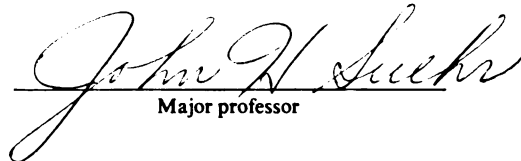


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THE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT: A PROBLEM FACING PUBLIC EDUCATION

By

Michael Louis Newton

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

The High School Dropout: A Problem Facing Public Education

By

Michael Louis Newton

To reduce attrition, it is important to identify and understand the characteristics of dropouts. The early and efficient identification of the at-risk student is very important if intervention efforts are to be successful. For this reason, the focus of this study was to identify the variables that have the greatest influence on a student's being at-risk or dropping out of school. Twenty-four specific variables were identified relative to determining dropout status, and hypotheses were formulated to test the relationship of variables to attrition. To determine whether significant relationships existed between those 24 variables and attrition, 95 Larkin High School dropouts and 95 Larkin High School persisters were interviewed relative to concerns recognized by educators and researchers as germane to the problem of attrition. The findings of the study indicated a significant relationship existed between 21 variables and attrition. Therefore, a prediction model can be developed to help identify at-risk students. A t-test and a chi-square test were used to determine statistical significance.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The school dropout problem is not a new phenomenon in American education. When President Lyndon Johnson characterized the dropout situation in his 1964 State of the Union Message as "the dark side of education," he was undoubtedly referring to the 60% of tenth-grade students from poverty neighborhoods who dropped out before graduating and an additional 10% of students who never reached tenth grade. In 1984, President Ronald Reagan referred to the dropout situation as "one of the many problems" modern educators must face. The United States is considered a most productive and progressive country; however, it can ill afford to have more than a million high school students drop out of school each year, likely to become the unemployed and nonproductive (Conant, 1961). This group of dropouts will not remain as they are without causing the society serious problems. Schreiber (1967) stated, "If we cannot reconstruct our educational system to provide meaningful, successful experiences for all of our children so that they will become a

contributing part of our society, then the possibility for growth and stability in America may be lost" (p. 27).

Background of the Problem

Around the turn of the century, as many as 94% of all high school students did not graduate; however, dropping out of school at that time did not affect the job market because dropouts could market their unskilled labor, learn on the job, and move upward to a respectable paying position (Pearl, 1967). Today, it is virtually impossible for dropouts to succeed once they leave school (Schreiber, 1967). In fact, the term "dropout" itself carries a pejorative social connotation. Something as basic as employment becomes a lifelong pursuit without a high school diploma (Schreiber, 1967). An ultimate failure, the inability to secure and hold a job, is a severe blow to the dropout (Swanstrom, 1967). When the dropout was in school, he learned that he was "good at nothing," and after leaving school, he is once more told in no uncertain terms that he is "good for nothing" (Schreiber, 1967). Therefore, if an individual has no occupation and is not working, he is perceived to perform no function in or for society. At best, his relationships with others are marginal; at worst, he is alienated from those others (Schreiber, 1967). Miller (1980) stated, "Because work is basic to the existence of any society, it is difficult, if not impossible, to think of an individual fitting into society without a

work role" (p. 45). Schreiber (1967) asserted, "When a man's occupation is known, a great deal about him may be immediately deduced with a high degree of accuracy; until it is known, little can be said about the role he is playing or about his status in either his own eyes or those of his fellows" (p. 245).

This general attitude is devastating not only to the more than one million young people who drop out of school each year, but also to society (Ginzberg, 1982). Ginzberg hoped that a majority of Americans would come to appreciate the real dimensions of the dropout crisis. It is only through education that millions of children can move upward to a more valued and respected life prospect (Stafford, 1982). As Brain (1967) stated,

Breaking the chain of poverty is in our own immediate direct interest. For this is one of the lessons that your city and all the cities of the United States teach: that our well being, our safety, the very quality of our lives and our children are bound up with the lives of countless other men whom we will never know. (p. 217).

Educators across the country are seeking new ways to cope with the rising rate of attrition among public school students (Harris, Horning, & Hedman, 1983; Hoeft, 1983). In three classic studies, researchers have attempted to provide insight into the dropout problem:

The Cervantes Report (1965), which Beck and Muia (1981), Hoeft (1983), and McMahon (1985) considered to be one of the most definitive reports on the dropout, attempted to determine primarily

from dropouts themselves why they were leaving school and why other youths in a seemingly identical situation were remaining. Several central tendencies of the dropout emerged from the Cervantes Report. The tendencies were categorized in three areas: school, family, and peers.

Cervantes (1965) identified these dropout characteristics for each category as follows:

School

- Irregular attendance
- No participation in extracurricular activities
- Behavior problems

Family

- More children than parents can control
- Unhappy family situation
- Few family friends
- Weak father figure

Peers

- Resentment of all authority
- Weak self image
- Friends not school oriented

In another study, Curtis and the Austin Independent School District (1983) found that secondary school students who dropped out

of school were indeed put at a great social and economic disadvantage. The researcher attempted to prove that if potential dropouts could be identified early, prevention might be possible. Consequently, the Austin Independent School District constructed a dropout prediction model that using readily available school information, could identify potential dropouts.

In a study by Martin Deutsch (1967), early school failure was found to be significantly related to attrition. Consequently, much of Deutsch's work has focused on preschool development. He said it is imperative to attempt to foster the developmental skills that are most essential in the learning process, thereby establishing both cognitive and attitudinal continuity between preschool and the school. The child who lacks these skills begins to perceive school as a place where he does not understand and where he experiences failure. According to Deutsch, "The child who comes to school with very few of the kinds of intellectual cognitive structures that school demands will be the most susceptible to the process of failing" (p. 354).

The three research projects had two essential similarities. First was the belief that if a potential dropout can be identified early, prevention may be possible. Second, the researchers concluded that further research should improve the effectiveness in predicting potential dropouts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between selected student characteristics and the incidence of attrition among 16-, 17-, and 18-year-olds at Larkin High School in Elgin, Illinois, during the 1985-1986 school year. The focus was to determine which pupils are most likely to drop out of school so that intervention measures can be undertaken to keep these students in school.

Need for the Study

The average attrition rate in United States high schools is 26%. Fifty percent if the high school is located in an urban center. The consequences of dropping out of school have been well documented (Lomas, 1984; Mitchell & Shepherd, 1980; Toffler, 1968). Dropouts between the ages of 16 and 19 tend to have high rates of behavior problems, isolation from their families, and unemployment (Brown, 1983).

Despite the number of services available in the Elgin, Illinois, area, the setting for this study, the dropout rate remains high. Since the 1979-1980 school year, an average of 464 students have dropped out of the three high schools each year. During 1983-1984, 523 students, 7.7% of the high school enrollment in the Elgin School System dropped out of school. This is higher than the

5% state average reported for that year by the Illinois Department of Education (Crain's Chicago Business, July 1985).

The number of youths who drop out of school is compounded over time in a community. According to the State of Illinois Report on Illiteracy (September 1985) an estimated 27,000 Kane County residents who were 18 years or older had less than eight years of education. Since the Elgin School District represents 35% of the population of Kane County, an estimated 9,450 people in the district have less than an eighth grade education. Although the dropout rate is not as high as the 26% national average, Elgin's educational community suffers from attrition in many ways:

1. In Illinois, financial aid to school districts is determined by their attendance rather than enrollment figures; therefore, dropouts and truants reduce an already low school budget. At present, Elgin's School District is facing an \$8 million deficit. During the 1984-1985 school year alone, the Elgin School District lost \$1,023,750 because 455 students dropped out of school.
2. Unemployment in Elgin is 8.1% and 39% among teenagers. With an increasing number of students both out of school and unemployed, how much wasted human capital can one afford? How much can governments afford? The Appalachian Regional Commission has estimated that dropouts

will earn \$237 billion less over their lifetimes than will high school graduates. Thus, state and local governments will collect \$71 billion less in taxes (Research Triangle Institute, 1985). Stated another way, society could spend \$71 billion on dropout programs and still break even (Mann, 1985). The majority of inmates in any jail are functionally illiterate, yet a year in jail costs three times as much (\$25,000) as a year in college (Mann, 1985). The United States cannot waste such a large portion of its youths. It is too expensive in lost taxes, misspent revenues, lost productivity, and lost profits (Thurow, 1983). Concerning the same type of problem in New York, a New York truant officer stated, "We're going to be paying their welfare bills for the rest of our lives" (Sewall, Sherman & Lee, 1982, page 44).

3. Truancy can be the first signal of future juvenile and adult problems (Brown, 1983; Bayh, 1978). Chronic truants frequently become high school dropouts and criminals (Brown, 1983; Texas Education Agency, 1984). In Elgin, the crime rate among juveniles has increased during the past year. An attempt was made in this study to determine whether there is a relationship between the dropout rate and the increase in crime.

Rather than examining a few dropout characteristics of three or four school districts, this researcher believed it would be of

value to study the dropout problems of one high school by examining many variables that might be related to attrition. Many of the variables examined in this investigation were not included in the attrition studies by Springstead (1981), Gottfredson and others, (1983), Gilchrist (1983), Curtis (1983), Tyerman (1968), Farrington (1980), Galloway (1976), Cervantes (1965), Beck & Muia (1980), and Hicks, 1969 (in Beck & Muia, 1981). Those researchers did not study the following important areas.

1. the relationship between early attendance problems and attrition;
2. the relationship between the number of schools attended during the primary school years and attrition;
3. the relationship between attending a formal preschool program and attrition;
4. the relationship between the number of police referrals and attrition;
5. the relationship between family meal habits and attrition;
6. the relationship between church attendance and attrition;
7. the relationship between taking drugs and attrition.

In addition, no recent dropout study has focused upon on a midwest city.

By concentrating the research on one high school and its feeder middle and elementary schools, the following objectives may be accomplished.

1. Many characteristics of dropouts may be discerned to assist in early identification of potential dropouts.
2. Once specific dropout characteristics are identified, appropriate action can be recommended to reduce attrition.
3. By reducing the number of dropouts, other major problems such as unemployment, truancy, and juvenile delinquency may be reduced (Cervantes, 1968; Conant, 1962; Hoeft, 1983).

Research Questions

The following questions were posed to guide the collection of data in this study.

1. What do dropouts and persisters like most about attending school?
2. What do dropouts and persisters dislike most about attending school?

3. Is there a relationship between the number of schools attended by a student during the primary school years and attrition?
4. Is there a relationship between enrollment in a preschool education program and success at the high school level?
5. Do Larkin High School dropouts have different feelings concerning the quality of education to which they have been exposed than do persisters?
6. Do students who drop out of school eventually return to some kind of formal education?
7. Do students who dropped out of school have different feelings concerning the difficulty of their academic work than do persisters?
8. Do dropouts value education as do persisters?
9. Is there a difference between the reading scores of dropouts and those of persisters?
10. While attending school, did dropouts participate in as many extracurricular activities as do persisters?
11. Is there a relationship between early attendance problems and attrition?

12. Did dropouts have more behavioral problems in and outside of school than do persisters?
13. Is there a relationship between the number of years parents attended school and the number of years their children remain in school?
14. Is there a relationship between mothers' employment outside the home during their child's elementary school years and attrition?
15. Is there a relationship between broken homes and attrition?
16. Is there a relationship between the family's degree of understanding and acceptance and attrition?
17. Is there a relationship between the amount of communication within a family and attrition?
18. Is there a relationship between the quality of communication within a family and attrition?
19. Is there a relationship between family meal habits and attrition?
20. Is there a relationship between family income and attrition?
21. Is there a relationship between drug use and attrition?

22. Is there a relationship between church attendance and attrition?
23. Is there a relationship between student unemployment and attrition?
24. What reasons do students give for dropping out of school?
25. Do high school dropouts come from families in which the immediate family members have dropped out of school?
26. Is there a relationship between truancy and attrition?
27. Is there a relationship between grade point average and attrition?

Definition of Terms

The following key terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this dissertation:

Attrition: Dropping out of school for reasons other than illness or transfer.

Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills in Reading: A standardized reading test that measures reading comprehension.

Extracurricular activities: Any school-sponsored activity outside the regularly scheduled class.

Family meal habits: The number of meals eaten together as a family per day.

Early attendance problems: The number of absences accumulated during the kindergarten through sixth grade years of primary and intermediate school.

Attending church regularly: Attending church at least twice during any given month, as reported by the student.

Preschool experience: Attendance in any accredited preschool education program before kindergarten.

Behavioral Problems: Any disciplinary problem (as defined in the Larkin High School Student/Parent Handbook) caused by students while attending school or school-sponsored functions.

Truancy: An unexcused absence from school or class.

Delinquent referrals: Any disciplinary referral that requires court involvement

Controlled substances: Any substance that appears on the Federal Government's list of controlled substances.

Formal education: Successful completion of the course of study at any state-accredited school.

Broken home: A family that has undergone parental separation, divorce, or death.

Larkin High School Disciplinary Log: A record of disciplinary infractions. A student is given log points when he/she

breaks a rule. The number of points is determined by the seriousness of the infraction.

School mobility: The number of schools students attended during their elementary years.

At-risk student: A student who is prone to school failure.

Grade point average: A measure of students' academic performance. Grade point averages at Larkin High School are figured on a 5.0 grading scale.

Delimitations

1. The samples delimited to 16-year old, 17-year-old, and 18 year-old Larkin High School students and former Larkin High School students.
2. The variables examined in this study dealt with five major areas: school experiences, education, family, employment, and peer group.

Overview

Chapter I contained the background of the problem considered in this study, the importance of the research, a statement of purpose, and the need for a dropout study. The research questions were stated, key terms defined, and delimitations stated. Chapter II is a review of related literature. The first part focuses on

seven strategies designed to help potential at-risk students and dropouts. The second part is a review of research concerning numerous factors thought to influence attrition and retention. The methodology of the study is explained in Chapter III. Included are descriptions of the population and sample, a statement of the hypotheses, and the statistical techniques used in analyzing the data. Results of the data analysis are presented in tabular and narrative form in Chapter IV. A summary of the study, discussion of findings, conclusions, recommendations, and personal reflections constitute chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Because average attrition rate of the typical American high school is 26% and 50% if the school is located in an urban center (McCarthy, 1980) the need to examine the dropout issue is germane. Current literature regarding the growing dropout problem is discussed in this chapter.

Many job counselors feel that at least two years of post-high-school education are necessary to obtain a well-paying job (Bowen, 1985; Carlsen, 1985; Peters, 1985). This trend in the job market is devastating to more than two million young people each year--the one of every four public school students who drop out of high school ("What's Being Done About the Dropouts, June 2, 1980).

To confirm the feelings of a typical dropout, Peng and Takai (1983) conducted a study to provide descriptive information about dropouts. Youths were asked to complete a questionnaire inquiring about their reasons for dropping out, their plans, and their activities after leaving school. Some of the findings were the following:

1. About 14% of high school dropouts left during or after their sophomore year, before completing requirements for graduation.

2. By the spring of the year, many of these dropouts (more than 27%) were unemployed or dissatisfied with their work and were looking for other work.

3. The majority of those who worked full or part-time were engaged in low skilled jobs.

4. Most of the dropouts regretted their decision to leave school prematurely.

5. Reasons for dropping out included dislike of or expulsion from school, desire to work full time, or plans to get married.

6. The students were from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Educators across the country are seeking new ways to cope with the growing number of public school dropouts (Maurer, 1982). Yet there is no easy way to turn potential dropouts into academically successful students. The following measures have been used by various high schools throughout the United States in an attempt to reduce attrition (Mann, 1985).

- a computerized referral system so that police encounters can be shared with the county juvenile justice agency and high school guidance counselors
- enhancing the self-image of elementary school children

- an alternative high school
- a "Big Brother" program run by the Chamber of Commerce for low-achieving high school students
- mini-computers for math instruction
- a store-front street academy with an experience-based career education component
- an after-school recreation program with academic acquisition in a middle school
- drug-abuse counseling
- smaller class sizes
- T-shirts, notebooks, pencils (with corporate logos) and dictionaries given at a ceremony at which 300 ninth graders take a public oath to graduate from school.
- an ombudsman
- night school
- a computerized index of commercially available curriculum organized by objectives for academic skills, attitudes, and job performance skills

Strategies Designed to Help
Potential At-Risk and Dropout Students

The list of measures undertaken to reduce attrition is extensive. Many more could be added to those cited above. In this section, however, seven strategies designed to help potential at-risk students and dropouts are examined in depth. Briefly, they are the following:

1. **The Effective Preschool Program:** A discussion on how an effective preschool program must prepare children with the cognitive and perceptual skills necessary to succeed in school.
2. **The Ossining Plan:** A description of how Ossining High School is attempting to reduce the dropout rate by working closely with teachers to improve classroom management and instruction.
3. **The Denver Approach:** A description of how the city of Denver has sponsored a program that allows dropouts to earn credit and eventually graduate without returning to the home school.
4. **The Cervantes Study (1965):** The study provides a number of suggestions on how the community, businessmen, teachers,

parents, and administrators can work together to reduce attrition.

5. The James B. Conant Model (1961): This internationally known scholar, statesman, and educator has suggested ideas for resolving the dropout problem.
6. The Shrewberry Model: To reduce attrition, Shrewberry High School has developed a program that brings students and staff throughout the school into a more collaborative working/learning relationship.
7. Milwaukee GED Approach: The city of Milwaukee has found that the traditional school is not always the best option of the problem student. Instead, Milwaukee is using a community-based GED option.

Each of these strategies is discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

The Effective Preschool Program

Because research has shown that dropout behavior patterns originate at the early elementary level, the most appropriate time to identify and treat dropout symptoms is during the preschool and elementary school years. (Bailey, 1982; Goodman, 1982; Granville, 1978; Ypsilanti-Perry Preschool Project, 1962). Many educators and psychologists believe that a well-planned preschool program is

essential in providing some children the opportunity to succeed in early schooling (Schreiber, 1967). For example, Ypsilanti-Perry Preschool Project researchers (Ypsilanti, Michigan, 1962) concluded that preschool experience can be very valuable. The study was a carefully controlled experiment with low teacher/pupil ratios, weekly home visits, excellent teachers, and a capable research director. On 48 measures of school and life success, the study found that the children who had attended a quality preschool outperformed those who had not.

Martin Deutsch, Director of the Institute for Developmental Studies, Department of Psychiatry, New York Medical College, (in Schreiber, 1967) asserted that a strong relationship exists between a child's first school experiences and academic success or failure. Deutsch suggested that an attempt be made to foster the developmental skills that are most functional in the learning process, thereby establishing both cognitive and attitudinal continuity between preschool and the regular school year. He described a typical problem that many children experience when starting first grade: A particular child comes to school with few of the cognitive skills that schools demand. These skills include visual and auditory perception, which are essential for learning reading, language skills, familiarity with books, toys, games, and the development of sustained curiosity. The student who lacks these skills will begin to see school as a place where he does not

"understand" and where he experiences failure. Deutsch stated, "the child who comes to school with very few of the kinds of intellectual cognitive structures that school demands will be the most susceptible to the process of failing." In addition, a recent study completed by the Public Education Association (1984) revealed that academic preparedness strongly related to higher rates of retention (in Mann, 1965).

The research completed by Deutsch and the Ypsilanti-Perry School System reached the same conclusion: If school is to influence children's attendance patterns, a positive influence must begin well before the school behavior and dropout problems arise.

In many cities, attempts are being made to plan and implement effective preschool programs that meet the needs of all children (Schreiber, 1967). Although there are some common threads among new and promising preschool practices, some of the approaches are particularly noteworthy. Davis (1973) identified a strong relationship of trust and mutual acceptance between teacher and student as being an important factor for an effective preschool program. She stated "The feeling of liking for the teacher develops into respect and the desire to win her approval." (p. 300)

Carl Byerly, educator for 25 years stated,

The primary development of a three or four year old child should focus on physical, emotional and social skills. Therefore, the preschool must place heavy emphasis in providing an environment that helps children use their bodies, direct and control their emotions toward authority figures and peers and develop a self image with a peer group from which social participation begins (in Schreiber, 1967, p. 300).

The goal of any school is to help all children become active participants in the learning process (Deutsch, 1967). This is certainly true of preschool education. Deutsch identified the approaches that can help students reach this goal.

1. Establish a good base: In facilitating children's learning process, the school must expect frequently to do a portion of the job traditionally assigned to the home and community.
2. Interpreting an appropriate behavior: The preschool program needs to interpret for the child the kind of behavior that will make it possible to function and cope with the school mechanisms. This could be accomplished through a direct relationship between the teacher and the community. For example, in some communities the school is seen as a resource center where the school is seen as a place as a social transition -where it is kept open at night and books can be taken out.

3. Developing the child's inner-self: According to Deutsch
(in Schreiber, 1967),

Goals are stimulated early in life. If the parents have had low ceilings in terms of variety of experiences, with the intensity being in terms of job insecurity, negotiations with welfare and landlords, there is not much left to give the child a sense of identifying the self with goals that take individual impetus and disciplining. The development of the inner self can be an intrinsic part of the preschool experience and possibly a basis for much later motivation. (p. 212)

In summary, preschool education is an attempt to provide many young children with the positive experiential background needed to succeed during the early years of school.

The Ossining Plan

Many high schools have worked conscientiously to decrease attrition (Foley and McConaughy, 1982). However, the average dropout rate among students from the typical American high school has reached 26% and 50% if the school is located in an urban center (Maurer, 1982). In other words, more than one out of four nonurban students and one out of two students from large city high schools drop out of school. In a city the size of New York, more than 40,000 students drop out of school each year (Maurer, 1982).

In an effort to halt the rising dropout rate, many high schools have adopted attendance and retention strategies that they

hope will motivate potential dropouts to remain in school (Hoeft, 1983; Peng & Takai, 1983; Prestholdt & Fisher, 1983).

The state of New York is attempting to combat the dropout problem by requiring high schools to maintain a certain retention rate or lose state financial aid ("Regents Set a Dropout Limit for High Schools," 1981). In 1981, the New York State Board of Regents voted to establish a 90% retention rate for all 1,200 public schools ("Regents Set a Dropout Limit for High Schools," 1981). With increasing problems of racial violence, poor attendance, assaults on teachers, and extremely high dropout rates, that retention policy needed to be written (Maurer, 1982).

Ossining High School is one school that has developed an effective dropout program to solve the problems of truancy, discipline, and attrition. That program has involved implementing the following four major strategies (Maurer, 1982):

1. Teacher/staff inservice training. The focus of the inservice training was to implement classroom-management and instructional techniques that researchers had identified as effective in improving student performance. At the end of the three-year study (1978-1982), 50% of the teaching staff had voluntarily participated in the training.

2. Alternative academic programs for high risk/potential dropouts. This program was designed for students who had academic

ability but could not function in the regular classroom. These students were identified as disruptive and potential dropouts. The alternative program also provided counseling services for those students in the program.

3. Family-intervention training. A service team composed of a classroom teacher, an attendance officer, a school psychologist, and a school counselor routinely visited the homes of students with poor behavior. The visits had three purposes: family counseling, teaching parents more appropriate disciplinary procedures, and mobilizing all the family resources to help students change.

4. Training students in social and interpersonal skills. The purpose of this training was to develop more appropriate interpersonal behaviors and more positive self-concepts among students identified as at-risk.

The three year Ossining program was an overwhelming success (Maurer, 1982). The dropout rate for at-risk students decreased dramatically, and the absence rate decreased by 16%. The academic failure rate for these students decreased by 52%. Finally, the suspension rate dropped by 71%.

The Denver Approach: The Youth Education Center

Denver is another large city that is trying to help students who are potential dropouts or who have already dropped out of high school. The school system's success is closely related to its philosophy of denying students the right to fail by giving them unlimited chances to succeed (Jacques, 1982). The Metropolitan Youth Education Center is an alternative school designed to prepare high school dropouts for employment by providing the basic academic skills needed for a high school diploma and the preparation necessary to pass the GED test. The Center offers a broad curriculum, with emphasis in English, mathematics, social studies, and reading. Staff members believe that the reading program makes the most productive contribution to rehabilitating these students (Jacques, 1982).

The Center does not issue diplomas but instead sends the credits students earn to the schools they last attended. The high schools then issue diplomas to qualified students, thus sparing them from being branded as high school dropouts. The Center's only stipulation is that a student show promise of success. The Center's overriding objective is to try to return each student to the mainstream of education (Jacques, 1982).

The Cervantes Study

Many educators consider the Cervantes study (1965) one of the important contributions to alleviating the dropout problem (Beck & Muia, 1981; Hoeft, 1982; McMahon, 1982). Cervantes wanted to determine, primarily from the dropouts themselves, why they were leaving school when other youths in similar situations were not. The findings and the solutions of the Cervantes Study are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Cervantes defined a dropout as "any youth who for any reason, except death, has left school before graduating from high school and without transferring to another school." In terms of the dropout's ability to function in society, Cervantes noted,

Unlike times when the dropout had a good chance of getting employment, today's dropout is clumsily dysfunctional in the computer-precise, machine-oriented, communication-saturated society. His truncated education makes him inadequate to qualify for any meaningful job and like most things in our automated world, he appears in quantity. (p. 196)

A dropout is an individual with unique characteristics, problems, and personal history. According to Cervantes, the following characteristics are found among potential or actual dropouts:

School:

1. Two years behind in reading or arithmetic at seventh grade level
2. Failure of one or more school years (first, second, eighth, and ninth grades most commonly failed)
3. Irregular attendance and frequent tardinesses
4. Performance consistently below potential
5. No participation in extracurricular activities
6. Frequent change of schools
7. Behavior problems requiring disciplinary measures
8. Feeling of "not belonging"

Family:

1. More children than the parent can control
2. Parents inconsistent in affection and discipline
3. Unhappy family situation
4. Father figure weak or absent
5. Education of parents at average of eighth grade level
6. Few family friends

Peers:

1. Friends not approved by parents
2. Friends not school oriented
3. Friends much older or much younger
4. Resentful of all authority

5. Weak self-image
6. Gratification pattern weak

In addition, Cervantes presented possible solutions to the attrition problem under seven categories: government, business, labor, school, counseling, student/teacher relationship, and volunteer groups. Since many of these solutions have been undertaken with successful results, a short discussion and summary of each solution is included here.

What Business Can Do: Businessmen are coming to realize that it is less expensive to help the dropout by providing him with a job than to support the unemployed through taxation (Cervantes, 1965). Cervantes recommended the following actions for business and industry:

1. Conduct a "dialogue" on youth employment between and within organizations.
2. Reexamine existing policies and take action to achieve equal job opportunities.
3. Establish realistic training programs, making sure they do not compete with programs that are better offered in the schools.
4. Make resources available to school vocational counselors.
5. Locate and establish protective entry jobs for unskilled, untrained, and unendowed youths.

6. Cooperate with the federal government in developing information on technological changes, displacement of workers, and requirements for new skills.
7. Provide realistic job descriptions, avoiding the tendency to overstate requirements.
8. Provide many opportunities for young people to visit plants and offices so they may hear realistic discussions of job requirements.
9. Participate in community-service programs in the schools.
10. Offer to speak at student assemblies and gatherings and tell the students why employers seek high school graduates.
11. Encourage students hired for the summer to return to school in the fall.
12. Plan production so students can work four hours or so a day but yet continue their education in either day or night school.
13. Offer scholarships to young students from blue collar backgrounds, contingent on their continued academic achievement.

What Labor Can Do: Cervantes found that labor has not been a great support system for education, specifically for vocational centers. Often, after a student has completed training at an accredited trade school, he must relearn on the job what he had been

taught in the trade school (Cervantes, 1965). Cervantes suggested that unions help by donating time, money, work, and teachers to trade schools.

What The Schools Can Do: Cervantes made the following recommendations concerning what schools can do to solve the attrition problem:

1. Provide Multi-Type Curriculum
 - a. academic
 - b. technical
 - c. commercial
 - d. occupational
2. Implement multiple track systems - classes should be divided according to students' ability.
3. Multiple approaches are needed. Although schools make available for talented students a more difficult curriculum, heavier work load, and earlier graduation, many students cannot emotionally or intellectually cope with these demands. Therefore, schools should provide programs geared to these students' abilities, as well (Cervantes, 1965).
4. Extra courses. Courses that are not college preparatory can be offered for the welfare of withdrawal-prone

students: Baking, barbering, bookkeeping, building, auto repair, consumer education, commercial cooking, homemaking, mechanics, and various vocational arts are examples of such courses.

Counseling: To direct students toward the types of jobs that exist today, professional assistance is necessary (Cervantes, 1965). Counseling programs must be started at the elementary level and continued throughout high school. Cervantes make the following specific recommendations regarding counseling:

1. Professional testing services should be made available for all children at as early an age as possible.
2. The school must assume leadership in the early identification of both pupils and parents who need help.
3. An elementary school ratio of one counselor to 600 pupils in middle class neighborhoods and one counselor to 300 pupils in lower-class socioeconomic situations seems reasonable.
4. A professional evaluation of each child's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social qualifications after he has been in the school system three years should be made available to all parents.

5. Some youths cannot continue school because their families need financial assistance. The schools should help such students to find part time jobs that will not interfere with their schooling.
6. School counseling with parents should include referrals to standard agencies and resources on prenatal care, proper diet, and medical assistance.
7. School guidance should emphasize how to get a job, human relations, and the rationale for choosing courses.

Teaching Staff: Cervantes made the following specific recommendations concerning teachers:

1. There is a grave need to recruit highly motivated teachers. Such increases in staff size would allow for smaller classes and individual attention.
2. Special recognition must be given to those teachers who serve the educationally disadvantaged.
3. The number of teachers needed should be determined by the needs of the pupils and not be based on fixed ratios.
4. Teachers should be selected for their ability to make a contribution to students rather than on the basis of isolated competencies in a certain subject.

5. Teachers should participate in training-enrichment programs.
6. Teachers must attempt to make each day a positive experience for each student.
7. The early recognition by teachers of the danger signals of the potential dropout and a consequent referral to a counselor would be helpful in correcting the situation.
8. Male teachers are needed in schools whose students whose families are primarily in the lower socioeconomic brackets.
9. Methods of raising the teacher's status must be explored.

Community: Cervantes stated,

It is intolerable that twenty percent of the total population lives in poverty while manpower, educational facilities, machinery, and capital are wasted. A citizens' body with representation from the schools, employment services, labor and management, social service agencies, character building agencies, churches, civic and fraternal groups, service clubs, foundations, and communication and government agencies should be established in every population center. (p. 200)

In summary, Cervantes offered numerous insight into the reasons young people drop out of school. In addition, he explored the options available to the educational community to reduce attrition.

The James B. Conant Model

Although Conant (1961) agreed that a high school diploma is an asset for virtually all students, he acknowledged that schools must face the fact that not all students will remain in school long enough to graduate. He stated, "For many students, it may be worse to stay in school and endure constant academic frustration than to leave school and to find a satisfying job." (p. 54) Conant believed that full-time schooling for certain youths may be good or bad, depending on the employment outlook: "The situation in which a boy drops out of school only to walk the streets is quite different from the situation in which a boy drops out and finds satisfactory employment." (p. 55)

Employment trends have indicated that fewer completely unskilled workers will be able to obtain jobs as the years go by because employers want to hire skilled workers. That is, white-collar jobs will grow more rapidly than blue-collar jobs -- the province of the slow learner and the dropout. The important question is this: What area of employment will give hope to slow learners and at-risk students? Conant acknowledged that the growth in the number of service occupations was still high. Those service occupations include jobs ranging from hotel bellboys to messengers to laundry operatives. For this reason, Conant believed that it would be worthwhile for schools to investigate the possibility of

setting up work-experience programs for slow learners and potential dropouts, which would be followed by full-time employment.

Conant and Cervantes agreed that the cooperation of local industries is necessary in solving not only the dropout problem but also the youth-unemployment problem. Conant described school/community programs that have helped many students develop marketable job skills.

In one such program, the city of Philadelphia developed "occupational" practice shops in many of its schools (Conant, 1961). Since many of the students who enrolled in this program had extremely low academic ability and achieved below their grade placement, simple types of manual skills were taught. Because many of the students in the program were not expected to finish four years of high school, the vocational emphasis started in grade nine, rather than being postponed until grade eleven. Conant summarized the importance of this type of program: "There are many potential dropouts in certain neighborhoods, and to help these youths fit into the employment picture some practical course work of the simple type must be available in early grades."

Various researchers have addressed the skill needs of potential and actual dropouts (Weber, 1983; Romano, 1983). Data from Weber's study (1983) revealed that the average performance of secondary vocational students on standardized basic measures was between the 35th and 40th percentiles, or one-half of a standard

deviation unit below the average. The dropout scored near the 25th percentile. Furthermore, the dropout's performance in reading and math appeared to be equally poor. It has been shown, however, that when potential and actual dropouts are afforded an opportunity to participate in vocationally oriented programs that have an integrated basic skills component, their basic skills attainment increases substantially (McMahon, 1985).

In Detroit, a "job upgrading program" was designed to help the slow learner, the at-risk student, and the drop out student (Conant, 1961). In this case, however, the upgrading centers operated independently of the regular high school curriculum. A job counselor was available for students who wanted to find employment. Many of the students, were taught such things as how to dress and be groomed, how to shake hands and greet a prospective employer, and how to complete a job application. Six weeks of supervised work in private industry or a public agency followed the four weeks in the Center (Conant, 1961). Again the main objective of the program was to help young children learn basic skills and obtain employment.

The Shrewberry High School Model

Shrewberry High School in Shrewbury, Massachusetts, developed a dropout-prevention program that accomplished its goal of bringing students and staff throughout the school system into a more collaborative working/learning relationship (McCarthy, 1980). Of

the 1,300 Shrewberry High School students, the program involved approximately 100 potential (in-school) dropouts (McCarthy, 1980). The program was organized into three stages, based on different types of potential dropouts. The stages include:

1. Stage I: This phase of the program was geared to students who had experienced considerable failure at the high school level. The objective was to set goals that would move this type of student toward a more positive vocational outlook.

The means include educational and vocational plans for students who have not adapted to the regular school setting but who demonstrate an interest and capacity to learn; job and project contracts for each student; and family and community classes and counseling in work/study (McCarthy, 1980, p. 17).

2. Stage II: This phase of the program is for students who are able to function in the high school environment but need alternative support.

The means are a schedule which matches students with appropriate teachers; supervision of teachers by program staff; individual and small group projects; group activities and trips during evening, weekends, and vacations; documentation of student talents and skills; and home and school conferences, counseling, meetings, and seminars (McCarthy, 1980, p. 18).

3. Stage III: The goal of this phase was to schedule regular classes for students and then to provide psychosocial services to enhance success.

A similar approach was implemented in Waukesha High School in Waukesha, Wisconsin (Champeau, 1983). That is, to prevent attrition and to improve students' self-concept, a program was developed to establish caring relationships between faculty and students. In both the Shrewberry and Waukesha high schools the dropout rate was reduced by one-half following the implementation of these programs.

Milwaukee's General Education

Development Approach

To reach hundreds of youths who drop out of the Milwaukee Public School System every year, the city of Milwaukee is rigorously demonstrating that the General Educational Development Test (GED) is an excellent option for many dropouts (Horning, Harris, & Hedman 1982). The Milwaukee program is housed in and administered by Journey House, an inner-city community center located in a neighborhood with a mixture of poor and working class whites, Latinos, and, more recently, Asians. The program works collaboratively with the Milwaukee Public School System. The program has been effective for students who had difficulty in the conventional high school for a number of reasons:

1. The classes are small, usually no larger than 12 students.
2. The program provides an opportunity for dropouts to "catch-up" on basic skills.

3. The school day is usually two hours long, and classes meet three to four times per week. The students can select the time that is convenient for them.
4. The program emphasizes reading skills.
5. Since many of the students are single mothers, the program provides free child care to the participants during classes.
6. The program is not grade oriented but diagnostic; tests are administered in mathematics, reading, and basic writing skills to locate specific deficiencies and provide information for planning clear-cut skill-oriented goals.

Marty Horning (1982), The Coordinator of Journey House, stated,

The traditional high school, no matter how it is modified, may not be the best mechanism for reaching dropouts. Educational recovery may occur best as part of the continuing work of community-based organizations. Furthermore, systems of grades and credits, almost unavoidable within a public school program, are inseparable obstacles to a dropout. We suggest that a community based G.E.D. is an excellent option. (p. 36)

SUMMARY

The effective preschool program, the Ossining Plan, Denver's Youth Education Plan, the Cervantes Study, the Conant Model, the Shrewberry Model, the Waukesha Model, and Milwaukee's GED Approach offer opportunities for thousands of young people to complete their

education. Recently Batsche (1984) and Lotto (1982) examined many of these dropout prevention programs. The two researchers identified several common characteristics of successful programs:

1. multiple strategies integrated within a single program
2. placement in environments dissimilar to traditional school
3. concentration of resources on a small target population
4. emphasis on vocational education and work experience
5. self-concept development
6. development of interpersonal life skills

The programs discussed in this study have many of the listed key characteristics of successful dropout programs. "No longer can one turn one's back on the dropout because of ignorance as to solutions" (Toffler, 1968, pg. 68)

BARRIERS TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Recent studies and educational articles have shown that young adults are excluded from school by a number of overt and subtle barriers (Cervantes, 1965; Children's Defense Fund, 1974; Sewall, Sherman & Elliott, 1979). In many situations, youths are out of school not by choice but because school and societal policies. Consequently, the term "push-out" is being used more than dropout (Children's Defense Fund, 1974). In his book The Dropout: Causes and Cures, Cervantes (1965) stated, "Many youths have been excluded

too young, some of them have been excluded without parental consent." Several writers (Cervantes, 1965; Harris, Hedman and Horning, 1983; Hicks, 1969) have indicated many reasons for attrition and poor school attendance. The following segment of the literature review focuses on some of the main reasons why millions of youths between 7 and 15 years of age are not enrolled in school (Cervantes, 1965; Children's Defense Fund, 1974; Wright, 1976). They include: Truancy, marriage and pregnancy, suspension and expulsion, employment, intelligence quotient, low financial status, and reading ability.

Truancy

The reasons why truancy is serious. At one time, truancy was not considered a serious problem (Brown, 1983). In fact, it was regarded with the amusement one might have felt for the comic-strip rascals who hid their school bags to go fishing unencumbered (Brown, 1983). However truancy is considered serious today for two major reasons.

First, millions of youths across the country are truant every day. These students may hang out on street corners, ride aimlessly on city buses and perhaps play pool for hours at the city pool hall (Sewall, Sherman & Elliott 1979). In recent years, many writers have asserted that the truancy problem is reaching epidemic

proportions (Defour, 1983; Stearn, 1981; "Student Absenteeism: Is There A Solution?" February, 1974; Wright, 1977). Schools across the country are reporting high rates of student absenteeism ("Student Absenteeism: Is There A Solution?" 1974). According to the Bureau of Attendance Figures (in Stearn, 1981), as many as 65,000 high school pupils in New York City are absent on an average day.

At Boys High School in New York City (46% absence rate each day), teachers report that students are now on a "self-declared" Tuesday through Thursday school week (Stearn, 1981). One study has shown that truancy is caused by the reprehensible values of the parents. "General standards of behavior are seen to have declined and their control of their children has declined" (Scottish Education Department, 1977, p. 2). For example, some truants copy the habits of their parents, who are so idle that they operate a four-day work week. Russell Lombardy, a high school principal in Washington, D. C., stated, "On certain school days, you see so many kids out on the streets that you'd think it was a holiday" (Sewall, Sherman, & Elliott, 1979, p. 44). Cleveland High School in Seattle, Washington, reported 35% of the pupils absent each period (Howard, 1978, p. 17).

Second, there is a fear that an upsurge in the truancy rate will contribute to a growing crime rate (Brown, 1983; Children's Defense Fund, 1974; Romano, 1983). A report by the Children's

Defense Fund (1974) stated, "Truancy is sometimes the first symptom of juvenile and adult problems. Excessive truantries frequently result in dropouts, illiterates, and criminals." (p. 225)
Consequently, the effects of truancy affect the entire community.

Explanations for the rise in truancy. In New York City, a number of parents, teachers, pupils, guidance counselors, and attendance officers have offered a wide variety of explanations for the rise in absenteeism. The reasons include -

- The frustration of high school students who are reading at third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade levels
- Skip-zoning policies, whereby some students must travel up to an hour and a half to get to their out-of-neighborhood schools
- Overcrowded schools
- Attacks on the relevance of traditional curriculum, which has lessened the value of studies in the eyes of some students
- A decline in adult authority
- Drug addiction
- The failure of many parents to recognize the importance of regular school attendance

- The feeling of many minority groups that no amount of schooling will improve their chances in life (Stearn, 1981).

In another article published in Newsweek magazine (August 27, 1979), Ralph Murphy, director of one of New York's anti-truancy programs, explained why students skip school:

Kids skip school for assorted reasons. Sometimes children stay at home to care for younger siblings or even to translate for their non-English speaking parents. But many truants, often from poor and minority backgrounds, simply consider school boring and irrelevant. (p. 44)

According to the American Association of School Administrators (Champeau, 1983) the most frequently given reasons for absences ranged from illness to pregnancy and parenthood. Other common excuses were dislike of school, social-adjustment problems, academic difficulties, and having to help at home.

In 1977 an Educational Research Service report on student absenteeism cited a number of explanations for excessive absenteeism. The report traced a students' truancy to personal and family life (illness, accident, lack of motivation, marital problems, unfavorable parental opinion), social and economic conditions (race, ethnic-group status, peer pressures, and drugs), and the school climate (personality conflict with teachers, ineffective teaching, poor learning environment, and so on).

Additional studies on truancy have reported the following information: Truants tend to come from low income families (Blythman, 1975; Farrington, 1980; Galloway, 1982; Tyerman, 1968) in which the father is an unskilled or semi-skilled worker or is unemployed or irregularly employed (Mitchell, 1972; Tyerman, 1968). As a result, a number of social pathologies occur that overwhelm the parents as well as the truants. For example, high incidences of alcoholism (Hersov, 1960-61), and physical illness ("Fa Wid Be a Scholar:" A Study in Truancy, 1977), violence (Farrington, 1980) and family disorganization (Carmichael, 1975) have been found among the families of truants.

The effects of rising truancy. Stearn (1981) alerted the educational community to the effects of rising truancy. Absenteeism is causing frustration among teachers and deep disappointment among parents who had hoped the schools would lead their children to a more positive life. Truancy is causing a widespread fear that yet another generation of youth is being produced who have no education, no work or study habits, and no prospect of improving their lives.

Research on truancy. The findings of the following studies have helped educators and concerned citizens work more effectively to combat the problem of student absenteeism. In 1976, Wright examined factors related to school attendance in Virginia. School attendance was significantly (.05 level) related to selected

variables. A factor positively associated with attendance was the percentage of state required courses offered as "electives." Factors negatively associated with attendance included population density, school size, pupil-teacher ratio, and the number of elective offerings.

In a study completed in 1975, Levano attempted to determine variables that led to attendance problems at a large Connecticut high school. He concluded that higher rates of truancy were associated with the following variables:

- older students
- black students
- girls in grade 12
- students in upper grades
- students living with one parent
- students in the general program of study
- students with a lower IQ (seniors)
- students with low class rank (seniors)
- students who do not participate in school activities
- students claiming no religion
- students with poor personality ratings

Lower rates of absenteeism were associated with the following variables:

- younger students
- white students

- boys in grades 9-11
- girls in grades 9-11
- students in lower grades
- students living with both parents
- students in the college-preparatory program
- students with higher IQ scores (seniors)
- students with higher class rank
- students participating in school-sponsored activities
- Jewish students
- students with good personality ratings from teachers

In another study, Karweit (1973) examined factors related to school absence for the Center for Social Organization of Schools at John Hopkins University. She reported that absenteeism was significantly greater

- on Mondays and Fridays
- on rainy days
- at the end of the school year
- for students riding the bus to school versus those walking or driving.
- for student mothers with infants at home
- for students who receive lower grades

Karseit also found that contacting parents about their children's attendance problems was not helpful in reducing

absenteeism. However, the results of Mitchell and Shepherd study (1980) seemed to dispute this finding. They stated (in Brown, 1983),

Parents of truants are interested in the education of their child. If the family's anti-educational bias were a prime determinant of a child's attitudes, we would expect parental support and connivance for the child's intention to absent himself . . . Yet below the age of 11 our children who disliked going to school had an attendance record as good as any others. (p. 226)

An analysis of students who had greater than a ten percent absentee rate at Mariner High School in Mukilteo, Washington, showed that the following phenomena were associated with truancy (Karweit, 1973):

1. Three out of every four absences occurred on Monday or Friday.
2. Truants were absent from school on days after vacations.
3. Truants were average or above average in intelligence but below average in achievement.
4. Truants were enrolled in the general, rather than the academic, vocational, or "specialized" curriculum.
5. Truants were not employed.
6. Truants were not involved in school-sponsored activities.
7. Truants did not eat breakfast on days they did come to school. (p. 7)

Robert Byrne, assistant superintendent in Fort Lee, New Jersey, stated, "In the long range, the solution to the problem of motivating youth to attend school will depend on instructional programs that maintain standards and a level of challenge that invites, and requires their full participation" (Byrne, 1981, p.33). Byrne believed that student motivation is the key to solving the problem of excessive truancy. Teachers are frustrated that an increasing number of students have little motivation to attend class and even less motivation to learn once they get there.

Attendance Policies. A number of schools and school districts have written and implemented attendance policies in an attempt to curb the rising truancy rate. Some of the more noteworthy plans are examined in the following paragraphs.

1. Cinnaminson High School Attendance Policy. In 1977, Cinnaminson High School faced a major attendance problem. A committee of high school administrators and staff members reviewed the problem and concluded that, as a result of time, neglect, and lack of attention

the entire framework of responsibility for attendance had shifted unwittingly from pupil and parents to the institution. No longer was it the responsibility of the student to attend class but the schools responsibility to pressure or cajole the student to comply with legal requirements (Byrne, 1981, p. 30).

To remedy this situation, the committee recommended discarding conventional procedures (including parent notes,

discipline, or even dragnets in the community) and establishing a system of firm limits regarding absences in each class. The following system was adopted by the committee and later the school board adopted the following policy regarding absences (Byrne, 1981):

- a. Students were given a limit of 12 absences for each full year.
- b. Students were allowed six absences for a semester course.
- c. Students were allowed three absences for a quarter course.
- d. Once a student exceeded those limits, he/she would be placed on noncredit status. As a result, the student could pass a class but not receive credit toward graduation.
- e. Only absences that were illegitimate or occurred without parental knowledge and consent were counted as a truancy.
- f. The policy also called for personal conferences with both students and parents to combat excessive absenteeism.

The committee cited many reasons for the success of the new policy:

- a. In addressing the problem of truancy, the policy made attending class a priority and placed responsibility with the student.
- b. The attendance policy had implications for instruction. The idea that instructional standards must match attendance standards was clear from the start.

- c. The success of the program depended on personal interaction and good faith among administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

In summary, the Cinnaminson High School staff felt that the policy was a unified effort among administrators, teachers, parents, and students to stop the rise of student absenteeism. The policy has been successful in reducing the truancy rate.

2. Benjamin Franklin High School Attendance Model. Benjamin Franklin High School in New York City organized a cluster program for ninth graders (Stearn, 1981). The purpose of the program was to examine whether the collective efforts of many staff members could start these pupils off on a successful high school career. "Groups of 120 children were assigned five teachers and a guidance counselor, and, in addition, a psychologist was asked to help children with acute problems" (p. 308). Although the high school has not yet seen significant results, the staff is still encouraged and interested in the program.

3. Adrian High School Attendance System. Adrian High School in Adrian, Michigan, had an average daily absentee rate of 12%; at times it reaches 15% (McNitt, 1983). The high school proposed an attendance policy that would limit the number of absences a student would be allowed each semester. Unlike the program at Cinnaminson High School, the Adrian School System developed a process by which

students who exceeded the allowed number of absences could retain credit status (McNitt, 1983). Students could make up the missed hours in an after-school or Saturday work program. At the end of the first semester, the average daily attendance percentage dropped 7.5%.

4. Community High School Attendance Policy. When the student attendance rate dropped to 87% in 1974, educators at Community High School in West Chicago, Illinois, felt that good student attendance must be a priority (Dufour, 1983). The following procedures helped to make that goal a reality:

- a. Daily calls were made on all absent students.
- b. Inevitable disciplinary consequences. Students who missed class would be disciplined.
- c. Incentives for good attendance. Students with no unexcused absences could advance along a continuum of privileges as they progressed through school.
- d. Charting student attendance. The charts provide a graphic presentation of a student's pattern of absences. School personnel could identify students who were chronically missing from particular classes.
- e. Coordinated efforts. Weekly staff meetings were held with guidance counselors, attendance clerks, deans, and everyone involved in the effort to increase attendance.

The Community High School program has been highly successful. By 1983, the rate of attendance at the school had risen to 97%. The system has not only received increased state aid and had a positive effect on the overall school climate, but, most important, increased attendance has improved student achievement. Community High School educators believe that if students attend class, they have a better chance to learn (Defour, 1983).

5. Kane County Truancy Prevention Program. To curb the rise in truancy, Kane County Educational Services in northern Illinois established the Kane County Truancy Prevention Program. After seeing the district's attendance rates fall an average of .1% each year for ten years, Dr. Douglas Hoeft, who heads the truancy program, stated, "the program uses a coordinated system approach to help students who accumulate excessive absences" (pg. 1). The program involves the coordinated efforts of individuals at four levels of service: the local school, the regional truancy prevention office, an adult family counselor, and court services. At the local level, the administrators and staff of each school are asked to pursue a number of options before referring a student to the truancy prevention program. Such options include the following:
- a. Hold a conference on the child
 - b. Contact the parents
 - c. Hold a building conference with the parents

- d. Assign a social worker to the case. If the student continues to be truant, a letter is sent to the Regional Truancy Prevention Office.

When the Truancy Office receives notification from the school, three actions take place:

- a. A youth outreach worker contacts the truant student and talks with the child to discover the cause of the truancy. A plan is then created to solve the problem.
- b. A strongly worded legal notice is sent to the parents of the truant student, warning them that if the child does not attend school regularly, legal action will be initiated.
- c. An adult family counselor is assigned as a resource person to direct the parent to appropriate community resources.

If the preceding actions do not stop the student's truancy, a conference is scheduled in the Project Office in the courthouse. The conference is attended by the truant, his parents, a school official, and the Project staff. The conference is led by Dr. Hoeft and is an aggressive discussion of why the student is not attending class. During the conference, the full extent of the law is explained, and reasons for continual truancy are explored. A contract is drawn which requires each party to take action to stop the student's attendance problem. At the end of the conference, the parents are served with a formal legal notice.

If all of the above options have been tried and the student still continues to be truant, a court referral is made. Because of the number of hours and effort spent by the school and the truancy program, there is a substantial amount of information to use in the prosecution. In such cases, parents have been fined from \$25 to \$500 and have been given jail sentences of up to 30 days.

In summary, since the Kane County Truancy Prevention program was first initiated, attendance in the Kane County Educational Service Regional districts has increased each year. "Not only has the Regional decrease of .10 percent every year stopped, but the attendance percentage in each school has increased" (Hoeft, 1984, pg. 13.).

6. Malden High School Attendance Program. Student attendance became a major concern at Malden High School in Malden, Massachusetts, when the school reported 42,097 student absences for the 1976-1977 school year (Malbon, 1980). According to Lee Malbon, school principal, the three and four day school week was becoming common among students who felt no sense of involvement in or commitment to their own education.

In an attempt to improve school attendance, the Malden Community Schools Board of Education endorsed a policy that placed responsibility for school attendance on students and their parents. The following program was implemented for the 1978-1979 school year.

- a. Students will receive a mandatory failing grade of E on the seventh unexcused absence.
- b. Excused absences do not count toward the six allowed absences per quarter period.
- c. The school will notify the parents of truants on the third, sixth, and seventh absences.
- d. Students are given an opportunity to appeal to a review board for exceptions to the attendance policy. The review board comprises an administrator, a teacher, a counselor, a student, and a parent.

A 3.7% increase in attendance for the entire student body of 2,100 students (from 87.4% in 1976 to 91.1% in 1978) was attributed to the new attendance policy.

7. Other School Attendance Policies. Other school systems are also fighting the problem of truancy (Sewall, Sherman & Lee, 1979). In Baltimore, the truancy rate is far below that of most cities. It maintains an aggressive anti-truancy staff, and its policemen stop children on the street to ask why they are not in school. The city also takes parents to court if their children skip school.

After a 1978 report revealed that truants cost Oakland, California, millions of dollars in vandalism and led to shocking rates of juvenile crime, the city cracked down in high-truancy areas

(Sewall, Sherman & Lee, 1979). Now a doubled attendance staff, working in two shifts from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., checks all absences by telephone and makes frequent home visits.

Another type of effort is being implemented by many high schools in New York City (Dougherty, March, 1983). To reduce the amount of truancy, (75,000 students daily), a Truancy Patrol Task Force was established in January 1981 as a pilot program in one of New York City's boroughs. The program entails three parts: apprehension, identification, and referral (Dougherty, 1983).

The police apprehend the truant on the street and bring him or her to a processing center where the truant is identified by the police and the attendance teacher. The teacher will then follow up with a conference with the parents. The truant's name is referred to both school and the attendance teacher assigned to that school as well as to the youth officer in the precinct in which the student resides. (p. 119)

New York City officials believe the program has been very successful, and the schools have benefited in many ways. The system has improved the relationship between police officers and students, tardiness has decreased drastically, the number of intruders has decreased, and, most important, truancy has dropped 5%.

Marriage and Pregnancy

Between 1979 and 1982, 2.7 million young women left American high schools without graduating: 1 million girls did so for family reasons, 45% left because they were pregnant, 37% because they got

married, and 18% because of home responsibilities, especially care of siblings (Mann, 1985). Although most states require young people to attend school until they are at least 16, marriage and pregnancy seem to undermine the attendance laws (Everhart, 1978). There are very few overt exclusionary policies, but according to a study conducted by the Children's Defense Fund (1974), the school personnel rarely support the idea of married and pregnant girls staying in school (Children's Defense Fund, 1974).

The following quotations from interviews demonstrate the feelings of school personnel regarding married high school students (Children's Defense Fund, 1974):

"We prefer that married students don't attend. This is a district wide policy. I don't know why" (interview with Tom Allen, Principal, Horace Mann Junior High School, Denver, Colorado, 11/6/73).

"There's no policy on married students except the girls have to maintain their maiden names until they graduate for our record keeping" (interview with Edwin C. Riddle, Superintendent of Schools, Autauga County, Alabama, 2/74).

"In Prestonsburg, Kentucky, there is a local rule which prohibits married students from participating in the Neighborhood Youth Corps In School Program" (interview with Estell Hall, Devita

Neighborhood Youth Corps In School Program, Prestonsburg, Kentucky, 1/24/74).

Policies affecting pregnant girls are also left up to the local school district (Children's Defense Fund, 1974). Many schools do, in fact, discourage pregnant students from continuing their education. The Children's Defense Fund on truancy cited the reasons most commonly given by school officials for excluding pregnant girls:

1. The need to protect her physical condition. (She cannot endure the "rough and tumble of school." She will "tire easily." "There are too many stairs to climb." "Her condition will result in her being sick in school.")
2. The need to protect her mental condition. ("She will be ridiculed, scorned, and embarrassed by her classmates." "She will be happier in some alternative program.")
3. The need to protect other students from the "bad" influence of pregnant girls and the unwillingness to appear to condone premarital intercourse. ("I have to think of the other children." "We have an obligation to other children." "They are here for reading and writing, not sex education." "We would get calls from the other parents and reflect the feelings of our parents in the community.")

4. The need to maintain an orderly environment. ("The class can't function normally." "When girls are thirteen they won't do any work if someone is showing wedding pictures.")
5. The school's lack of facilities for day care and flexible scheduling.

The court system has made its position very clear concerning whether pregnant school-age girls may remain in a regular classroom. In the case of *Ordway v. Hargraves* (d. Mass. 1972) the courts ruled that the dangers in attending school are no worse for a pregnant student than for a nonpregnant girl (Children's Defense Fund, 1974, p. 69). In *Perry v. Grenads* (d. Mississippi, 1970), the courts ruled that "excluding a pregnant girl can affect her adversely by contributing to depression, isolation, and possible denial of prenatal medical care and counseling through fear of exposing her condition (Children's Defense Fund, 1974, p. 69). In an article entitled, "A Dilemma for School Boards: Employees Who Are Unwed Parents, Horton (1983) summarized court decisions holding that school systems cannot dismiss an unwed parent based on the assumption of immorality or because the individual is seen as an "unfit" role model for students.

Regarding pregnant girls' need to complete their education, the Office of Civil Rights stated,

Pregnant school-aged parents need to complete their education as much as other students. If they are forced out, the

consequences to themselves and their children (two generations of children ill-equipped for full participation in society) are a tremendous cost to bear (Children's Defense Fund, 1974, p. 71).

The American School Board Journal warned school officials to "think twice about admitting--much less trying to prove--that one pregnant girl makes a shamble out of education in their school district" (in Brown, 1983 p. 24).

In an article entitled "Addressing Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood," Greene (1984) explained that pregnant students and those who are already parents have the same legal rights to public education as do all other students. To meet this responsibility and to lower dropout rates, schools need to make educational opportunities available to pregnant students.

School Suspensions and Expulsions

Each year thousands of students are suspended or expelled for a wide range of disciplinary reasons (Children's Defense Fund, 1974). In 1972-73, the Office of Civil Rights analyzed suspension data from five states (Arkansas, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, and South Carolina) and found that 152,904 children had been suspended at least once for more than 575,000 school days or 3,200 school years. This means that approximately 1 out of every 20 school-age children was suspended (Children's Defense Fund, 1974, p.125). The

statistics are similar to those of many schools that use suspension as a disciplinary option (Children's Defense Fund).

Many school administrators feel that options other than suspension and expulsion should be used in handling disciplinary problems. In fact, many schools use suspension and expulsion as a last measure in handling difficult students (Children's Defense Fund, 1974). To reduce disciplinary and dropout problems, the Office of Civil Rights has offered the following recommendations (Children's Defense Fund, 1974, p. 147):

1. School board members and administrators should immediately examine their disciplinary exclusion policies and apply them only to those offenses involving violence against person and property.
2. Removing a student from the educational setting should be done as a last resort. Such disciplinary options as school counseling, psychiatric diagnosis, conference with child and parent, and placement in alternative classes should be pursued before school personnel consider suspension or expulsion.
3. Diverse curricula and modes of teaching must be adopted. Schools must attempt to provide an interesting and flexible curriculum and teaching approaches to meet human variations.

4. Schools of education and professional associations should provide teacher inservice programs on handling children with discipline problems.

The Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency suggested the following options to reduce the number of disciplinary problems, thus reducing the need to suspend or expel students from school (Children's Defense Fund, 1974, p. 140):

1. Community education and optional alternative education programs
2. Curriculum reform
3. Police/school/community liaison arrangements
4. Inservice and preservice teacher preparation courses
5. Counseling and guidance strategies
6. Student and parental-involvement programs
7. Creative alternatives to suspensions

The other side of the suspension issue is that a significant and growing number of schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas are experiencing serious levels of violence and vandalism, and school officials believe suspension is necessary to secure order within the school (Thistle, 1974). Owen Kiernan, former executive secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals Association, stated,

Ten years ago, in the the secondary schools of this nation, violence and vandalism were remote problems. Occasionally we would have a so-called "blackboard jungle school" but this was quite unique. This is no longer the case. (in Bayh, 1978, p. 299)

James Harris, former president of the National Education Association expressed the following concern, "Incidents of physical assault have increased dramatically; vandalism and destruction of property are even more awesome" (in Bayh, 1978, p. 300).

Employment

Many students want to work rather than attend school; however, the statutory exemption from compulsory school attendance applies only to children who must work for their family's survival (Children's Defense Fund, 1974). In his book, Chasing the American Dream, Mann (1985) cited work-related reasons for 21% of the boys and 9% of the girls dropping out of school. Being employed poses a major problem for young people who are already at risk. With limited time and energy, school work suffers. Barro (1984) wrote, "Both males and females are more likely to drop out if they work longer hours." Up to 14 hours of employment a week, has little effect, but working 15 to 21 hours a week increases the risk of attrition by 100% (in Mann, 1985). Further, when a family's financial pressures convince a child to quit school, schools should be flexible enough to provide services in ways that enable children

to continue their education. Work opportunities and education should not be mutually exclusive (Jencks et al., 1972).

Low Intelligence Quotient

Cervantes (1965) and Schreiber (1967) stated that educators believe continuation in school is a question of IQ and family income. Cervantes, however, stated that: "A low IQ is the intellectual milieu of the dropout but is by no means a determinant that a youth will drop out.

Findings of the Cervantes and Schreiber studies have been buttressed by those of several national studies, which indicated that there is an overlapping of basic intellectual capacities between the dropout and the graduate: A United States Department of Labor study of 22,000 dropouts found that 54% of them had an average IQ of 90 to 110 or better. The study also showed that youths who had IQs below this level were twice as prone to drop out as their more gifted teenage peers, but at every level there was heavy overlapping (Cervantes, 1965).

In 1955, The National Science Foundation gave an academic aptitude test to a sample of 9,700 high school sophomores (Cervantes, 1965). In the fall of 1957, the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey, determined which of those 9,700 high school youths had graduated and which had dropped out of school (Cervantes, 1965). Nine out of ten of the most able third had

graduated, eight out of ten of the middle third had graduated, and seven out of ten of the lowest third had graduated. Not only did the test make clear that there was a notable overlapping of intellectual capacities between dropouts and graduates, but it confirmed that IQ was by no means the decisive factor in whether or not a teenager continued his high school education to graduation (Cervantes, 1965).

Likewise, Beck and Muia (1980) stated, "Although dropouts have evidenced a great deal of difficulty with school work, the stereotype of the dropout as an incapable, low IQ juvenile is simply inaccurate" (p.17).

Low Financial Status

When addressing the question of whether youths drop out of school because of a lack of money, one is faced with an apparent contradiction in the evidence (Cervantes, 1965). Ginzberg stated, "Poverty is the condition of the dropout, but inability to pay for his education is not the reason why the dropout withdraws" (in Schreiber, 1967, p. 126). A high percentage of students from the wealthy class graduates from high school, and one out of two of the very poor class finishes; yet, when Cervantes investigated the reasons why the very poor drop out of school, he found that it was not because there was not enough money to continue but because of other, less tangible, reasons.

Perhaps this phenomenon deserves further corroboration. Two researchers who considered the correlation between finances and education recognized the close relationship between lower income and lower academic attainment (Davie, 1976; Hollingshead, 1945). In the 1940's, Hollingshead conducted an extensive study of the importance of social class on adolescents. He found that all upper-class youths of high school age were in school. Similarly, a very small proportion of middle-class youths dropped out of high school. However, 64% of lower-class youths had dropped out of school before they were 16 years old (Cervantes, 1965).

During the late 1960s, Davie completed a study of 17-year-old dropouts. He found that the percentage of dropouts increased sharply with "each downward step" on the economic ladder. At the top rung, the upper-upper class, only 1 out of 50 youths failed to graduate from high school; on the second rung, the lower-upper class, 1 out of 10 failed to finish high school. The parents of children within the top two economic classes took it for granted that their children would attend college. In addition, parents often provided a special tutor to ensure their children's academic success. On the third rung, the upper-middle class, one out of six students failed to finish school. Parents in this class insisted, however, that their children finish high school and wanted their children to go on to college. On the fourth rung, the lower-middle and upper-lower class, one out of four youths failed to finish

school. The parents of teenagers in this class felt that high school should prepare their children for good jobs as semi-skilled workers. On the lowest rung, the lower class, one out of two students failed to finish formal schooling. The attitude of lower-class families toward education, and the conditions that contributed to their value judgment, were described by Davie as follows:

The parents of the children had generally received less than a high school education. Both parents worked in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs to earn enough to pay the rent for their cold-water flat and to keep the family fed. When the children were not "needed" at home they often left school in quest of a job. The one positive influence keeping them in school was the knowledge that more and more employers were asking for high school diplomas (in Cervantes, 1965, p. 97).

In 1969, George Mower, Director of Guidance of the St. Louis Public School System, studied the dropout problem in the metropolitan St. Louis area (Cervantes, 1965). He evaluated the reasons for withdrawal of every dropout from the public school system between September 1960 and September 1961. Mower found that of the 2,579 youths who had left school, only 3% had withdrawn because of financial need.

In "Dropouts: A Political Problem, Miller (1967) stated,

Contrary to popular beliefs, dropouts are not exclusively from the working class, or lower economic families. In Syracuse, New York, for example, thirty percent of the parents of dropouts were in white collar occupations. Similarly, the ecological distribution of Syracuse male dropouts shows that at least one fifth come from fair neighborhoods. (p. 185)

Miller also acknowledged that, of low-income youths, as many as 60% do graduate from high school. Thus, not all dropouts are from low-income families, nor do all low-income youths become dropouts.

Low Reading Ability

Many researchers (Cervantes, 1965; Conant, 1961; Deutsch, 1967; Schreiber, 1967) felt that a more important issue to examine than that of finance and IQ is the dropout's low reading ability. Cervantes' report revealed that 80% of the dropouts studied were reading one or more years below grade level. Cervantes also acknowledged that the dropout regularly needed assistance in answering questions on questionnaires. In addition, when Cervantes administered the Thematic Apperception Test, the stories and themes invented by dropouts were less than half as long as those of graduates: "Their ability to express themselves was clearly inferior."

In summary, the inability of students to read well enough to do grade-level assignments caused Cervantes to conclude that:

1. Teenagers who do not read well enough for the work of their grade are likely to fail, and to feel frustrated and discouraged.

2. The lack of verbal skills and communication abilities pointed to deficiencies in their home environment.

PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

A trait that many dropouts and truants share is their inability to identify with the school (Cervantes, 1965; Massey & Crosby, 1979; Springstead, 1981). Various researchers have found that it is characteristic of lower-class students not to participate in school activities as much as do upper-class youths; however, dropouts seemed to have utterly no ties to the school (Beck & Mura, 1980; Cervantes, 1965; Mahan & Johnson, 1983). Cervantes found that not one person who dropped out of high school before the third year had engaged in even one activity. Of those who had finished the third year, 89% had engaged in extracurricular activities.

In a study of dropouts in the Leyden School District in Franklin Park, Illinois, Mahan and Johnson (1983) found that, in general, dropouts did not have a feeling of belonging to the high school. Of the 155 dropouts contacted, none have been involved in extracurricular activities. Mahan stated,

the dropouts lost interest in school and believed that school personnel had lost interest in them. Dropouts were usually far behind in classwork and believed a job could be more relevant. They usually were not involved in a school program. (pg. 81)

Beck and Muia (1981) supported Mahon by stating in their study that "the majority of dropouts enjoy only an extracurricular aspect of school or enjoy nothing about school at all."

Participation in any school activity is a very important part of one's school experience (Cervantes, 1965; Conant, 1961; Howard, 1978). Activities can provide youths with a role, identification, comradeship, support for academic orientation, a sense of accomplishment, a chance for self-development and recognition (Cervantes, 1965). Cervantes stated, "Insofar as a youth becomes a participant rather than a detached observer, he becomes emotionally committed and he feels he belongs" (p. 103). An activity that would seem to be of interest to many dropouts is organized competitive sports. However, what is entertaining and of interest to millions of young people is totally uninteresting to most dropouts. Usually, dropouts do not want to be involved in group activities in which their inability to perform as well as others might be exposed. Cervantes stated,

Dropouts, on the whole, are not geared for competitive sports. Organized sports imply control, discipline, team play and being at a certain place at a certain time, in a certain costume, with definite equipment to abide by rules in strict team play and where you can still come off the loser--that's not for the dropout (p. 81).

FAMILY AND THE DROPOUT

For many years, educators have been saying that the home does much more educating, for better or worse, than the school can do in six hours a day, five days a week, with three months off for a vacation spent in the "summer school of the streets" (Schreiber, 1967). Researchers have found with high levels of significance that the family is of maximum importance in the development or lack of development of youth (Cervantes, 1965; Conant, 1961; Jencks, 1972; Mahan & Johnson, 1983.) Therefore, it is important that educators consider the family unit in their plans for the development and direction of the young people considered to be potential dropouts.

In Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America, Jencks et al. (1972) stated that the most important determinant of educational attainment is family background. The influence of family background can be accounted for partly by measurable economic differences between families, as well as and by more elusive noneconomic differences.

Tyerman (1968), a child psychologist, stated, "Few truants and dropouts receive either affection or training. Those who do come from families where there is love and discipline rarely play truancy for long or drop out of school." (p. 75) As many as three-fourth of the truants Tyerman studied were denied parental affection. In a similar study, Weisman (1978) concluded that

Children who do not have the benefit of a single, sustained contact with a loving parent for at least the first three years of their lives will, depending on the degree of deprivation, manifest a diminished capacity to love others, impaired intellectual powers and an inability to control their impulses, particularly in the area of aggression (in Brown, 1983, p. 226).

In the Leyden High School study of dropouts, Mahan and Johnson (1983) also identified the family background as a key determinant of whether students would drop out of school. Cervantes' (1965), too, devoted considerable attention to the relationship between the dropout and his family. Much of his information related to the following four areas: (1) feelings of acceptance, (2) communication within the family, (3) confiding in the family, and (4) happiness within the home. Each of these areas will be briefly discussed.

Four out of five dropouts (79%) judged themselves as understanding and accepting their families very little, whereas four out of five graduates (82%) judged themselves as understanding and accepting their families very much. Cervantes found that dropouts felt their parents pushed too much by pressuring and nagging them. When a student is doing poorly at school, both he and his parents become very sensitive and vulnerable; consequently, both parties adjust to the situation by building various defensive and offensive techniques that inevitably prove exacerbating.

Cervantes (1965) also noted the importance of communication within the home. Social scientists have long believed that frequent

communication within the family group is important because the expression of one's feelings and beliefs tends to influence the feelings and beliefs of other family members. Although the frequent of communication does not guarantee agreement, it does facilitate and encourage it. Differences between dropouts and graduates in terms of intrafamily communication are evident from the following percentile distributions: Eighty-one percent of the dropouts received their life's orientation in a family of inadequate intercommunication. Eighty percent of the graduates received their basic orientation in a nuclear family of at least adequate intercommunication.

On the issue of confiding within the family, the emotional climate of dropouts' has been found to be decisively different "cooler" than that of the graduates' homes (Cervantes, 1965). The emotional climate within the home is so disagreeable that the potential dropout feels there is not one family person in whom he can confide, whom he enjoys during leisure, and who he feels understands and accepts him. And, as Cervantes noted,

Confiding is a very important characteristic of a primary relationship. When a family reaches the fullness of communication, family members feel free to confide in another. If one does not feel free to confide in another as with the case of the dropout, the door to spontaneous interchange and development has been blocked. (p. 145)

Cervantes also examined happiness within the home as another possible factor influencing attrition. The hypothesis that dropouts would report their homes to be less happy than would the general student population was validated at the .001 level of confidence. Cervantes found that the typical dropout's home was unhappy or indifferent 87% of the time. The graduate's home was happy 48% of the time. The difference in the home climates of dropouts as compared with graduates was dramatic. Unhappiness was the characteristic of the former group; happiness that of the latter.

Conant (1961) conducted an extensive examination of families of dropouts. He identified the following family characteristics of dropouts:

1. Constant change of dwelling: In many inner-city schools, the composition of the classroom changes so rapidly that a teacher will find at the end of the school year that she is teaching but few of the students who started with her in the fall.
2. No male figure: In many large inner-city school districts, one-third of the students come from family units that have no male parent or guardian.
3. Low parent education: Conant found that only 10% of the parents of students in a large-inner city school had

graduated from high school, and only 33% had completed elementary schooling.

4. Parents: In the same study, the parents of at least one third of the children were either in penal institutions, on probation, or had prison records. "In such an environment all forms of evil flourish - the peddling of dope, drunkenness, disease, accidents, physical, mental and moral handicaps, sex perversions involving children. . . ". (page 63)

Considering the information Conant compiled, it seems that inner-city children have enough to worry about simply in terms of survival, let alone trying to obtain an education.

THE DROPOUT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Introduction

Job market potential for the high school dropout is very poor (Conant, 1961; Jencks et al., 1972; Schreiber, 1967). At present, the high school dropout can expect to earn less than the graduate, experience unemployment more often, and, when employed, work in a

lower skill category (Conant, 1961; Ginzberg, 1967; Jencks et al., 1972; Miller, 1967; Schreiber, 1967; Toffler, 1968; Williams, 1982).

This segment contains a discussion of the general topic of employment for the dropout. It focuses on the following information:

1. The difficulty of finding employment
2. Work-experience programs at the high school level
3. An employer's point of view about employing the dropout

The Difficulty Of Finding Employment.

School dropouts encounter great difficulty in finding employment (Jencks, 1972; Miller, 1967; Toffler, 1968.) Schreiber (1967) found seven barriers to dropouts' gaining work experience.

1. Their age, usually 16 years, operates against them.
2. Those with little education have more difficulty finding jobs. There is abundant evidence that employers prefer workers with more education to workers with less schooling.
3. There is a surplus of unskilled workers in the labor market.
4. The cost of machinery and plant equipment has risen steadily in the past decade, and employers are very hesitant to allow young dropouts to operate costly equipment.
5. Many dropouts lack the accepted employability credentials.

6. Many dropouts often have a court or police record, which reduces their chances of being hired.
7. The dropout lacks the basic work skills necessary to perform adequately on the job.

In Profile of the School Dropout, Miller (1967) gave four reasons why the outlook for the dropout is very dim: (1) an unorganized, inefficient labor market prevails, (2) technological change, (3) economic growth is limited, and (4) the push from the rural communities to the large cities. Miller (1967) further stated that

There is no clear way of obtaining jobs today because a rational procedure for making jobs available does not exist. Yet work is still a hallmark of adulthood, and if work experience cannot be obtained, the schools must offer it. (p. 19)

He emphasized that work is a basic ingredient of any society. If a person is unemployed, he is thought of as performing no function for society. Miller says, "at best his relations with others are marginal, at worst, he becomes alienated from them."

Work Experience Programs at the High School Level

Because work is paramount for personal growth and maturity, Miller asserted that work-experience programs must be available to potential dropouts for the following reasons:

1. Work experience gives direct and indirect satisfaction to maladjusted youths' which reduces the likelihood of delinquent activities on their part.
2. Work experience can prevent serious delinquent behavior.
3. Work experience can rehabilitate the maladjusted.

If Miller's first statement is true, it is critical that schools start work-experience programs early.

A study in Minneapolis by the Health and Welfare Council (in Schreiber, 1967) showed that 31% of the male contacts with the Crime Prevention Bureau occurred by age 13, and 24% of the female contacts took place by that age. As a response, the Minneapolis Health and Welfare Council, affirmed the necessity of starting a work-experience program as early as the sixth or seventh grade. Various writers have asserted that work-experience programs should be an important part of any school program. (Conant, 1961; Jencks, 1972; McMahon, 1972; Schrieber, 1967). In many cases, work-experience programs provide a second chance for maladjusted, alienated youths to become part of the mainstream of America's work force. According to Schreiber (1967), successful school work-experience programs share the following characteristics:

1. They encourage and permit alienated youths to improve their self images and self-concepts.
2. They enable youths to learn and exercise self discipline and to develop proper work habits and work attitudes.

3. They enable youths to attain at least minimum levels of education and marketable work skills.
4. They offer alienated youths opportunities to relate with and to other persons and encourage them to do so.
5. They give the individual direct and indirect satisfaction in knowing that he can both undertake and complete a job satisfactorily.

Sean Sullivan, who wrote a chapter on youths in the book Meeting Human Needs, suggested three areas that should be pursued to help train and employ young people:

1. Greater involvement of private employers
2. Encouragement of schools to adopt school work programs
3. Additional help from the federal government for the employment and training of disadvantaged young people .

An Employer's Point of View About Employing the Dropout

The Pinellas County (Florida) Public School Superintendent stated that, "trends among most employers show that students who do not have a high school diploma usually have a difficult time finding a job." In other words, today's job market requires a high school diploma. Mrytle Hunt, employment administrator for the Pinellas County School System, reaffirmed that there are three reasons why dropouts generally have a difficult time finding employment:

1. Employers believe someone who stuck it out and earned their diploma has something on the person who quit school.
2. Many jobs, especially clerical ones, require an aptitude test, and dropouts generally do not test well.
3. Dropouts face competition from unemployed adults.

Ms. Hunt stated that employing dropouts is a growing concern in the labor market and for economic growth.

CHAPTER III

Introduction

This chapter contains a discussion of the methodology used in this dropout-prediction study. The type of research is explained, and the population and sample are described. Then the hypotheses are stated in the null form, followed by a description of the dependent variables examined in the study. Finally, data collection procedures and statistical techniques used in analyzing the data are explained.

Type of Research

Because the variables in this investigation were correlated with "the dropout" and direct control was not possible, the type of research used in this study was ex post facto. Kerlinger (1979) defined ex post facto research as

systematic empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulable. Inferences about relations among variables are made, without direct intervention, from concomitant variation of independent and dependent variables. (p. 265)

Population/Sample

The research population comprised all 16-, 17-, and 18-year-old students at Larkin High School in Elgin, Illinois. Larkin is a

four year high school in the suburb of a major midwestern metropolitan area and has experienced a 3% enrollment increase over the past three years. Larkin High School currently has an enrollment of 2,031 students. Other pertinent information regarding the population is as follows:

1. Larkin High School has a total enrollment of 1,019 female and 1,012 male students.
2. Five percent of the student body receives special education services. This includes learning disabled students, and educable mentally handicapped students, and those with behavioral disorders.
3. The ethnic/racial composition of the school is as follows:
 - Caucasian-American.....1,750 students (86%)
 - Afro-American..... 127 students (6%)
 - Spanish-American..... 149 students (7%)
 - Oriental-American..... 3 students (.001%)
 - Other 2 students (.005%)
4. Nine percent of the students at Larkin High School receive some form of financial aid from the federal and state governments. Students may receive financial assistance for payment of fees and lunches.
5. The number of dropouts has increased in the past three years. The statistics are as follows:

-1984-1985 128

-1983-1984..... 118

-1982-1983..... 105

6. The average daily attendance rate at Larkin High School for the past four years was:

-1984-1985..... 93.1 %

-1983-1984..... 93.28 %

-1982-1983..... 94.71 %

-1981-1982..... 95.06 %

7. The total number of in-school suspension days for the past three years was:

-1984-1985..... 1,709

-1983-1984..... 1,839

-1982-1983..... 883

8. The total number of outside school suspension days for the past three years was:

-1984-1985..... 507

-1983-1984..... 470

-1982-1983..... 314

9. The mean scores for students taking the ACT test in the past five years were:

-1984-1985..... 20.3

-1983-1984..... 19.9

-1982-1983..... 19.4

-1981-1982..... 18.7

-1980-1981..... 18.2

10. Forty-two percent of all Larkin High School students participated in one or more extracurricular activities.

In this study, two groups were considered: The first group was a random sample of Larkin High School students who dropped out of school for any reason other than illness or transfer. The number of young people in this group was 95. The researcher took the following steps to secure the random sample of dropouts.

1. When students drop out of school, they must go through a de-enrollment process. In 1984-1985, therefore, the names of the 128 dropouts were entered on a drop list. Each was assigned a number from 1 to 128.
2. A simple randomized program was written on an Apple computer; this provided 95 numbers.
3. The researcher then proceeded to take the dropout list and randomly selected the 95 youths who would constitute the dropout group.

The second group comprised a random sample of 95 students, 16 years or older, who were continuing to pursue a high school education. The following process was used to select this sample.

1. The researcher received a print out sheet of all Larkin High School students 16 years and older, arranged by ID number. Larkin High School ID numbers are not assigned according to any type of alphabetical pattern.
2. The Larkin High School Data Processing Department provided a list of 1,352 Larkin High School students 16 years or older. The cutoff birth date used was June 1, 1969.
3. The researcher then assigned each ID number a number between 1 and 1,352, beginning at the top of the list.
4. Once each ID listing was given a number, the researcher wrote a simple randomized program on an Apple computer, which yielded 95 numbers.
5. From the student list the researcher then selected the 95 students, by ID number, who would constitute the persister group.

The researcher was then ready to interview the two groups of students.

Hypotheses

1. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of extracurricular activities participated in.

2. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of behavior problems reported by school personnel.
3. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the percentage of incidence of truancy during the 1984-1985 school year.
4. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the incidence of absenteeism during elementary school.
5. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of elementary schools they attended.
6. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of court appearances due to delinquent referrals reported by the police.
7. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the consumption of controlled substances.
8. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward communication in their homes.

9. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward their family members' understanding of each other.
10. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward family members' acceptance of each other.
11. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the average number of years of formal education received by their mothers and fathers.
12. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of mothers' employment outside the home.
13. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the incidence of broken homes.
14. Larkin High School persisters will not score significantly different from dropouts on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills in Reading (CTBS).
15. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of meals eaten together as a family

16. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward the difficulty of their classes.
17. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the incidence of preschool education.
18. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward the quality of education offered at Larkin High School.
19. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward education in general.
20. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of feelings (likes and dislikes) about Larkin High School activities.
21. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the frequency of church attendance .
22. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of total family income.
23. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of employment (part or full time).

Dependent and Independent Variables

The dependent variable was the 95 students who had dropped out of Larkin High School for any reason other than illness or transfer during the 1984-1985 school year. The independent variables were the selected characteristics whose possible relationship to attrition was examined.

Data-Collection Procedures

The Interview

A personal interview was used to gather the data needed to test the hypotheses. The researcher interviewed the 175 students (88 school persisters and 87 dropouts) involved in this study. (Fifteen of the original 190 students elected not to participate in the study.) Each person was contacted, and an interview time was set. The first interview of the day generally started at 3:30 p.m., and the last interview ended at approximately 6:30 p.m. The student always sat next to the interviewer, who wrote the answers on the interview form.

Seventy-nine percent of the dropout interviews were held in the resource center at Larkin High School, which provided a quiet and relaxed atmosphere. The remaining 21% of the interviews were held at the dropouts' homes. All of the persister interviews were held in the resource center. The researcher experienced many problems when the interview took place in the home. For example, on numerous

occasions, an appointment was made but no one was home when the interviewer arrived. The one advantage, however, in conducting the interview at the home was the availability of parents to confirm many of the answers given by dropouts.

The average persister interview lasted 18 minutes. The longest persister interview was 29 minutes, and the shortest was ten minutes.

The average dropout interview lasted 25 minutes. The longest dropout interview was 45 minutes, and the shortest was ten minutes. Dropouts tended to elaborate more on their answers than did persisters. The researcher felt the dropouts enjoyed sharing information.

Reliability of the Interview

Kerlinger (1979) stated, "If one does not know the reliability of one's data, little faith can be put in the results obtained and the conclusions drawn from the results." (p. 84) Therefore, much time and effort were spent constructing each interview question. Ideas for questions to include in the interview were derived from three sources.

1. Review of studies that have identified key information about dropouts.
2. Interviews with school staff members who work daily with truancy and dropout problems.

3. Interviews with elementary principals and teachers, who can sometimes identify early characteristics of potential dropouts.

After assembling the many ideas related to the dropout problem, interview questions were constructed on six major topics:

1. Juvenile Delinquency and the Dropout
2. The Family and the Dropout
3. Employment and the Dropout
4. The Dropout and his/her Peers
5. Information about the Self
6. School Experiences

Each of these topics is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Juvenile Delinquency and The Dropout. Recent studies have found that high dropout rates are directly related to increases in crime (Bayh, 1978; Brown, 1983; Cervantes, 1965). To confirm whether there is a relationship between delinquent behavior and attrition, the researcher examined the juvenile court records of every student in the sample. The researcher received a court order from Juvenile Court Judge Peter Mahoney allowing him to examine all Kane County Juvenile Court Records.

The Family and the Dropout. An article in U.S. News and World Report (1980) stated that "a major part of the blame for today's high dropout rate is being placed on the nation's rising

divorce rate and the resulting break-up of the family." (p. 64) Myra Sampson, Principal of Chicago's Community Alternative School, was quoted as saying, "One of the biggest causes of the dropout goes back to the family." (p. 64) Sociologists who have studied aspects of the dropout problem regard the nuclear family as an important influence to consider (in Cervantes, 1965). Questions regarding the dropout and his/her family focused on communication, happiness, understanding, and acceptance.

Employment and the Dropout. Many students work while attending high school, some because of economic necessity and others to obtain "extra spending money." It can also be said that the ability to secure and hold a job is very critical to every individual. Therefore, questions regarding employment were posed in the interviews to determine whether there is a relationship between employment/unemployment and attrition.

The Dropout and His Peers. Because the need for peer acceptance is very strong during adolescence (McGee, 1977), it is important for school administrators to focus attention on the relationship between the dropout and his/her peers.

Information Concerning the Self. A number of interview questions were posed to cause respondents to examine their values. These questions pertained to health and welfare, influence, and happiness.

School Experiences. Questions in this area are designed to elicit respondents' attitudes toward school.

To ensure that each question in the interview was worded properly, a preliminary check was made to locate ambiguities. In addition, the researcher pretested the interview questions with former Larkin High School students who had dropped out of school at least five years ago. After each interview question, the researcher asked the respondent to make comments regarding the clarity of the questions. Respondents considered many of the questions ambiguous; therefore, the researcher either eliminated the question or tried to improve its wording. Following the pretest, the researcher eliminated many of the initial questions. For example, one of the questions asked the respondent to "State the yearly income of your parents." In almost all cases, pretest respondents overestimated the family income. In some cases, they overestimated by more than \$20,000. This discrepancy between the actual and the estimated income caused the researcher to eliminate the question. Although the researcher still wanted to examine the relationship between income and attrition, he needed to find a better method to measure the variable. To solve this problem, he settled on the criteria established by the federal government for the free-lunch program. In addition, the researcher communicated with the parents of 10% of the sample to secure an accurate report of family incomes.

Another pretest strategy was to form a group of professional educators who were familiar with the construction of interview

questions and ask them to evaluate the interview questions for clarity. The following people helped with questionnaire construction:

1. Dr. Nancy Patek, Language Arts Director, School District U-46, Elgin, Illinois.
2. Dr. John Pennoyer, Director of Curriculum, LaGrange High School, LaGrange, Illinois
3. Dr. Hoi Suen, Northern Illinois University Special Projects Director, DeKalb, Illinois.
4. Dr. Peter Abrams, Professor of Research and Statistics at Northern Illinois University.
5. Dr. Douglas Hoeft, Assistant Superintendent of Kane County Educational Services, Geneva, Illinois.
6. James Dean, English Teacher, Larkin High School
7. Bernice H. Roome, English Teacher, Larkin High School

"Response consistency" appears to be a possible problem with the attitudinal questions. To construct each question as reliably as possible, the following reliability safeguards were implemented.

1. Whenever possible, the researcher used the following official documents: student disciplinary logs, student attendance records, C.T.B.S. test scores (reading), permanent school record card, and Kane County Juvenile Court records.

2. With the attitudinal questions, 20% of the sample was retested (test-retest) to check the consistency of their previous answers.
3. Many of the questions from the interview required communication with parents, teachers, and employers to check the reliability of answers..
4. Many of the related questions were combined when statistically measured. This should increase the level of reliability.

Data-Analysis Procedures

The researcher used a variety of descriptive statistics to analyze the data gathered in this study. The statistics included: means, ranges, t-test, and chi-square. To reject a null hypothesis, it was necessary to show a significant difference (at the alpha .05 level) between two variables. Chapter IV contains the results of the data analysis performed in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The statistical information presented in this chapter confirms the significant relationship between certain variables and attrition. It should be noted that the sizes of the two groups did not always remain constant because respondents were told they did not have to answer questions about which they were sensitive. In the following report of the results, each null hypothesis is restated, followed by the findings for that hypothesis.

1. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of extracurricular activities participated in.

Tables 1A and 1B present the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and attrition. Table 1A shows student participation in one activity, and Table 1B shows participation in more than one activity. The relationships shown in both Tables 1A and 1B were positive. The relationships in these tables were tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationships were significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical

significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of participation in extracurricular activities

TABLE 1A
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: ONE ACTIVITY

COUNT	1					
EXPECTED VALUE	1					
TOTAL PCT.	1	YES		NO		ROW TOTAL
PERSISTERS	1	62	1	27	1	89
	1	40.7	1	47.2	1	
	1	.70%	1	.30%	1	
DROPOUTS	1	19	1	68	1	87
	1	40.26	1	46.73	1	
	1	.22%	1	.78%	1	
COLUMN TOTALS		81		95		176
		46%		54%		

<u>CHI-SQUARE</u>	<u>DEGREES OF FREEDOM</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
41.58	1	<u>.0001</u>

TABLE 1B
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: MORE THAN ONE ACTIVITY

	YES			NO			
PERSISTERS	1	41	1	47	1	88	
	1	24.64	1	63.36	1		
	1	.47%	1	.53%	1		
DROPOUTS	1	8	1	79	1	87	
	1	24.36	1	62.64	1		
	1	.9%	1	.91%	1		
COLUMN TOTALS		49		126		175	
		28%		72%			

<u>CHI-SQUARE</u>	<u>DEGREES OF FREEDOM</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
30.34	1	.0001

The relationship between the degree of participation in extracurricular activities and attrition was highly significant. The finding of this study--that dropouts shared an inability to identify with the school--is consistent with the results of attrition studies (Cervantes, 1965; Jordan-Davis, 1984; Mahan, 1981; Prestholdt, 1983).

A message that was frequently heard in the dropout interviews was that the youth did not feel a part of or an identification with the school. The dropouts felt that they did not "belong." Of the 87 dropouts who were interviewed, 19 (22%) stated that they had participated in at least one extracurricular activity. Of those 19, 8 (9%) stated that they had participated in more than one such activity. The figures were significantly different from the persister sample. Of the 89 persisters who were interviewed, 62 (70%) had participated in at least one extracurricular activity. Of those 62 participants, 41 (47%) had participated in more than one such activity. The conclusion is obvious: Dropouts tend not to get involved in school activities.

2. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of behavior problems reported by school personnel.

Table 2 presents the relationship between school behavioral problems and attrition. The relationship shown in Table 2 was

positive. Each relationship in this table was tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Since the relationship was significant at the .0001 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of numbers of behavior problems.

TABLE 2
SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: TEN OR MORE POINTS ON A DISCIPLINARY LOG

COUNT EXPECTED VALUE ROW PCT.		YES		NO		ROW TOTAL	
PERSISTERS	1	14	1	74	1	88	
	1	43.74	1	44.25	1		
	1	16%	1	84%	1		
DROPOUTS	1	73	1	14	1	87	
	1	43.25	1	43.74	1		
	1	84%	1	16%	1		
COLUMN TOTALS		87		88		175	
		50%		50%			
CHI-SQUARE		DEGREES OF FREEDOM		SIGNIFICANCE			
80.91		1		.0001			

There was a statistical significant relationship between inappropriate behavior in school (measured by the number of behavioral referrals sent to the dean's office) and attrition. Of the 87 Larkin High School dropouts who were interviewed, 73 (83%) had what the dean's office would describe as a poor disciplinary record, which includes an accumulation of at least ten points on the

disciplinary log. Any time a student accumulates 18 or more disciplinary points, he/she faces the possibility of expulsion. Of the 73 dropouts who had a poor disciplinary record, 30 (34%) had accumulated 18 or more points. It should also be noted that the names of the 87 dropouts were given to the principals of Larkin feeder elementary schools. Principals remembered 39 of the dropouts as having had behavioral problems during elementary school. Incidence of early disciplinary problems can be an identifier of at-risk students. In comparison, of the 88 persisters in the sample, 16 had a poor disciplinary record, and only one had 18 or more disciplinary points.

3. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the percentage of incidence of truancy during the 1984-1985 school year.

Table 3 presents the relationship between school attendance and attrition. The relationship shown in Table 3 was positive. The relationship in this table was tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Since the relationship was significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of incidence of absenteeism.

TABLE 3**1984-1985 ATTENDANCE: STUDENTS WHO HAD 90% AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE**

COUNT	I		I		I	
EXPECTED VALUE	I		I		I	
ROW PCT.	I	YES		NO		ROW TOTAL
PERSISTERS	I	76	I	12	I	
	I	41	I	46.76	I	88
	I	86%	I	14%	I	
DROPOUTS	I	6	I	81	I	
	I	46.76	I	46.23	I	87
	I	7%	I	93%	I	
COLUMN TOTAL		82		93		175
		.47%		.53%		
CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM		SIGNIFICANCE			
110.94	1				.0001	

One characteristic of the potential dropout is his/her record of truancy (Tyerman, 1968; Cervantes, 1968; Hodge, 1968; Austin Independent School District, 1982). This study, as well as others, showed a significant relationship (at the .0001 level) between a history of truancy and attrition. The dropout sample (87 students) had an average of 67.93% school attendance during the 1984-85 school year. The persister sample (88 students) had an average of 93.06% school attendance during the same year.

4. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the incidence of absenteeism during elementary school.

Tables (4A through 4G) present the relationship between the number of elementary school absences and attrition. All of the relationships shown in Tables 4A through 4G were positive and ranged from .0000 to .033. The average relationship is .0007. Each relationship was tested for significance by means of a t-test. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of incidence of absenteeism during the elementary grades. Since the relationship was significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained.

TABLE 4A
NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT IN KINDERGARTEN

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	68	5.85	4.909	-4.36	125	.0001
DROPOUTS	59	11.91	10.193			

TABLE 4B
NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT IN FIRST GRADE

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	66	8.90	5.930	-3.69	128	.0001
DROPOUTS	64	13.92	9.257			

TABLE 4C
NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT IN SECOND GRADE

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	67	7.46	5.295			
				-3.29	131	0.0001
DROPOUTS	66	11.31	7.968			

TABLE 4D
NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT IN THIRD GRADE

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	71	7.26	5.014			
				-2.09	135	.038
DROPOUTS	66	9.43	7.032			

TABLE 4E
NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT IN FOURTH GRADE

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	71	7.12	5.23			
				-4.50	134	.0001
DROPOUTS	65	12.33	8.092			

TABLE 4F
NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT IN FIFTH GRADE

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	73	7.95	6.38			
				-2.68	142	.0008
DROPOUTS	71	11.21	8.07			

TABLE 4G
THE NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT IN SIXTH GRADE

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	71	7.14	5.21			
				-4.81	135	.0001
DROPOUTS	66	13.21	9.16			

The pattern of absenteeism is established during the elementary school years (Deutsch, 1967). This study demonstrated a significant relationship between attrition and the incidence of absenteeism during the elementary school years. Based on elementary school attendance records, this study substantiated that students who eventually became dropouts missed more days of school during the elementary grades than did persisters. Table 4H illustrates that difference.

TABLE 4H
DIFFERENCE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BETWEEN DROPOUTS AND PERSISTERS (IN DAYS ABSENT)

	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
DROPOUTS	11.9	13.9	11.3	9.4	12.3	11.2	13.2
PERSISTERS	5.8	8.9	7.4	7.2	7.1	7.9	7.1
DIFFERENCE IN DAYS							
	6.1	5	3.9	2.2	5.2	3.3	6.1

5. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of elementary schools they attended.

Table 5 shows the relationship between the number of elementary schools attended and attrition. The relationship in Table 5 was positive. The relationship in this table was tested for significance by means of a t-test. Since the relationship was significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of the number of elementary schools they had attended.

TABLE 5
NUMBER OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ATTENDED

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	80	1.42	.725			
				-6.26	154	.0001
DROPOUTS	76	2.48	.1.32			

One of the causes of truancy among elementary school students has been shown to be high mobility. Because truancy is considered a significant reason why many young people leave school, mobility--frequent changing of school--is a variable that needs to be examined. This study showed a significant relationship between the number of schools students attended during the elementary years

(high mobility) and attrition. The dropouts in this study attended an average of three schools during their elementary years, compared with an average of 1.2 schools attended by the persisters.

6. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of court appearances due to delinquent referrals reported by the police.

Table 6A shows the relationship between the number of court appearances and attrition. Table 6B presents the relationship between the number of court appearances of siblings and attrition. The relationships shown in Tables 6A and 6B were positive. The relationships in these tables were tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationships were significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of the number of court appearances due to delinquent referrals.

TABLE 6A**NUMBER OF COURT APPEARANCES DUE TO DELINQUENT REFERRALS.**

COUNT	1					
EXPECTED VALUE	1					
ROW PCT	1	YES		NO		ROW TOTAL
	1	4	1	84	1	
PERSISTERS	1	14.08	1	73.92	1	88
	1	.05%	1	.95%	1	
	1	24	1	63	1	
DROPOUTS	1	13.92	1	73.08	1	87
	1	.28%	1	.72%	1	
COLUMN TOTAL		31		148		179
		.17%		.83%		
CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	SIGNIFICANCE				
17.280	1	.0001				
(BEFORE YATES CORRECTION)						

TABLE 6B**NUMBER OF COURT APPEARANCES OF SIBLINGS DUE TO DELINQUENT REFERRALS**

	YES		NO		
	1	8	1	80	1
PERSISTERS	1	20.11	1	67.88	1
	1	.09%	1	91%	1
	1	32	1	55	1
DROPOUTS	1	19.88	1	67.11	1
	1	37%	1	63%	1
COLUMN TOTAL	40		135		175
	23%		77%		
CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	SIGNIFICANCE			
19.02	1	.0001			

There was a strong relationship between incidence of court appearances and attrition. Of the 87 dropouts who were

interviewed, 24 (27%) had experienced court involvement at least once. Of the 24 dropouts who had been involved in court action, 8 had been referred to the court system more than once. Three stated that they have been referred to court on three different charges. In contrast, of the 88 persisters who were interviewed, 8 students (4%) experienced court action. It should be noted that all of the above data were authenticated by Mike Daley, Director of Juvenile Court Services in Geneva, Illinois. The dropouts were taken to court for a wide range of reasons, including theft, possession/selling of controlled substances, robbery, minor assault, driving under the influence, truancy, disorderly conduct, and battery. The school persisters were taken to court for truancy, theft, and driving under the influence.

Another related finding was the high incidence of siblings of dropouts who had experienced court involvement. Thirty-two dropouts stated that a brother or sister had been referred to court because of improper behavior. In contrast, 8 persisters stated that siblings had been brought to court. The data, therefore, suggested that juvenile delinquency is a characteristic of dropouts.

7. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of consumption of controlled substances.

Table 7 presents the relationship between the consumption of controlled substances and attrition. It can be seen that the

relationship in Table 7 was positive. The relationship in this table was tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationship was significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of consumption of controlled substances.

TABLE 7A
USE OF DRUGS

COUNT	1					
EXPECTED VALUE	1					
ROW PCT.	1	YES		NO		ROW TOTAL

PERSISTERS	1	42	1	44	1	86
	1	56.8	1	29.2	1	
	1	48.8	1	51.2	1	

DROPOUTS	1	71	1	14	1	85
	1	56.8	1	28.8	1	
	1	83.5%	1	16.5%	1	

COLUMN TOTAL		113		58		171
		66%		34%		

CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM			SIGNIFICANCE		

22.95	1			.0001		

Students' use of drugs has become a major problem in many public schools (Bayh; 1978, Thistle; 1974). The two types of students especially vulnerable to drug abuse are those who are failing in school or those who see no relevance in pursuing a high school diploma (Bayh, 1978). This study supported the preceding assertion and demonstrated a significant relationship between the

use of drugs and attrition. Of the 86 dropouts who were interviewed, 71 (83%) stated that they had used drugs. This compares to 42 of the 86 persisters (49%) who admitted using drugs. Many more dropouts than persisters had experimented with drugs.

The researcher also attempted to determine to what extent dropouts were using drugs. Of the 71 dropouts who acknowledged trying drugs, 48% said they used drugs frequently, and an additional 38% said they used drugs occasionally. Therefore, of those dropouts who had tried drugs, a total of 73% admitted using them frequently or occasionally. In comparison, of the 42 school persisters who admitted trying drugs, 4% said that they use drugs frequently, and 11% said they used them occasionally. Therefore 16% of the persisters admitted using drugs frequently or occasionally. Table 7A shows the relationship between the frequency of drug consumption and attrition. As shown in the table, there was a significant relationship (at the .0001 level) between frequency of drug consumption and attrition.

TABLE 7B
FREQUENCY OF DRUG CONSUMPTION

COUNT EXPECTED VALUE ROW PCT.	I	F = FREQUENTLY O = OCCASIONALLY S = SELDOM N = NEVER			
		F	O	S	N
PERSISTERS	I	2	I 5	I 21	I 58
	I	15.5	I 14.0	I 15.0	I 41.5
	I	2.3%	I 2.9%	I 24.4%	I 67.4%
DROPOUTS	I	29	I 23	I 9	I 25
	I	15.5	I 14.0	I 15.0	I 41.5
	I	33.7%	I 26.7%	I 10.5%	I 29.1%
COLUMN TOTALS		13	28	30	83
		18%	16.3%	17.4%	48.3%
CHI-SQUARE DEGREES OF FREEDOM SIGNIFICANCE					
53.008		3		.0001	

8. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward their family members' understanding of each other.
9. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward communication in their homes.
10. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward family members' acceptance of each other.

Tables 8, 9, and 10 present the relationships between familial communication, understanding, and acceptance and attrition. The relationships shown in Tables 8, 9, and 10 were positive. Each relationship in these tables was tested for significance by means of a t-test. Because all of the relationships were significant at the .0001 level, none of the null hypotheses was retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of attitudes toward family communication, understanding, and acceptance.

TABLE 8

COMMUNICATION: ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN (ONE IS LOW AND 10 IS HIGH, HOW WELL DOES YOUR FAMILY COMMUNICATE?)

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	87	6.90	2.19	5.05	161	.0001
DROPOUTS	76	5.00	2.633			

TABLE 9

UNDERSTANDING: ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 (1 IS LOW AND 10 IS HIGH), HOW WELL DOES YOUR FAMILY UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	88	7.52	1.84	6.39	163	.0001
DROPOUTS	77	5.23	2.72			

TABLE 10

ACCEPTANCE: ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 (1 IS LOW AND 10 IS HIGH) HOW WELL DOES YOUR FAMILY ACCEPT EACH OTHER?

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	88	7.93	1.68	6.94	165	.0001
DROPOUTS	79	5.45	2.837			

The question of whether the family background of the dropout is different from that of the persister is of central importance. To answer this question with reference to the dropout, three family variables were examined: communication, acceptance, and understanding in the family unit. In addition, the researcher examined the degree of parental acceptance of their child's friends.

Communication When asked, "Does your family talk things over?", the dropouts frequently replied, "Mom and Dad do all of the talking, and I do all of the listening." Both the dropouts and persisters were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 10 (10 is high and 1 is low) the perceived adequacy of communication in their homes. The dropout sample had a mean of 5.0, and the persister sample had a mean of 6.90 (Table 8). Therefore, there was a significant relationship (.0001 level) between lack of communication and attrition. The following conclusions were drawn from these data:

1. Many of the dropouts felt that their parents never gave them an opportunity to express their feelings.
2. Commonly, the dropouts talked about the poor quality of communication that existed between their mother and father. In many cases the only communication between parents was arguing, shouting and belittling. More than 70% of the dropouts had been raised in a single-parent home.
3. When asked which person they would go to with a major problem, only 5% of the dropouts said they would discuss the problem with their parents. Sixty-five percent of the dropouts said that they preferred discussing problems with "a friend." In contrast, 55% of the persisters preferred to discuss problems with a parent.

Family Understanding The word "understanding" is often used to characterize a successful family. Freud said, "There is not any need in childhood as strong as that for a mother and father's understanding" (cited in Knudsen, 1977). Understanding means different things to different people; however, to many persisters, family understanding meant that "my parents listen to me and respect what I say." In contrast, most dropouts in this study felt that family understanding was lacking. The dropouts and persisters were asked the following question: "On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 is high and 1 is low) how would you say that you understand your parents?"

The dropout sample had a mean of 5.23, and the persister sample had a mean of 7.52 (Table 9). Therefore, there was a statistical significant difference (.0001) between family understanding and attrition.

Family Acceptance: When measuring level of acceptance on a scale from 1 to 10, dropouts had a mean of 5.45. In contrast, persisters had a mean of 7.93 (See Table 10). The relationship between lack of family acceptance and attrition was significant at the .0001 level. In summary, the majority of persisters saw their families as accepting each other as complete persons, whereas the majority of dropouts saw their families as failing to accept each other as complete persons.

When asked, "How many close friends do you have that your parents approve of?" and "How many close friends do you have that your parents do not approve of?" the results were significant. On the question pertaining to the number of friends approved by the parents, the dropouts had a mean of 3.50 and the persisters had a mean of 4.33. The difference between groups was significant. The question pertaining to the number of friends not accepted by the parent showed further significant differences between groups. The dropouts had a mean of 4.00 and the persisters had a mean of 1.43.

Table 10A and 10B show the relationship between the number of school friends approved by parents and the number of friends not approved by parents and attrition.

TABLE 10A
NUMBER OF FRIENDS APPROVED BY PARENTS

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREE	2-TAIL PROB.
SCHOOL PERSISTERS	89	4.3371	2.291			
				2.33	171	.021
DROPOUT	84	3.5000	2.437			

TABLE 10B
NUMBER OF FRIENDS NOT APPROVED BY PARENTS

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREE	2-TAIL PROB.
SCHOOL PERSISTERS	87	1.436	2.171			
				-5.91	167	0.000
DROPOUT	82	4.000	3.374			

The relationships contained in both tables were positive. The relationship in these tables were tested for significance by means of a t-test. Significant differences existed between persisters and dropouts in terms of friends approved by parents (.02 level) and friends not approved by parents (.00 level).

11. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the average number of years of formal education received by their mothers and fathers.

Tables 11A and 11B show the relationship between the amount of formal schooling received by mother and father and attrition. The relationships shown in both tables 11A and 11B were positive. The relationships in these tables were tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationships were significant at the .001 and .0001 levels, respectively, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of fathers' and mothers' level of education.

TABLE 11A**FATHER'S EDUCATION: NUMBER OF YEARS OF FORMAL SCHOOLING.**

COUNT	I										
EXPECTED VALUE	I										
TOTAL PCT.	1	2	5	6	7	8	9				
PERSISTERS	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	3
	1	.5	1	1	1	2.7	1	2.7	1	1.6	1 3.2
	1	1.1%	1	1.1%	1	2.3%	1	1.1%	1	1.1%	1 3.4%
DROPOUTS	1	0	1	1	1	3	1	4	1	2	1 3
	1.5		1	.9	1	2.3	1	2.3	1	1.4	1 12.8
	1	.0%	1	1.3%	1	3.8%	1	5.1%	1	2.6%	1 3.8%
COLUMN TOTAL	1	2	5	5	3	6					
	.6%	1.2%	3.0%	3.0%	1.8%	3.6%					

	10	11	12	13	14	15
PERSISTERS	1 4 1 6.9 1 4.5%	1 7 1 10.6 1 8.0%	1 30 1 35.5 1 34.1%	1 1 1 1.6 1 1.1%	1 5 1 2.7 1 5.7%	1 3 1 1.6 1 3.4%
DROPOUTS	1 9 1 6.1 1 11.5%	1 13 1 9.4 1 16.7%	1 37 1 31.6 1 47.4%	1 2 1 1.4 1 2.6%	1 0 1 2.3 1 .0%	1 0 1 1.4 1 .0%
COLUMN TOTAL	13 7.8%	20 12.0%	67 40.4%	3 1.8%	5 3.0%	3 1.8%

	16	17	18	
PERSISTERS	1 16 1 9.5 1 18.2%	1 2 1 1.6 1 2.3%	1 11 1 6.4 1 12.5%	88
DROPOUTS	1 2 1 8.5 1 2.6%	1 1 1 1.4 1 1.3%	1 1 1 5.6 1 1.3%	78
COLUMN TOTAL	18 10.8%	3 1.8%	12 7.2%	166

CHI-SQUARE DEGREES OF FREEDOM SIGNIFICANCE

35.201

14

.0014

TABLE 11B**MOTHER'S EDUCATION: NUMBER OF YEARS OF FORMAL SCHOOLING.**

	4	5	6	7	8	9
PERSISTERS	1 1 1 .5 1 1.1%	1 1 1 1.6 1 1.1%	1 0 1 1.6 1 .0%	1 1 1 2.2 1 1.1%	1 2 1 3.8 1 2.3%	1 3 1 3.8 1 3.4%
DROPOUTS	1 0 1 .5 1 .0%	1 2 1 1.4 1 2.8%	1 3 1 1.4 1 4.2%	1 3 1 1.8 1 4.2%	1 5 1 3.2 1 6.9%	1 4 1 3.2 1 5.6%
COLUMN TOTAL	1 .6%	3 1.9%	3 1.9%	4 2.5%	7 4.4%	7 4.4%

	10	11	12	13	14	15	
	1 4	1 8	1 29	1 1	1 8	1 1	1
PERSISTERS	1 5.5	1 9.8	1 33.9	1 2.2	1 4.4	1 1.1	1
	1 4.6%	1 9.2%	1 33.3%	1 1.1%	1 9.2%	1 1.1%	1
	1 6	1 10	1 33	1 3	1 0	1 1	1
DROPOUTS	1 4.5	1 8.2	1 28.1	1 1.8	1 3.6	1 .9	1
	1 8.3%	1 13.9%	1 45.8%	1 4.2%	1 .0%	1 1.4%	1
COLUMN	10	18	62	4	8	2	
TOTAL	6.3%	11.3%	39.0%	2.5%	5.0	1.3%	
	16	17	18	ROW TOTAL			
	1 18	1 0	1 10	1			
PERSISTERS	1 10.4	1 .5	1 5.5	1	87		
	1 20.7%	1 .0%	1 11.5%	1			
	1 1	1 1	1 0	1			
DROPOUTS	1 8.6	1 .5	1 4.5	1	72		
	1 1.4%	1 1.4%	1 .0%	1			
COLUMN	19	1	10				
TOTAL	11.9%	1.3%	6.3%	159			
CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM		SIGNIFICANCE				
41.80972	14		.0001				

This study showed that the educational attainment of both parents did influence their children's educational aspirations. In other words, better-educated parents had a positive influence on their children's educational aspirations, thereby increasing their children's ability and ultimately their likelihood of remaining in school.

The statistics in this study showed that the dropouts' mothers had an average of 10.79 years of formal education, and their fathers had an average of 10.02 years of formal schooling. In

comparison, persisters' mothers had an average of 13.5 years of education, and their fathers had an average of 14.3 years of schooling. The figures for parents of the Larkin High School persisters are higher than the national average.

The researcher also asked dropouts about the amount of education their siblings had attained. More than half of the dropouts had at least one sibling who had dropped out of school. In many cases, the dropout stated that no one in his family had ever earned a high school diploma. In comparison, fewer than 10% of the persisters had siblings who had dropped out of school. With parents and siblings not attaining a high school diploma and family members encouraging younger siblings to drop out of school and seek employment, the at-risk student becomes vulnerable to following family tradition.

12. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of mothers' employment outside the home.

Table 12 presents the relationship between mothers' employment outside of the home and attrition. The relationship shown in Table 12 was positive. This relationship was tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationship was significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference

between persisters and dropouts in terms of the number of mothers employed outside the home.

TABLE 12
MOTHERS' EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE THE HOME

	COUNT	1				
	EXPECTED VALUE	1				
	TOTAL PCT.	1	YES	NO	ROW TOTAL	
		1	42	1	47	1
PERSISTERS		1	57	1	32	1
		1	47.2%	1	52.8%	1
		1	70	1	16	1
DROPOUTS		1	55	1	31.0	1
		1	81.4%	1	18.6%	1
COLUMN TOTAL			111	63		175
			64.0%	36.0%		

<u>CHI-SQUARE</u>	<u>DEGREES OF FREEDOM</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
20.7493	1	.0001

Seventy of the dropouts (81%) said that their mothers were employed outside the home during the time they attended elementary school. In comparison, 42 persisters (47%) stated that their mothers had worked outside of the home during the time they attended elementary school. There was a significant relationship between mothers' employment outside the home during the child's elementary school years and attrition.

13. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the incidence of broken homes.

Tables 13A, 13B, and 13C show the relationship between family separation (marital separation, divorce, and death) and attrition. Two of the relationships shown in the three tables were positive. The relationships in these tables were tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the two relationships (six-month separation and divorce) were significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. A statistically significant difference existed between persisters and dropouts in terms of broken homes as evidenced by parental separation and divorce.

TABLE 13A
HAS EITHER PARENT LIVED AWAY FROM HOME FOR SIX MONTHS OR MORE?

COUNT	1					
EXPECTED VALUE	1					
TOTAL PCT.	1	YES		NO		ROW TOTAL
	1	22	1	66	1	
PERSISTERS	1	40.5	1	47.5	1	88
	1	25%	1	75.0%	1	
	1	58	1	28	1	
DROPOUTS	1	39.5	1	46.5	1	86
	1	67.4%	1	32.6%	1	
COLUMN TOTAL		80		94		174
		46.0%		54.0%		
CHI-SQUARE		DEGREES OF FREEDOM		SIGNIFICANCE		
29.85729		1		.0001		

TABLE 13B
FREQUENCY OF DIVORCE.

		YES		NO		ROW TOTAL

PERSISTERS	1	16	1	72	1	88
	1	32.2	1	55.8	1	
	1	18.2%	1	81.8%	1	

DROPOUTS	1	47	1	37	1	84
	1	30.8	1	53.2	1	
	1	56.0%	1	44.0%	1	

COLUMN TOTAL		63		109		174
		36.6%		63.4%		

<u>CHI-SQUARE</u>	<u>DEGREES OF FREEDOM</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
24.81161	1	.0001

TABLE 13C
FREQUENCY OF PARENTAL DEATH.

	YES		NO		ROW TOTAL	
	1	6	1	81	1	
PERSISTERS	1	8.6	1	78.4	1	87
	1	6.9%	1	93.1%	1	
	1	11	1	73	1	
DROPOUTS	1	8.4	1	75.6	1	84
	1	13.1%	1	86.9%	1	
COLUMN TOTAL	17		154		171	
	9.9%		90.1%			

<u>CHI-SQUARE</u>	<u>DEGREES OF FREEDOM</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
1.207	1	.2719

Sixty-seven percent of the dropouts stated that one of their parents had lived away from the home for six months or more during the time they attended school. In contrast, 25% of the persisters

said that one of their parents had lived away from the home for six months or more.

A significant relationship existed between divorce and attrition. Of the 84 dropouts who answered the question regarding divorce, 47 (56%) of them said their parents were divorced. Conversely 18% of the persisters' parents were divorced.

14. Larkin High School persisters will not score significantly different from dropouts on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills in Reading (CTBS).

The relationship between reading comprehension and attrition is shown in Table 14. That relationship was positive. The relationship was tested for significance by means of a t-test. Because the relationship was significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of reading comprehension.

TABLE 14
READING COMPREHENSION: SCORES ON THE CTBS READING TEST

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB
PERSISTERS	82	55.93	19.39	5.95	163	.0001
DROPOUTS	83	37.9	19.52			

One of the variables measured in this study was reading ability. This findings indicated a significant relationship between inability to read and attrition. When examining 9th grade CTBS reading scores of 88 dropouts, a mean score of 37.9 was calculated. This compares with a mean reading score of 55.9 for the 92 persisters. In addition, the reading grade level of the dropouts was significantly lower than that of the persisters. The results showed the dropouts were an average of two grade levels behind in reading at the time they entered the 10th grade. This information was obtained by examining the Gates Reading Examination of 55 dropouts.

15. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the number of meals eaten together as a family

Table 15 shows the relationship between number of family meals eaten together and attrition. The figures contained in Table 15 indicate there was a positive relationship. That relationship was tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationship was significant at the .0019 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of the number of meals eaten with the entire family.

TABLE 15
NUMBER OF MEALS EATEN WITH THE ENTIRE FAMILY

COUNT	1						
EXPECTED VALUE	1						
TOTAL PCT	1 NONE	1	2			ROW TOTAL	
	1 12	1 6	1 69	1			
PERSISTERS	1 22.1	1 5.5	1 59.3	1		87	
	1 13.8%	1 6.9%	1 79.3%	1			
	1 32	1 5	1 49	1			
DROPOUTS	1 21.9	1 5.5	1 58.7	1		86	
	1 37.2%	1 5.8%	1 57.0%	1			
COLUMN TOTAL	44	11	118			173	
	25.4%	6.4%	68.2%				

<u>CHI-SQUARE</u>	<u>DEGREES OF FREEDOM</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
12.56630	2	.0019

It can be seen that the relationship contained in Table 15 has a positive relationship of .0019. The relationship in this table was tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationship was significant below the .05 level, the null hypothesis cannot be retained.

A nutritious diet has been considered a supportive factor in helping students to achieve well in school. The researcher examined the possible effects of nutrition on attrition. First, he assumed that families that eat together generally have well balanced meals. Given this assumption, the study findings showed a significant relationship between poor nutrition and attrition. Dropouts were asked, "When you attended school, how many meals did you have

together as a family (per week day)?" Thirty-seven percent of the dropout sample stated that they did not sit down for a meal with family members. This compares with 14% of the persisters who stated they did not have a meal with family members. The number of dropouts who said they did not eat breakfast was also surprising.

Studies have documented the importance of students eating well-balanced meals; however, what takes place when a family sits down to have that meal is also important. Many of the persisters revealed that dinner time was not only a time for eating but also a time for sharing. In fact, some persisters said that was the only time the entire family had a chance to be together; consequently, it was a time remembered with positive feelings. A shared family meal time seemed to be lacking for many of the dropouts.

16. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward the difficulty of their classes.

Table 16 shows the relationship between attitudes toward academic difficulty and attrition. That relationship was positive, as evidenced by the figures in the table. The relationship was tested for significance using a t-test. Because the relationship was significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant relationship between

persisters and dropouts in terms of their attitudes concerning the difficulty of their classes at Larkin High School.

TABLE 16

STATED ATTITUDES TOWARD THE DIFFICULTY OF CLASSES: ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN (1 IS LOW AND 1 IS HIGH) HOW DIFFICULT WERE YOUR CLASSES AT L.H.S.?

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	89	6.61	1.592			
DROPOUTS	81	4.86	2.042	6.27	168	.0001

There was a significant relationship between the perceptions of academic difficulty and attrition. Dropouts tended to feel that their classes were less difficult than did the persisters. On a 1 to 10 scale (10 is difficult and 1 is easy), dropouts rated the difficulty of their classes 4.8, whereas persisters rated the difficulty level at 6.6.

17. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the incidence of preschool education.

Table 17A shows the relationship between students' attitudes toward the quality of education offered at Larkin High School and attrition. Table 17B shows the number of staff members at Larkin High School whom dropouts considered as "friends." When asked about the quality of education at Larkin High School, dropouts gave the school a mean rating of 6.48 on a scale from 1 to 10 (10 is high and

1 is low). This compares with a mean rating of 7.73 by the persisters. The difference between groups was significant at the .0001 level of confidence.

Table 17A

QUALITY OF EDUCATION AT LARKIN HIGH SCHOOL: ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 (1 IS LOW AND 10 IS HIGH, HOW GOOD OF AN EDUCATION DOES L.H.S. OFFER STUDENTS?

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	89	7.73	1.175			
DROPOUTS	83	6.48	2.056	4.88	167	.0001

School persisters and dropouts were also asked if they would consider any one of the Larkin High School staff members a friend. Of the 83 dropouts interviewed, 44 (53%) said yes. Of the 88 persisters, 61 (69%) said yes. Therefore, the relationship between staff members being considered a friend and attrition was significant.

TABLE 17B
STAFF FRIENDS

COUNT	1				
EXP VALUE	1	YES	NO	ROW TOTAL	
TOTAL PCT	1				
----- ----- -----					
	1	61	1 27	1	
PERSISTERS	1	54	1 34	1	88
	1	69.3%	1 30.7%	1	
----- ----- -----					
	1	44	1 39	1	
DROPOUTS	1	51	1 32	1	83
	1	53.0%	1 47.0%	1	
----- ----- -----					
COLUMN TOTAL		105	66	177	
		61.4%	38.6%		

CHI SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	SIGNIFICANCE

4.128	1	.0422

It can be seen that the relationships shown in Tables 17A and 17B were positive. The relationship in Table 17A was tested for significance by using a t-test, and the relationship in table 17B was tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because both relationships were significant (quality of education = .0001 level, staff friends = .04 level), the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts, both in their perceptions of the quality of education at Larkin High School and whether they considered any staff member to be a friend.

18. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward the quality of education offered at Larkin High School.

Table 18 shows the relationship between students' attitudes toward education in general and attrition. That relationship was positive. The relationship was tested for significance by means of a t-test. Because the relationship was significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of their attitudes toward education in general. When asked how important education is in their lives, dropouts had a mean importance rating of 7.8 on a 10-point scale (1 is low and 10 is high). Conversely, persisters had a mean rating of 8.9.

TABLE 18
ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION: ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 (1 IS LOW AND 10 IS HIGH), HOW IMPORTANT IS EDUCATION IN YOUR LIFE?

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREE	2-TAIL PROB.
PERSISTERS	89	8.9	1.290	3.55	168	.0001
DROPOUTS	81	7.8	2.501			

19. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the incidence of preschool education .

Table 19 shows the relationship between incidence of preschool education and attrition. The relationship shown in Table 20 was positive. The relationship in this table was tested for

significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationship was significant at the .0015 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of the incidence of preschool education. Twenty-four dropouts (29%) had preschool education, whereas 48 persisters (54%) had attended preschool.

TABLE 20
INCIDENCE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

	COUNT	1				
	EXPECTED VALUE	1				
	TOTAL PCT.	1	YES	NO	ROW TOTAL	
PERSISTERS		1	48	1	41	1
		1	37.3	1	51.7	1
		1	53.9%	1	46.1%	1
DROPOUTS		1	24	1	59	1
		1	34.7	1	48.3	1
		1	28.9%	1	71.1%	1
COLUMN TOTAL-			72		100	172
			41.9%		58.1%	

<u>CHI-SQUARE</u>	<u>DEGREES OF FREEDOM</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
11.51	1	.0015

20. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of their feelings (likes and dislikes) about Larkin High School activities.

Tables 20A and 20B show the relationship between the students' feelings (likes and dislikes) about Larkin High School activities and attrition. The relationships shown in both tables

were positive. These relationships were tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationships were significant (likes = .0001, dislikes = .003), the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of both their likes and their dislikes about Larkin High School activities

TABLE 20A
WHAT RESPONDENTS LIKED ABOUT LARKIN HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES.

	1		2		3		4		5		6		
	I	22	I	35	I	18	I	7	I	1	I	5	I
PERSISTERS	I	15.08	I	41.23	I	16.09	I	4.52	I	6.53	I	4.52	88
	I	25%	I	40%	I	20%	I	8%	I	1%	I	6%	I
	I	8	I	47	I	14	I	2	I	12	I	4	I
DROPOUTS	I	14.91	I	40.76	I	15.90	I	4.47	I	6.46	I	4.47	87
	I	9%	I	54%	I	16%	I	2%	I	14%	I	5%	I
COLUMN TOTAL	30	82	32	9	13	9	175						
	17%	47%	19%	5%	7%	5%							
CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM				SIGNIFICANCE								
20.98	5				.0001								

- 1 = LEARNING/CLASSES
- 2 = SOCIAL
- 3 = EXTRACURRICULAR
- 4 = STAFF
- 5 = NOTHING
- 6 = OTHER

TABLE 20B

WHAT RESPONDENTS DISLIKED ABOUT LARKIN HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
PERSISTERS	I 11 I 14.08 I 13%	I 17 I 14.08 I 19%	I 15 I 9.55 I 17%	I 20 I 23.13 I 22%	I 11 I 17 I 13%	I 14 I 10 I 16%	88
DROPOUTS	I 17 I 13.92 I 20%	I 11 I 13.92 I 13%	I 4 I 9.44 I 5%	I 26 I 22.86 I 30%	I 23 I 16.91 I 26%	I 6 I 9.94 I 7%	87
	28 16%	28 16%	19 11%	46 26%	34 19%	20 11%	175

CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	SIGNIFICANCE
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17.15	5	.003
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- 1 = CLASSES/HOMEWORK
- 2 = TIME INVOLVEMENT
- 3 = NOTHING
- 4 = RULES
- 5 = STAFF
- 6 = OTHER

21. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of the frequency of church attendance .

Table 21 shows the relationship between the frequency of church attendance and attrition. That relationship was positive. The relationship was analyzed for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationship was significant at the .0011 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of frequency of church attendance. Dropout's generally did not attend church. Of the 84 dropouts interviewed, only 18 (21.4%)

stated that they attended church regularly. In comparison, 41 persisters (46%) said that they attended church regularly.

TABLE 21
FREQUENCY OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE

COUNT	1					
EXPECTED VALUE	1					
TOTAL PCT.	1	YES		NO		ROW TOTAL
	1	41	1	48	1	
PERSISTERS	1	30.4	1	58.6	1	89
	1	46.1%	1	53.9%	1	
	1	18	1	66	1	
DROPOUTS	1	28.6	1	55.4	1	84
	1	21.4%	1	78.6%	1	
COLUMN TOTAL		59		114		173
		34.1%		65.9%		
CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	SIGNIFICANCE				
10.60283	1	.0011				

22. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of total family income.

Table 22A shows the relationship between family income and attrition. It can be seen that the relationship shown in Table 22A was positive. The relationship was tested for significance by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationship was significant at the .0001 level, the null hypothesis was not retained. There was a statistical significant difference between persisters and dropouts in terms of family income. Family income is an important factor when considering the dropout phenomenon. To reduce the problems of

inaccurate individual reporting of family income, a printout listing the names of all Larkin High School students who received free or reduced cost lunches was used. The question, therefore, was whether the parents' income was within the guidelines for a free or reduced-cost lunch. The eligibility criteria for acceptance into the free lunch program are set by the federal government. The eligibility guidelines are shown in Tables 22B and 22C.

TABLE 22A

RESPONDENTS' FAMILY INCOME: DID YOU QUALIFY FOR A FREE OR REDUCED COST LUNCH?

COUNT	I	TOTAL				
EXPECTED VALUE	I					
TOTAL PCT.	I	YES		NO		

	I	7	I	81	I	
PERSISTERS	I	12.13	I	75.86	I	88
	I	.8%	I	92.0%	I	

	I	17	I	69	I	
DROPOUTS	I	11.86	I	74.13	I	86
	I	20.0%	I	80.0%	I	

COLUMN TOTAL		24		150		174
		14.0%		86.0%		

CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM		SIGNIFICANCE			

5.104	1		.0021			

TABLE 22B
FEDERAL GUIDELINES FOR A FREE LUNCH

HOUSE HOLD SIZE	YEARLY INCOME	MONTHLY INCOME	WEEKLY INCOME
1	6,825	569	132
2	9,165	764	177
3	11,505	959	222
4	13,845	1154	267
5	16,185	1349	312
6	18,525	1544	357
7	20,865	1739	402
8	23,205	1934	447

TABLE 22C
FEDERAL GUIDELINES FOR A REDUCED COST LUNCH

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	YEARLY INCOME	MONTHLY INCOME	WEEKLY INCOME
1	9,713	810	187
2	13,043	1,087	251
3	16,373	1,365	315
4	19,703	1,642	379
5	23,033	1,920	443
6	26,363	2,197	507
7	29,693	2,475	572
8	33,023	2,752	636

Of the 86 dropouts interviewed, 17 received a free or reduced lunch. This contrasts with 7 school persisters who received a free or reduced-cost lunch. Although this data showed a significant relationship between family income and the dropout, low income generally is not the decisive factor (Cervantes, 1965). In fact, only one student acknowledged dropping out of school for financial reasons. One can form a number of conclusions from these data, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

1. Where a student lived was significantly related to attrition. Table 22C shows the subdivisions within the Larkin High School attendance boundaries and the number of 1984-85 dropouts who came from each definable area. Table 22D shows the socioeconomic breakdown of the subdivision from the wealthiest to the most impoverished (Elgin Board of Realtors, 1985).

Table 22D

**DISTRIBUTION OF DROPOUTS ACCORDING TO SUBDIVISIONS
WITHIN THE LARKIN HIGH SCHOOL BOUNDARIES**

	DROPOUTS	PERCENTAGE
- South Elgin -----	32	(25%)
- Walnut/Sunset Park-----	20	(16%)
- Clifford Court -----	19	(15%)
- Abbott Area -----	17	(13%)
- College Park/Burham Mills -----	9	(7%)
- East of Fox River-----	9	(7%)
- Valley Creek -----	4	(4%)
- Century Oaks/-----	4	(4%)
- Country Knolls-----	3	(2%)
- Williamsburg -----	0	
- Other -----	11	(9%)

Table 22E

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN OF LARKIN HIGH SCHOOL SUBDIVISIONS (FROM
WEALTHIEST TO THE MOST IMPOVERISHED)**

- Williamsburg
- Century Oaks
- Valley Creek
- Country Knolls
- Abbott Area
- College Park/Burham Mills
- Walnut/Sunset Park
- South Elgin
- Clifford Court
- East of Fox River

2. The preceding information is an accurate breakdown of the geographic area from which Larkin High School dropouts came. The geographic distribution of Larkin dropouts was consistent for the past three years. As indicated, the greatest percentage of dropouts traditionally came from the South Elgin area.
3. It should be noted that over 50% of the parents of dropouts from the South Elgin area themselves were high school dropouts. The pattern has continued despite the fact that the same disadvantages of attrition existed 25 years ago. Gaining good employment required a high school diploma then as it does now.
4. The parents of dropouts were predominantly employed in lower-skill jobs.

23. Larkin High School persisters will not differ significantly from dropouts in terms of employment (part or full time).

Table 23 shows the relationship between employment and attrition. That relationship was negative. The relationship was tested by means of a chi-square test. Because the relationship was not significant at the .05 level, the null hypothesis was retained. Although fewer dropouts (50%) than persisters (61.4%) were employed, the difference between groups was not statistically significant.

TABLE 23
EMPLOYMENT AND THE DROPOUT

COUNT	1					
EXPECTED VALUE	1					
TOTAL PCT.	1	YES		NO		ROW TOTAL

	1	54	1	34	1	
PERSISTERS	1	49.2	1	38.8	1	88
	1	61.4%	1	38.6%	1	

	1	40	1	40	1	
DROPOUTS	1	44.8	1	35.2	1	80
	1	50.0%	1	50.0	1	

COLUMN TOTAL		94		74		168
		55%		45%		
CHI-SQUARE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM		SIGNIFICANCE			

1.75875	1		.1848			

It is well documented that dropouts have a difficult time gaining employment (Schreiber, 1967; Stafford, 1983; Austin Independent School District, 1982). Although this study did not show a significant correlation between lack of employment and attrition, the following information is noteworthy:

1. Fifty percent of the dropouts interviewed were unemployed. This seems to be a very high figure considering they were not attending school.
2. The dropouts who found employment were not satisfied with their jobs. On a scale of 1 through 10 (1=low and 10=high), the dropouts gave their jobs a mean rating of 4.6.

3. There was a significant relationship between dismissal from jobs and attrition. Of the 85 dropouts who answered the question, 18 said that they had been terminated from a job. This compares to 6 out of 88 persisters who said that they had experienced being fired.
4. A high percentage of dropouts had no idea about how they wanted to be employed ten years hence. In comparison, many of the persisters had specific career plans. Many dropouts were ambivalent about the prospects of future employment. It has been said that people will not succeed in general until they can in some way first experience success in life. Many of these dropouts had not experienced success.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Summary

One of the concerns expressed by many educators across the country is that alarmingly high numbers of students withdraw from school before graduating. Many children who enter the public education system never stay to complete 12 years of school. In addition, a number of researchers have focused on the dropout phenomenon. Conant (1961), Cervantes (1965), and Curtis (1982), for example, found that students who drop out of school are placed at a substantial social and economic disadvantage. In addition to foregoing school experience and skills, dropouts are much less likely to find employment than graduates (Curtis, (1983). As an unemployed individual, lacking school experience and devoid of marketable skills, the dropout becomes a burden to society. Over the years various writers have characterized dropouts as "The New Lost Generation" (Conant, 1961), "Public Enemy Number One" (Hoover, 1965), "That Outlaw Pack" (Wirtz, 1960), and "The New Minority" (Cervantes, 1965).

To reduce attrition, it is important to identify and understand the characteristic tendencies of dropouts. The

identification of at-risk students is crucial if early intervention efforts are to be successful. For this reason, the substantive purpose of the study was to identify those general variables that made the greatest contribution to a student's being at-risk of dropping out or actually having dropped out of school. Twenty-four specific variables were identified relative to determining dropout status, and hypotheses were also formulated to test the relationship of those variables to attrition. Eighty-seven Larkin High School dropouts and Eighty-eight present Larkin High School persisters were interviewed relative to six categories of concerns recognized by educators and researchers as germane to the question of attrition. These categories included

1. Juvenile delinquency and the dropout
2. The family and the dropout
3. Employment and the dropout
4. The dropout and his/her peers
5. Information about the self
6. School experiences

The researcher interviewed dropouts and persisters either at the Larkin High School Learning Center or at the interviewees' home.

Findings

The findings of this study indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between 21 variables and attrition. The following variables were significantly related to attrition at the .0001 level:

Family

- Communication within the family
- Understanding between family members
- Mother's years of schooling
- Mothers working outside the home during child's elementary school years
- Family separation (marital separation and divorce)
- Family income

School

- Participation in extracurricular activities
- School behavior
- School attendance
- School attendance at the kindergarten, first, second, fourth, and sixth, grade levels
- School mobility
- Reading ability/level
- Attitudes toward difficulty of classes

- Attitudes toward the quality of education offered at Larkin High School
- Preschool education
- Failing grade levels

Self

- Court appearances
- Use of controlled substances
- Personal likes about Larkin High School activities

The following variables were significant at the .01 level:

Family

- Father's years of schooling

Education

- School attendance at the third and fifth grade levels

Self

- Nutrition
- Personal dislikes about Larkin High School activities
- Church attendance
- Family income

It should be noted that there was no significant correlation between students' employment and attrition.

Conclusion

Because twenty-one variables in this study were significant at the .01 or .001 level, a prediction model can be developed to identify at-risk students. For this reason, the dropout-prediction model developed in this study may be germane to many "typical" high schools.

Recommendations

Further Research

To increase the reliability of the study, it is suggested that an attempt be made to replicate the dropout-prediction model developed in this study. In replicating the study, future researchers should:

1. Implement the design procedures, but apply them to a different population. The average dropout rate in the typical American high school has reached 26% and 50% if the school is located in an urban center (McCarthy, 1980). For example, in New York City, one out of every two students leave school prematurely. This amounts to more than 49,000

students each year. It is imperative that this or a similar dropout model, in conjunction with an array of other strategies, be implemented to reduce the dropout rate. The alternative is an unacceptable social burden.

2. Refine the treatment In this study, 21 variables were significantly correlated to determine dropout predictability. It is suggested that the study be replicated using fewer variables. The researcher could rank each of the variables according to its statistical correlation and then select the 10 variables that would most reliably predict a student's dropout status.

It may be important to investigate students' attitudes toward school to see if those attitudes influence the variables with the prediction model. Briefly stated, a list of variables, or reasons for dropping out of school, may be misleading. It may be that a combination of factors is important in identifying the potential dropout, whether those factors be concrete or abstract. The underlying attitude toward a certain independent variable may be as important or more important than the variable itself.

The findings of this study suggested that attempts to identify potential dropouts be linked to attempts to combat related problems; such as drug use, gang involvement, early marriage and pregnancy.

Educational Practice

Congregating in every public school in this country are thousands of students whose common denominator is failure. Convinced of their failure, these students live in rebellion against the system (Glasser, 1975). For these students, their families, and society, the implications of developing a reliable dropout prediction model are extremely meaningful. The following ideas could help reduce all of the types of problems generally associated with attrition:

1. Develop a Dropout-Prediction Formula: After the study has been replicated, significant dropout variables would be determined and each of the variables would be given a numerical value between 1 and 10. For example, early elementary grade failure might be given a value of 8. After checking each significant variable, a total score for each student would be calculated. The total score would determine the degree of risk or potential dropout predictability. For example, any score above 15 might be considered serious and "at-risk." If a reliable dropout-prediction formula could be developed when a student was young, one could expect a substantial decline in the attrition rate.

2. As a component of the dropout-prediction model, both high schools and elementary schools could develop data-base systems that would help predict at-risk students.

Computers can help keep track of those multiple effects and alert administrators, teachers, and family members if a student has reached a point of concern. The type of information recorded by administrators could include

- standardized test scores
- grades
- gender
- grade level failures
- daily absences
- race
- age
- reading scores
- ethnic background
- mothers' employment
- number of years of schooling by mother and father
- attendance at night activities
- behavioral referrals

Through a multiple regression formula, the data can be used to develop patterns that may provide school administrators

with important information that will help identify at-risk students.

Future research should also be done to reduce academic failure that contributes to attrition. Possible topics for this type of research could include

- The school and teachers as vehicles of student success
- School facilitation of a more positive attitude
- An alternative to suspension
- The formation of a vigorous in-service program to train the teachers to cope with at-risk students

Personal Reflections

Because this researcher spent more than a year examining the dropout problem and has personally worked with hundreds of dropouts every year for the past five years, it is important to take this opportunity to share additional ideas, considerations, and opinions concerning the dropout. The format of this discussion is organized according to the variables investigated in this study.

Family

Family separation. It is an understatement to say that children are the big losers in a divorce. Children face extended periods of major emotional and social adjustment when a family goes through a divorce. During the adjustment period, children experience anger, grief, and depression. They may express these feelings at school and at home. In fact, researchers have shown that increased stress in families causes a significant decline in learning.

School districts should develop counseling programs to help children cope with their parents' divorce. According to a Chicago-area principal, divorce-counseling programs have helped students realize they are not the only ones whose parents are divorced. Some districts have hired an additional staff member to help single working parents become more involved in their children's education.

Finally, it would seem that the best role the school can play is a preventative one: to help young people learn parenting skills. If quality parenting skills exist in a family, it does not matter whether the youngster is with one parent or two. If family separation is a signal for identifying a potential dropout, schools must learn how to help children reduce bad feelings, and recognize the possibility that "things will get better." In this way, the

healing process begins and the child can focus on his/her life once again.

Parental Education. Many parents who do not have a high school education tend to emphasize values other than pursuing high school diploma or a college education. In fact, many of the dropouts who were interviewed said their parents encouraged them to drop out of school to get a job. The feeling of many dropouts' parents was, "Why spend a lot of time, money, and effort on an education when you can get a well paying job without it?" A lack of parental support, along with the incentive of making "decent" money for the first time, influences many at-risk students to drop out of school. Attitudes concerning the importance of education are inculcated very early. If parents reinforce the idea that school is not a priority, it is doubtful whether their children will view education as important.

Working Mothers: To promote the involvement of working mothers, school districts should consider the following information:

1. Children need support: Being available to attend school and class activities sends a clear message to a child that "mother cares." This is not to say that working parents do not support their children. Rather, it is more difficult to show enthusiasm, interest, and excitement when one has to work an eight-hour day first.

2. After working eight hours, it is difficult for a mother to come home, prepare the meal, wash the dishes, clean the house, and be relaxed when spending time with her children.
3. In survey, mothers stated that children generally tend to communicate more about their school-day experiences immediately after school than later in the day.

Single mothers of many dropouts work out of financial necessity. Their thoughts tend to be more on being able to feed, cloth, and shelter their children than on helping them with their school subjects. This is typically true for disadvantaged children who eventually drop out. In addition to the responsibility of raising their children, their mothers still want and need a social life.

The school should provide as many opportunities as possible for parents to get involved with their children's schooling. For example, one elementary school in Elgin has become known as its area's "resource center." It is kept open in the evening. Library books can be taken out, and the school has encouraged parental involvement. Another thing school administrators and teachers can do is make frequent positive telephone calls at night to working parents. The school staff must help its parents get involved.

Early school attendance: The elementary school years are critical in fostering positive attitudes toward school. If the

school is to foster regular attendance, that fostering must begin before any form of school failure. If a child can succeed in school at an early stage, he/she has an excellent chance for success in future grades. Students who succeed are rarely absent from school. There are ways elementary school administrators can help children succeed. School achievement/failure and attendance/truancy are variables that relate to a student's overall success at school. To decrease the incidence of failure,

1. Schools need to reconsider existing minimum age limits for school entry: Too many students enter school entirely unready for daily school requirements. For these children, the probability of failure within the school is greatly enhanced. After sufficient negative experiences, a child will start to look at school as a place he/she experiences failure.
2. High Expectations: "What teachers expect, students are likely to learn" (Brookover, 1982, p. 55) School personnel send messages to students concerning appropriate behavior, levels of expected achievement, and evaluation of ability (Brookover, 1982). Recent research has shown that teachers' low expectations of their students do contribute to school failure. It is imperative that school personnel set high but realistic expectations for all children and

communicate these expectations to their students
(Brookover, 1982).

3. Regular and positive communication from the schools to the parents of truants: This communication must be persistent and consistent. School personnel can communicate with parents by telephone, conference, or newsletter.
4. Regular and positive reinforcement to students: The early years are critical years in forming attitudes about the self. Success is a sine qua non in such attitude formation; therefore, means must be developed so that all children can succeed. Glasser (1973) stated, "If a child no matter what his background can succeed in school, he has an excellent chance for success in life." (p. 5)
5. Elementary counseling staffs: Counseling programs are essential for all elementary and middle schools. Many child psychologists feel that counseling is particularly crucial at the first-grade, second-grade and third-grade levels (Deutsch, 1967). This service must take place before the potential dropout becomes overly discouraged because of failures experienced in school.

High Mobility: When a student first enters school, he/she begins a relationship with the school. This relationship includes the development of friends, association with teachers, and learning

academic content, school procedures, and activities. The child soon develops an identity with the school. The child feels he/she "belongs." When a child is suddenly removed from that familiar and comfortable setting and is enrolled in a new school, anxiety and stress often result. Situations that produce anxiety and stress (meeting new children, acceptance, anticipation of teacher expectations, and so on) may detract from the learning process, thereby causing unpleasant situations or possible failure. For students who have difficulty adjusting to new situations, this change could produce a definite negative affect.

In view of the preceding data, the school should provide new students with experiences that help them identify with the school. The teacher can best do this. If teachers can help new students feel accepted, comfortable, and successful, the negative effects of change can be minimized. According to child psychologist Martin Deutsch, the critical years are between ages five and ten. Failure, which should be prevented throughout school, is most easily prevented during the early school years; therefore, special attention must be given to young children who transfer to a new school. Every attempt must be made to insure their success in the school.

To reduce new-school-induced failure and anxiety, Larkin High School has developed a "buddy" system. Members of the student government, are assigned to new students and freshmen who have had

problems at the middle school. The more experienced youths will show new students around the building and introduce them to other students and faculty members. The staff at Larkin High School feel that the program has helped to reduce the incidence of student failures.

Preschool education: Many disadvantaged children are not developmentally ready to start school. Some of these children do not know how to hold a pencil, use a pair of scissors, identify colors, or recognize the letters of the alphabet. These students experience failure almost immediately. Their frustration at not understanding and not succeeding often begins a pattern for the development of negative self-images. Once this negative cycle begins, the dropout cycle starts. Although many preschools provide primarily a baby-sitting service, others teach some of the skills necessary for early success in school. Preschool education is not recommended for all children; however, it does provide many students with educational advantages. For this reason, all school districts need to consider implementing such a program.

Extracurricular activities: Schools can do many things to get all types of students involved in school activities. One component of the Larkin High School freshman orientation is to emphasize the benefits and importance of participating in some such activities. Participation in school activities gives students a

feeling of ownership of, identity with, and comradeship within the system. Melvin Peters, a Larkin High School counselor for 20 years, was asked what he considered to be the most important advice to give to incoming freshman. His reply was "involvement." It is advantageous for students to get involved with school activities as soon as possible.

Participation in many of the extra curricular activities would seemingly be of interest to many dropouts. However, what is entertaining and interesting to millions of young people is not so for most dropouts. Dropouts usually do not want to be involved in group activities in which they fear that they might be exposed as not being able to perform as well as others. An already low self-image inhibits their participation.

Although schools cannot force students to participate in extracurricular activities, they can do a better job of encouraging such participation. Recognizing this, many schools have implemented the following policies to help all students feel a sense of ownership in their school.

1. Expanded student service activities
2. Implemented a "no participation fee" for all activities
3. Expanded the intramural program
4. Expanded the number of athletic teams
5. Implemented a "no cut" policy for athletics
6. Established groups to enhance ethnic and racial pride

7. Expanded the school drama department
8. Encouraged freshmen to participate in at least one extracurricular activity.

By helping students establish a feeling of ownership in their school, schools can reduce truancy and disciplinary problems, two symptoms of attrition.

Grade Point Average: A poor grade point average is the result of many factors. Truancy, frequent experiences with failure, lack of self-esteem, no school identity, and use of drugs are some of the factors that could lead to a poor grade point average. Earning a good grade point average requires most students to put forth time, effort, and commitment. It sometimes means studying when there are more entertaining things to do. Dropouts frequently stated that they did not study while in high school. They were too busy "partying," "being with friends," "causing trouble," and "having fun."

Many of the options available to school administrators to help at-risk students improve their grade point average include:

- Tutoring: Many schools offer tutoring programs to help students who have academic difficulty. Both peer and adult tutoring programs have helped many at-risk students.

- Increase feeling of ownership in school: Every attempt should be made to get all students involved in school activities.
- Improve reading ability: A remedial reading program is necessary to help students who have difficulty with reading. This may be the only way the at-risk student can improve his/her reading skills.
- Increase positive reinforcement by staff members: All students need to be given positive reinforcement. Recognition of a job well done, will help the student gain confidence. Having confidence in oneself, is a prerequisite for any type of success.
- Improve the evaluation system: Giving letter grades at the elementary level seems to be an inadequate type of evaluation. Letter grades at times are invalid, unreliable, unfair, and encourage cheating.

Parents also have an important role in fostering healthy learning skills. The report entitled, "What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning (1986) emphasized parents' role as "their children's first and most influential teachers." Cited in this report were different ways that parents can help their children.

1. The best way for parents to help their children become better readers is to read to them.
2. Children improve their reading ability by reading a lot.
3. Learning to count everyday objects is an effective basis for early arithmetic.
4. Children who are encouraged to draw and scribble "stories" at an early age will later learn to compose more easily.
5. The most effective way to teach writing is to teach it as a process of brainstorming, composing, revising and editing.

Attendance: One of the best identifiers of the potential dropout is his/her record of truancy (Tyerman, 1968; Cervantes, 1965; Austin Independent School District, 1982). According to a national survey of high school principals (Howard, 1983), their most troublesome and frustrating daily problem is attendance. Students give many reasons for having stopped attending classes. The following were given by Larkin High School students during the 1984-1985 school year:

1. poor teacher-student relationship
2. personal problems
3. lack of interest in subject matter
4. inability to pass a class
5. avoidance of a testing situation
6. studying for another class
7. "better things" to do

With truancy increasing every year, it is important to develop programs for its reduction. The following programs are used in Elgin School District U-46 schools and other schools that have reduced truancy (Aurora Public Schools, Lake Park School District, Dundee Community Schools, St. Charles Community Schools, Geneva School System, and Barrington Public Schools).

1. Positive and regular communication with the parents:

Because parents of students with attendance problems cannot be reached by telephone during the day, an office worker is available in the evening to make the calls. Parents must be notified after each truancy.

2. Police support: To deter habitual truants, additional support is sometimes needed. Surprisingly, Elgin policemen have managed to maintain credibility with young people. Police departments can be an excellent support system for the schools. Police officers can "patrol" school areas and influence potential truants to attend class.

3. Perfect-attendance policy: The "perfect attendance" concept is a motivational strategy designed to reduce truancy. This policy is presently being pilot tested at another school in the Elgin school district. If a student can complete a semester without a single absence, he/she may waive the final examination. If the student chooses to

take final exams, he/she cannot receive a grade lower than the grade earned before the examination. Elgin High School began its pilot test of this experiment during fall semester 1985-86 and has reported 6,000 fewer cuts (Elgin High School Truancy Report, 1986).

4. Driver's education The staff at Larkin High School know that one of the most popular classes is driver's education. To a high school student, not many objectives are as important as getting a driver's license. Capitalizing on this, Larkin High School requires that a student exhibit acceptable behavior and good attendance in order to enroll in the driver's education course.
5. Improve supervision in the hallways: Improving hallway supervision at Larkin seems to have reduced the number of single-period trancies.
6. Family and student counseling: Counseling has improved attendance patterns by helping at-risk students understand their personal and learning problems.
7. Poor attendance is a symptom of poor instruction; therefore, the foundation of an effective attendance policy must be in the practice of the classroom teacher. For this reason, school districts should appropriate adequate sums of money to staff development. Teachers and administrators

must continue to find new learning strategies to help young people succeed.

8. Larkin High School has hired a dropout/truancy specialist for the 1985-1986 school year. Such a specialist can offer at-risk students the support necessary to achieve in school. Larkin High School was able to hire a person for this position because government money is available for dropout/truancy programs.
9. A system of rewards and incentives can promote good attendance. Forty at-risk students are identified each year at Larkin High School. If these students can establish positive attendance patterns, various rewards and incentives are given to them. For example, if the student attends all of his/her classes for a week, he/she is given cafeteria or snack bar coupons. If the student attends all of his/her classes for a month, he/she is taken to a restaurant for lunch. The incentive program has been effective in reducing single period truancies.

Reading ability/level: The inability of the dropout to read may be attributed to two factors:

1. The fact that dropouts could not read well may be traced to the lack of parental support in nurturing the readiness skills that enable children to be successful readers. When

83 dropouts were asked if their parents read to them as children, more than 70% said either "no" or "very little." When 82 persisters were asked this same question, 54% said either "frequently" or "occasionally." Many of the persisters commented that their parents had made it a ritual to read to them when they were children.

2. Inability to read caused dropouts' to experience a high level of failure, frustration, and futility. Reading is a skill needed that students need in order to succeed in all their classes; consequently, the inability to read is directly related to failure in other classes. This statement was corroborated by the low cumulative grade-point average of the typical dropout in the sample.

Some of the ways to help break the pattern of student failure due to an inability to read are as follows:

1. Schools personnel need to recognize reading as an important component of all subject areas. The ability to read is vital to success in school
2. School personnel need to implement effective programs that focus on parenting skills. Few schools, offer programs that teach these skills. Future parents need to learn that reading is valuable to all children.

3. The sizes of elementary school classes should be reduced so teachers can give each student more individual attention. The elementary schools that feed into Larkin High School are attempting to reduce the classroom size. In the Elgin School District, the 1984-85 census showed the average second grade class had 28.7 students. Today the average is 25.4 students.
4. Implementing a good preschool program can help identify students who need special help with the cognitive and perceptual skills that are necessary in learning to read.
5. Schools must choose a reading program that will best help the students.
6. Schools must ask for parents' help and support. Parental assistance is especially effective in the improvement of reading skills.

It must be recognized that, to implement many of these school strategies, more money will be necessary. The initial investment may seem costly; however, in terms of long-range benefits, school districts must make the investment.

Behavior in school. An important characteristic of a maladjusted student is a negative self-image. Most of the dropouts who had behavior problems in school felt they could not be

successful in school. They had no confidence in themselves, and they seemed not to anticipate for future success. Although the dropouts consistently blamed no one person for their problems in school, they expressed the concern that they did not have anyone in the building to talk to about their problems.

A number of behavioral strategies could be implemented to reduce the chances of an at-risk student causing disciplinary problems:

1. Teachers and administrators must set clear limits. It is imperative that classroom teachers inform students of what constitutes acceptable behavior in the classroom. Although having too many rules can be a disadvantage, one rule students need to understand is that they must show respect for other students. If this rule is understood, classrooms can generally function without major problems.
2. Develop an open door policy. Students must feel that they have support systems in the school. There is a relationship between positive student behavior and willingness of school personnel to see children about their problems at any time.
3. Help all students hold positions of responsibility. Student ownership relates to student self-worth. By investing time in helping students feel better about

themselves, a school will go a long way toward solving disciplinary problems. Larkin High School encourages student involvement in all areas of the school program.

5. Have high expectations for all students. What teachers expect, students readily perceive. When staff members show confidence in their students, they tend to have fewer student behavior problems.
6. Problem solving. To help students learn how to make good decisions, teachers should help students learn critical-thinking skills.
7. Encourage all students to participate in extracurricular activities. Student pride and ownership are important in reducing disciplinary problems.
8. Listen to what students are thinking and feeling. Probably no skill is more important than active listening to quell potentially troublesome student disciplinary situations.
9. Frequent positive reinforcement. Nothing can promote success as much as frequent and appropriate positive reinforcement.
10. Provide instruction at a level where success is possible

SELF

Drug Abuse: Why would at-risk students, who stand the most to lose, risk further failure by involving themselves with drugs? The answer may lie within the question itself: dropouts have found that, although failure can be painful and lonesome, it does not require much work and effort to fail, whereas it does take effort to succeed. Because of continued failure, dropouts have very low self-esteem, which has caused them to seek illogical and sometimes unhealthy options. The effect of drug use is obvious to many: It is impossible for most students to meet and complete the difficult daily academic tasks and to be on drugs at the same time.

There are few, if any, solutions to this serious problem. Somehow educators must provide all children with the thinking skills necessary to deal with complex issues. If this can be done, children will, ideally, be able to face all potential adversity because they will make wise decision. One of these skills is knowing how to assert oneself by saying "no" and still saving face with their friends.

Because drug abuse is a major problem in many cities, drug counseling centers have been established to help young people who have a drug problem. Larkin High School, for example, has worked closely with Community Concern for Alcohol and Drug Abuse (CCAD). The purpose of CCADA is simply to offer to drug users as much good

information as possible about drugs to help them make good decisions.

Nutrition: Studies have documented the importance of students eating well-balanced meals. However, what takes place when a family sits down to have that meal is also important. Many of the persisters in this study revealed that dinner time was not only a time for eating but one for sharing. In fact, some persisters said it was the only time that the entire family had a chance to be together; consequently, it was a time they remembered with positive feelings. Meal time together as a family seemed to be lacking for many of the dropouts.

Church: People who attend church generally have a commitment to their faith. One of the problems with dropouts has been a lack of commitment to anything except immediate gratification. In general, churches, like schools, are family oriented; therefore, where does the single parent fit in? The single parent is usually a divorced mother. Do churches or schools offer "Mom" anything to help her with her needs? If the mother is not interested in church or school, is it surprising that her child is not interested?

Employment: Schools have a responsibility to help at-risk students succeed. Educators know that students who do not want to be in school rarely learn a great deal in class. Is it not the function of the school, then, to create opportunities for success

for each student? To accomplish this objective, the school must provide alternatives to the traditional academic program.

Work-study programs are an alternative for students who are having a difficult time attending the conventional school.

School districts also need more information concerning the vocational interests and abilities of students who are potential dropouts. One way to obtain this information is to hire a vocational diagnostician to assess the vocational, educational, and interpersonal skills of at-risk students. Larkin High School operates a pilot Vocational Diagnostic Center which is equipped with reliable and valid instruments designed to guide individuals to the most appropriate career option.

Individuals who have already dropped out of school often do not have realistic career and vocational goals. A lack of appropriate career choices and vocational skills may be one reason why dropouts have a high rate of unemployment, which costs society an estimated \$3 billion annually (Illinois Association of Truancy Prevention, 1985).

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