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DROPOUT PREVENTION: CURRENT STATE OF MICHIGAN
SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AT RISK

presented by

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of the requirements for

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**DROPOUT PREVENTION: CURRENT STATE OF MICHIGAN
SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AT RISK**

By

Susan Tangeman Carter

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

DROPOUT PREVENTION: CURRENT STATE OF MICHIGAN SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AT RISK

By

Susan Tangeman Carter

The purpose of this study was to gather descriptive data about the dropout-prevention efforts being made by Michigan K-12 public school districts. Specifically, data were collected to determine what programs Michigan districts are currently providing for children at risk, what programs or options they would like to provide, and what inhibiting factors impede the districts' efforts to serve at-risk students. In addition, districts were grouped into categories relating to size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate for purposes of comparison. Programs offered by districts in various categories were also studied.

The project included two parts: a questionnaire sent to all 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts and interviews with educators around the state concerning the dropout problem. Together, the questionnaire and interviews were designed to provide baseline data on dropout-prevention efforts in Michigan K-12 public schools.

The first of these steps was carried out in the context of a larger project being undertaken by the Michigan Department of

Susan Tangeman Carter

Education. The questionnaire served as a means of creating a statewide dropout-prevention network of contact persons in each K-12 public school district. The narrative descriptions of programs, along with survey results and dropout-prevention information, were gathered together in a Children At Risk Resource Manual. It was hoped that this information would prove useful to Michigan Department of Education policy makers and planners in the individual school districts.

The analysis of the data showed that Michigan K-12 public school districts are heavily committed to dropout prevention. Programs deemed most important and most often provided were remedial instruction, attendance policies and procedures, vocational programs, and substance-abuse programs. Respondents expressed concern about unstable families, lack of support for schools from parents, and lack of funding. Staff development and strategies for involving the community were found to be important but often were not provided.

Conclusions of the study supported current research about the importance of size and close personal relationships in dropout prevention. Educators saw an increased need for more programs at the preschool and elementary levels and for counseling and parent education at all levels.

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To my family and friends
with gratitude for their support and assistance,
especially
Phil, Matt, Liz, Gini, and Chuck,
who always believed I could do it;
and to the children at risk who inspired this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Dropout Crisis

Dropout prevention has been identified as "the most important issue in the national agenda today" (Hornbeck, 1988). Literature on dropouts contains statistics showing a dropout rate today of 27% nationwide and as much as 50% to 60% in the inner cities (Hess & Greer, 1986; Pallas, 1986). Students who drop out of school before graduation have difficulty finding and keeping jobs, they often turn to crime and substance abuse, and many become teenage parents ("Dealing With Dropouts," 1987). In addition to exacerbating serious social problems, dropping out costs the citizens of this country between \$70 billion and \$200 billion per year in lost tax revenues, welfare payments, and crime prevention (Catterall, 1985; Ferguson, 1987).

Concern About Dropouts

Dropout rates in the past exceeded those of today. In 1950, 40% of students failed to graduate from high school (Tanner, 1982). But the problem becomes critical today for two reasons. First, researchers have found that the dropout rate is now rising, and they have predicted that for the year 2000 it will again reach 40% (Titone, 1979). Second, with increasing technology, jobs for

dropouts are dwindling rapidly. The Adult Literacy Task Force (1988) reported that "many of our people do not possess the skills that today's economy demands" (p. 1).

Educators, politicians, businessmen, and community leaders are speaking out about the present crisis in education, decrying the lack of basic skills on the part of high school graduates and the high rate of dropping out before graduation (MDC Inc., 1988). Legislation is being passed in states throughout the nation to fund dropout-prevention efforts. According to Rumberger (1986), "More research has appeared on the problem of dropouts in the last two years than perhaps the previous fifteen" (p. 1). In addition to the alarming rise in dropout rates, other factors add to the seriousness of this major social problem.

Social Problems

When large numbers of students leave school before graduation, many social problems arise (Catterall, 1985). Students who drop out of school before graduation have difficulty finding and keeping jobs, often turn to crime and substance abuse, and many become teenage parents (Earle & Roach, 1987; Gangs, 1988; Leigh & Peterson, 1986; Wayne County, 1987). Students in the inner cities find drug pushing more lucrative than finishing school and finding a job. According to MDC Inc. (1988), "For too many of our youth, the easy money of the drug world offers more incentives than our education system" (p. 2).

Economic Costs

In addition to the social costs to individuals and communities, the economic costs of dropping out are staggering. According to Ferguson (1987), dropping out costs the citizens of this country approximately \$77 billion per year in lost tax revenues, welfare, and crime prevention. Economic costs to individual dropouts are high, as well. MDC Inc. (1988) reported that "real, mean earnings of 20- to 24-year-old male dropouts declined 41.6 percent between 1978 and 1984" (p. 2). The decline for Hispanic young men for the same period was 38.6%. The decline for young black males was 61.3%. Income for black male college graduates in the same period rose by 16.6%.

Personal Costs

Finally, educators have expressed concern that students who drop out of school do not feel a part of society. Statistics on crime, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy indicate that in large numbers dropouts turn to activities that harm society (Van denHeuvel, 1986). Thus, some believe that dropouts constitute an alienated minority that threatens our democratic way of life (Ekstrom, 1986; Ferguson, 1987).

Significance of the Dropout Crisis

Increasing numbers of students in this country are failing to reach adulthood with the skills they must have to provide for their own needs (Wehlage, 1986). At-risk students who receive adequate assistance strengthen their communities and the nation; those who

are not given enough help often become lifelong drains on the economy and on society ("Dealing With Dropouts," 1987). The social problems related to dropping out, particularly substance abuse, crime, and teenage pregnancy, have attracted the attention of politicians and the public. Those who have studied the problem believe that with effort, planning, and commitment on the part of all citizens, this problem can be better addressed (Adult Literacy Task Force, 1988; Hahn, 1987; Howe, 1985).

Dropouts in Michigan

Dropout Rates

As in the nation, the dropout rate in Michigan is currently around 27% (Michigan Youth Dropout Prevention Report, 1988), with dropout rates in some major urban schools as high as 50% (Detroit Dropout Prevention Collaborative, 1987; Michigan Department of Education Dropout Report, 1987). Governor Blanchard (1989), President DiBiaggio of Michigan State University, legislators, school superintendents, and others have expressed grave concern over the extent of the dropout problem in Michigan.

Past Dropout-Prevention Efforts

Over the past decade, the Michigan Department of Education, interested citizens, and individual schools have taken action to improve schools and to lower the dropout rate. Concern for equity in the 1970s resulted in the funding and implementation of many programs designed to broaden the base of options provided in public

schools and to provide assistance to students who need extra help with academic skills. Vocational education, remedial instruction, alternative schools, and other alternative programs were created in many districts throughout the state. These programs have proven to be effective. Organizations such as the Urban Alliance and the Southeast Michigan Dropout Prevention Network have been formed to take action. The State Board of Education and the Michigan Department of Education invested substantial funding and guidance in these efforts.

Current Dropout-Prevention Efforts

Recently, more aggressive steps have been taken to serve students at risk. In the last few years, the Michigan Department of Education has taken the initiative in developing and implementing innovative programs such as Operation Graduation, the Detroit Compact, and the Tuition Incentive Program. In 1989, the Preschool Readiness and Enrichment Program (PREP) was launched and will be expanded over the next four years to cover every "at risk" four year old in Michigan. Financial incentives will be provided to districts that adopt a three- to five-year school-improvement plan (Blanchard, 1989).

Continuing Needs

Past efforts to raise standards have yielded results, particularly with respect to raising achievement levels, the Board's second goal. Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)

scores reached their highest level in 15 years. Yet the dropout problem continues.

Although it is known that the social and economic costs of dropouts in Michigan are reaching crisis proportions, and efforts at the state level are well documented, little is known about what programs and approaches local Michigan K-12 school districts are using to address the dropout problem.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers and educators in Michigan and throughout the country have found that dropout prevention and remediation is a complex task. Many different approaches to the problem are possible. Information and data are lacking about the current efforts that schools in Michigan are making to reduce the dropout rate by serving at-risk students.

Ripley (1977) contended that a clear understanding of existing conditions is a vital prerequisite for planning and implementation of social programs. Thus, to plan further activities and coordinate the efforts of educators around the state, more needs to be learned about what local K-12 Michigan public school districts are doing now.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gather descriptive data about the efforts schools were making to serve at-risk students. The project included two parts: a questionnaire sent to all 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts and a series of interviews

with educators around the state concerning the dropout problem. Together, the questionnaire and interviews were designed to provide baseline data on dropout-prevention efforts in Michigan K-12 public schools.

The first of these steps was carried out in the context of a larger project being undertaken by the Michigan Department of Education. The questionnaire served as a means of creating a statewide dropout-prevention network of contact persons in each K-12 public school district. The narrative descriptions of programs, along with survey results and dropout-prevention information, were gathered together in a Children At Risk Resource Manual. It was hoped that this information would prove useful to Michigan Department of Education policy makers and planners in the individual school districts.

Study Design and Objectives

Study Design

The data-gathering process included a questionnaire sent to the superintendent of each of the 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts. Superintendents were asked to nominate a person in their district as Children At Risk Contact Person who would describe, using the survey questionnaire, the programs or approaches their district was using and those they would like to use. Respondents were to indicate the level of emphasis for each program, using a six-point Likert scale. They were also asked to indicate, using a Likert scale, the inhibiting factors that make it difficult for them

to prevent students from dropping out and the importance of each. Finally, respondents were asked to answer two open-ended questions about circumstances that affect the dropout rate in their district and information or assistance they would like from the Michigan Department of Education.

In addition to the written questionnaire, interviews were conducted with educators in various school districts to add to information obtained through the questionnaires. Finally, in preparation for correlating the data received on programs with other variables seen as relating to dropouts, data were gathered from Michigan Department of Education documents on dropout rates, school size, and expenditure per pupil.

Study Objectives

The specific objectives of this project were to obtain data about what programs existed in Michigan K-12 public schools in 1988. These objectives were to:

1. Gather information about what all 526 Michigan K-12 public schools were doing to serve children at risk, specifically: (a) to examine by way of a statewide survey of all K-12 Michigan public school districts what programs these districts were currently offering (current efforts), (b) to examine what approaches educators in these districts would like to be using to help at-risk students (desired efforts), (c) to study inhibiting factors that prevented these districts from deterring dropouts as much as they would like, and (d) to examine discrepancies between current and desired efforts

in order to gauge priorities as respondents saw them at the time of the survey.

2. Organize school districts into two categories--high dropout rate and low dropout rate--in order to compare them as to the following: (a) current efforts, (b) desired efforts, and (c) inhibiting factors.

3. Categorize schools in two other ways--by size and by expenditure per pupil--to determine whether schools in like categories were similar with respect to (a) current efforts, (b) desired efforts, and (c) inhibiting factors.

4. Examine relationships between the following variables: (a) school size and dropout rate and (b) expenditure per pupil and dropout rate.

In addition, Michigan educators were asked about circumstances that affect the dropout rate in their districts and about what information or assistance districts need from the Michigan Department of Education.

Research Questions

Research questions were formulated to gather information relating to each of the above objectives. Thus, questions were asked about programs offered and inhibiting factors, size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rates. Research questions examined in this study were:

- I. Questions relating to all 526 Michigan public school districts:
 - A. What programs or approaches are Michigan K-12 public school districts currently providing in an effort to reduce dropout rates among children at risk?
 - B. What programs or approaches would Michigan K-12 public school districts most like to offer?
 - C. What inhibiting factors are being experienced by the 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts?
 - D. In which program options are the greatest discrepancies found between current efforts and desired efforts toward meeting the needs of children at risk among Michigan K-12 public school districts?
- II. Questions relating to districts with high dropout rates as compared to those with low dropout rates:
 - A. What differences exist in current efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?
 - B. What differences exist in desired efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?
 - C. What differences exist in inhibiting factors related to meeting the needs of children at risk between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?
- III. Questions relating to school districts in categories according to size and expenditure per pupil:
 - A. Do school districts in various size categories differ with respect to:
 1. current efforts?
 2. desired efforts?
 3. inhibiting factors?
 - B. Do school districts in various expenditure-per-pupil categories differ with respect to:
 1. current efforts?
 2. desired efforts?
 3. inhibiting factors?

IV. Questions relating to relationships between the variables size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate:

- A. Do smaller school districts in Michigan have lower dropout rates than larger schools?
- B. Do districts with larger expenditures per pupil have lower dropout rates?

In addition, two open-ended questions included on the survey were:

- 1. What circumstances unique to your school district or district population do you think affect the dropout rate?
- 2. What information or assistance would you like to receive from the Michigan Department of Education?

Size and Expenditure Per Pupil

In looking at what is being done to help children at risk, the focus of this study was on school-related factors believed to affect these students. Among the many factors that many believe are directly related to what schools have been able to do for at-risk students are school size and expenditure per pupil. Many other factors within schools, in families, and in the community affect dropout rates. Transience, the prevalence of crime and substance abuse, the percentage of traditional families, educational backgrounds of parents, family income levels and expectations, attitudes toward schooling, and other circumstances all contribute to students' chances for success in school. Because many of these data would be difficult to collect, and because it was not possible to examine all the relevant factors at once, the two variables discussed below were studied.

School Size

McDill, Natriello, and Pallas (1986) identified school size as a critical factor in reducing the dropout rate. They wrote:

Of all the alterable characteristics of schools discussed in the literature, size of school is the one most emphasized. Researchers and practitioners are practically unanimous in asserting its importance. (p. 3)

Morgan and Alwin (1980) said that "size is conceptualized as a basic structural feature of social groups" and has been viewed "as the most important condition affecting the structure of organizations" (p. 243). Butchart (1986) agreed. He saw both small class size and small school size as a "crucial element" of success for potential dropouts. He wrote:

Virtually all the literature cites size as a crucial element. Class size (in alternative schools) is small, allowing individualization of instruction and close relationships between teachers and students. School size reduces the bureaucratization and impersonality of most urban and consolidated high schools, and facilitates closer relationships between a student and his peers, the faculty, and the activities of the institution. (p. 15)

Although in this study district size rather than class size or school size was examined, the same advantages would appear to exist within a school district for several reasons. First, large districts most often have large schools. Second, in large districts, close relationships between school staff and parents or other members of the community would appear to be more difficult to establish. The large class sizes often found in large, urban schools would also tend to inhibit individualization and personalized learning.

Expenditure Per Pupil

Suburban areas often have the added advantage of more money to spend on students and a higher socioeconomic level, a societal factor considered to relate very closely to dropout rates (Adult Literacy Task Force, 1988; Michigan Interagency Committee on the Black Child, 1986). When expenditures per pupil are high, services for at-risk students are more likely to be available. The wealth factor almost appears to be a necessary prerequisite for innovativeness among public schools. Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), referring to innovations of all kinds, stated that "the biggest single predictor of school innovativeness is educational cost per pupil" (p. 59).

Although research has not isolated money as a single determining factor, it is generally acknowledged that programs and options require additional people and time, which often costs money (Institute for Educational Leadership, 1987). Whereas higher expenditures per pupil alone will not solve the dropout problem anywhere, many educators strongly believe those expenditures can be a critical component in the struggle.

Limitations

Study Based on Self-Report and Self-Perceptions

This survey provided data based on the perceptions of respondents. The data from the questionnaire reflect subjective assessments of what each school was doing, of what it would like to do, and of the problems it has encountered. No attempt was made in

this study to determine the validity of the respondents' perceptions.

Timing of the Questionnaire

The survey was conducted in April and May, a time of the year when school personnel are tired and busy. The answers obtained might have been less thoroughly thought out than they would have been earlier in the year, and this could affect the quality of the data.

Delimitations

Program Effectiveness Not Evaluated

This study included an examination of programs and approaches that the 526 Michigan public school districts were using at the time of the study to meet the needs of at-risk students. No attempt was made to compare or evaluate the extent, quality, or effectiveness of programs or approaches used to serve children at risk.

Program Definitions Not Provided

Names of programs were largely self-explanatory (i.e., remedial instruction in math and reading). In one case, however, the program title could be interpreted in various ways. Those in vocational education understand that comprehensive vocational programs refer to districts that offer "15 or more wage earning Office of Education codes" (Michigan Department of Education, 1978). However, questionnaire respondents might have understood this title to mean

that various vocational courses were offered. For this reasons, results for this program could be misleading.

Scope of the Study

In addition to programming options, school-related factors in this study were size, dropout rate, and expenditure per pupil. No other school-related or nonschool factors relating to dropouts were studied.

Generalizability

Conclusions reached as a result of doing this survey apply to Michigan only. However, cogent findings may be generated that other states may wish to pursue in their own circumstances. For example, in the case of the Wisconsin survey, Fredisdorf (1987) found that a very large number of persons in the state perceived a strong need for community collaboration in program efforts, but very few were using these approaches. Therefore, it would be useful to determine where and to what extent similar results were obtained in this study. As more and more states gather data on programs, evidence may warrant future analyses, research, and action.

Importance of the Study

Efforts to serve children at risk are fraught with problems. When the Michigan Department of Education was charged with the task of initiating efforts to help local school districts with this difficult task, obtaining baseline data describing "what is" became crucial to planners. This project provided new knowledge regarding

perceptions about current and desired efforts of Michigan K-12 school districts toward meeting the needs of children at risk. Information gathered about perceptions of need and about problems regarding programming for children at risk was also obtained.

In addition, data relating to size, expenditure per pupil, dropout rates, and programming efforts were compared and contrasted to determine how the perceptions and efforts of schools with low dropout rates differed from those of schools with high dropout rates and how schools of different sizes and per-pupil expenditures compared with each other. An effort was made to determine whether certain programs received more emphasis in low-dropout districts than in high-dropout districts and to determine the effect of size and expenditure per pupil on dropout rate and programming.

Knowing what the current status of programs for at-risk youths in Michigan is, it then becomes possible to look at means of coordinating activities, to identify possible voids in programming and approaches, and to generate alternatives. Thus, the study serves as a foundation for future studies, making possible comparisons between the conditions of the present and those in the future. State department officials and others expressed their conviction that the data gathered are needed by planners and would be useful to them.

Finally, it was thought that the study could prove useful to researchers and educators in other states by providing both a means of examining programs in their states and as a source of data to which theirs may be compared. To the extent that similar studies

reach parallel conclusions, patterns may become apparent that will help state and local planners set priorities and objectives.

Overview

An overview of the dropout problem and the purpose, scope, and design of this study were provided in Chapter I. The remaining chapters include a review of the literature pertaining to dropouts, a description of the methodology used in this study, and a summary of the results obtained from the survey questionnaire and from interviews with educators around the state. Finally, conclusions arrived at as a result of the study are presented, recommendations made, and reflections shared.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is a summary of research relating to children at risk and dropouts. It includes an explanation of why dropouts have become a critical problem in recent years, a discussion of the characteristics of dropouts and children at risk, a description of identification procedures and of programs currently being implemented to reduce the dropout rate, and recommendations about what might be done in the future to help solve what has become a national crisis.

Dropout Rates

Educators studying the dropout problem often begin by looking at the number of dropouts nationwide, statewide, or within individual districts or schools. By examining these statistics they can determine the numbers of students involved. These data are needed so that planners may accurately assess the extent of the dropout problem, evaluate the success of efforts to reduce the dropout rate, and make comparisons among districts and states, and within the nation, over time.

Historical Trends

In the first half of this century, it was not expected that all students in America's public schools would graduate from high school. Since the 1960s, it has become more universally accepted by educators and by society that all students should graduate from high school. Concerns about equity that arose and became dominant in the 1960s and 1970s led to many changes in schooling, which resulted in a substantial increase in the number of students graduating from high school. According to Tanner (1972), the percentage of high school graduates over the last 100 years was as follows:

1869:	2.0%
1900:	6.0%
1950:	60.0%
1970:	80.9%

In most recent years, however, figures cited by researchers have ranged from 74% to 76%, an unprecedented drop in the percentage of students graduating from high school. According to Sewell, Palmo, and Manning (cited in Weber, 1986), the number of dropouts today is even higher than the commonly cited data would indicate. They stated that "almost 30 percent of students who enter fifth grade leave school prior to graduation" (p. vii). Weber added, "This dropout rate . . . translates into approximately 1,000,000 youth dropping out of school annually" (p. vii).

Michigan Dropout Rates

According to figures included in the Michigan State Department of Education (1986) report on the condition of Michigan education, statewide dropout rates are approximately 24%. However, according

to this report, dropout rates in some schools reached a yearly high of 15% (or 50% to 60% for a cohort from a single graduating class over their 12 years of schooling).

As in other states, reports on dropout rates in Michigan can vary. Recent news reports concerning dropout rates in Michigan have reflected confusing and contradictory data. In one report, Russell (1989) stated: "The sixth annual federal report on state-by-state educational progress found that only 62 percent of Michigan's students graduated with classmates in 1987" (p. 1B). This would result in a dropout rate of 38%. State Superintendent Bemis said the federal report was erroneous and that statistics had not been updated because "in 1985-1986, about 75 percent of the state's 525 school districts failed to report dropout and graduation information" (Russell, 1989, p. 6B). However, in another article, Bemis was reported to have said that the 25% high school dropout rate "is based on 1988 graduation rates compiled by the State Department of Education from figures supplied by 93 percent of state school districts" (George, 1989, p. 12A). The dropout rate has now been reexamined by the U.S. Department of Education, and the lower 25% rate has been accepted as valid.

Conflicts Over Dropout-Rate Statistics

Unfortunately, statistics on dropouts are often unreliable, particularly in districts where accountability is very highly stressed and districts may feel under pressure to report lower rates (Hammack, 1987). However, while individual schools may

intentionally submit distorted data, the problem of obtaining accurate information is further complicated by the complexities of computing dropout statistics. Procedures vary from district to district and state to state. Accounting procedures of individual schools may not be adequate to provide accurate figures (Hammack, 1987).

A number of valid conflicts are involved in calculating dropout rates. Differences of opinion arise concerning the rules and procedures to be used in counting dropouts. Unless uniform procedures are defined and used by districts throughout the state, comparisons and judgments based on the data cannot be made with any validity.

In many Michigan districts, for example, officials do not count students who have transferred to adult education or GED programs as dropouts, even though they no longer attend the regular school program. When Detroit followed this procedure, dropout rates declined 8.43%, from 41.31% in 1986 to 32.88% in 1988. If students enrolled in adult education and GED programs had been counted as dropouts, the rate for 1988 would have been 40.14%, a decrease of only 1.17 percentage points over a two-year period (Spratling, 1989).

Montgomery (cited in Spratling, 1989), a consultant for the Citizens Education Committee, believed this method of calculating the dropout rate is "problematic" because GED and adult education programs are "different and not as good as completion of the

full-time day school program" (p. 15A). He thought that students who complete these alternative programs are "not as well prepared to pursue further education or training" (p. 15A). Research has supported Montgomery's conclusion. Pallas (1986) reported: "Researchers at the University of Wisconsin have found that GED holders who enrolled in college were much less likely to graduate than regular day high school graduates" (p. 167). Still, as Pallas pointed out, students obtaining GEDs show persistence, ability, and ambition "exceeding that of the typical high school dropout" (p. 167). Also, many districts feel justified in counting students enrolled in adult education programs because these are funded by the district.

According to Cain (cited in Spratling, 1989), Assistant Superintendent for Community and School Affairs, Michigan Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Education is working on a uniform definition of dropouts. By this definition, he said, students who "complete other state or district-approved programs would not be considered dropouts" (p. 15A). Thus, the current trend is to count students as dropouts only if they leave the educational system entirely.

As this example illustrates, the way in which the dropout rates are calculated makes an important difference in the data. Therefore, reliable data from which comparisons can be made require the use of uniform accounting procedures within and among states. Thus, the reader is cautioned to note the basis upon which rates were reported in each of the studies in this chapter.

The National Dropout Prevention Center, headed by Dr. Cain of the Michigan Department of Education, recently published two reports on defining dropouts and on procedures for identifying potential dropouts (Hamby, 1989). As schools become aware of and use this information, dropout data in Michigan should become more reliable.

Dropouts and Children at Risk--Who Are They?

Definition of Dropouts

Dropouts are students who leave school before earning a high school diploma. The following definition developed by the Michigan Department of Education (1988) describes a dropout as:

A student from a regular K-12 program who has been enrolled in a district but leaves, for any reason other than death, the regular school program in that district before graduating and does not re-enroll in another regular K-12 school program.

This definition is comparable to the one recommended by the National Dropout Prevention Center for adoption by all states. The Center has recommended that a dropout be defined as "a student who (for any reason other than death) leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school/institution" (Hamby, 1989, p. 5). A more commonly used definition is that provided by the Bureau of Census, which reads: "Dropouts are persons who are not enrolled in school and who are not high school graduates (or the equivalent)" (Dropping Out, 1987, p. 5).

Definition of Children at Risk

The term "children at risk" was defined by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for the purpose of implementing

their 1987 Children at Risk legislation requiring schools to identify children at risk and provide programs for them. According to this definition, the term "children at risk" means K-12 pupils whose school achievement, progress toward graduation, or preparation for employment are in serious jeopardy due to one or more of the following:

- One or more years behind their grade level in reading or math basic skills achievement (K-8).
 - Three or more credits behind their age/grade level in credits earned for graduation (9-12).
 - Chronic truancy or absenteeism.
 - School-age parent.
 - Adjudicated delinquent.
 - Personal or family drug or alcohol abuse.
 - Family trauma such as death, divorce, violence, separation, or unemployment.
 - Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.
 - Ethnically, economically, or linguistically disadvantaged.
- (Fredisdorf, 1986, p. 132)

Why Dropouts Are a Problem Today

Regardless of the exact number of dropouts, educators agree that dropping out of school is a far graver problem today for both society and the individual than it was 30 or more years ago. This section includes a description of the many problems that result when students fail to graduate from high school.

Dropouts and Unemployment

The most urgent concern facing dropouts today is unemployment (Ohio State University, 1984). Students need to be better educated now than in the past to find jobs (National Academy of Sciences, 1984). Whereas, in 1950, 34% of all jobs were available to workers

who lacked high school diplomas, by 1970 only 8% of jobs could be filled by dropouts (READ, 1984). As more and more middle-level jobs disappear from the economy, high school dropouts have difficulty obtaining even low-paying jobs (Adult Literacy Task Force, 1988). In his book Slums and Society, Conant (cited in Maine, 1987) predicted that "fewer and fewer . . . unskilled workers will be able to obtain jobs in the decade ahead. White collar workers will grow at a more rapid rate than blue collar jobs" (p. 4).

Cage (1984) stated that the unemployment rate for high school dropouts jumped from 19% at the end of 1979 to 25.3% at the end of 1980. The unemployment rate for black teenagers rose from 35% in 1972 to 43% in 1986 (NCREL, 1987). Furthermore, according to Cage, dropouts have difficulty obtaining jobs that would provide them with training to gain needed skills. He reported that "many employers, apprenticeship programs, and the military are unwilling to take high school dropouts" (p. 2). Even federal job assistance programs quite often are open only to high school graduates, leaving dropouts ineligible for this help when they lose their jobs (Maine, 1987, p. 5). And, because of increasing technology, dropouts not only face difficulty obtaining jobs, but also have trouble keeping jobs and getting promotions (Maine, 1987).

Unemployment, in turn, affects education, exacerbating the dropout problem. Steinberg (1987) pointed out:

The dynamics of the labor market critically affect the dropout rate. Many young people simply do not foresee adequate employment opportunities or a place in society, and this, in turn, affects their participation in school. (p. 8)

In the inner cities, educators have difficulty interesting students in learning when the major visible source of income seems to be the sale of illegal drugs (MDC Inc., 1988). In rural areas, too, students learn to subsist on welfare when they see high school graduates unable to find jobs ("Policies," 1987).

Quality Education and Dropouts

In response to the demand from business and the community for students who have high-level skills to meet the requirements of our increasingly complex work world, the proponents of quality education are demanding higher standards for students and for teachers. The Adult Literacy Task Force (1988) explained why society expects excellence in education today. Of the 4.3 million jobs available in 1995, most will be for highly skilled workers. Fifty-two percent of new jobs will require one or more years of college. Thirty-four percent of new jobs will require a high school education. Only 10% of jobs will require one to three years of high school.

Educators concerned with the dropout rate, while acknowledging that students need high-level skills today, see higher standards as a threat to students who are already experiencing failure in school. McDill (1985) stated that "raising standards may increase academic stratification in schools and cause more school failure, with no apparent remedies" (p. 415).

Other studies have explained why the quality education curriculum threatens at-risk students. Some have cited the problem created by a "narrow range of curricular offerings," which, they

have said, "may lead to negative consequences for potential dropouts" (Rosenholtz & Rosenholtz, 1981). At the very least, Natriello and Dornbush (1984) concluded, "low ability students must be provided with additional help as they attempt to meet more demanding standards." In Maine (1987), legislative committee members stated, with reference to the Education Reform Act, that

Many recognized that the procedures required to improve the skills of Maine's high school graduates in general would simultaneously increase pressures on marginal students and that truancy, dropping out and other school failures may well increase.

Most educators agree on the need for additional support for students at risk, particularly in an educational system that is setting higher standards of achievement. However, as MDC Inc. (1988) pointed out, "Only a handful of states have appropriated additional moneys for counseling and remediation for those who will need assistance in reaching these standards" (p. 4). MDC Inc. estimated that "only 5 percent of state education funds are being used specifically for service to at-risk youth" (p. 4).

Also, in the stress on excellence, concern for equity may be forgotten or pushed out. Vocational education, a successful effort to broaden the curriculum and meet the needs of diverse groups, has already been threatened in many areas by the core curriculum requirements (Weber, 1986). Adjustments may need to be made in academic requirements to allow students to participate in vocational courses. Alternatively, vocational courses may need to be redesigned to meet some of the requirements of the core curriculum (Weber, 1986).

Minorities and Urban Problems

Educators studying the dropout problem are concerned with the rising number of minority students in the population. Most of these students live in the inner cities. Students who live in fringe areas or suburbs, whether or not they are minorities, are much less likely to suffer from the conditions described here (Hess & Greer, 1986).

Rising minority population. Minority students (blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans) are growing in numbers with higher birth rates, particularly among unwed mothers, and with immigration. In U.S. News and World Report (May 1983), it was reported that "if current [immigration] rates continue, Hispanics will overtake blacks as the country's largest minority by 2020" (p. A26). By the year 2000, 30% of the population in the United States will comprise minorities (MDC Inc., 1988; National Council of La Raza, 1987). In large cities and even in smaller ones, minorities also constitute 50% or more of the population (Rumberger, 1986) and may, by the year 2000, make up nearly all of the population in our large cities. In Los Angeles in 1982, 78% of total school enrollments consisted of minority students (Plisko & Stern, 1985).

Minorities and dropout rates. The Los Angeles data reported above are important because dropouts are most numerous among minorities--blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans. In Baltimore in 1986, for example, dropout rates for inner-city students were about 50%, with rates of 85% for Native Americans, 50% for

Hispanics, 44% for blacks, and 10% for whites (Baltimore City Public Schools, 1986). In a national study it was found that dropout rates for nonminority students were 15%, whereas those for blacks were 17% and for Hispanics 31% (Ohio State University, 1984). Surveys of the labor market have suggested that minority youths may be less likely than whites to return to school after dropping out ("School Dropouts," 1986).

Racial or cultural factors appear to be linked to other factors that influence dropout rates. For example, location seems to be a significant factor. Dropout rates in Chicago's inner-city districts range from 38% to 57%, whereas those in lakefront or outer fringe areas are much lower (Hess & Greer, 1985). Poverty seems to be linked to reading scores and, thus, to dropout rates (Hess & Greer, 1985).

Racial composition of schools may affect dropout rates. Most often, black and Hispanic students in urban schools that are predominantly black and/or Hispanic drop out at higher rates than those in predominantly white schools (Hess & Greer, 1985).

Deterioration of large cities. In addition to the rise of the minority population, educators concerned with assessing the seriousness of the dropout problem and the prospects for the future consider with alarm the deterioration of large cities. Sternlieb (1983) described what will happen to our largest cities--New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and others--in the next 10 to 20 years. He wrote:

In large, ageing cities, vast neighborhoods housing the least mobile of Americans--the poor, the elderly and new immigrants from other lands--will continue to crumble. The residential parts of central cities will be more a repository for those who have fallen off the train. (U.S. News and World Report, May 1983)

In Michigan, more than 97% of districts with high dropout rates represented urban areas; conversely, urban areas comprised only 34% of districts with low dropout rates ("School Dropouts in Michigan," 1987).

Increases in substance abuse and crime already plague our large cities and will exacerbate the dropout problem, contributing to the decay of the inner-city schools. Seventy to 80% of prison inmates are high school dropouts (Van denHeuvel, 1986). The prisons in Michigan are filled to overflowing, and the general population complains that the streets are still unsafe. How can students survive and learn in such an atmosphere of hopelessness and fear?

In fact, McMillan (1986) detailed the risks faced by young black men in the inner cities. According to McMillan,

The life chances of Black male children are drastically reduced by such alarming facts as:

1. One out of every 22 Black American males will be murdered before the age of 24.
2. Forty or more percent of all prisoners are Black males.
3. One out of every six Black males will be arrested by the time they reach age 19.
4. Unemployment among Black youth ranges between 46% and 52% nationwide. In many large cities, 70% of Black men in the age group 17-35 are unemployed.

Students who live in large urban areas, the majority of whom are minority students, are at greater risk because of serious social and economic problems in major cities (Steinberg, 1987). The Michigan Interagency Committee on the Black Child (1986) stressed

that black children are handicapped in many ways. Some of those mentioned in their report are:

1. Black students are overrepresented in certain special education programs, particularly Educable Mentally Impaired and Learning Disabled classrooms. (p. 14)
2. In the city of Detroit, the infant-mortality rate was 26.8 per 1,000 in 1984 compared to a national average of 10.9 deaths per 1,000 births. (p. 23)
3. Black children were victims in 24 percent of the reported cases of child abuse and neglect in Michigan in 1985. (p. 25)
4. Black children are about three times as likely as White children to have no parent employed. (p. 29)
5. Close to two-thirds of Michigan's Black youth are, today, without gainful employment. (p. 30)

Teenage pregnancy is a particularly alarming factor related to dropouts and is most prevalent in major cities. The Detroit Early School Leavers Project (1987) found that "42% of the girls and 4% of the boys dropped out primarily for reasons of pregnancy or fatherhood." Van DenHeuvel (1986) stated that "over 80% of females and 93% of males receiving Aid to Families of Dependent Children failed to complete high school." In some states, the problem has grown to epidemic proportions. In Louisiana, "26.6% of children are born to unwed [teen] mothers." In Mississippi, the percentage is 32.3% (Project T.E.E.N., 1986). According to the Michigan Interagency Committee on the Black Child (1986), black teens are "twice as likely as White teens nationwide to become pregnant" and are also "more likely to have the child" (p. 5). In addition, the Committee explained that

Almost 60 percent of births to adolescents under 15 occur among Black youth. Black girls account for 27.9 percent of ALL births to teens, and for 47.3 percent of all births to unmarried teens. (p. 5)

Substance abuse presents further substantial obstacles to students' success in school (Mayhew, 1986). The National Center for Health Statistics (NCREL, 1987) reported that "arrests of teens for drug abuse increased 600% between 1960 and 1980" (p. 5). The National Institute for Drug Abuse (NCREL, 1987) estimated that 80% of high school dropouts have drug-related problems.

Finally, schools in major cities are often overcrowded and underfinanced (Hahn, 1987). In addition, community or neighborhood support and a cohesive student body are not characteristics often found in urban schools (Toles et al., 1986).

Cities are plagued, too, by the trend toward the dissolution of the traditional family unit. Wehlage (1986) stated, "50 percent of all children born in 1983 will live with only one parent before reaching age eighteen" (p. 19). Although much has been written, particularly in the press, about the problems of children from single-parent families, this factor does not, in and of itself, place children at risk. The effectiveness of the single parent is more important than the fact that there is only one adult in the family (Garbarino et al., 1986). However, children in families headed by the mother are often poor, and poverty alone has been shown to be closely related to dropping out (MDC Inc., 1988).

Economic Costs

Social problems are intertwined with and compounded by the economic costs of dropping out. In a comprehensive study of social

consequences of the dropout problem, Levin (1972) identified seven consequences of dropping out. These include:

1. Foregone national income--\$237 billion.
2. Foregone tax revenues for support of government services--\$70 billion.
3. Increased demand for social services.
4. Increased crime.
5. Reduced political participation.
6. Reduced intergenerational mobility.
7. Poorer levels of health. (p. 10)

Catterall (1985) reviewed Levin's figures, taking into account additional considerations such as the prevalence of minority students in urban settings today and "the likelihood of discrimination-related shortfalls in earnings" among those who graduate. "Even with the downward adjustments made, the dollar costs today still exceed \$200 billion for each school class across the U.S." (pp. 16-17).

Tax losses alone constitute a major drain on the economy. According to MDC Inc. (1988), if the federal government were to spend \$50 billion over the next ten years, as recommended by the William T. Grant Commission, "it would still be LESS than society's loss of tax dollars from dropouts in a single year over these youths' lifetimes" (p. 5).

These economic and social costs seriously threaten the welfare of individuals who cannot find or keep jobs. Whereas lifetime earnings for high school graduates in 1961 were about \$31,000 more than those for nongraduates, by 1979 the difference had increased to \$260,000 (Michigan Youth Dropout Prevention Report, 1988). High numbers of dropouts dangerously jeopardize our economy as well.

Ramirez (1987) computed various economic costs of dropouts to society. Tragically, the cost of appropriate education for children at risk would be a fraction of what these young people would return to the economy if they were to graduate. Ramirez wrote: "For every dollar expended on prevention and the education of the would-be dropout, nine dollars will be returned" (p. 7).

Research also has indicated that the cost of dropout prevention is lowest when early intervention is provided. One year of compensatory education provided before a student repeats a grade costs \$500. The costs rise to \$3,000 annually after a student repeats a grade (Howe & Edelman, 1985).

Although not all dropouts turn to crime and some graduates commit crimes, the enormous cost of supporting offenders in prison, 80% or more of whom are dropouts, should provide powerful incentives for spending money on dropout prevention and remediation. In September 1989, The Detroit Free Press reported that Michigan's prisons now hold 30,036 people, an increase of 8.8% over 1988. Nationwide, the prison population now stands at 673,565 men and women. At an average cost of \$25,000 per person per year, this means approximately \$16.5 billion per year is being spent on prison inmates alone. Catterall (NCREL, 1987) described the economic effect of dropouts on a community: "In a high school with a 40% dropout rate, \$3.2 billion represents the lost lifetime earnings of the class in which dropouts failed to graduate" (p. 5). Higher costs for health services also add to the ever-rising bill dropouts present to society (Catterall, 1985).

The economic ramifications of dropping out are even more alarming, considering that the "youth cohort is shrinking in relation to the rest of the population" and that "a rising proportion of youth are poor and minority." Steinberg (1987) explained that this means that young people will not be able to support the elderly in the years to come. According to Ferguson (1987), dropouts cost American business \$25 billion a year in training and lost productivity.

Tragically, as Catterall (1987) pointed out, funding for dropout prevention and remediation programs does not begin to approach the costs of dropouts to society. In attempting to explain the discrepancy between need and services, Catterall (1985) mentioned several possible explanations for lack of funding. School officials and legislators appreciate the seriousness of the problem, but dropping out affects local schools directly only in limited ways (i.e., loss of state funds). Costs of unemployment, crime, substance abuse, higher welfare payments, and so on, are borne by society as a whole.

In addition, dropout prevention is both costly and risky. Progress may be slow and success uncertain. Finally, educators do not always agree on the most effective ways to address the problem. Adams (1986) explained that schools may be reluctant to take responsibility for students whose complex problems involve so many factors unrelated to school efforts (i.e., family life, ethnic and economic background, emotional and personality problems, and so on).

Personal Costs

The personal cost to individuals whose lives are destroyed by illiteracy, teen pregnancy, crime, substance abuse, and general hopelessness is incalculable. Ferguson (1987) wrote:

More damaging than the dollar costs . . . is the fact that the dropout crisis threatens to create an underclass of alienated people--people whose disaffection shows up in rising rates of crime, drug use, and teenage pregnancy; people who don't have the skills needed to keep American industry competitive; and, worst of all, people without the enlightenment that's vital in a democracy. (p. 6)

Summary

Whereas social problems have significantly contributed to the rising number of dropouts today, the dropout, in turn, enhances social problems. Unemployment costs taxpayers enormous sums in welfare payments, lost taxes, and prison expenses. Crime, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy dominate the lives of young people in the inner cities. In rural areas, where students drop out because they see no hope for employment, welfare costs are high.

Just as the dropout problem seriously affects the lives of everyone, so researchers believe that all members of society will be needed to work toward a solution. Schools alone have not caused the problem, and schools alone cannot solve it (Hahn, 1987). With the help of parents, volunteers, and business and community groups, educators can lead the overall effort to ensure that every child is given the help he or she needs to become a productive, self-supporting citizen.

Current Efforts to Serve Children at Risk:
Getting Started

In view of the severity of the problem, it is not surprising that many resources are now being brought to bear on the dropout problem. State and federal legislation has been passed, conferences have been presented, networks for communication have been set up, members of the community have been recruited, local schools have planned and implemented programs, and individual teachers have developed approaches to help children at risk either in the regular classroom or in special programs. Following is a description of some of the action that has been taken to serve dropouts and children at risk.

Legislation

Interest in legislation has increased somewhat in recent years, as evidenced by the surge in laws passed by federal and state governments. Some of the legislation that has recently been enacted is as follows:

1. In 1985, federal legislation was passed mandating action by the states on behalf of dropouts.

2. In the past five years, legislation has been passed in numerous states, and funding has been allocated for many local dropout-prevention and remediation programs. In Wisconsin, for example, children-at-risk legislation now requires every school district to identify children at risk and to plan programs and approaches to meet their needs. Appropriate programs must be made available to every identified child (Van denHeuvel, 1986). Maine

passed the Education Reform Act of 1985, requiring action on dropouts (Maine, 1987). North Carolina, Louisiana, California, and other states have made plans for expanding programs for dropouts and children at risk. Michigan has set goals and provided funding for some dropout-prevention programs.

In 1987, the Michigan Department of Education was directed by the Michigan Legislature to:

develop a method of identifying educationally and socially at risk children in elementary schools and make recommendations to the Legislature regarding the best method of working with the at risk children and their families to reduce the educational and social disadvantage.

In November 1988, in its comprehensive statement of goals for the next two years, the Michigan State Board of Education (1988) enunciated two goals for students at risk. These were: "(1) to work toward the reduction of the dropout rate and (2) to work toward increased student achievement" (p. 4). In implementing these goals, the State Board of Education asked the Governor and the Legislature to:

enact an incentive program as part of a compensatory education categorical program to improve student achievement and reduce dropout rates. Provide increased funding so all school districts can offer a pre-school program for four-year-old children who are "at-risk."

The Department of Education and the Governor have placed strong emphasis on school improvement. Financial incentives have been granted to schools that implement school-improvement programs. And, according to the Third Annual Status Report of the Michigan State Board of Education (May 1987), school-improvement efforts have

increased substantially, with approximately one-half of the districts' having adopted long-range school-improvement plans.

In 1987 and 1989, under the leadership of Dr. Cain, Assistant Superintendent for School and Community Affairs, the Michigan Department of Education sponsored statewide dropout-prevention conferences in Detroit and Flint to provide information about dropout prevention to educators and to stimulate their awareness of and interest in the activities others have found effective in reducing dropouts. In 1989, parents were encouraged to attend the conference as well, and sessions were provided for them.

As yet, although most districts have programs that meet some needs of at-risk students, few districts have focused efforts specifically on serving children at risk. According to the status report, less than one-quarter of the districts have a written policy on dropout prevention (Michigan State Board of Education, 1988). Still, many of the new school-improvement plans will involve helping students at risk. All of the innovative measures are designed to keep young people in school and to provide incentives for them to learn.

Identifying Children at Risk-- Characteristics

Before planning ways to serve children at risk, educators have had to study these students to determine who they are and why they drop out. Extensive research has been done on characteristics, correlates, and reasons for dropping out. Some of the most well-known studies are the Current Population Survey (CPS), the Common

Core of Data (CCD), and High School and Beyond (HS&B) (Pallas, 1986). The research presented below has shown that educators have explored and identified characteristics, correlates, and reasons for dropping out.

Research on characteristics has led to agreement on multiple factors as causes and indicators of potential dropouts. The particular factors that apply to any individual child will often be different, and most often a variety of factors will apply in the case of any individual student (Grant & Slecter, 1986).

Schreiber (1962) listed nine reasons for leaving school before graduation. These included reading retardation, grade retention, subject failure, low intelligence, family attitudes, the organization and size of the school, low self-image, general dislike of school, and lack of interest in school. In Michigan, the Michigan School Holding Power Committee (Michigan Department of Public Instruction, 1960) found 20 reasons for dropping out. These were:

1. Consistent failure to achieve.
2. Grade level placement two or more years below average for age.
3. Irregular attendance and frequent tardiness.
4. Active antagonism to teachers and principals.
5. Marked disinterest in school, with feelings of "not belonging."
6. Low scholastic aptitude.
7. Low reading ability.
8. Frequent changes in school.
9. Nonacceptance of school staff.
10. Nonacceptance of school mates.
11. Friends either younger or much older.
12. Unhappy family situation.
13. Marked differences from school mates, differences in size, interests, social class.

14. Inability to match normal financial expenditures of classmates.
15. Nonparticipation in extracurricular activities.
16. Inability to compete with brothers or sisters or ashamed of them.
17. Performance consistently below potential.
18. Serious physical or emotional handicaps.
19. Being a discipline case.
20. Record of delinquency. (p. 17)

Wisconsin uses four categories of 16 characteristics in identifying at-risk students: family, school, personal, and community (Van denHeuvel, 1987, p. 2). These are:

1. Family

Child abuse and neglect
Divorce and separation
Parental apathy
Family crisis and/or poverty

2. Personal

Low self-image
Truancy/absenteeism
Disruptive behavior
Problems with parents or other family members

3. School

Lack of positive, cooperative relationships between and among students, staff, parents, and administrators
Inadequate discipline policies and/or practices
Lack of alternative schools/programs to meet needs of "at-risk" groups
Lack of collaborative teamwork among school and community professionals

4. Community

Lack of community support services
Lack of links between school and community services
Lack of preventive mental health programs, such as those that address drug, alcohol, or family problems

Poverty, as well as ethnic background, has proven to be a key correlate of dropping out. Whereas 50% of lower-lower-class

students drop out, only 2% of upper-upper-class youths leave before graduation (Plisko & Stern, 1985). According to Hahn (1987), dropouts are three times more likely than high school graduates to come from families that receive welfare.

The Baltimore City Public Schools (1986, p. 13) divided 33 factors into three categories: family-related factors, non-school-related factors, and school-related factors. These are:

1. Family-related factors:

- Excessively stressful home life
- Communication between home and school usually poor
- Single-parent household
- Racial or ethnic minority
- Low educational level of parents
- Non-English-speaking home
- Siblings or parents have been dropouts
- Tend to come from low-income families
- More mobile than other students
- Pregnancy

2. Non-school-related factors:

- Low self-concept/esteem
- Immature, suggestible, easily distracted
- Frequent health problems
- Friends are outside of school, usually older dropouts
- Early marriage
- Social adjustment and court-related problems
- Work offer and desire to work
- Boredom/lack of interest
- Lack of motivation
- Substance abuse

3. School-related factors:

- Absenteeism/truancy/frequent tardiness
- Poor grades
- Low math and reading scores (at least one year behind)
- Failure in one or more schools
- Failure of grade
- Lack of encouragement to stay in school
- Feelings of rejection by school/feelings of alienation
- Gifted and talented student frequently bored with school
- Disruptive behavior and rebellious attitudes toward authority

Loners/not accepted by peers
 Classified as slow learners
 Have repeated at least one grade
 Not accepted or respected by teachers

McDill (1985) stressed the multidimensional nature of causes for dropping out and suggested that educators and schools should attempt to address non-school-related factors as well as those directly related to school. He wrote:

Both the causes of, and the self-reported reasons for, dropping out of high school paint a multi-dimensional picture of the dropout problem. School, family, and economic factors all are implicated in the problem, and there are clear sex and, to a lesser extent, racial/ethnic differences in the importance of various factors. (p. 419)

A factor infrequently mentioned that may be important, particularly in schools with high dropout rates, is the influence of friends who drop out (Howard & Anderson, 1978). Another key correlate included in the Baltimore list is English proficiency. Hahn (1987) reported that "three times as many Spanish language background Hispanic students drop out during 10th grade or earlier as do English language background Hispanic youth" (p. 23).

Identifying Students at Risk-- Procedures

Program planners, looking at the varied characteristics of the population they must serve, have to decide which characteristics or correlates they will use in an identification process. Since the procedure they design must be practical in order to work, districts need to narrow the list of indicators. The Michigan State Department of Education has recommended indicators that schools might use in early identification of children at risk. Some of the

family information can be most helpful in the early elementary grades before other data become available. The Michigan Department of Education's recommended identification process suggests staff examine varied indicators at each level from kindergarten to grade 12 (Michigan Children At Risk Resource Manual, 1989). These indicators, which can be determined from school records, are:

<u>Level</u>	<u>Indicator</u>
K-2	1. Parental education attainment. 2. Single versus two-parent home. 3. Free or reduced-price lunch. 4. Repeated grade or entrance to kindergarten. 5. Home language other than English. 6. School absenteeism. 7. Suspensions/disciplinary record. 8. Parental involvement in child's education.
3-5	9. Standardized test scores. 10. Participation in extracurricular activities. 11. MEAP scores.
6-8	All of the above except 2 and 8 and the following: 12. Grade point average. 13. Number of failing grades.
9-12	Same variables as for levels 6-8, plus: 14. Type of curriculum.

Many educators believe it is necessary to keep the identification process as simple as possible in order to focus more effort on programming efforts. Baltimore City Public Schools (1986), for example, narrowed their list of possible risk indicators to six:

1. Attendance--45 or more days absent.
2. Standardized reading score--1 or more years below grade level.
3. Proficiency/Maryland Functional Results--failing 2 or more tests.

4. Disciplinary removal(s)--2 or more.
5. Suspension(s)--1 or more.
6. Retention at grade.

As with the Michigan criteria, these data are easily obtained from school records.

Some schools, cognizant of the fact that absenteeism is often found to be the best predictor and also one of the major causes of dropouts, focus solely on absenteeism. Enterprise High requires that a student be out of school for 91 days in order to qualify for the program, unless he or she is referred to the program by school officials (Benedict, 1987). For a high school program in California, Titone (1979) described another quick way of selecting students. In this program, students who received one or more "F's" after the first quarter of the ninth grade were placed in a three-stage program designed to prevent them from dropping out.

Although this method of identifying students in need of additional help may seem too rudimentary, some schools may fail to provide help because the identification and monitoring procedures themselves require more effort than teachers can give. Monitoring forms such as those used in the Baltimore City Public Schools can be used to reduce paperwork while picking up as many children as possible who need help. In addition, Wisconsin requires that any child whose parents request help be provided for under the children-at-risk legislation. A similar criterion could be used by schools in addition to whatever guidelines and monitoring procedures they have found workable.

Research on Successful Programs and Approaches

Program Models

Extensive research has been done in recent years, particularly on the characteristics of dropouts, reasons for dropping out, and procedures to be used for identification. Less research has been done on dropout-prevention programs. Martin (1987) expressed the frustration of some educators who believe that too often schools are slow to use what has been learned about the characteristics of children at risk in implementing programs. He wrote: "Since potential dropouts can now be identified, it is the task of educators to develop prevention programs that . . . meet the needs of these students" (p. 7).

Lack of evaluation. Although programs have been initiated in numerous school districts with varying rates of success, most of these programs have not been properly evaluated (Rumberger, 1986). In particular, evaluations fail to measure both effectiveness and cost of programs. In some cases, programs are new and results are not yet known (Mann, 1985). In most situations, however, evaluation consists of counting student retention rate in the program, of counting the number of students who have graduated from high school while in the program, and/or of comparing the school dropout rates before and after the program was established. Sometimes subjective data are gathered from program teachers and/or participants to provide some assessment of the program's effectiveness. Well-planned, valid evaluation techniques are avoided because of the cost in time, energy, and money (Rumberger, 1987).

Because of the problems involved in systematic evaluation, little is known about the effectiveness of particular program types and specific program features (Mann, 1987; Stern et al., 1985). Many educators think that the bottom line is whether students come to the program consistently and whether they complete the program. If the purpose of the program is to keep kids in school, there is validity to this approach, but it does not tell evaluators much about why a program or program feature worked, or how the program affected achievement. Nor can evaluators compare costs per student for different program models.

Nevertheless, many programs have been started at the local level in schools throughout the country. Some of these programs are being undertaken by school staffs without additional pay; others are being funded by local, state, or federal funds. Other programs that address specific problems known to be associated with dropouts, such as reading retardation, have been funded and in operation for years. Chapter I remedial reading and math programs fit this category.

Single-dimensional versus multidimensional programs. In designing programs to meet the varied needs of children at risk, planners plan either single-dimensional programs aimed at one part of the population (adolescent parents, disciplinary programs, summer remediation, and so on) or multidimensional programs designed to meet a variety of needs. In Dealing With Dropouts (1987), the urban superintendents stressed that effective programs must be

multidimensional in order to address the complex problems of children at risk. Town ("Policies," 1987) also endorsed the need for a multidisciplinary approach because of the multiplicity of predictive factors related to dropping out. Because of their varied needs, few students can be adequately helped with a single approach.

Rhoades (1988), on the other hand, warned against the risks of using what he called the "shotgun" approach and advised schools to use single-dimensional programs with limited, observable, and measurable objectives. Most schools begin with single-dimensional programs because they often cost less and are more easily initiated.

Types of models. Some of the models used in Massachusetts (Massachusetts, 1987) are multidimensional, whereas others target single causes. In most schools using single-dimensional approaches, more than one is used. With coordination among single-dimensional programs, a school can gradually build a multidimensional program.

A list of model programs in Massachusetts includes the following:

1. Counseling/tutorial collaborative (includes employment, family services, health, etc.).
2. Alternative education: School-within-a-school or cluster program.
3. Work-study and cooperative education programs or pre-employment programs (academic courses and job training).
4. Adolescent parenting programs.
5. Transitional programming--provides remediation and acceleration for students who have fallen behind.
6. Alternative discipline program: In-school suspension provides also remedial and counseling services.
7. Improving the school climate: Mediation programs, more democratic school.
8. Furlough program (time off).
9. Teacher advisory and mentor programs (adult guides students to opportunities and helps solve problems).
10. Summer remediation and enrichment program.

Successful Program Features and Characteristics

In addition to studying program types, researchers have looked at program elements to determine whether some are more common to successful programs than others. Program elements that NCREL (1987) found to be most important to a successful dropout program are:

1. Early intervention.
2. Preschool experience.
3. Early diagnosis.
4. Restructuring primary education (basic skill emphasis).
5. Academic acceleration (helping students catch up).
6. Effective instructional practices.
7. Assessment aligned to curricular offerings and measurement instruments.
8. Curriculum integration.
9. Sustained features of effective schooling.
10. Significant parent and community involvement.
11. Attendance strategies.
12. Alternative administrative/organizational/instructional arrangements.
13. Collaboration with families, youth service providers, and business. (p. 19)

Early identification and intervention. The first five items on the preceding list all relate in some way to early identification and early intervention at the preschool and elementary levels. Researchers and practitioners alike agree on the vital importance of early identification and early intervention, both for effectiveness and cost savings.

Hahn (1987) explained the importance of early intervention in preventing grade retention and, ultimately, in reducing the sense of failure that leads to dropping out. A Minneapolis task force study of early childhood development programs found that for every \$1 spent on programs such as Head Start, \$4 to \$7 is saved in later costs for remedial education, court services, and welfare payments

(Hahn, 1987). Mayhew (1988) cited the High Scope Perry Pre-School Project in Ypsilanti, Michigan, which has proven the lasting effects of an early school experience. The High Scope study found that:

Nineteen-year-olds who had been in pre-school programs for low income children had better employment records, school records, and literacy scores than those who had not attended pre-schools. (Anstatt, 1988, p. 1B)

In Michigan, preschool programs are being heavily stressed. In 1987, before the instigation of PREP, the new preschool program announced by Governor Blanchard in 1989, preschool programs were funded by the Michigan Department of Education. Blanchard acknowledged that extensive funding is being spent on "the largest prison construction program in our state's history," but added: "I'm convinced that a good pre-school program would have made that contribution unnecessary. . . . A good well-funded pre-school program makes good economic sense" (Anstatt, 1988, p. 1B).

While Michigan is emphasizing preschool education, more strategies are also needed to help elementary students who have fallen behind catch up before the learning deficit becomes too great. This is the goal of the program designed by Stanford University's School of Education for elementary schools (Levin, 1987). This program stresses academic acceleration in basic skills through a variety of strategies--an extended day, extensive parent involvement, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and the use of community volunteers. The goal of the accelerated curriculum is to "bring all children up to grade level by the end of the sixth grade so they could take advantage of mainstream secondary school

instruction" (Levin, 1987, p. 20). Levin added, "The approach is designed to prevent dropouts by eliminating the single most important cause of dropping out: serious achievement deficits" (p. 20).

Effective instructional strategies. In addition to early identification and intervention, NCREL cited effective instructional practices as a key element in successful dropout programs. The importance of effective instructional strategies is recognized by many educators, but too often the practices that work best with at-risk students are not widely used. Steinberg (1987) wrote:

Most of the school reform initiatives undertaken since the publication of A Nation At Risk in 1983 have failed to address the need for basic changes in the pedagogy and structural arrangements of our public schools. (p. 12)

What strategies should teachers use more frequently in order to reach students at risk? First, Cummings (1986) recommended giving students a more active role in learning. He believed that students' learning problems are often "pedagogically induced" by instructional practices that relegate students to a passive role. Steinberg (1987) suggested that students be encouraged to pursue more active modes of learning with extensive teacher-student and peer interaction, especially in elementary school.

Burke and Davis (1988) endorsed cooperative learning experiences as opposed to competitive and individualistic ones. This can be particularly important for Hispanic students, who "learn significantly more English in classrooms that provide frequent

opportunities for reciprocal interaction with teachers and peers" (Steinberg, 1987, p. 13).

Gay (1988) stressed the importance of cooperation rather than competition in learning activities because many minority students come from cultural environments in which they have learned in "informal, cooperative, and collaborative styles" (p. 336). She reported: "When these students are placed in situations that are highly structured, individualistic, and competitive, they find it difficult to perform at high quality levels" (p. 336).

Burke and Davis (1988) cited research from several studies that showed the effectiveness of several cooperative learning methods. Three of these were: (a) Student Teams--Achievement Division (STAD), (b) Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT), and (c) Team Assisted Individualization (TAI). All of these strategies foster cooperation and active learning. Competition among teams is permitted, however. Other strategies advocated by researchers for promoting cooperative learning or active learning are peer tutoring (Burke & Davis, 1988), student-centered activities (Peck, 1988), experiential learning (Wehlage, 1983), and interactive teaching (Peck, 1988).

The Curriculum Study Group of the National Association of State Boards of Education (1988) also strongly endorsed more extensive use of cooperative learning, peer teaching, and other student-centered activities that "permit students to actively engage in learning, in building social skills, and in forming relationships" (p. 5). This group recognized that students need not only to learn academic skills and concepts but also to develop affectively by learning to

get along with and like others. Steinberg (1987) cited the importance of the affective realm as he recognized the importance of teachers' attitudes toward students. He wrote: "For minority students, it is not just the level of interaction with teachers and peers that is important, but the feelings and values that get communicated in that interaction" (p. 13). In fact, researchers studying the experiences of Hispanic students in school commented that "institutional discrimination" exists for these students. Laosa (cited in Michigan State Board of Education, 1986) found that "Anglo elementary teachers interacted more negatively with Mexican-American than with Anglo children" (p. 9).

Recognizing the importance of using differential strategies for minority students, the Michigan Department of Education has developed a resource guide to assist teachers in working with minority students. This guide, entitled "Multicultural Education: Suggested Classroom Activities" (Michigan State Board of Education, 1983), shows how learning goals and multicultural education goals can be integrated. It describes ways in which various cultural groups are similar and different and helps teachers design activities to allow students to "experience . . . ways ethnic groups communicate thoughts and feelings using verbal and non-verbal modes of expression" (Gay, 1988, p. 336).

A substantial amount of research has been done by Slavin, Johnson and Johnson, and others concerning cooperative learning. The techniques they have developed and tested can be used not only

for teaching basic skills such as reading and math, but also science, social studies, and other subjects. Studies on cooperative learning have shown that students using cooperative learning strategies not only score higher on individual achievement tests, but also learn group-process skills and gain self-esteem.

Another resource for effective instructional strategies is the literature on learning styles. Although little research appears to have been done directly relating learning-style strategies to dropouts, those who have implemented learning-style strategies in the classroom believe they make a vital difference. Research on learning styles has proven that many low achievers learn in ways not often used in the traditional classroom (Dunn, 1983).

At Madison Prep, Hodges (1987) used a variety of strategies, particularly tactual-kinesthetic and cooperative-learning activities, because she observed that the low achievers in her class often preferred these ways of learning. Cavanaugh (1981), who also had experience teaching with learning-style strategies, wrote enthusiastically of students' progress. He mentioned specifically the dramatic rise in one student's grades when she learned using tactual-kinesthetic approaches. Schmeck and Lockhart (1983) mentioned the value of providing different activities for introverts and extraverts.

School improvement. School-improvement efforts include alignment of curriculum and assessment, curriculum integration, and the use of features of effective schooling, elements 7 through 9 on the NCREL list. The Michigan Department of Education has provided

incentives for schools that plan and implement school-improvement programs (Blanchard, 1989; Michigan State Board of Education, 1988). Currently, a majority of districts in Michigan have school-improvement programs (Michigan State Board of Education, 1987).

Many different kinds of programs can be used. The Outcomes-Driven Developmental Model (ODDM) (Johnson City, 1986) is being used by five districts in Michigan. Using this model, which relies heavily on many areas of educational research, the Johnson City Public Schools have raised achievement and reduced the dropout rate.

ODDM is complex and requires a major two-year commitment on the part of school staff. It cannot be imposed "top-down." The required leadership team must visit Johnson City to observe the ways in which this school staff has implemented each of the 19 components. In addition to encouraging professionalism and collaboration on the part of the staff, ODDM as implemented in Johnson City strives to nurture self-directed learners with positive attitudes, highly developed learning skills, and creativity, among other attributes (Johnson City, 1986).

Parent and community involvement. The value of parent and community involvement or collaboration is widely recognized among researchers today. Fredisdorf (1987), among others cited above, stressed the importance of including people throughout the community in the effort to prevent dropping out and showed that schools recognize that such an effort needs to be made. He wrote:

The overall findings suggest that schools have not developed effective strategies for harnessing external support and for

dealing with nonschool causes that place children at risk. First, programs that involve parents, community members, community or state agencies, business and industry are least common among all school efforts to serve children at risk. Second, nonschool inhibiting factors are perceived to present the greatest obstruction to successfully serving children at risk. Third, districts of all sizes and locations perceived a great need to increase current efforts that utilize outside support and resources, and that alleviate nonschool problems associated with dropping out. (p. 115)

Peck (1987) stressed the need for and benefits of getting parents involved in their children's learning and in the schools.

She wrote:

The benefits of improved parental involvement, cooperation, support, and assistance to school personnel should be stressed. Parental involvement has been an essential ingredient throughout our educational history. The family is the first and one of the primary educators. A parent involvement approach can teach parents to be better educators and how to utilize family resources to reinforce dropout prevention efforts at home. Working with parents can positively affect student performance, behavior, and attitudes. (p. 16)

Peck then provided a list of 29 ways in which schools can get parents involved.

In Dealing With Dropouts (1987), urban superintendents agreed that "involving parents is crucial to keeping students in school" (p. 50). However, they also noted that this effort is often particularly difficult in the case of students at risk. In large cities, many parents of low achievers lack education, do not speak English, and/or have little interest in their child's progress in school. The superintendents recommended that home-school links be encouraged early, "preferably in preschool, before the high-risk students' problems have enlarged" (p. 50).

Whereas in the past schools tended to meet their responsibilities without the help of the community at large, today more and more schools recognize the urgent need for outside help. Peck (1987) recommended that "emphasis needs to be placed on creating strong linkages between schools, parents, community agencies, businesses, and institutions of higher education" (p. 12). Again, Peck provided many suggestions for districts that wish to involve others in dropout-prevention efforts.

In his Children at Risk study, Van denHeuvel (1986) cited the need for collaboration among schools, businesses, and social agencies. He wrote:

The Children At Risk programs and resources . . . have recurring themes. They underscore that:

- Schools cannot do the job alone.
- Public relations efforts are essential to building cooperative solutions.
- Systematically managed school/community networks best serve the varied needs of children at risk.
- Parent education about the importance of school attendance and achievement increases family support for children at risk.
- Most communities, rural and urban, have more resources than they realize.
- Business and industry leaders at local, state, and national levels care about children at risk and are eager to help when asked. (p. 5)

Part of collaboration involves enlisting the help of various community agencies and businesses and coordinating their efforts. Mann (1986) pointed out that schools may be reluctant to take on this task because "coordinating policies to improve the programs available to young people is surreal in its complexity" (p. 10). Again, there are many resources to use in deciding where to start and how to proceed.

The Wisconsin Dropout Prevention Resource Manual (VandenHeuvel, 1986) provides a game-board-type plan for involving the community. Students At Risk (1988) includes an "Eight-Step Plan for School-Community Problem Solving" (p. 41), as well as "Guidelines for Community Involvement" (p. 39). As with most innovations, it is usually wise to start small and proceed slowly.

Attendance. In the opinion of many educators, attendance is the first line of defense in dropout prevention. Most believe that students cannot learn when they do not go to school. Research has indicated that "students who drop out nearly always have attendance problems beginning in elementary school" (Dealing With Dropouts, 1987, p. 28). Absenteeism and truancy have been mentioned in virtually every list of correlates for dropouts. Publications on dropout prevention have routinely discussed the importance of attendance and ways in which schools can encourage students to attend. Traditional schools often fail or suspend students who miss school too often.

But many debates arise over the issue of attendance. Researchers have found that attendance policies and enforcement are needed, but when attendance policies are too harsh or too rigid, the policies designed to improve attendance actually encourage truancy (Dealing With Dropouts, 1987). Weber (1986) urged educators to focus on what schools offer students, rather than on rules. He wrote: "Preoccupation with matters of control and discipline to the exclusion of matters involving instruction, positive school spirit,

and so forth, is commonly correlated with high dropout rates" (p. 31).

Interestingly, although absenteeism is one of the key indicators that a student is having problems, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1986) study on promising practices for high-risk youths did not mention attendance policies. Instead, such features as small class sizes, a caring staff, integration of academic and vocational studies, individualized instruction, experiential learning, paid work experience, interpersonal/life-skills activities, counseling services, clearly communicated performance standards, and other elements relating to the quality of the educational experience were stressed.

Peck (1987) again provided a list of strategies for "accomplishing the goals of an assertive attendance system" (p. 36). However, these strategies were overwhelmingly weighted in favor of incentives rather than punitive measures. Such techniques included establishing an Adoptee Program in which volunteers get together weekly with "high-risk" students, initiating a "peer calling" group in which students in the group call each other, awarding prizes and privileges for excellent attendance, posting good-attendance banners in classrooms with the best attendance, and so on. These methods, it would seem, are more consistent with a caring approach to education than are the punitive measures that are often used. Clearly, though, the one-to-one contact options especially are time consuming and require considerable commitment and effort on the part of those involved.

Other researchers have identified similar elements of successful programs, but each was different in some way. When looking for factors that are deemed essential to the success of a program, Michigan researchers identified four characteristics of successful programs (Michigan Youth Dropout Prevention Report, 1988). These were:

1. The individualization of programming efforts to meet the specific needs of the participants.
2. The caring demonstrated by staff, administrators, and others regarding the participants and the dropout problem in general.
3. The cooperation levels achieved between various agencies and individuals to work with the various problems of the participants.
4. The success orientation of programming efforts to support and reward the participants' efforts. (p. 14)

Mann (1985) identified two of the same characteristics, caring and collaboration, and added two additional ones, cash (meaning the link between learning and earning) and computers (both for learning and for record-keeping). Docking (1967) identified ten features of successful programs for dropout prevention. These included early identification, success experiences, work-study programs, noncompetitive grading, self-concept, teacher preparation in special programs, teacher acceptance of students, class size, the type of curriculum used, and the quality of guidance services available. More recent research has stressed the importance of collaboration and of working constructively with parents (Hahn, 1987).

Funding. Conflict arises over the issue of funding and the extent to which more money is needed to solve the dropout problem. Hodgkinson (1985) found that teacher salary and expenditures per

pupil were not related to dropout rate, but teacher/student ratios did correlate with the incidence of dropping out. Since, as Hahn (1987) pointed out, hiring more staff costs money and faculty salaries constitute most of schools' budgets, funding would seem to make some difference.

A more accurate assessment would be that, as suggested by the research presented above, committed, caring people are more important than any other element. Without a dedicated staff, other action will not be taken or efforts may be ineffective.

Vocational education. In addition to assessing regular school programs and their effectiveness in serving students at risk, researchers have examined two main alternative forms of schooling--vocational education and alternative schools. Heavily funded and expanded in the early 1970s, vocational education programs have become an essential part of many schools' educational programs. Whether classes are held in the regular building or in a "skills center," many students find learning in vocational education classrooms more appealing than the paper/pencil activities of traditional academic classrooms. Furthermore, vocational education helps students remedy basic-skills deficiencies and learn job-related skills (Weber, 1986).

Research has shown that when students are enrolled in vocational classes, they are less likely to drop out of school before graduating (ERIC Clearinghouse, 1987). However, as Weber (1986) pointed out, the kinds of vocational education chosen by

students may be related to their effectiveness. He reported that dropouts "take more exploratory courses rather than occupational [job-skill training] courses" (p. x). Dropouts also are more often involved in work-study experiences, especially those that are not "directly related to their overall high school programs" (Weber, 1986, p. ix). Thus, although vocational education correlated with reduced dropout rates, no data are available regarding (a) what alternative configurations of vocational experiences are most clearly related to retaining individual students in school or (b) what alternative vocational offerings provided by different schools are most closely related to reducing dropout rates across those schools (Weber, 1986).

Planning seems to be essential in ensuring the effectiveness of vocational programs in reducing the dropout rate (Weber, 1986). According to Weber, students need to be encouraged to take "job specific skill training courses rather than just exploratory types of courses," and to link work-study experiences with their overall school programs (p. xii).

Further, counselors should continually review "rules governing vocational program entry . . . to ensure that dropout-prone students are not being kept out of these programs [unnecessarily]" (Weber, 1986, p. xii). This is a particular concern since Weber pointed out that increases in the academic requirements for high school graduation tend to decrease enrollments in vocational education and may directly affect dropout rates (Weber, 1986). He wrote: "One of the net effects of this reform movement is to reduce the time

available to ALL students for electives, including vocational courses" (p. 13).

All of this means that vocational education is changing. In 1985, the Center for Economic Development attacked vocational education by stating that "there is little evidence that vocational education is either meeting the needs of students or of the employers who are expected to hire them" (Freedberg, 1980).

Honig, California's Superintendent of Instruction, indicated that employers no longer want "people with specific skills" but are now looking for "people who can read, write, and understand" (Freedberg, 1989). In some schools, vocational classes are being linked to those offered in community colleges with accompanying rigorous standards. And, contended Honig, quality vocational classes enrich academic work by "linking abstract concepts to practical applications" (Freedberg, 1989).

As Freedberg reported, this view may be "receiving growing support nationally," but many schools do not have the resources to provide expensive, up-to-date equipment or even the staff to teach technologically sophisticated courses. To bring about a change, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education has been established. This center has been created to help high schools integrate vocational and academic subjects and make the other necessary changes to enable vocational education to survive (Freedberg, 1989).

Alternative Schools

Alternative schools arose in the 1960s from a recognition that public schools serve students with diverse abilities, interests, and needs, and that the traditional public school often does not provide adequately for all students. In the beginning, alternative schools may have been less academically rigorous since many states at that time eliminated or lowered statewide graduation requirements (Magyar, 1986). Certainly, alternative schools have had a reputation for requiring less of students in terms of academic achievement.

Close relationships. According to Butchart (1986), however, most alternative schools today follow a relatively traditional curriculum. The difference, he explained, lies in the recognition that one key to success with students at risk is "the quality of the relationships" (p. 11). Yagi (1986) agreed. He wrote:

Perhaps the single most important feature of the private alternative school is not so much the curriculum, but the special kind of relationship among staff members and especially with disenchanted youths. Alternative school enrollees are largely those who respond only to frequent and immediate attention--attention that is consistent in time and quality, attention that their homes or regular schools did not provide. Staff members provide this attention in and out of the classroom. (p. 4)

Yagi emphasized, too, the fact that alternative students do not lack ability. He said that they are "disenchanted, not disabled" (p. 3). Rather, most are fully capable of learning academic or other subjects.

At the same time, Hinckley's (1979) description of alternative school students showed how these students are different from those

who are achieving in the regular school program and why they are, in fact, disabled in that program. According to Hinckley, students who come into alternative programs are often defeated by the regular school system. He wrote:

Students come into the program feeling helpless. They want to escape from the reality of their helpless situations. They may run away, get drunk, take drugs, or withdraw in an attempt to forget some of the disillusioning experiences of their lives. (p. 59)

These students, he explained, are emotionally dependent on others and afraid to ask for help. Because they "lack a strong ego structure," they are afraid of failure. Finally, they need immediate, concrete rewards.

Such students as Hinckley described need positive, nurturing relationships as a prerequisite for learning. This may explain why Enterprise High's "basics" begin with the teacher-student relationship. Benedict et al. (1987) wrote:

At Enterprise High, staff members are trained to suspend judgment, cultivate friendship, honestly share feelings, and confront from a position of caring. Only when the teacher-student relationship is characterized by trust can we expect students to mature in positive ways. (pp. 76-77)

Hodges (cited in Dunn, 1981) agreed about the importance of relationships and used varied techniques to build trust and cohesiveness, an esprit de corps, among her students and staff. In addition to the student newspaper, awards, Madison Prep T-shirts, and a student-planned and organized environment, Hodges used learning-style teaching strategies to meet students' individual learning needs.

The importance of relationships was also reflected in answers to questionnaires in Docking's (1967) study of an alternative program in Pontiac, Michigan. Many student comments on these questionnaires related to the quality of relationships (The teachers really care, teachers are nice, teachers listen, and so on) or to the climate resulting from the relationships (relaxed, comfortable, not competitive, and so on).

Differential instructional strategies. Above and beyond the relationships, however, teaching strategies seem to play a major role in restoring students' motivation and confidence in their ability to learn. Butchart (1986) described some of the strategies used in alternative schools that make a difference. Some of these are peer tutoring, experiential learning, competency-based learning, contract learning, interdisciplinary instruction, and field trips. Interdisciplinary instruction has long been advocated by researchers for regular school teachers, but it is seldom practiced. Even in many team-teaching situations that are ideal for this, teachers often stay within their specific disciplines. Butchart wrote of alternative schools: "The primary curricular innovation is thematic and interdisciplinary instruction, favored both because of a more holistic approach to learning and because of the limited staff" (p. 12).

Thus, it seems that students at risk fail in the regular school because of their own special needs and because the school fails to provide adequately for them. Magyar (1986) explained that the nature of the regular school environment causes failure. She

discussed the school factors that contribute to dropping out. Some of these are inadequate counseling, tracking practices, and lack of variety of subjects, especially the lack of fine and performing arts and vocational education.

If some students have special needs beyond those provided for in special education classes, what are the elements of alternative schools that best meet these special needs?

Wehlage (1986) and his associates have carried out extensive research on programs and approaches for children at risk. They put together a model that they believe best exemplifies a model school dropout-prevention program. Wehlage described the model program using four categories: administration and organization, teacher culture, student culture, and curriculum.

Small size, autonomy. In designing a model program for at-risk high school students, Wehlage, Rutter, and Turnbaugh (1986) explained why small schools are better equipped to serve these students. Small size, they pointed out, has a number of advantages. Among them are:

1. It permits face-to-face relationships on a continuing basis which is necessary if teachers are to communicate the sense of caring which at-risk students feel is lacking in the regular high school.
2. In small classrooms, teachers can both personalize and individualize instruction and better monitor students' progress.
3. Small size also facilitates continued communication among faculty for planning and meeting about matters of mutual concern.
4. Faculty are better able to create a clear identity for the program, to administer it, and to be responsible for both their program and individual students. (p. 72)

The model school, Wehlage believed, should be a "separate alternative school or a school-within-a-school." In addition to being small, from 25 to 100 students, the school should ensure that teachers have autonomy. Ownership of the program, of its successes and failures, needs to be theirs along with accountability.

Shared beliefs and values. Teachers should share beliefs and values that guide decisions. They must believe that at-risk students can learn, and they must be caring and interested in their students as individuals. They must work well with other teachers and be able to work as a team.

The student culture is one in which students become committed to a set of standards and rules. The program must work to foster pride and a belief that behavior can be changed.

Differential curriculum. Alternative schools or classrooms are also essential because some researchers have found that the curriculum for students at risk needs to be different from the usual high school curriculum. Wehlage (1986) stated, "More of the same will not result in success for these youths" (p. 220). The curriculum elements that have been found to be most effective are "individualization, personalization, clear objectives, prompt feedback, concrete evidence of accomplishments, and an ACTIVE role for the student in learning" (Wehlage, 1986, p. 220).

Instruction in basic skills is important, but expectations will need to be flexible as students will be working at many different levels. Experiential learning involving real work and contact with responsible working adults is important. Group projects such as

house construction are also successful options. At-risk students need help in learning to work with others in a team situation.

Other features. Butchart's (1986) study of alternative schools nationwide confirmed Wehlage's conclusions. In describing the elements he found to be essential to successful alternative schools, Butchart discussed the following as keys to success:

1. Size: Virtually all the literature has cited size as a crucial element. Class size is small, allowing individualization of instruction and close relationships between teachers and students. School size--the number of students and teachers--is also small, reducing the bureaucratization and impersonality of most urban and consolidated high schools, and facilitating closer relationships between a student and his peers, the faculty, and the activities of the institution.
2. Choice: Both teachers and students have opted for the program. This seems to create special commitments to the program on the part of both groups.
3. Autonomy: Teachers design the program and choose teaching strategies. They "create cohesive programs with well-defined goals" that they have chosen. The resulting ownership and empowerment add to commitment and responsiveness to students, who respond in kind. The result is frequent student reports of caring teachers and a learning environment that is demanding but supportive.
4. Positive school climate: All of the above foster a positive school climate in which students are actively engaged in learning. Structures created encourage student participation and altered roles for the staff, adding to their commitment, involvement, and sense of ownership and affiliation.
5. Varied learning opportunities: Small classes and low student loads allow for maximum use of experiential learning, learning by doing; of individualized, self-paced learning; and of small-group learning. The element of choice carries over into teacher and student choice of curriculum and instructional mode. Classroom vitality is maintained through small classes devoted to dialogue and learning through doing. (pp. 13-15)

The examples in the following section illustrate the effectiveness of alternative schools in preventing dropouts. Since

this is so, why are these alternatives not provided in all school districts? First, most administrators seem to believe that alternative schools cost more per student than regular schools. In fact, they sometimes do. But Butchart (1986) found that, despite extremely low teacher/student ratios in alternative schools, "62 percent reported per-pupil costs equal to or less than the average cost in the host district" (p. 18). For example, the Alternative Learning Project in Providence, Rhode Island, costs \$1,100 per student compared with \$1,800 per student in the regular school (Butchart, 1986).

Although staff/student ratios are low, alternative schools typically do not provide elaborate physical education or art programs, although these activities are often part of the curriculum. Expensive equipment is also less often found in these schools. When vocational education is provided, costs rise (Butchart, 1986), but in some cases, students can make use of area skills centers or vocational programs housed in other facilities. The private alternative schools described by Yagi (1986) generally required additional funds, which came from foundations, business and industry, special education funding, and, in one case, tuition. These programs appeared to make use of more expensive equipment for vocational and instructional purposes.

Finally, despite the evidence presented by this research, many educators believe that alternative schools are not the solution to the dropout problem. They believe that traditional schools should meet the needs of all students. At Jefferson Junior High School in

Pontiac, Michigan, many elements common to alternative schools are evident. Teachers and administrators at this school, like those at alternative schools, believe that all students can succeed and continually seek new ways of making this possible. Shared values, strong school spirit, clear guidelines, frequent positive feedback, extra tutoring, mentor relationships, and extensive parent and community involvement characterize this traditional school. Thus, it would seem that more research is needed to determine whether other traditional schools can create the same conditions for success that are found in the best alternative schools.

Summary. Although much research is still needed on the relative effectiveness of different program models, Hahn (1987) stressed that educators know enough now to initiate more options for at-risk students. Administrators and teachers can use the information available to assess their schools' efforts at serving children at risk and to plan ways to increase and/or modify these efforts. Peck's (1987) Handbook for Meeting the Needs of High Risk Students contains suggestions for programs, parent and community involvement, attendance strategies, identification procedures, and so on. This and other resources are now available. Many of these may soon be available, too, through the Michigan Department of Education's clearinghouse for children at risk, which has collected information on successful programs and practices used in Michigan and throughout the nation.

Model Programs--Examples

In another segment of the literature review, persons involved with specific school programs reported on their successes and failures. The following programs incorporate features and strategies described in the previous section and have produced impressive results. The three programs described below constitute a small sampling of the variety of alternative schools that have been created throughout the country. All were able to show substantial results in retention and achievement. Improvement in student attitudes and social skills, although not documented in the published articles, appeared evident. Although all of the alternatives share certain characteristics, such as small size; close, caring relationships between staff and students; student-centered and varied teaching strategies; and experiential learning, each is different from the others.

Madison Prep. The first alternative school, Madison Prep, is an example of a small (21 students, 3 staff) alternative school in New York City (Dunn, 1981). Hodges took \$600 of her own money, rented basement space provided by a community board, recruited a teaching aide and a social worker, and created Madison Prep. Hodges recruited students by asking her principal to gather the "twenty worst youngsters" at Junior High School 22 (Dunn, 1981, p. 386). To begin building ownership and cohesiveness, Hodges enlisted students' efforts in cleaning and decorating "their" school. The students transformed a "dark, dungeon-like basement" into a cheerful learning

environment by painting a mural, helping custodians install lighting, and arranging donated furniture (Dunn, 1981, p. 386).

Using learning-style research, Hodges diagnosed each student's learning style and geared assignments to learning preferences. The school had an integrating theme--aerospace--chosen by the students, but instruction was completely individualized. Close relationships developed between the staff and students and among the students. Awards were given for achievement. Madison Prep T-shirts, photos, group sessions, and other activities fostered an "esprit de corps" essential to the success of the project.

Although many students could not pass the New York State writing exam the first year, 80% passed this difficult test after the second year. The Regents' Exam is designed for college-bound students. According to a former New York State graduate, the passing rate on this exam for students statewide is about 50%. All students at Madison Prep improved in attendance, attitude, and academic progress. Not one student dropped out.

Enterprise High. Other alternative schools and programs have also proven highly successful. Enterprise High, an alternative program model created in 1982 in Macomb County, Michigan, initially served 50 students with a staff of five and now has expanded to four program sites serving approximately 200 students (Benedict et al., 1987). The program includes many of the features described by Wehlage and Butchart--emphasis on experiential learning through engagement in business ventures; teaching of basic skills through practice related to practical projects; extensive work on

staff-student relationships, specifically with respect to building trust; and work on learning to work in groups. Also, since students now attend Enterprise High four days a week, the program further provides one day each week for staff to work together on curriculum and instruction development.

The basic features of Enterprise High that the staff consider to be the foundation of its success are as follows (Benedict et al., 1987, p. 78):

- I. Teacher-Student Relationship
 - Trust--through unconditional positive regard
- II. Curriculum Content
 - A. Enterprise--how to earn a living
 - B. Simulation--how to manage life
 - C. Embedded basic academic skills--from the whole to parts
 - D. Embedded group problem solving--all problems are group problems
- III. Structure
 - A. Points-based credits--reinforce curricular engagement by allowing the students enough time for mastery
 - B. Democratic share of authority to staff and students--people "buy into" solutions of problems they help resolve
- IV. Professional development
 - Weekly collaborative staff development--staff and students grow through problem solving with colleagues

In addition to these four curriculum components, the emphasis on trust is considered to be the program's "most basic component." The personal relationship between the student and teacher is considered to be the foundation on which all other activity rests. Students are made to feel safe so that they can risk failure. They are helped to care about others and to feel pride in the contribution they can make to the group.

Four out of five former dropouts complete the year's program at Enterprise High. Upon returning to the regular high school,

approximately two-thirds graduate. The \$4,000 cost per student is only slightly higher than the average cost per student in the regular high school. Keeping in mind that these are students who had already dropped out of school, many of whom were further handicapped by substance-abuse problems in addition to low self-esteem and low skills, the results show that such a program can make a substantial difference.

Project Intercept. Madison Prep and Enterprise High are two excellent alternative programs. A third, Project Intercept in Ossining, New York, is a school-within-a-school program (Maurer, 1982). It provides alternative classes within the high school and involves families of children at risk.

Project Intercept, a program for 92 students in two alternative programs, consists of one alternative class for 30 students with two teachers and a second section for 65 students who had been identified as discipline problems. The emphasis in this program is on four major strategies: (a) teacher/staff inservice training, (b) alternative academic programs for high-risk potential dropouts, (c) training students in social and interpersonal skills, and (d) family intervention training.

The goals of this program are not only to reduce the dropout rate at Ossining High School, but also to "increase the competence of teachers in classroom management, discipline, and instructional techniques, and to develop more appropriate interpersonal behaviors and more positive self-concepts among students identified as high-risk potential dropouts" (Maurer, 1982).

Teacher training has involved 50% of the total faculty, all volunteers. Teachers are helped to develop skill in 17 specific teaching competencies believed to be effective in increasing student achievement and improving student behavior.

The family intervention component includes visits to the homes of students who did not improve in the alternative programs. Family counseling and instruction in effective discipline procedures help parents support the school program goals. Churches and community agencies provide support for parent training workshops.

The overall school dropout rate decreased from 6.04% in 1977 to 3.3% in 1980. More important, however, students in the experimental program dropped out at a rate of 3%, whereas similar students at risk in a control group dropped out at a rate of 32%. Absenteeism in treatment groups decreased by 16%, whereas absenteeism for students in control groups increased by 42%.

Program evaluators believed that involving a high percentage of the teachers in the school in the training and the interrelatedness of the four major elements of the plan contributed to the program's success. Again, however, it is important to note that this report of the project was made three years after the initiation of the program. The effectiveness of programs for children at risk is best judged after the program has been in progress for more than one year and, preferably, three years. The Ossining program, which has been properly evaluated, was accepted for inclusion in the National Diffusion Network (1988), a collection of programs proven to be successful according to stringent criteria.

Summary. In summary, many different dropout programs are currently under way throughout the nation, but the efforts being made have not been sufficient to reduce the dropout rate nationwide. Although improvement can clearly be seen in individual districts such as those described above, some dropout programs prove ineffective while others simply fail to keep pace with the rising trend of dropping out or are discontinued for lack of funds.

In the largest cities, especially, the number of students leaving school before graduation has risen to catastrophic proportions. In the districts where educators are working hard to provide services for at-risk students, students continue dropping out. Even though dropout programs are enormously cost effective in terms of saving society high expenditures in the long run, means of adequately financing dropout-prevention programs have not yet been found. Yet the literature review for this section substantiated Hahn's (1987) contention that, in fact, enough is known about dropouts.

Recommendations From the Literature

Michigan Recommendations

Over the past two years, numerous recommendations have been made by Michigan Department of Education officials. In 1987, Runkel, former state superintendent, proposed to the legislature a comprehensive plan for dropout prevention and remediation, including 21 low-cost recommendations to be carried out by the Department and six funded programs totaling \$12.9 million (see Appendix E). Most

of the funded programs have been put into operation. Very few of the low-cost recommendations appear to have been implemented.

Following Runkel's report, the Ad Hoc Committee on Dropout Prevention was formed, and this committee outlined six objectives (see Appendix F) to be completed by the end of 1988. This committee, under the direction of Dr. Cain, Assistant Superintendent for School and Community Affairs, has completed about half of the six objectives. Because Department of Education personnel have many other responsibilities and are often short-handed, not all of the objectives could be completed as planned.

Additional recommendations for dropout prevention in Michigan have been made by researchers (Adult Literacy Task Force, 1988, Appendix G; Michigan, 1988) and the Michigan Interagency Committee on the Black Child, 1986 (Appendix H). All of these groups have recommended the creation of a task force or policy board to establish goals and oversee their completion, the provision of direct services to school districts, and more public information effort to elicit community support for programs.

Most recently, Bemis, the new state superintendent, set forth a five-point plan for dropout prevention (George, 1989). The five points were:

1. Establish teams to help communities coordinate dropout prevention efforts.
2. Appoint Deputy Superintendent Markle to direct all dropout prevention programs in the state Department of Education.
3. Ask the U.S. Department of Education to recalculate Michigan's dropout/graduation rate.
4. Ask the Legislature to require all state school districts to report dropout/graduation rates.

5. Create an annual report on efforts to improve Michigan's schools. (p. 3A)

Bemis's appointment of Dr. Markle as director of dropout-prevention programs was intended to improve coordination of the state's dropout-prevention efforts. According to Bemis, there are 18 programs and 29 Department of Education staff members working on dropout prevention, representing an annual expenditure of \$118.7 million at the state level.

George (1989) pointed out that "only one point of the plan . . . provides new direct assistance for districts coping with the dropout problem" (p. 12A). In personal interviews, Bemis stated that no further direct assistance to local districts is planned at present, but a comprehensive dropout-prevention plan is to be developed and announced within the next year. Jacobus, president of the State Board of Education, said that "more recommendations may be coming" (George, 1989, p. 12A).

Other Recommendations

Recommendations from the research literature reflected the experiences of educators described in this chapter. The urban superintendents' six "best bets" are as follows:

1. Intervene early.
2. Create a positive school climate.
3. Set high expectations.
4. Select and develop strong teachers.
5. Provide a broad range of instructional programs.
6. Initiate collaborative efforts. (Dealing With Dropouts, 1987, p. 7)

The Superintendents Network explained that, although teachers should set high expectations, these must also be realistic and students at

risk should be given adequate support to meet them. Teachers should be competent in subject matter and sensitive to the needs of at-risk students.

The Institute for Educational Leadership (Hahn, 1987) provided additional recommendations. Some of these are:

1. The Current Population Survey (CPS) definition should be used in schools implementing dropout-prevention programs.
2. School districts should commit to providing significant resources and assuring most equitable expenditures throughout their systems to improve failing schools.
3. Students at risk should be identified early.
4. Direct and consistent approaches in the early grades should be used to reduce the negative effects of grade retention.
5. Management information systems, which link the three levels of school as well as programs in the out-of-school environment are essential elements of a comprehensive dropout-prevention strategy.
6. Maintaining communication between counselors, teachers, and administrators at every level of the system is important.
7. The truancy office should be restructured to stimulate greater linkage between schools, students' homes, and the community. The truant officer should serve as "case manager" for truant youth.
8. Community-based organizations should work in neighborhood schools on dropout prevention.
9. Remediation intervention strategies should be widely implemented in both school and nonschool community settings.
10. Parents should be involved with the schools in developing effective parental-involvement programs.
11. Every district should appoint a Dropout Prevention Coordinator responsible for overseeing and coordinating all dropout-prevention efforts.

Fredisdorf (1987), in summarizing policy recommendations that resulted from his study of all Wisconsin school districts, stressed the importance of collaboration. He wrote:

Technical assistance provided by DPI, Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, and by other agencies to local districts should focus on promoting efforts to serve children at risk that harness outside resources and more closely involve parents, community members, community agencies, and business people. (pp. 117-118)

The Institute for Educational Leadership (cited in Hahn, 1987) suggested that community organizations that work with at-risk students might be brought into the schools, with case managers monitoring referrals of students to these agencies. Among the "outside" resources schools should be using more, according to all researchers, are parents. Parental involvement, stated the Institute, is essential to an effective dropout program, yet parents are often ignored when programs are being designed (Hahn, 1987).

Other recommendations frequently made by researchers are:

1. The need for more research on programs available and communication among planners. (Kladifko, 1975)
2. Studies that demonstrate how to implement some program components such as collaboration.
3. More implementation of programs using current knowledge; funding for this implementation.
4. More publicity on the economic and social factors related to dropouts compared with the costs of prevention and remediation.
5. Funding for children-at-risk programs.

Summary

This chapter included a discussion of dropout rates and the problems caused by dropouts, definitions, characteristics of and identification procedures for dropouts and children at risk, dropout-prevention program models and features, and examples of dropout-prevention programs. Recommendations from the literature in Michigan and nationwide were presented.

In this review of literature, the complexity of the problem was illustrated. As stated in Dropouts in America:

To reclaim the most severely damaged youngsters requires a long, costly, multidimensional response. Recovery from a

tragic childhood cannot happen instantly. Successful treatment may require psychological and social services, family support, individualized learning of basic skills at the student's pace, a measured and patient exposure to work, and ongoing social and vocational counseling while the youngster is on the job. (pp. 60-61)

Alternative programs have been initiated that have been shown to be successful. Programs embedded within the regular school program have helped many students who do not require alternative programs. But at-risk students will not be saved by limited, piecemeal planning. Researchers have stressed that the schools cannot bear the burden of this effort alone. This is a social and economic problem that will be solved only by a total community effort.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A description of the design and methodology provided in this chapter includes research questions, instrumentation, data collection, and procedures of analysis. The purpose of this study was (a) to gather useful descriptive information and data about the efforts Michigan K-12 public school districts were making to serve children at risk, (b) to determine in what areas they would most like to be providing more programs, (c) to assess the inhibiting factors that they saw as creating the major obstacles in solving the dropout problem, and (d) to gather data concerning information or assistance local districts need from the Michigan Department of Education.

It was hoped that this information would prove useful to planners at the Michigan Department of Education who had been asked by the Superintendent and the State Board of Education to make recommendations to the Board and to take action to reduce the large number of students in Michigan K-12 public schools who were dropping out of school before graduation. It was also hoped that through the creation of a Children at Risk Resource Manual, including data from this study and the narrative descriptions of effective children-at-risk programs in Michigan, individual districts would be assisted in

setting priorities and planning more effective strategies for preventing students from dropping out.

Research Questions

Introduction

Following current research on dropouts, certain issues were considered relevant to a study of the current status of dropouts in Michigan. Questions relating to size, expenditure per pupil, programs offered, and dropout rates were included in the study. Using state data, districts were categorized according to size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate. Comparisons were made among school districts of different types, and analyses were done relating to programs and options provided by different types of school districts. Comparisons were also made between programs currently provided and those that school districts in different categories would like to provide. Inhibiting factors were examined. Finally, program descriptions guided the researcher in deciding upon the best approach for follow-up interviews with contact persons completing the questionnaire.

Closed-Ended Questions

Research questions examined in this study were:

- I. Questions relating to all 526 Michigan public school districts:
 - A. What programs or approaches are Michigan K-12 public school districts currently providing in an effort to reduce dropout rates among children at risk?
 - B. What programs or approaches would Michigan K-12 public school districts most like to offer?

- C. What inhibiting factors are being experienced by the 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts?
 - D. In which program options are the greatest discrepancies found between current efforts and desired efforts toward meeting the needs of children at risk among Michigan K-12 public school districts?
- II. Questions relating to districts with high dropout rates as compared to those with low dropout rates:
- A. What differences exist in current efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?
 - B. What differences exist in desired efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?
 - C. What differences exist in inhibiting factors related to meeting the needs of children at risk between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?
- III. Questions relating to school districts in categories according to size and expenditure per pupil:
- A. Do school districts in various size categories differ with respect to:
 - 1. current efforts?
 - 2. desired efforts?
 - 3. inhibiting factors?
 - B. Do school districts in various expenditure-per-pupil categories differ with respect to:
 - 1. current efforts?
 - 2. desired efforts?
 - 3. inhibiting factors?
- IV. Questions relating to relationships between the variables size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate:
- A. Do smaller school districts in Michigan have lower dropout rates than larger schools?
 - B. Do districts with larger expenditures per pupil have lower dropout rates?

The procedures for data collection and the choice of variables for analysis were designed for the purpose of attempting to answer these questions.

Instrumentation

Introduction

To obtain data for answering the basic research questions, information was secured from two basic sources, the Michigan Department of Education and the individual Michigan K-12 public school districts. Statistical data relating to school size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate were obtained from state records. Details of the efforts, needs, and problems of each Michigan K-12 public school district were obtained from them by questionnaire and interview.

State Statistics

Organizational performance data taken from the Michigan Department of Education for the 1985-1986 school year (the latest year for which complete data were available) include (a) reports from the Office of Research and Information, Michigan Department of Education, which provided the data on dropout rates and size of district; and (b) Bulletin 1014, published by the Michigan State Board of Education (1986), which provided information on expenditure per pupil.

Questionnaire Format and Design

The survey instrument (Appendix C), based on one used by Fredisdorf (1987) in Wisconsin, was designed to provide information

about what school districts are currently doing to help at-risk students, what they would like to be doing, and perceived inhibiting factors. The basic design of the Fredisdorf questionnaire was used, with modifications to be discussed later. Fredisdorf granted permission to use the questionnaire and to make the necessary changes in his instrument.

Respondents were asked about the number and variety of programs or approaches that existed in responding school districts. Information was sought concerning levels of efforts, needs, and inhibiting factors. The questionnaire had five basic components:

1. The first part was an introductory section, in which demographic data were requested.

2. The second and largest part contained 30 items and used a six-point Likert scale to elicit information on existing programs or approaches and the perceived level of effort for each. In addition, for each program, the district was asked to indicate its desired level of effort.

3. Using the same six-point Likert scale, the third section included a request for information concerning the degree to which 15 inhibiting factors existed in each district.

4. Part four contained two open-ended questions.

5. In part five, respondents were asked to provide a narrative report describing programs currently being provided for children at risk in their districts.

Section 1: Introduction. In the introduction, respondents were asked to give the name and address of the district; their own

name, phone number, title, and address; and their district/school code. They were also asked to indicate whether they desired a copy of the survey results.

Section 2: Existing programs--current and desired efforts. In this section, 30 types of at-risk programs/options were listed. These were:

A. Identification and Monitoring/Attendance

1. Early identification of children at risk.
2. Systematic planning and evaluation procedures to ensure that educational progress of children at risk is monitored and documented.
3. A pupil accounting system to monitor attendance and inform parents daily about absences.
4. A designated school attendance officer in your district.
5. Innovative enforcement of school attendance policies.
6. A board-approved district attendance policy.

B. Curriculum Options

7. Remedial instruction in reading/math.
8. Alcohol and drug abuse program(s).
9. Individualized instruction.
10. School-age-parent program.
11. Suicide-prevention program.
12. Alternative high school.
13. Alternative classroom(s)/day, after-school, or evening classes/programs.
14. Integrated, multidimensional program for dropout prevention/remediation.
15. A districtwide curriculum planning committee.
16. A districtwide developmental guidance and counseling program.

C. Vocational Options

17. Comprehensive vocational education program(s) designed to prepare students for employment.
18. Job Training Partnership Act Program.
19. Job Placement Program(s).
20. Work Experience Program (e.g., cooperative education).
21. Community-based career education program.

D. Community Outreach/Involvement

22. Systematic procedures for communication between school staff and parents.
23. Community education awareness programs to generate support for the importance of school attendance and achievement.
24. Education programs for parents of children at risk.
25. A school/community/business children-at-risk advisory committee to plan and recommend programs for children at risk.
26. Joint school/business or school/community partnership program(s) serving children at risk.

E. Staff Development/Program Development

27. Local staff development programs to enable school staff to work more effectively with children at risk.
28. A designated children at risk district leader responsible for coordinating children-at-risk programs.
29. Technical assistance from the Michigan Department of Education in training school personnel, developing model programs, and providing materials and curriculum.
30. State and federal grants to your school district to develop dropout-prevention programs.

These 30 program options and approaches used by schools were grouped into five categories:

1. Identification and Monitoring/Attendance
2. Curriculum Options
3. Vocational Options
4. Community Outreach/Involvement
5. Staff Development/Program Development

Respondents were asked whether programs or approaches existed in their school districts. If programs or approaches existed, respondents were asked to indicate the current level of effort and desired level of effort. If the program or approach did not exist, respondents were asked only to indicate the desired level of effort. A six-point Likert scale was used to determine current and desired level of effort of programs.

Section 3: Inhibiting factors. Inhibiting factors are those obstacles that educators must overcome in meeting the needs of

children at risk. The factors included in this survey, which were also identified by Fredisdorf (1987) in Wisconsin, were:

1. Insufficient assessment and evaluation tools for early and accurate identification of children at risk.
2. Ineffective truancy enforcement laws.
3. Ineffective prosecution of truants and parents.
4. Insufficient funding available to hire additional administrators, teachers, and/or aides to work with children at risk.
5. Difficulties related to establishing school/family linkages.
6. Low teacher expectations of children at risk.
7. Low parental expectations of children at risk.
8. Unstable family situations among children at risk.
9. Lack of parental interest or support for school efforts regarding children at risk.
10. Lack of support from local law enforcement.
11. Lack of curriculum options for children at risk.
12. Inappropriate instructional techniques for children at risk, considering their level of interest/ability (remedial or gifted programs).
13. Lack of systematic coordination among school/community/business/industry programs and resources.
14. Lack of cooperation with health and social service providers.
15. Teacher "burnout" from working with children at risk.

With respect to inhibiting factors, respondents were asked only to indicate the degree to which each factor existed in the respondent's district. A six-point Likert scale was used for assessing the degree to which 15 inhibiting factors existed in each district.

Section 4: Open-ended questions. The survey included the following two open-ended questions:

1. What circumstances unique to your school district or district population do you think affect the dropout rate?
2. What information or assistance would you like to receive from the Michigan Department of Education?

The purpose of asking the first question was to gather information about socioeconomic or other factors that respondents

thought made a significant difference in their particular situation. The second question was asked to determine whether districts welcomed assistance from the Michigan Department of Education and, if so, what kind of assistance they valued most highly. This would serve as an additional informal needs assessment for the Michigan Department of Education.

Section 5: Program descriptions. In the last section of the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide narrative descriptions of effective programs currently operating in their district. They were asked to include the following information:

1. The title of the program.
2. The target audience.
3. A brief description of the program.
4. Evaluation information.
5. Requirements for participation.
6. Costs.
7. Funding sources.
8. Name and phone number of a contact person.

The purpose of gathering this information was to gain additional knowledge about local programs so that this information could be disseminated to all of Michigan's K-12 public school districts. Narrative descriptions were not used in conducting the analysis of the survey, but they were useful in selecting districts for interviews.

Questionnaire Adaptations

As indicated, several changes were made in the questionnaire used in the Fredisdorf (1987) study. The survey used in Wisconsin was shortened slightly for the purposes of this project, and program

categories were changed. Because it was thought that a shorter survey might yield a better response, 22 programs from the Wisconsin questionnaire were not included in this study. The remaining 30 specific programs listed on this questionnaire are the same as those on the Wisconsin questionnaire, but program categories were changed. Fredisdorf used three broad categories: General Programs/Approaches, Specific Programs/Approaches, and Organizational and/or Managerial Programs/Approaches. The five categories used in this study were chosen so that several other options--attendance, vocational education, community involvement, and staff and program development--could be looked at separately and compared. No changes were made in the list of inhibiting factors.

In the analysis design, modifications from the Wisconsin study were also made. Instead of categorizing schools by size, type (urban, suburban, and rural), and dropout rate, in this study, schools were grouped by size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate. It is difficult to obtain information in Michigan on geographical location needed to classify each as urban, suburban, or rural. However, information on dropout rate and expenditure per pupil was available and was thought to be useful. The results of research done for the literature review pointed to the possibility of a correlation between financial resources and dropout rate.

All of these changes were discussed with Fredisdorf, who gave his permission to use the Wisconsin survey and to make the above-mentioned changes.

Field Testing

Because Fredisdorf did extensive work in Wisconsin in preparing the survey, including work with a panel of 12 experts on children-at-risk programming and two preliminary field tests, extensive consultation with educators in Michigan was not done. A single field test involving six schools of different sizes was carried out primarily to ensure that the questionnaire was clearly understood by school practitioners and to ascertain whether additional programs or approaches should be added. A final review of the questionnaire was conducted by the Detroit Office of the Michigan Department of Education to ensure that the instrument was properly formatted and designed for data-entry purposes.

Interviews

In addition to the written questionnaire, interview questions were developed to obtain more information about educators' perceptions regarding current program efforts, desired efforts, and problems related to dropout prevention. Questions were constructed by the researcher after studying the literature on dropout prevention and remediation and the questionnaires received from schools around the state. After the original list of 20 questions had been field tested, three were selected as most relevant and appropriate for the 30- to 60-minute period generally allotted for interviews. These questions were:

1. What programs or approaches are you currently using which you believe to be most effective?
2. What one program or approach would you most like to add?

3. What inhibiting factor do you feel creates the greatest obstacle for you, and what would best help you in overcoming it?

Although these questions appear to duplicate questions asked on the written survey, it was thought that a discussion of the issues involved would provide an opportunity for respondents to expand on and clarify information already provided and might bring out information about possible approaches not included on the questionnaire.

Summary

Data obtained from the three sources described above--Michigan Department of Education statistical documents, the survey questionnaire, and interviews--provided quantitative and qualitative information about children-at-risk programming in Michigan. Based on these data, it was hoped that comparisons could be made between districts and conclusions drawn about what districts are doing, what they would like to do, and the obstacles they face in meeting the needs of children at risk.

Data Collection

Introduction

Data collection proceeded over a period of months. The data were collected in two phases. The first phase was done by the researcher, working under the auspices of the Michigan Department of Education. The final phase, involving interviews, was done at a later time.

Michigan Department of Education Statistical Data

Statistics gathered on dropout rates and school district size were reported by local school districts to the Office of Research and Information and published in the Michigan Department of Education's statistical report for the year 1985-1986. The size of districts was based on the "total adjustment members" in the district, as reported by the schools. Statistics on expenditure per pupil were reported by districts and published in the 1985-1986 Bulletin 1014 on Michigan K-12 school districts (Michigan State Board of Education, 1986).

Questionnaire Data-Collection Process

The first step in the data-gathering process was to send the questionnaire to the superintendent of each of the 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts. Next, a mail follow-up was sent to districts failing to respond to the first request. Finally, phone calls were made to each district whose questionnaire was still unreturned.

The purpose of surveying all members of the population was to obtain the most accurate measure possible of efforts to serve children at risk. The researcher conducted the mailing of the surveys and follow-up letters and made all phone calls. In support of the study, the state authorized the study and provided advice, paid printing and mailing costs, furnished the names and addresses of all superintendents, and allowed the researcher to use their WATTS line.

Initial mailing. A packet of survey materials was sent to each K-12 public school district in mid-April 1988. Each packet contained (a) a cover letter to the superintendent (Appendix A), (b) a cover letter to the district's children-at-risk contact person (Appendix B), and (c) a survey questionnaire (Appendix C). In the cover letter, the purpose of the study was explained, and superintendents receiving the packet were asked to nominate a person in their district as Children-At-Risk Contact Person and to send the packet on to that person. The cover letter to the contact person explained the purpose of the study and provided a definition of children at risk. The definition used was the same as that used in the Wisconsin study. The purpose of providing this definition was to establish the proper context for completing the survey.

Follow-up mailing. On May 20, follow-up letters were sent to superintendents in districts that had not responded to the original mailing. Copies of the original letters and the survey questionnaire were included with the follow-up letter.

Telephone follow-up. On June 1, follow-up phone calls were begun. These calls to 151 districts continued for two and one-half months because contact persons were often difficult to reach due to vacation schedules and many hours were required for phone calls.

Numerous phone calls were also made to respondents who had filled out only part of the questionnaire or whose answers were inconsistent. Although it was not possible to obtain complete and consistent data for every questionnaire, many were completed or

corrected through these phone calls. Ultimately, 94.7% of the districts surveyed did respond. The rate of response for the study was as follows:

April	118 or 22.4%
May	257 or 48.9%
June	75 or 14.3%
July	33 or 6.2%
August	15 or 2.9%
Total	498 or 94.7%

Questionnaire Data-Collection Schedule

Initially, a goal was set for a 100% return in collecting data for the questionnaire. Between April 15 and August 15, 94.7% of the questionnaires were collected according to the following schedule and in the following manner:

1. On April 14, 1988, the researcher, in cooperation with the Detroit Office of the Michigan Department of Education, sent out the Children-At-Risk survey to all local school districts in Michigan. Respondents were asked to complete the survey and return it to the Detroit Office by May 18.

2. Follow-up phone calls were made by the researcher after April 13 as needed to districts that had returned the survey but had not completed it correctly.

3. On May 20, follow-up letters were sent by the researcher to all schools that did not return a completed survey.

4. Follow-up phone calls were made by the researcher after June 1 to all schools that had not returned a completed survey.

5. From March 1989 to May 1989, the researcher conducted interviews with respondents to determine what additional information could be learned in this manner about what schools are doing to serve at-risk students and about what educators in Michigan believe works for these students.

Interviews

After the questionnaires were analyzed, the three interview questions were finalized. Interviews were conducted with educators in 15 different school districts to add to information obtained through the questionnaires.

Selection of interviewees. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of several criteria. First, districts were chosen based on geographical location. Five respondents were selected from urban districts, five from rural districts, and five from suburban districts. Although geographical location was not a variable used in analyzing the results of the questionnaire, it was thought that distributing respondents in this manner would provide balance and an opportunity to obtain the views of educators working in different kinds of situations. Some interviewees were chosen because their districts appeared to be making significant efforts at preventing dropouts and were successful in maintaining a low dropout rate. One interviewee was chosen because his district seemed to have an unusually high dropout rate despite very high expenditures per pupil. Most rural and suburban districts selected had low dropout rates, while urban districts had high dropout rates.

Interview procedures. Once districts were selected, a preliminary letter was sent to the contact person of each district, describing the study and explaining the purpose of the interview. These letters were followed by a phone call to each contact person to obtain permission for the interview and, if permission was granted, to set a time for the interview. All contact persons who were telephoned generously agreed to be interviewed. Letters were then sent to contact persons, explaining in greater detail the nature and purpose of the study. Some early results of the study were also included, along with a list of the interview questions to be asked.

Interviews took place in March, April, and May 1989. Twelve of the 15 interviews were conducted in the school districts, while three interviews were done on the telephone because the districts were a considerable distance away. Two alternative schools were visited.

Summary

In this section, the data-collection process was described. Data were obtained from three different sources: (a) Michigan Department of Education statistical data on school size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate; (b) survey questionnaire data; and (c) interviews. The information gathered represents a substantial investment of time on the part of respondents from individual districts who participated in the study. Interviewees all gave one

hour or more to interviews in addition to completing the written questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The survey was designed to examine efforts by schools to serve at-risk students. Following current research on dropouts, relationships were believed to exist among size, expenditure per pupil, programs offered, and dropout rates. Statistical data relating to school size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate were obtained from Michigan Department of Education documents. School districts were divided into categories, depending on their size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rates. In the statistical analysis, comparisons were made among school districts of different categories, and analyses were done relating to programs and options provided by districts in different categories.

Closed-Ended Questions

Analyses that were used in answering each of the research questions included frequencies and percentages, t-tests, analyses of variance (ANOVA), and chi-square analysis, as described below.

Section I: All 526 Michigan public school districts.

- A. What programs or approaches are Michigan K-12 public school districts currently providing in an effort to reduce dropout rates among children at risk?
- B. What programs or approaches would Michigan K-12 public school districts most like to offer?
- C. What inhibiting factors are being experienced by the 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts?

The major question of the study involved finding out what efforts are currently being made by K-12 local school districts in Michigan on dropout prevention and remediation. One yes/no option was used to get an idea of whether or not the school district provided the option. Two six-point Likert scales were used to measure both the current and the desired emphasis each district placed on each option or approach. The 30 programs or approaches included on the questionnaire are shown in Table 3.1. In addition, programs were divided into the following five categories:

- a. Identification and Monitoring/Attendance
- b. Curriculum Options
- c. Vocational Options
- d. Community Outreach/Involvement
- e. Staff Development/Program Development

Table 3.1.--Dropout-prevention programs and approaches.

A. Identification and Monitoring/Attendance

- 1. Early identification of children at risk.
- 2. Systematic planning and evaluation procedures to ensure that educational progress of children at risk is monitored and documented.
- 3. A pupil accounting system to monitor attendance and inform parents DAILY about absences.
- 4. A designated school attendance officer in your district.
- 5. Innovative enforcement of school attendance policies.
- 6. A board-approved district attendance policy.

B. Curriculum Options

- 7. Remedial instruction in reading/math.
- 8. Alcohol and drug abuse program(s).
- 9. Individualized instruction.
- 10. School-age parent program.
- 11. Suicide-prevention program.
- 12. Alternative high school.

Table 3.1.--Continued.

B. Curriculum Options (cont'd)

- 13. Alternative classroom(s)/day, after-school, or evening classes/programs.
- 14. Integrated, multi-dimensional program for dropout prevention/remediation.
- 15. A districtwide curriculum planning committee.
- 16. A districtwide developmental guidance and counseling program.

C. Vocational Options

- 17. Comprehensive vocational educational program(s) designed to prepare students for employment.
- 18. Job Training Partnership Act Programs.
- 19. Job Placement Program(s).
- 20. Work Experience Program (e.g., cooperative education).
- 21. Community-based career education program.

D. Community Outreach/Involvement

- 22. Systematic procedures for communication between school staff and parents.
- 23. Community education awareness programs to generate support for the importance of school attendance and achievement.
- 24. Education programs for parents of children at risk.
- 25. A school/community/business children-at-risk advisory committee to plan and recommend programs for children at risk.
- 26. Joint school/business or school/community partnership program(s) serving children at risk.

E. Staff Development/Program Development

- 27. Local staff development programs to enable school staff to work more effectively with children at risk.
 - 28. A designated children at risk district leader responsible for coordinating children-at-risk programs.
 - 29. Technical assistance from the Michigan Department of Education in training school personnel, developing model programs, and providing materials and curriculum.
 - 30. State and federal grants to your school district to develop dropout-prevention programs.
-

Frequencies and percentages were compiled showing the number and percentage of districts offering each of the program options (Table 3.2). Mean scores and standard deviations relating to current efforts made by districts were computed for each program category and for each program option separately. Mean scores and standard deviations were also computed relating to desired efforts made by school districts for each program option separately and in each program category. Finally, mean scores and standard deviations were computed relating to inhibiting factors affecting school districts in each category.

- D. In which program options are the greatest discrepancies found between current efforts and desired efforts toward meeting the needs of children at risk among Michigan K-12 public school districts?

T-tests on means for current and desired effort were examined to determine in which programs the greatest discrepancies existed between current and desired emphasis. These are the programs to which districts may want to consider giving more attention. For example, in the Wisconsin survey (Fredisdorf, 1987), it was found that most school districts had few programs involving collaboration with business and the community, but these were programs that schools considered to be most important. A comparatively large discrepancy was also found for staff development.

Looking at these discrepancies can help planners determine whether funded programs are meeting targeted needs and whether some funding might be better used in other areas. It can also help individual districts plan for future needs.

Table 3.2.--Children-At-Risk survey summary.

Item	No. of Districts Providing	% of Districts Providing ^a
Early identification	355	71.9
Systematic planning and evaluation	265	54.3
Daily attendance monitoring	347	70.0
District attendance officer	235	47.4
Attendance policy enforcement	303	62.3
Board-approved attendance policy	438	88.7
Remedial instruction: math/reading	470	95.1
Substance abuse program	435	88.4
Individualized instruction	358	73.2
School-age-parent program	177	36.6
Suicide prevention	183	37.4
Alternative high school	227	45.8
Alternative programs	292	59.0
Multidimensional programs	99	20.2
Districtwide curriculum planning committee	403	81.4
Districtwide counseling program	231	46.8
Comprehensive vocational program	435	89.0
Job Training Partnership Act programs	313	64.7
Job-placement program	333	68.7
Work experience	409	83.8
Community-based career education	213	44.1
Staff/parent communication	442	89.7
Community education awareness	254	51.9
At-risk parent education	139	28.4
At-risk advisory committee	47	9.6
Joint school/business partnerships	71	14.5
Staff development for at-risk	251	51.0
At-risk coordinator	76	16.3
Michigan Department of Education assistance	61	12.5
State/federal dropout-prevention grants	96	19.6

Section II: Comparison of districts with high dropout rates
and those with low dropout rates.

- A. What differences exist in current efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?

B. What differences exist in desired efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?

T-tests were used to examine the differences between the mean scores on current effort and desired effort relating to programs in high-dropout districts and those in low-dropout districts. T-tests were done by program category and by individual program. Spearman correlation coefficients were also used to determine whether there was a relationship between dropout rate and specific options.

Dropout rate was the rate reported for one year. Thus, a district reporting a 6% dropout rate for the year 1985-1986 might have had a dropout rate of 18% to 25% or more for a particular cohort of students. High-dropout districts were defined as those with a dropout rate of 5.1% or above (28.7% of the districts), whereas low-dropout districts were those with a dropout rate of 2.1% or below (about 26.7% of the districts). With a normal distribution, this would eliminate approximately 38% of the districts with a dropout rate closest to the mean. The actual percentage of districts eliminated using this procedure was 42.6%.

The classification of districts was done somewhat arbitrarily. Because the objective was to compare districts with distinctly different dropout rates, it was decided that about one-fourth of the lowest districts would be appropriate for the low-dropout-rate group and about one-fourth of the highest districts should represent the high-dropout-rate group. Also, it was thought that districts with a dropout rate of 2.1% or below were doing very well in preventing dropouts, whereas those with rates above 5% needed to improve.

- C. What differences exist in inhibiting factors related to meeting the needs of children at risk between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?

T-tests were used to examine the differences between the mean scores on inhibiting factors in the districts with high dropout rates and those in districts with low dropout rates.

Section III: Comparing districts according to size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate.

- A. Do school districts in various size categories differ with respect to:
1. current efforts?
 2. desired efforts?
 3. inhibiting factors?
- B. Do school districts in various expenditure-per-pupil categories differ with respect to:
1. current efforts?
 2. desired efforts?
 3. inhibiting factors?

To answer these questions, school districts were divided into the following five categories according to size:

1. Districts with fewer than 1,000 students
2. Districts with 1,000 to 2,499 students
3. Districts with 2,500 to 9,999 students
4. Districts with 10,000 to 49,999 students
5. Districts with more than 49,999 students

Districts were divided into these size categories for several reasons. First, the largest district, more than 50,000 students, was considered to be different from other large districts and was separated from them. Districts with 10,000 to 49,999 students were in most instances urban districts. Those with fewer than 1,000 students were seen as most likely to demonstrate the benefits of

small size. Categories two and three were divided in an effort to determine where the benefits of size diminish or stop.

Next, school districts were divided into the following three categories according to expenditure per pupil:

1. Districts with expenditures per pupil of \$1,992 to \$2,800
2. Districts with expenditures per pupil between \$2,801 and \$3,999
3. Districts with expenditures per pupil above \$3,999

Districts were divided into expenditure per pupil categories first by dividing the range by three. Then, because the top category included too few districts, more were added and numbers were rounded off. An effort was also made to ensure that "poor" districts differed considerably from "rich" districts in their expenditure per pupil.

ANOVA tests were done using mean scores for program categories to examine the ways in which school districts in different size and expenditure categories differed by program category in the programs they used and preferred.

Chi-square tests were used in comparing schools in different size and expenditure per pupil categories on specific program options. ANOVAs were done to examine the inhibiting factors district contact persons perceived as obstacles to further improvement.

Section IV: Comparing districts in different categories according to size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate.

- A. Do smaller school districts in Michigan have lower dropout rates than larger schools?

ANOVA was used to examine the way in which dropout rates differed for schools in different size categories. School districts were grouped into five categories by size (0-999, 1,000-2,499, 2,500-9,999, 10,000-49,999, and 49,999 and above). Chi-square tests were also used in studying the relationship between these variables.

B. Do districts with larger expenditures per pupil have lower dropout rates?

ANOVA and chi-square were also used to examine the relationship between financial support for students and dropout rates. Schools were grouped into three categories according to their expenditure per pupil (\$1,992-\$2,800, \$2,801-\$3,999, and \$4,000 and above).

Open-Ended Questions

Survey questions. Open-ended questions were asked on the survey to gather respondents' opinions about the children-at-risk problem in their district and about what help they would like from the Michigan Department of Education. The two open-ended questions included on the survey were:

1. What circumstances unique to your school district or district population do you think affect the dropout rate?
2. What information or assistance would you like to receive from the Michigan Department of Education?

Interview questions. Interviews were conducted with educators in various school districts to add to information obtained through the questionnaires. The original questions designed for interviews (Appendix D) proved in field testing to be too lengthy and detailed for a half-hour to an hour interview session. Since most of the

relevant information seemed to fit into the scope of three questions, subsequent interviews focused on three topics. These were:

1. What are you currently doing in your district that works best for children at risk?
2. What are the most serious problems you face in attempting to help children at risk?
3. If you could add one program or approach to what you are currently doing, what would you choose to add?

Interviews were conducted to gather additional information related to dropout-prevention programs in particular schools. For the most part, these interviews were conducted with questionnaire respondents, but some other educators were interviewed as well, to obtain a broader point of view. Information gained from the interviews was studied, and conclusions were written in narrative form.

Summary

The purpose of this study was (a) to gather useful descriptive information and data about the efforts Michigan K-12 public school districts were making to serve children at risk, (b) to determine in what areas they would most like to be providing more programs, (c) to assess the inhibiting factors that they saw as creating the major obstacles in solving the dropout problem, and (d) to gather data concerning information or assistance local districts need from the Michigan Department of Education. This chapter included a description of the design and methodology for this children-at-risk

study, including research questions, instrumentation, data-collection procedures, and schedule and procedures for analysis.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data gathered about dropout-prevention efforts in Michigan K-12 public school districts. The first set of research questions relates to all 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts--what programs they are currently offering, what programs they would like to offer, inhibiting factors, and discrepancies between current emphasis and desired emphasis. Other questions concern comparisons among districts grouped by size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate. All information is based on self-report. Of 526 districts surveyed, 497 or 94.7% of the districts returned completed written questionnaires. For individual items, the number of respondents varied somewhat. All data gathered in programs are based on the title of the program alone; no information was gathered about the extent, quality, or effectiveness of programs based on objective assessment.

Research Questions and Findings

Section I: All Michigan K-12 Public School Districts

This section includes questions about programming in all school districts throughout the state. It contains baseline data on what

programs exist, what emphasis is currently being placed on these programs in each district, and what programs districts would most like to emphasize. The degree of stress of 15 inhibiting factors was studied. Finally, by examining desired emphasis and the discrepancy between current and desired emphasis, an attempt was made to determine what programs respondents perceived to be most needed.

Programs offered--number and percentage. The first research question was:

What programs or approaches are Michigan K-12 public school districts currently providing in an effort to reduce dropout rates among children at risk?

Answering this question required identifying programs or approaches serving children at risk that respondents perceived to exist in their districts. In Table 4.1 the number and percentage of all Michigan K-12 districts that offered particular programs are displayed. Specific approaches most often used were school-based programs that benefit all students--communication between staff and parents, board-approved attendance policies, daily attendance monitoring, individualized instruction, and district curriculum planning committees.

Other frequently used options--early at-risk identification, remedial instruction, substance-abuse programs, and comprehensive vocational education--serve children at risk more directly. Four out of five of the vocational options listed on the questionnaire were provided in more than half of the districts. More than

two-thirds of the districts used the first 11 options shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1.--Programs offered by reporting districts.

Program Option	Number of Districts	Percent of Districts Responding
Remedial instruction	470	95.1
Communication between staff and parents	442	89.7
Comprehensive vocational education	438	89.0
Board-approved attendance policy	435	88.7
Substance-abuse programs	435	88.4
Work experience	409	83.8
District curriculum planning committee	403	81.4
Individualized instruction	358	73.2
Early at-risk identification	355	71.9
Daily attendance monitoring	347	70.0
Job placement	333	68.7
Job Training Partnership Act	313	64.7
Attendance policy enforcement	303	62.3
Other alternative programs	292	59.0
Systematic planning and evaluation	265	54.3
Community awareness education	254	51.9
Staff development re: children at risk	251	51.0
District attendance officer	235	47.4
District counseling program	231	46.8
Alternative high school	227	45.8
Community-based career education	213	44.1
Suicide prevention	183	37.4
School-age-parent program	177	36.6
At-risk parent education	139	28.4
Multidimensional program	99	20.2
State/federal grants: dropout prevention	96	19.6
Designated at-risk coordinator	76	15.3
Joint school/business partnership	71	14.5
Michigan Dept. of Education tech. assist.	61	12.5
At-risk advisory committee	47	9.6

Options least frequently offered included many of those specifically designed for children at risk, such as school-age-parent programs, at-risk parent education, alternative high schools, and suicide prevention. These options usually are not funded by state or federal governments. Options designed to improve long-range planning were also offered by fewer districts. These approaches included systematic planning and evaluation, staff development re: children at risk, at-risk advisory committee, multidimensional programs, and a designated at-risk coordinator. Also, few options were used that enlist the help of the community--joint school/business partnerships, community-based career education, and at-risk parent education. Little aid in terms of technical assistance or funding seems to be available because fewer than 20% of the districts reported having these options. Programs most frequently offered by all Michigan districts usually served all the students rather than focusing on children at risk. The approaches designed for a specific population are very often those that are heavily funded by state and federal grants. Substance-abuse programs and vocational education options are examples of this.

Programs stressed--degree of current emphasis. Means for current emphasis for specific programs reinforced the conclusion that programs most heavily emphasized are those that provide direct school-based services to children at risk. Mean values ranged from 0.0 to 6.0, with the greatest possible emphasis being 6.0 and the lowest emphasis 0.0. The importance of attendance was reflected in

the heavy stress on these options as three of the four--board policy, daily monitoring, and enforcement--were among the top ten options in degree of current emphasis. Efforts to correct academic deficiencies were reflected in the emphasis on remedial instruction and individualized instruction. The importance of communication with parents and early identification of children at risk were also reinforced by the current emphasis placed on these options by districts.

Comprehensive vocational education and substance abuse also received strong emphasis, reflecting the recognition of need to broaden the curriculum in meeting students' needs. However, with these two options, particularly, the reader is reminded that program definitions were not provided. Comprehensive vocational education for those in this field is defined as "a program of 15 or more wage earning Office of Education Occupational Programs" (Michigan Department of Education, 1978). Since only 45% of the districts reported providing a comprehensive vocational education program in 1978, it is possible that respondents to this survey who were not vocational education specialists used a less rigorous definition in recording responses.

Also, with respect to substance abuse, Michigan has adopted for use in all schools a Michigan Health Model, which includes a substance-abuse curriculum for all levels. Individual districts vary considerably in the extent to which they provide instruction or activities beyond this model.

Finally, the degree of current emphasis illustrates again the lack of options such as counseling, systematic planning and evaluation, approaches for parent and community involvement, and funding. Multidimensional programs that have been recommended by research received little emphasis. Districts reported very little emphasis on Michigan Department of Education technical assistance. Means for current emphasis for each approach are listed in Table 4.2.

Upon examining the same data for desired emphasis, it became clear that educators thought that many options that would prove effective in reducing the dropout rate were not being provided in their districts or were being provided at an inadequate level. The next section includes these data and conclusions.

Programs desired. The second research question in Section I was:

What programs or approaches would Michigan K-12 public school districts most like to offer?

Means for "desired emphasis" were examined to determine what respondents perceived to be the most needed programs. This information can be helpful in setting priorities for planning. As might be expected, the desired emphasis for all 30 programs was high. Although the range of means for current emphasis was 2.970, the range of means for desired emphasis was only 1.599.

The desired emphasis for each program option is shown in Table 4.3. Programs that districts would most like to offer (desired emphasis) were often the same as those they were currently offering

(current emphasis). The higher the mean value, the greater the desired emphasis. The highest possible mean was 6.0.

Table 4.2.--Current emphasis for specific program options.

Program Option	Current Emphasis
Board-approved attendance policy	4.765
Remedial instruction	4.692
Daily attendance monitoring	4.345
District curriculum planning committee	4.273
Comprehensive vocational programs	4.268
Communication between staff/parents	4.246
Substance abuse	4.129
Attendance policy enforcement	3.983
Work experience programs	3.868
Early at-risk identification	3.653
Individualized instruction	3.598
Job placement	3.445
Job Training Partnership Act	3.430
Other alternative programs	3.330
District counseling programs	3.302
District attendance officer	2.258
Community awareness education	3.225
Systematic planning and evaluation	3.168
Alternative high school	3.123
Community-based career education	2.893
Suicide prevention	2.876
Staff development re: children at risk	2.852
School-age-parent program	2.671
Multidimensional programs	2.364
At-risk parent education	2.280
State/federal grants for dropout prevention	2.214
Designated at-risk coordinator	2.001
Joint school/business partnership	1.951
At-risk advisory committee	1.808
Michigan Dept. of Education tech. assistance	1.795

Table 4.3.--Programs most desired by reporting districts.

Rank	Program Option	Mean
1	Remedial instruction: reading/math	5.430
2	Communication between staff and parents	5.271
3	Early at-risk identification	5.218
4	Board-approved attendance policy	5.212
5	Substance-abuse programs	5.206
6	District curriculum planning committee	5.245
7	Daily attendance monitoring	5.114
8	Systematic planning and evaluation	5.087
9	District counseling programs	5.083
10	Comprehensive vocational programs	5.072
11	Attendance policy enforcement	4.808
12	Staff development re: children at risk	4.782
13	Individualized instruction	4.749
14	Community awareness education	4.718
15	At-risk parent education	4.636
16	Work experience programs	4.538
17	Job placement	4.414
18	State/federal dropout-prevention grants	4.360
19	Suicide prevention	4.347
20	Alternative high school	4.288
21	Other alternative programs	4.263
22	Job Training Partnership Act	4.186
23	District attendance officer	4.183
24	Multidimensional programs	4.133
25	Community-based career education	4.126
26	Designated at-risk coordinator	3.998
27	Michigan Dept. of Education tech. assistance	3.918
28	Joint school/business partnership	3.902
29	School-age-parent program	3.792
30	At-risk advisory committee	3.756

Of the top ten programs on the "desired emphasis" list, eight were being provided by 70% or more of the districts. Programs most desired were largely school-based programs, such as remedial instruction and substance-abuse programs, which provide direct services to all students. However, early at-risk identification placed third on this list, reflecting concern about meeting the

needs of these students. Also, some options that had a high "desired emphasis" were not being offered by a high percentage of districts (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4.--Desired emphasis for specific program options.

Program Option	Desired Emphasis	Percent of Districts Offering
District counseling programs	5.083	46.8
Systematic planning and evaluation	5.087	54.3
Staff development	4.782	51.0
Community awareness education	4.718	51.9
At-risk parent education	4.646	28.4

Inhibiting factors. The third research question in Section I was:

What inhibiting factors are being experienced by the 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts?

Means relating to inhibiting factors for all Michigan K-12 public school districts indicated that the major obstacles to serving children at risk were primarily problems with families and lack of funds. Family problems were cited in three of the top five inhibiting factors. Funding was the second most serious inhibiting factor according to respondents. Failure of legal remedies for keeping students in school (ineffective prosecution and ineffective truancy laws) also appeared to be a problem in many districts. Respondents also found establishing school/family links to be a

serious problem. Coordination with the community-at-large, while a concern, was considered to be less problematical. Concern about teaching techniques and curriculum offerings was relatively low. The inhibiting factors in order of strength are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5.--Inhibiting factors as reported by respondents.

Rank	Inhibiting Factor	Strength
1	Unstable family situation	5.246
2	Insufficient funding	5.123
3	Lack of parental interest	4.818
4	Low parental expectations	4.458
5	Ineffective prosecution	4.079
6	Difficulty of establishing school/family links	3.785
7	Lack of school/business/comm. coordination	3.769
8	Ineffective truancy laws	3.761
9	Lack of curriculum options	3.545
10	Inappropriate instructional techniques	3.492
11	Low teacher expectations	3.413
12	Insufficient evaluation tools	3.260
13	Teacher burnout	3.091
14	Lack of law-enforcement support	2.842
15	Lack of social services cooperation	2.820

Discrepancies between desired effort and current effort. The fourth question in Section I was:

In which program options are the greatest discrepancies found between current efforts and desired efforts toward meeting the needs of children at risk among Michigan K-12 public school districts?

T-tests were done to show differences between current emphasis and desired emphasis. Discrepancies between means for "current emphasis" and "desired emphasis" help to suggest programs where more

work needs to be done. Discrepancies were significant for all program categories. This was shown by the p-value of .000. By category, vocational programs had the lowest discrepancy (1.03) of any program group. Discrepancies for community outreach/involvement and staff and program development were the largest, suggesting that programs in these categories were most needed by all districts. Discrepancies between current and desired emphasis by program category are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6.--Discrepancies between current and desired emphasis by program category.

Program Category	Current Emphasis	Desired Emphasis	Discrepancy	p-Value
Vocational options	3.20	4.24	1.03	.000*
Identification and monitoring	3.40	4.68	1.28	.000*
Curriculum options	2.98	4.37	1.38	.000*
Community outreach/involvement	2.31	4.20	1.89	.000*
Staff and program development	2.00	4.10	2.10	.000*

*Difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

With respect to specific programs or approaches, programs with the greatest discrepancies between means for current and desired emphasis are shown in Tables 4.7 and 4.8. T-tests done on specific program options showed that discrepancies were all significant at the .000 level.

Table 4.7.--Discrepancies between means for current and desired emphasis: all school districts.

Program Option	Current Emphasis	Desired Emphasis	Discrepancy	p-Value
Early at-risk identification	3.672	5.218	1.546	.000*
Systematic planning and evaluation	3.190	5.089	1.897	.000*
Daily attendance monitoring	4.361	5.114	.753	.000*
District attendance officer	3.280	4.183	.903	.000*
Attendance policy enforcement	3.988	4.808	.820	.000*
Board-approved attendance policy	4.778	5.212	.434	.000*
Remedial instruction: reading/math	4.693	5.430	.737	.000*
Substance-abuse programs	4.139	5.206	1.067	.000*
Individualized instruction	3.595	4.749	1.154	.000*
School-age-parent program	2.676	3.792	1.116	.000*
Suicide prevention	2.879	4.347	1.468	.000*
Alternative high school	3.122	4.288	1.166	.000*
Other alternative programs	3.336	4.263	.927	.000*
Multidimensional programs	2.369	4.133	1.773	.000*
District curriculum planning committee	4.270	5.245	.975	.000*
District counseling program	3.308	5.083	1.775	.000*
Comprehensive vocational program	4.268	5.072	.804	.000*
Job Training Partnership Act	3.434	4.186	.734	.000*

Table 4.7.--Continued.

Program Option	Current Emphasis	Desired Emphasis	Discrep- ancy	p- Value
Job placement program	3.450	4.414	.964	.000*
Work experience program	3.860	4.538	.678	.000*
Community-based career education	2.902	4.126	1.224	.000*
Communication between staff/parents	4.252	5.271	1.019	.000*
Community awareness education	3.240	4.718	1.478	.000*
At-risk parent education	2.291	4.636	2.345	.000*
At-risk advisory committee	1.807	3.756	1.949	.000*
Joint school/business partnership	1.960	3.902	1.942	.000*
Staff development re: children at risk	2.659	4.782	1.923	.000*
Designated at-risk coordinator	2.031	3.998	1.967	.000*
Michigan Department of Education tech. assist.	1.794	3.918	2.124	.000*
State/federal dropout- prevention grants	2.211	4.360	2.149	.000*

*Significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Table 4.8.--Ranking of discrepancies between means.

Rank	Program Option	Discrep. Between Means
1	At-risk parent education	2.345
2	State/federal grants for dropout prevention	2.149
3	Michigan Dept. of Education technical assist.	2.124
4	Designated at-risk coordinator	1.967
5	At-risk advisory committee	1.949
6	Joint school/business advisory committee	1.942
7	Staff development re: children at risk	1.923
8	Systematic planning and evaluation	1.897
9	District counseling programs	1.775
10	Multidimensional programs	1.773
11	Early at-risk identification	1.546
12	Community awareness education	1.478
13	Suicide prevention	1.468
14	Community-based career education	1.224
15	Alternative high school	1.166
16	Individualized instruction	1.154
17	School-age-parent program	1.116
18	Substance-abuse programs	1.067
19	Communication between staff/parents	1.019
20	District curriculum planning committee	.975
21	Job placement program	.964
22	Other alternative programs	.927
23	District attendance officer	.903
24	Attendance policy enforcement	.820
25	Comprehensive vocational education	.804
26	Daily attendance monitoring	.753
27	Remedial instruction	.737
28	Job Training Partnership Act	.734
29	Work experience program	.678
30	Board-approved attendance policy	.434

Note: All discrepancies were significantly different at alpha < .05, as shown in Table 4.4.

Program options designed specifically for at-risk students were most often those that had the largest discrepancies between means for current and desired emphasis. Education for parents of at-risk students showed the largest discrepancy between "what is" and "what ought to be," followed by the need for state and federal dropout-prevention grants and technical assistance from the Michigan Department of Education. Discrepancies were also high for planning and for people committed to helping children at risk: at-risk coordinator, at-risk advisory committee, joint school/business partnership, and systematic planning and evaluation. Staff development, early at-risk identification, multidimensional programs, and community awareness education were also seen as high priorities based on discrepancies. Discrepancies were still significant, but relatively low, for attendance options and most vocational options.

Desired emphasis and discrepancies combined. Looking at "desired emphasis" in combination with discrepancies helps to sort out which programs were considered by Michigan school personnel to be important to dropout prevention and, at the same time, were not being offered at a desirable level. Means for desired emphasis and discrepancies were combined in two ways. First, Table 4.9 shows the ranking of programs derived by multiplying the means for desired emphasis (with a weight of 1.5 to emphasize programs most desired) by the means for discrepancies between current and desired emphasis. This was done to place the greatest emphasis on programs respondents considered to be most important to dropout prevention. The weight

of "desired emphasis" was thus greater than that for discrepancies. Table 4.10 shows the ranking of program options when means for desired emphasis and discrepancies were multiplied, but each was given equal weight. The "equal weight" method was used to determine if the listing of "most needed" programs would be different when "desired effort" and discrepancies were weighted equally. In both instances, it is clear that nearly all "most needed" programs were the same, and that these programs were most often in categories 4 and 5--community outreach/involvement and staff and program development.

Table 4.9.--Programs most needed, based on desired emphasis (1.5) multiplied by discrepancies between means.

Program Option	1.5 Desired Emphasis x Discrepancy
1. Systematic planning and evaluation	14.480
2. State/federal grants for dropout prevention	14.054
3. Staff development re: children at risk	13.793
4. District counseling program	13.533
5. Michigan Department of Education assistance	12.482
6. Early at-risk identification	12.100
7. At-risk coordinator	11.796
8. Joint school/business partnership	11.366
9. Multidimensional programs	10.991
10. At-risk advisory committee	10.980
11. At-risk parent education	10.459

Table 4.10.--Programs most needed, based on desired emphasis multiplied by discrepancies between means.

Program Option	Desired Emphasis x Discrepancy
1. At-risk parent education	10.871
2. Systematic planning and evaluation	9.653
3. State/federal grants for dropout prevention	9.369
4. Staff development re: children at risk	9.195
5. District counseling	9.022
6. Michigan Department of Education assistance	8.321
7. Early at-risk identification	8.067
8. At-risk coordinator	7.864
9. Joint school/business partnership	7.577
10. Multidimensional programs	7.327
11. At-risk advisory committee	7.320

Every option from the staff and program development category was considered to be needed. In addition, systematic planning and evaluation, which could have been included in this category, also received strong emphasis. More options involving the community were also seen as needed. These included at-risk parent education, at-risk advisory committee, and joint school/business partnerships. Other options respondents perceived to be most needed were district counseling programs and multidimensional programs.

These programs, then, according to the survey results alone, are the programs on which most emphasis should be placed by planners.

Summary. This section included findings about programs currently being offered by all Michigan K-12 public school districts, about programs respondents said they would most like to

offer, about inhibiting factors that present obstacles in meeting the needs of children at risk, and about the discrepancies between current emphasis and desired emphasis. After examining these data, conclusions were drawn about what programs currently being offered need to be continued, about what programs need to be offered by more schools and with greater emphasis, and about what factors present the greatest problems for educators in serving children at risk.

Section II: Dropout Rate and Programming

Research questions in Section II relate to the relationship between dropout rate and effort and dropout rate and inhibiting factors. Data were gathered in an attempt to determine in what ways districts with high dropout rates differed from those with low dropout rates with respect to effort and inhibiting factors. It was hoped that patterns prevalent in districts with low dropout rates would suggest ways in which dropping out could be prevented.

Dropout rate and current effort. The first question in this section was:

What differences exist in current efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?

Dropout rate and current effort by program category. T-tests were done by program category to compare the level of effort in districts with high dropout rates with the level of effort in districts with low dropout rates. Table 4.11 the current effort by program category in districts with high and low dropout rates. The

number of low-dropout-rate districts responding ranged from 115 to 132, for an average of 127.6; the number of high-dropout-rate districts responding ranged from 124 to 143, for an average of 136.8.

Table 4.11.--Effort expended, by program category: high-dropout-rate districts compared to low-dropout-rate districts.

Program Option	Low Dropout-Rate Districts		High Dropout-Rate Districts		Discrepancy	p-Value
	Mean	N ^a	Mean	N ^a		
1. Identification/monitoring	3.65	132	3.35	143	.30	.037*
2. Vocational programs	2.95	130	3.42	140	.47	.002**
3. Curriculum options	2.92	132	3.12	141	.20	.106
4. Community involvement	2.27	129	2.45	136	.18	.141
5. Staff/program development	1.77	115	2.16	124	.39	.003**

^aN indicates number responding.

*Programs stressed significantly more heavily by low-dropout-rate districts at $\alpha < .05$.

**Programs stressed significantly more heavily by high-dropout-rate districts at $\alpha < .05$.

Levels of current effort for two program categories were lower for low-dropout-rate districts than for high-dropout-rate districts at $\alpha < .05$. In one category, identification and monitoring, low-dropout-rate districts expended significantly more effort than high-dropout-rate districts. In other categories, there was no significant difference between means.

High-dropout-rate districts reported significantly more effort for vocational programs and staff and program development. Both high- and low-dropout-rate districts expended low levels of effort in community outreach/involvement and moderate levels of effort in curriculum options.

Dropout rate and current effort by specific option. T-tests were done for specific program options to determine whether significant differences existed between low- and high-dropout-rate districts with respect to current efforts on specific programs (Table 4.12). Districts with low dropout rates differed in some respects from those with high dropout rates on the program options they stressed. Low-dropout-rate districts placed significantly greater emphasis on preventative measures such as attendance monitoring and enforcement, communication between staff and parents, systematic planning and evaluation, and early identification.

High-dropout-rate districts stressed significantly more specific options designed for remediation such as alternative programs, alternative high schools, school-age-parent programs, and at-risk parent education. High-dropout-rate districts also receive significantly more state and federal funding for dropout-prevention programs than do low-dropout-rate districts and often have an at-risk coordinator, at-risk parent education, and school/community advisory committee for at-risk students. Table 4.12 shows the degree of current emphasis for each program in high- and low-dropout-rate districts.

Table 4.12.--Program emphasis in high-dropout-rate and low-dropout-rate districts.

Program Option	Low Dropout-Rate Districts		High Dropout-Rate Districts		Discrepancy	p-Value
	Mean	N ^a	Mean	N ^a		
Early at-risk identification	3.848	125	3.526	131	.322	.093*
Systematic planning and evaluation	3.310	116	2.960	126	.350	.086*
Daily attendance monitoring	4.680	122	4.088	124	.592	.004*
District attendance officer	3.377	114	3.364	118	.013	.960
Attendance policy enforcement	4.189	116	3.818	127	.371	.075*
Board-approved attendance policy	4.739	123	4.807	135	.068	.659
Remedial instruction	4.674	129	4.719	139	.045	.748
Substance-abuse programs	4.212	127	4.073	137	.139	.384
Individualized instruction	3.769	117	3.511	131	.258	.142
School-age-parent program	2.470	102	2.895	111	.425	.053**
Suicide prevention	2.870	108	2.672	116	.198	.327
Alternative high school	2.576	104	3.414	123	.838	.001**
Other alternative programs	2.972	108	3.507	126	.535	.014**
Multidimensional program	2.303	99	2.392	112	.089	.014**
District curriculum planning committee	4.218	119	4.225	133	.007	.970
District counseling program	3.405	116	3.258	120	.147	.473

Table 4.12.--Continued.

Program Option	Low Dropout-Rate Districts		High Dropout-Rate Districts		Discrepancy	p-Value
	Mean	N ^a	Mean	N ^a		
Comprehensive vocational program	4.065	123	4.372	137	.307	.070**
Job Training Partnership Act	3.290	110	3.611	126	.321	.128
Job placement program	3.267	112	3.587	126	.320	.101
Work experience program	3.587	114	3.992	136	.405	.035**
Community-based career education	2.644	107	2.949	118	.305	.131
Communication between staff/parents	4.388	126	4.080	136	.308	.058*
Community awareness education	3.228	114	3.291	120	.063	.756
At-risk parent education	2.075	106	2.398	118	.323	.066**
At-risk advisory committee	1.681	91	1.990	108	.309	.087**
Joint school/business partnership	1.846	91	2.009	108	.163	.368
Staff development re: children at risk	2.705	112	2.900	120	.195	.316
Designated at-risk coordinator	1.747	95	2.160	112	.413	.032**
Michigan Dept. of Educ. technical assistance	1.606	94	1.841	107	.235	.151
State/federal dropout-prevention grants	2.052	95	2.513	113	.461	.033**

^aN indicates number responding.

*Programs stressed significantly more heavily by low-dropout-rate districts at $\alpha < .05$.

**Programs stressed significantly more heavily by high-dropout-rate districts at $\alpha < .05$.

Vocational programs such as work experience and comprehensive vocational education were also stressed significantly more in high-dropout-rate schools. Regardless of the district in which they are found, these programs can serve both a preventative and a remedial function. The results of this analysis indicated that low-dropout-rate districts used more general, proactive measures, whereas high-dropout-rate districts used more remedial or reactive options designed specifically for the population of children at risk.

Dropout rate and desired effort. The second question in Section II was:

What differences exist in desired efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?

Dropout rate and desired effort by program category. T-tests were done to determine whether there were significant differences between high- and low-dropout-rate districts with respect to desired emphasis for each program category. Levels of desired effort varied much more than levels of current effort, reflecting a significantly greater perceived need on the part of high-dropout districts. Regardless of the program category, high-dropout districts reported a significantly greater desired emphasis than did low-dropout districts; differences on the t-test were significant for all program categories. Table 4.13 shows the desired effort for high- and low-dropout-rate districts by program category. The number of high-dropout-rate districts responding ranged from 134 to 142, whereas the number of low-dropout-rate districts responding ranged from 128 to 130. Desired efforts for both types of districts were

lowest in the categories of community outreach/involvement and staff/program development.

Table 4.13.--Desired effort for programs: high-dropout-rate districts compared to low-dropout-rate districts.

Program Option	Low Dropout-Rate Districts		High Dropout-Rate Districts		Discrepancy	p-Value
	Mean	N ^a	Mean	N ^a		
1. Identification/monitoring	4.53	133	4.83	142	.30	.021*
2. Vocational programs	3.86	131	4.60	140	.74	.000*
3. Curriculum options	4.07	132	4.63	142	.56	.000*
4. Community involvement	3.85	128	4.52	137	.67	.000*
5. Staff/program development	3.57	118	4.51	125	.94	.000*

^aN indicates number responding.

*Programs stressed significantly more heavily by high-dropout-rate districts at alpha < .05.

Dropout rate and desired effort by specific option. T-tests were done to determine whether there were significant differences between high- and low-dropout-rate districts with respect to desired emphasis. The degree of desired emphasis for each program in high- and low-dropout-rate districts is shown in Table 4.14. For 25 out of 30 options, high-dropout districts reported a significantly greater need to increase effort on dropout programs than did low-dropout-rate districts. High-dropout-rate districts also showed a

Table 4.14.--Desired emphasis in high-dropout-rate districts and low-dropout-rate districts.

Program Option	Low Dropout-Rate Districts		High Dropout-Rate Districts		Discrepancy	p-Value
	Mean	N ^a	Mean	N ^a		
Early at-risk identification	5.087	126	5.330	136	.243	.035**
Systematic planning and evaluation	4.893	122	5.207	135	.314	.019**
Daily attendance monitoring	5.096	124	5.227	136	.131	.353
District attendance officer	3.902	123	4.431	132	.529	.018**
Attendance policy enforcement	4.611	121	5.022	134	.411	.011**
Board-approved attendance policy	5.097	123	5.301	136	.204	.097
Remedial instruction	5.388	126	5.499	138	.045	.748
Substance-abuse programs	5.185	124	5.220	136	.035	.753
Individualized instruction	4.781	119	4.712	132	.069	.629
School-age-parent program	3.250	116	4.101	128	.851	.000**
Suicide prevention	4.033	121	4.417	134	.384	.039**
Alternative high school	3.400	120	4.765	132	1.365	.000**
Other alternative programs	3.650	120	4.629	135	.979	.000**
Multidimensional program	3.528	121	4.572	131	1.044	.000**
District curriculum planning committee	5.065	122	5.367	136	.302	.023**
District counseling program	4.943	123	5.231	134	.288	.028**

Table 4.14.--Continued.

Program Option	Low Dropout-Rate Districts		High Dropout-Rate Districts		Discrepancy	p-Value
	Mean	N ^a	Mean	N ^a		
Comprehensive vocational program	4.785	126	5.253	138	.468	.000**
Job Training Partnership Act	3.899	119	4.546	128	.647	.000**
Job placement program	4.016	122	4.748	135	.732	.000**
Work experience program	4.098	121	4.868	137	.778	.000**
Community-based career education	3.636	121	4.435	131	.799	.000**
Communication between staff/parents	5.166	126	5.350	134	.184	.097
Community awareness education	4.414	123	4.923	131	.509	.002**
At-risk parent education	4.166	126	4.923	131	.757	.000**
At-risk advisory committee	3.260	119	4.232	129	.972	.000**
Joint school/business partnership	3.384	117	4.226	128	.842	.000**
Staff development re: children at risk	4.436	126	4.992	133	.556	.000**
Designated at-risk coordinator	3.450	120	4.392	130	.942	.000**
Michigan Dept. of Educ. technical assistance	3.378	119	4.271	129	.893	.000**
State/federal dropout-prevention grants	3.752	121	4.883	129	1.131	.000**

^aN indicates number responding.

*Programs desired significantly more by low-dropout-rate districts at alpha < .05.

**Programs desired significantly more by high-dropout-rate districts at alpha < .05.

significantly greater need for systematic planning and evaluation, staff development, funding, and many other options designed specifically to assist at-risk students.

All districts placed a high desired emphasis (5.0 or more) on the following programs:

- Early at-risk identification
- Daily attendance monitoring
- Board-approved attendance policy
- Remedial instruction
- Substance-abuse programs
- District curriculum planning committee
- Communication between staff and parents

Dropout rate and inhibiting factors. The third question in this section was:

What differences exist in inhibiting factors related to meeting the needs of children at risk between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?

Inhibiting factors examined in this study were:

- Insufficient evaluation tools
- Ineffective truancy laws
- Ineffective prosecution
- Insufficient funding
- Difficulty of establishing school/family links
- Low teacher expectations
- Low parental expectations
- Unstable family situations
- Lack of parental interest
- Lack of law enforcement support
- Lack of curriculum options
- Inappropriate instructional techniques
- Lack of school/business/community coordination
- Lack of social services cooperation
- Teacher burnout

The purpose of examining these data was to determine whether districts with low dropout rates faced different kinds of problems from those with high dropout rates. T-tests were done to see

whether significant differences existed between high- and low-dropout-rate districts with respect to inhibiting factors.

No significant differences were found between high- and low-dropout-rate districts on four inhibiting factors--unstable families, lack of curriculum options, insufficient evaluation tools, and inappropriate instructional techniques.

All schools, regardless of dropout rate, reported having serious problems with unstable family situations (over five-sixths on the Likert-type scale). This one inhibiting factor is the only one rated above 5.0 on the six-point scale. Other inhibiting factors they shared--lack of curriculum options, insufficient evaluation tools, and inappropriate instructional techniques--were considered to be less hindering (about 3.5 or less).

Eleven out of 15 inhibiting factors were perceived to be a significantly greater problem for high-dropout-rate districts than for low-dropout-rate districts. Parents, because of low expectations and lack of interest, were considered to be strong inhibiting factors (4.5 or above) for all schools, but high-dropout-rate districts rated these two items significantly higher than did low-dropout-rate districts. Districts with high dropout rates also had significantly greater difficulty than low-dropout-rate districts establishing school/family links and coordinating efforts with the community. High-dropout-rate districts had significantly more serious problems than low-dropout-rate districts getting help from the legal system. To a significantly greater extent, they also

considered laws to be ineffective and prosecution and law-enforcement support generally to be lacking.

Insufficient funding was the most serious problem for districts with high dropout rates, but this placed second to unstable family situations for districts with low dropout rates. The need for funding was rated at a significantly higher level by respondents from high-dropout-rate districts.

High-dropout districts also cited lack of social services cooperation and teacher burnout as significantly more problematic than did low-dropout districts. Table 4.15 shows the level of emphasis on inhibiting factors for both types of districts, the differences between them, and the significance of these differences as determined by the t-test. The number of low-dropout-rate districts reporting ranged from 132 to 133. The number of high-dropout-rate districts reporting ranged from 141 to 142.

Summary. In this section, data were presented relating to the differences between districts with high dropout rates and those with low dropout rates with respect to current and desired program emphasis and inhibiting factors. Low-dropout-rate districts stressed general and/or preventative approaches, such as attendance monitoring and early at-risk identification. High-dropout-rate districts more often provided programs specifically designed for children at risk, such as alternative high schools and at-risk parent education. Although most of these specific programs can be preventative, many, including vocational options and formal planning options such as the at-risk advisory committee, at-risk coordinator,

and at-risk parent education, appeared to have been initiated in response to the high dropout rate.

Table 4.15.--Emphasis on inhibiting factors: high-dropout-rate districts compared to low-dropout-rate districts.

Inhibiting Factor	Low Dropout- Rate Districts	High Dropout- Rate Districts	Discrep- ancy	p- Value
	Mean	Mean		
Unstable family situations	5.15	5.35	.20	.093
Insufficient funding	4.80	5.39	.59	.000*
Lack of parental interest	4.71	5.03	.32	.016*
Low parental expectations	4.19	4.68	.49	.001*
Ineffective prosecution	3.56	4.44	.88	.000*
Lack of curriculum options	3.53	3.61	.08	.667
Difficulty of establishing school/family links	3.40	4.08	.68	.000*
Lack of school/community/ business coordination	3.39	4.04	.65	.000*
Inappropriate instruc- tional techniques	3.35	3.49	.14	.371
Ineffective truancy laws	3.28	4.11	.83	.000*
Low teacher expectations	3.26	3.77	.51	.001*
Insufficient evaluation tools	3.15	3.40	.25	.161
Teacher burnout	2.83	3.27	.44	.011*
Lack of law enforcement support	2.69	3.06	.37	.036*
Lack of social services cooperation	2.68	3.01	.33	.024*

*Inhibiting factors stressed more heavily by high-dropout-rate districts. Differences were significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Desired emphasis was significantly greater for high-dropout-rate districts than for low-dropout-rate districts for 24 out of 30 specific options. No significant differences were found for daily

attendance monitoring, remedial instruction, substance-abuse programs, individualized instruction, and communication between staff and parents.

Inhibiting factors were similar for districts in both categories, but high-dropout-rate districts reported that 11 out of 15 of these factors created considerably more problems for them than was the case for low-dropout-rate districts. No significant differences between high- and low-dropout-rate districts were found for the following four inhibiting factors: unstable family situations, lack of curriculum options, insufficient evaluation tools, and inappropriate instructional techniques. High-dropout-rate districts reported having significantly more problems than low-dropout-rate districts with lack of parental support and interest, insufficient funding, ineffective prosecution, community coordination, teacher burnout, lack of social services cooperation, and difficulties establishing school-family links.

Section III: Questions Relating to District Size and Expenditure Per Pupil

The first question in Section III was:

Do school districts in various size categories differ with respect to:

1. current efforts?
2. desired efforts?
3. inhibiting factors?

District size and current effort by program category. ANOVA showed significant differences in four out of five program categories between size and current effort. The results of the

ANOVA and the test of least significant difference for each of the categories are shown in Tables 4.16 through 4.20.

1. Identification and monitoring. For identification and monitoring, the difference in current effort was not significant for districts in any size groups (Table 4.16). No follow-up test was done because there were no significant differences.

Table 4.16.--Relationship between size and current effort: identification and monitoring.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	341.953	4	35.488	1.697	.149
Residual	24477.203	486	50.365		
Total	24819.157	490	50.651		

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	131	19.69
2	1,000- 2,499	196	20.66
3	2,500- 9,999	143	21.14
4	10,000-49,999	20	23.70
5	50,000-HI	1	21.00

2. Curriculum options. ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in efforts for curriculum options based on district size. This was indicated by the F-value of 17.054, which was significant at the .000 level (Table 4.17). Size was very closely related to the efforts of districts for curriculum options

Table 4.17.--Relationship between size and current effort: curriculum options.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	6373.587	4	1593.397	17.054	.000*
Residual	45220.515	484	93.431		
Total	51594.102	488	105.726		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	130	25.2077
2	1,000- 2,499	194	29.3196
3	2,500- 9,999	144	33.4792
4	10,000-49,999	20	38.5000
5	50,000-HI	1	41.0000

Test of Least Significant Difference: Curriculum Options

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000-2,499	2,500-9,999	10,000-49,999	50,000-HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*				
2,500- 9,999	*	*			
10,000-49,999	*	*	*		
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Districts between 1,000 and 49,999 in size differed significantly from the smallest districts (under 1,000). Although the mean for the largest district was higher than those for districts in other

size groups, the difference was not significant, perhaps because there was only one district in the largest group. Districts in groups 3 and 4 (2,500-49,000 students) differed significantly from those in groups 1 and 2 (0-2,499 students), and those in group 4 (10,000-49,000) differed from those in groups 1, 2, and 3 (0-9,999). Thus, with the exception of the largest district, which had an "n" of 1, the larger the district, the more effort was reported on curriculum options for at-risk students, and these differences were significant.

3. Vocational options. ANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference in efforts for vocational options based on size of district. This was indicated by the F-value of 10.361, which was significant at the .000 level (Table 4.18). As with curriculum options, effort for vocational options was significantly greater with larger district size except for group 5 (over 50,000 students). Again, the mean for this district was greater than those for smaller districts, but the difference was not significant, perhaps because of the small number of districts ($n = 1$). For all other size groups, larger districts expended significantly more effort than did smaller districts.

Table 4.18.--Relationship between size and current effort: vocational options.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	1476.739	4	369.185	10.361	.000*
Residual	16782.539	471	35.532		
Total	18259.277	475	38.441		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	122	13.8361
2	1,000- 2,499	194	15.7680
3	2,500- 9,999	140	17.7857
4	10,000-49,999	19	20.7368
5	50,000-HI	1	21.0000

Test of Least Significant Difference: Vocational Options

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000-2,499	2,500-9,999	10,000-49,999	50,000-HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*				
2,500- 9,999	*	*			
10,000-49,999	*	*	*		
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

4. Community outreach/involvement. ANOVA indicated that the difference between the effort of larger districts and those of smaller districts for community outreach/involvement was significant

for most groups, as indicated by the F-value of 7.969, which was significant at the .000 level (Table 4.19). Districts in groups 1 and 2 (0-2,499 students) did not differ significantly from each other. However, for groups 3, 4, and 5 (2,500 to over 50,000), larger districts expended significantly greater effort than the smallest districts (0-999). The effort of the largest district was so much greater than that of other districts that it became significant despite the small "n" of 1 for this group. Thus, the largest district made a significantly greater effort to involve the community than did any other districts.

5. Staff/program development. The ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference in effort for staff and program development based on district size. This was indicated by the F-value of 3.339, which was significant at the .010 level (Table 4.20). Districts in groups 2, 3, and 5 (1,000-9,999 and 50,000-HI) reported a significantly greater effort on staff and program development than did the smallest district. There were no significant differences between districts in category 4 and other districts, perhaps due to the small number of districts (18) in this group. However, the effort of the one district in group 5 (50,000-HI) was so much greater than that of districts in other size groups that it was significant despite the small number of districts in the group. No significant differences were found between groups of over 1,000 students.

Table 4.19.--Relationship between size and current effort: community outreach/involvement.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	783.321	4	195.830	7.969	.000*
Residual	11550.309	470	24.575		
Total	12333.629	474	26.020		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	123	10.1767
2	1,000- 2,499	190	11.2789
3	2,500- 9,999	141	12.7092
4	10,000-49,999	20	14.4500
5	50,000-HI	1	25.0000

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Community Outreach/Involvement**

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499					
2,500- 9,999	*	*			
10,000-49,999	*	*	*		
50,000-HI	*	*	*	*	

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Table 4.20.--Relationship between size and current effort: staff and program development.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	219.465	4	54.866	3.339	.010*
Residual	6802.822	414	16.432		
Total	7022.216	418	16.800		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	100	6.7500
2	1,000- 2,499	165	7.9394
3	2,500- 9,999	135	8.4000
4	10,000-49,999	18	8.3889
5	50,000-HI	1	15.0000

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Staff and Program Development**

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*				
2,500- 9,999	*				
10,000-49,999					
50,000-HI	*				

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Summary. Efforts of the smallest districts fell significantly below those of most larger districts in the categories of curriculum options, vocational options, community outreach/involvement, and staff/program development. For curriculum options and vocational options, larger districts expended significantly greater effort than smaller districts with the exception of the largest district, where the difference was not significant.

Effort for the largest district (over 50,000 students) was not significantly different from that of districts in other groups on three out of five categories. However, the largest district differed significantly from districts in all other size groups for community outreach/involvement, expending significantly greater effort than all other districts. The largest district also expended significantly greater effort than the smallest districts (0 to 999) for staff/program development.

No significant differences were found between large and small districts for identification and monitoring/attendance.

Current effort for specific program options. In addition to ANOVA, chi-square tests were done for specific program options to determine whether there was a relationship between size and current effort on specific programs. For 16 out of 30 options, the results were significant at the $p < .05$ level. Specific program options that showed a significant relationship (at $p < .05$) are as follows:

- *Individualized instruction
- **School-age-parent programs
- **Alternative high schools
- **Other alternative programs
- **Multidimensional programs

- **Work experience
- **Joint school/business partnership
- **Suicide-prevention programs
- **Job Training Partnership Act
- **Job placement
- **Staff development re: children at risk
- **At-risk advisory committee
- **Community-based career education
- **District curriculum planning committee

*Small districts expended significantly greater effort for this option than did large districts.

**Large districts expended significantly greater effort for this option than did small districts.

In all instances except for individualized instruction, large districts offered these programs to a significantly greater extent than small districts. Small districts emphasized individualized instruction significantly more than large districts. As found in Section II, large districts emphasized significantly more than small districts options designed specifically for at-risk students (at-risk parent education, at-risk advisory committee, staff development re: children at risk). In addition, they stressed vocational program options involving systematic planning (curriculum planning committee and multidimensional programs), and programs stressing community involvement (joint school/business partnership, at-risk advisory committee, and community-based career education). Alternative schools and programs were also heavily stressed in large districts.

District size and desired effort by program category. ANOVA showed a correlation between size and desired effort with respect to all program categories. The results of the ANOVA and the test of

least significant difference for each category are displayed in Tables 4.21 through 4.25. Results for each of the program categories are summarized below.

1. Identification and monitoring/attendance. The ANOVA indicated there was a significant difference in desired effort for identification and monitoring/attendance based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 3.544, which was significant at the .007 level (Table 4.21). For identification and monitoring/attendance, districts in groups 3 and 4 (2,500-49,999) differed significantly from the smallest districts (0-2,499), desiring to expend greater effort. Districts in group 4 (10,000-49,999) reported a significantly higher desired effort than did districts in group 2 (1,000-2,499 students). Thus, there was some relationship between size and desired emphasis for this program category, but only in some instances.

2. Curriculum options. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in desired effort for curriculum options based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 11.770, which was significant at the .000 level (Table 4.22). Districts in the middle ranges (1,000-49,999) differed significantly from the smallest district, reporting a significantly higher "desired effort." Districts in groups 3 and 4 (2,500-49,999) differed significantly from those in group 2 (1,000-24,999) on desired emphasis for curriculum options, reporting a higher desired emphasis. Although there was a relationship between size and

Table 4.21.--Relationship between size and current effort: identification and monitoring/attendance.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	568.460	4	142.115	3.544	.007*
Residual	19290.569	481	40.105		
Total	19859.029	485	40.946		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	129	26.9070
2	1,000- 2,499	195	27.7538
3	2,500- 9,999	141	29.1206
4	10,000-49,999	20	31.3500
5	50,000-HI	1	30.0000

Test of Least Significant Difference:
Identification and Monitoring/Attendance

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000-2,499	2,500-9,999	10,000-49,999	50,000-HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499					
2,500- 9,999	*				
10,000-49,999	*	*			
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Table 4.22.--Relationship between size and current effort: curriculum options.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	4777.190	4	1194.297	11.770	.000*
Residual	48604.009	479	101.470		
Total	53381.198	483	110.520		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	129	39.2713
2	1,000- 2,499	193	43.7565
3	2,500- 9,999	141	46.8794
4	10,000-49,999	20	50.0000
5	50,000-HI	1	49.0000

Test of Least Significant Difference: Curriculum Options

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*				
2,500- 9,999	*	*			
10,000-49,999	*	*			
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

desired effort for curriculum options, this relationship applied only to some groups. No significant difference was found in desired emphasis on curriculum options between the largest district and districts in other size groups.

3. Vocational options. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in desired effort for vocational options based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 12.473, which was significant at the .000 level (Table 4.23). Districts in groups 2 to 5 (1,000-50,000-HI) all differed significantly from districts in the smallest group (0-999) on desired emphasis for vocational options. This was the only category for which the largest district showed a significant difference from the smaller districts. In addition, districts in groups 3 and 4 (2,500-49,999) differed significantly from smaller districts (less than 2,500 students) with respect to desired effort for vocational options. Where differences were significant, larger districts reported a significantly greater desired emphasis than smaller districts. No significant differences were found between districts in groups 3 and 4 (2,500-49,999 students) and districts in other size groups for vocational options.

4. Community outreach/involvement. Desired emphasis for community outreach/involvement was rather low for districts in all groups (grand mean = 21.15), particularly compared with the emphasis for curriculum options (grand mean = 43.74) (Table 4.24). According to the ANOVA, there were some significant differences in desired effort for community outreach/involvement based on district size.

Table 4.23.--Relationship between size and current effort: vocational options.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	1613.910	4	403.478	12.473	.000*
Residual	15268.844	472	32.349		
Total	16882.755	476	35.468		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	125	18.7040
2	1,000- 2,499	193	21.1399
3	2,500- 9,999	139	23.0935
4	10,000-49,999	19	24.8947
5	50,000-HI	1	30.0000

Test of Least Significant Difference: Vocational Options

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*				
2,500- 9,999	*	*			
10,000-49,999	*	*			
50,000-HI	*				

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Table 4.24.--Relationship between size and current effort: community outreach/involvement.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	1071.075	4	267.769	7.996	.000*
Residual	15806.652	472	33.489		
Total	16877.727	476	35.457		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	126	19.1825
2	1,000- 2,499	191	20.9319
3	2,500- 9,999	139	22.9784
4	10,000-49,999	20	22.4000
5	50,000-HI	1	30.0000

Test of Least Significant Difference:
Community Outreach/Involvement

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000-2,499	2,500-9,999	10,000-49,999	50,000-HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*				
2,500- 9,999	*	*			
10,000-49,999	*				
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

This was shown by the F-value of 7.996, which was significant at the .000 level. However, few significant differences were found among districts for this category. Districts in the middle range (1,000-49,999) differed significantly from those in the smallest group (0-999), and districts in the middle group (2,500-9,999) differed significantly from those in the next smallest group (1,000-2,499). No significant difference was found between the largest district and districts in other size groups for this category on desired effort.

5. Staff/program development. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in desired emphasis for staff/program development based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 3.853, which was significant at the .004 level (Table 4.25). Desired emphasis for staff and program development was very low for districts in all size groups (grand mean = 16.37). Districts in the middle groups (2,500-49,999) differed significantly from those in the smallest group for this category, and districts in the middle group (2,500-9,999) differed significantly from those in the second smallest group (1,000-2,499). Where differences were significant, larger districts reported a significantly greater desired effort than smaller districts.

Table 4.25.--Relationship between size and current effort: staff and program development.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	406.343	4	101.586	3.853	.004*
Residual	12180.570	462	26.365		
Total	12586.912	466	27.011		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	123	15.1789
2	1,000- 2,499	186	16.1667
3	2,500- 9,999	138	17.4493
4	10,000-49,999	19	18.1579
5	50,000-HI	1	18.0000

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Staff and Program Development**

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499					
2,500- 9,999	*	*			
10,000-49,999	*				
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Size and desired emphasis--specific program options. In addition to ANOVA, chi-square tests were done for specific programs to determine whether there was a relationship between size and desired effort on specific programs. For 14 out of 30 options, the results were not significant. However, 16 specific program options showed a significant relationship (at $p < .05$) for size and desired effort; they are as follows:

- *Attendance policy enforcement
- *Multidimensional programs
- *Joint school/business partnership
- *Early identification and intervention
- *Alternative high schools
- *Other alternative programs
- *Job placement
- *School-age-parent program
- *Work experience
- *Job Training Partnership Act
- *Community-based career education
- *At-risk parent education
- *At-risk advisory committee

*Desired effort for large districts was significantly greater than that for small districts at $\alpha < .05$.

In all instances for desired effort, large districts scored significantly higher than small districts. Chi-square tests showed that large districts reported a significantly greater "desired effort" for specific options designed especially for at-risk students, such as alternative high schools and other alternative programs, school-age-parent programs, job placement and work experience programs, community-based career education, and joint school/business partnerships. Many of these options, such as multidimensional programs, require systematic planning and

evaluation, another option for which large districts reported a significantly greater desired emphasis. All districts reported a very high need for districtwide counseling and staff development; differences were not significant.

Summary of data on district size and desired effort. Some significant differences were found between districts in different size groups with respect to desired emphasis. For all categories, there were significant differences on desired effort between districts in the smallest group and those in some larger groups. Districts in groups 3 and 4 (2,500-49,999 students) reported a significantly higher desired emphasis than did districts in the smallest group for every program category. In two categories (community outreach/involvement and vocational options), the middle-sized districts (2,500-49,999 students) reported a significantly greater desired effort than did districts in group 2 (1,000-2,499 students). In most instances, the only significant differences occurred between the two smallest districts (0-2,499 students) and some of the larger districts.

With the exception of vocational options, where the largest district differed significantly from the smallest, reporting a significantly greater desired effort, there were no significant differences between the largest district and districts in other size groups on program categories.

District size and inhibiting factors. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences on inhibiting factors among

school districts of different sizes for 8 out of 15 inhibiting factors. Results of the ANOVA for each inhibiting factor are shown in Tables 4.26 through 4.40.

1. Low teacher expectations. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for low teacher expectations based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 3.810, which was significant at the .005 level (Table 4.26). Low teacher expectations were a significantly greater obstacle for all districts with 1,000 or more students than for the smallest districts (0-999 students). The means for this factor increased as school size increased, with the largest district reporting a level of 6.0, the highest possible score. This was nearly double the mean for the smallest districts. However, no significant differences were found between groups for districts larger than 1,000 students.

2. Insufficient funding. Significant differences between means for districts based on size were found for insufficient funding (Table 4.27), despite the consistently high means for all districts. This was shown by the F-value of 3.530, which was significant at the .008 level. Districts in the middle categories (1,000-9,999 students) reported this factor to be a significantly greater problem than did the smallest districts (0-999 students). Contrary to the usual pattern, the mean for the next-to-largest districts (10,000-49,999) actually was the lowest for all the districts. There was a significant difference between districts in this size group (10,000-49,999) and the next-to-smallest districts (1,000-2,499) for insufficient funding. Thus, districts in group 2

**Table 4.26.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
low teacher expectations.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	28.163	4	7.041	3.810	.005*
Within groups	903.594	489	1.848		
Total	931.757	493			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	3.1194
2	1,000- 2,499	195	3.4359
3	2,500- 9,999	144	3.5556
4	10,000-49,999	20	4.0000
5	50,000-HI	1	6.0000

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Low Teacher Expectations**

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*				
2,500- 9,999	*				
10,000-49,999	*				
50,000-HI	*				

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Table 4.27.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
insufficient funding.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	25.249	4	6.312	3.530	.008*
Within groups	876.234	490	1.788		
Total	901.483	494			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	4.8209
2	1,000- 2,499	195	5.3282
3	2,500- 9,999	145	5.1793
4	10,000-49,999	20	4.7000
5	50,000-HI	1	6.0000

Test of Least Significant Difference:
Insufficient Funding

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*			*	
2,500- 9,999	*				
10,000-49,999					
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

reported significantly more difficulty with insufficient funding than did districts in group 4.

3. Low parental expectations. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for low parental expectations based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 3.132, which was significant at the .015 level (Table 4.28). Means were consistently high for low parental expectations. Although all districts reported having problems with parental expectations, the differences were significant only between the smallest districts (0-999 students) and the middle-sized districts (2,500-9,999) and between the next-to-smallest districts (1,000-2,499) and the middle-sized districts (2,500-9,999). Means were higher for the two smallest districts than for the middle-sized districts (2,500-9,999 students), indicating that the smallest districts had significantly greater difficulty on this factor than did the middle-sized districts. The largest district (over 49,999 students) reported having serious problems (mean = 6.0) with this factor, but there were no significant differences between the means for this group and those for other groups, perhaps due to the small number of districts (1) in the largest group.

4. Lack of parental interest. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for lack of parental interest based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 2.843, which was significant at the .024 level (Table 4.29). Lack of parental interest was considered to be a serious problem (means = 4.35 or

Table 4.28.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
low parental expectations.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	17.580	4	4.395	3.132	.015*
Within groups	684.818	488	1.403		
Total	702.398	492			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	4.5970
2	1,000- 2,499	194	4.5670
3	2,500- 9,999	144	4.2083
4	10,000-49,999	20	4.2000
5	50,000-HI	1	6.0000

Test of Least Significant Difference:
Low Parental Expectations

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999			*		
1,000- 2,499			*		
2,500- 9,999					
10,000-49,999					
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Table 4.29.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
lack of parental interest.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	14.281	4	3.570	2.843	.024*
Within groups	615.355	490	1.256		
Total	629.636	494			

*The difference between means was significant at alpha < .05.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	4.8582
2	1,000- 2,499	195	4.9744
3	2,500- 9,999	145	4.6345
4	10,000-49,999	20	4.3500
5	50,000-HI	1	5.0000

Test of Least Significant Difference:
Lack of Parental Interest

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499		*	*		
2,500- 9,999					
10,000-49,999					
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at alpha < .05.

above) for all districts. The next-to-largest districts (10,000-49,999 students) reported the lowest level of difficulty (4.35), but all other districts reported levels ranging from 4.63 to 5.0. The mean for the next-to-smallest districts (4.97) was significantly greater than the mean for the middle-sized districts (2,500-9,999 students) and the mean for the next-to-largest districts (10,000-49,999 students). Again, although the mean for the largest district was larger than the means for other groups (5.0), this difference was not significant.

5. Lack of school/community/business coordination. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for lack of school/community/business coordination based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 2.674, which was significant at the .031 level (Table 4.30). Most districts reported moderate levels of difficulty (means = 3.4 to 4.1) for lack of school/community/business coordination. Although the largest district reported a higher level of difficulty (5.0), this level was not significantly different from those of districts in other size groups. Districts in the low to medium size ranges (1,000-9,999 students) reported this factor to be a significantly greater problem for them than did the smallest district (0-999 students).

6. Lack of curriculum options. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for lack of curriculum options based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 2.548, which was significant at the .039 level (Table 4.31). Lack of curriculum

**Table 4.30.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
lack of school/community/business coordination.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	20.883	4	5.221	2.674	.031*
Within groups	952.756	488	1.952		
Total	973.639	492			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	133	3.4511
2	1,000- 2,499	195	3.8462
3	2,500- 9,999	144	3.9028
4	10,000-49,999	20	4.1000
5	50,000-HI	1	5.0000

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Lack of School/Community/Business Coordination**

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499		*			
2,500- 9,999		*			
10,000-49,999					
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

**Table 4.31.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
lack of curriculum options.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	20.388	4	5.097	2.548	.039*
Within groups	980.339	490	1.848		
Total	1000.727	494			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	3.6194
2	1,000- 2,499	195	3.6615
3	2,500- 9,999	145	3.4207
4	10,000-49,999	20	2.7500
5	50,000-HI	1	5.0000

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Lack of Curriculum Options**

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999				*	
1,000- 2,499				*	
2,500- 9,999				*	
10,000-49,999					
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

options was not a serious problem for districts in group 4 (10,000-49,999 students), which reported a mean of 2.75. Smaller districts (under 10,000 students) differed significantly from these next-to-largest districts (10,000-49,999 students) with respect to curriculum options, reporting greater difficulty (3.40 to 3.66) for this factor. The largest district reported the highest level of difficulty (5.0), but this difference was not significant, perhaps due to the small number of districts (1) in this group.

7. Inappropriate instructional techniques. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for inappropriate instructional techniques based on district size. This was shown by the F-value of 2.426, which was significant at the .047 level (Table 4.32). Districts in groups 2 and 3 (1,000-9,999 students) reported significantly greater problems than the smallest district (0-999 students) with regard to inappropriate instructional techniques. Means for all districts except the largest ranged only from 3.2 (for districts in group 1: 0-999 students) to 3.6 for districts in group 2 (1,000-2,499 students). The largest group's mean of 5.0, although substantially higher than those for other groups, was not significantly different from the others.

8. Teacher burnout. The ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences for teacher burnout based on district size (Table 4.33). The mean for group 4 (10,000-49,999 students) was the largest mean for all groups, but it was not significantly different from the mean for any other group. The mean for group 5 (50,000-HI

**Table 4.32.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
inappropriate instructional techniques.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	17.734	4	4.434	2.426	.047*
Within groups	893.733	489	1.828		
Total	911.468	493			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	3.2015
2	1,000- 2,499	195	3.6205
3	2,500- 9,999	144	3.5694
4	10,000-49,999	20	3.5500
5	50,000-HI	1	5.0000

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Inappropriate Instructional Techniques**

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*				
2,500- 9,999	*				
10,000-49,999					
50,000-HI					

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

students) was unusually low (2.0), considerably lower than that for any other group. Again, perhaps because of the small number of districts in this group, this difference was not significant.

Table 4.33.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
teacher burnout.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	18.036	4	4.509	2.333	.055
Within groups	946.873	490	1.932		
Total	964.909	494			

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	2.7985
2	1,000- 2,499	195	3.1590
3	2,500- 9,999	144	3.2621
4	10,000-49,999	20	3.7000
5	50,000-HI	1	2.0000

9. Difficulty establishing school/family links. Based on the ANOVA, differences between means for this factor were found not to be significant (Table 4.34). Districts in all groups reported considerable difficulty establishing school/family links. Means for this factor ranged from 3.5 to 5.0.

**Table 4.34.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
difficulty establishing school/family links.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	14.998	4	3.749	2.121	.077
Within groups	864.258	489	1.767		
Total	879.255	493			

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	133	3.5224
2	1,000- 2,499	194	3.9179
3	2,500- 9,999	144	3.8542
4	10,000-49,999	20	3.7000
5	50,000-HI	1	6.5000

10. Insufficient evaluation tools. Based on the ANOVA, there were no significant differences between means for any groups (Table 4.35). Means for insufficient evaluation tools were low, ranging from 2.0 to 3.3. Contrary to the usual pattern, the largest district reported the fewest problems with this factor.

11. Ineffective truancy laws. The ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences between districts for ineffective truancy laws (Table 4.36). Districts reported experiencing a high level of difficulty because of ineffective truancy laws. Means for this factor ranged from 3.5 to 6.0. Smaller districts reported fewer problems (3.5 to 3.7) than did the largest district, which had a mean of 6.0, but these differences were not significant.

Table 4.35.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
insufficient evaluation tools.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	5.869	4	1.467	.6891	.600
Within groups	1036.830	487	2.129		
Total	1046.699	491			

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	132	3.2500
2	1,000- 2,499	194	3.3600
3	2,500- 9,999	145	3.1793
4	10,000-49,999	20	3.0000
5	50,000-HI	1	2.0000

Table 4.36.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
ineffective truancy laws.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	6.061	4	1.515	.477	.753
Within groups	1549.696	488	3.176		
Total	1555.757	492			

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	3.7388
2	1,000- 2,499	193	3.7824
3	2,500- 9,999	145	3.7655
4	10,000-49,999	20	3.5500
5	50,000-HI	1	6.0000

12. Ineffective prosecution. Based on the ANOVA, there were no significant differences between size groups for ineffective prosecution (Table 4.37). Respondents from all district size groups reported a high level of difficulty with ineffective prosecution. Means ranged from 3.75 to 6.00, but four out of five groups had a mean of over 4.0.

Table 4.37.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
ineffective prosecution.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	9.346	4	2.336	.768	.547
Within groups	1488.576	489	3.044		
Total	1497.921	493			

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	4.0075
2	1,000- 2,499	194	4.1907
3	2,500- 9,999	145	4.0276
4	10,000-49,999	20	3.7500
5	50,000-HI	1	6.0000

13. Unstable family situations. According to the ANOVA, there were no significant differences between any two groups for unstable family situations (Table 4.38). Unstable family situations were reported as a highly serious problem for districts in all size groups. Means ranged from 4.9 to 6.0. Again, districts in group 4

(10,000-49,999 students) reported fewer difficulties than other districts.

**Table 4.38.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
unstable family situations.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	3.612	4	.903	.874	.479
Within groups	506.319	490	1.033		
Total	509.931	494			

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	5.2612
2	1,000- 2,499	195	5.3077
3	2,500- 9,999	145	5.1862
4	10,000-49,999	20	4.9500
5	50,000-HI	1	6.0000

14. Lack of law enforcement support. Based on the ANOVA, there were no significant differences between any two groups for lack of law enforcement support (Table 4.39). Lack of law enforcement support was not considered to be a major problem by districts regardless of size (Table 4.39). Means ranged from 2.3 to 3.0. The largest levels were reported by the smallest districts (0-999 students) and by the largest district (50,000-HI students).

Table 4.39.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
lack of law enforcement support.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	12.474	4	3.119	1.452	.213
Within groups	1041.185	488	2.134		
Total	1053.659	492			

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	133	2.9699
2	1,000- 2,499	194	2.9278
3	2,500- 9,999	145	2.6759
4	10,000-49,999	20	2.3500
5	50,000-HI	1	3.0000

15. Lack of social services cooperation. Based on the ANOVA, there were no significant differences between the means for any two groups for this factor (Table 4.40). Lack of social services cooperation was not seen by respondents to be a major problem. Means for this factor ranged from 2.0 to 2.9. Means for smaller districts for obtaining social services cooperation were slightly higher than those for larger districts. These differences were not significant, however.

Table 4.40.--Relationship between size and inhibiting factors:
lack of social services cooperation.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	9.536	4	2.384	1.484	.206
Within groups	785.430	489	1.686		
Total	794.966	493			

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	134	2.8060
2	1,000- 2,499	195	2.9487
3	2,500- 9,999	144	2.7292
4	10,000-49,999	20	2.3500
5	50,000-HI	1	2.0000

Summary of district size and inhibiting factors. Based on a comparison of means, the largest district reported having a higher level of difficulty than other districts with the following nine factors:

- Ineffective truancy laws
- Ineffective prosecution
- Difficulty of establishing school/family links
- Low parental expectations
- Unstable family situations
- Lack of law enforcement support
- Inappropriate instructional techniques
- Low teacher expectations
- Lack of school/business/community cooperation

However, the differences between means were significant for only one of these factors--low teacher expectations. For the other eight factors, differences were not significant, perhaps due to the small number of districts in the largest group. Large districts reported

fewer problems with teacher burnout. However, again, due perhaps to the small "n" (1), these differences were not statistically significant.

The middle-range districts (1,000-9,999 students) reported significantly greater problems than the smallest districts (0-999 students) with the following factors:

- Lack of funding
- Low teacher expectations
- Lack of school/business/community coordination
- Inappropriate instructional techniques
- Teacher burnout

Districts in group 4 (10,000-49,999 students) reported the least difficulty with funding, but this was significant only compared with districts in group 2 (1,000-2,499 students). Although, for most inhibiting factors, large or middle-sized districts had greater difficulty than the smallest district, the smallest district reported significantly more problems than some of the larger districts for low parental expectations and lack of curriculum options. The next-to-smallest districts (1,000-2,499 students) reported significantly greater difficulty than the middle-sized districts (2,500-9,999 students) for low parental expectations and lack of parental interest. This group (1,000 to 2,499 students) also reported significantly more difficulty with lack of curriculum options than districts in group 4 (10,000-49,999 students). All respondents expressed a high level of concern about unstable family situations, insufficient funding, and lack of parental interest.

Expenditure per pupil and current effort. The second question in Section III was:

Do school districts in various expenditure-per-pupil categories differ with respect to:

1. current effort?
2. desired effort?
3. inhibiting factors?

Results of the ANOVA and the test of least significant difference are shown in Tables 4.41 through 4.45. These data illustrate that differences for current effort between "rich" and "poor" districts were significant for three program categories--identification and monitoring/attendance, curriculum options, and community outreach/involvement. In each of these categories, the current effort was significantly higher for "rich" districts than for "poor" districts.

1. Identification and monitoring/attendance. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for identification and monitoring/attendance based on expenditure per pupil. This was shown by the F-value of 8.038, which was significant at the .000 level (Table 4.41). For identification and monitoring/attendance, districts with higher expenditures per pupil expended greater effort. Each district group was significantly different from the other two. Richer districts reported expending greater effort than poorer districts for identification and monitoring/attendance.

2. Curriculum options. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for curriculum options based on district expenditure per pupil. This was shown by the F-value of 6.271, which was significant at the .002 level (Table 4.42). Districts in the two richer groups reported significantly greater effort than the

poorest group for curriculum options. However, although the richest districts (\$4,000 and above) reported substantially greater effort for curriculum options than districts in the middle group (\$2,801 to \$3,999), this difference was not significant, perhaps because of the smaller number of districts (43) in the richest group.

Table 4.41.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and current effort: identification and monitoring/attendance.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	778.061	2	389.031	8.038	.000*
Residual	23135.452	478	48.401		
Total	23913.514	480	49.820		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	19.5127
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	241	21.2780
3	\$4,000-HI	43	23.8372

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Identification and Monitoring/Attendance**

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			
\$2,801-\$3,999	*		
\$4,000-HI	*	*	

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Table 4.42.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and current effort: curriculum options.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	1286.543	2	643.272	6.271	.002*
Residual	48825.900	476	102.838		
Total	50112.443	478	104.838		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	195	28.2974
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	241	30.8963
3	\$4,000-HI	43	33.5116

Test of Least Significant Difference:
Curriculum Options

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			
\$2,801-\$3,999		*	
\$4,000-HI		*	

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

3. Vocational options. Based on the ANOVA, there were no significant differences for current effort between districts in various expenditure-per-pupil groups in this category (Table 4.43). Differences for vocational options followed the same trend as that for other categories in that richer districts reported greater

current effort for programs in these areas than did poorer districts. However, the differences were not significant for any of these groups. Means for this category were much lower (15.6 to 16.8) than the means for other categories (i.e., curriculum options, 28.2 to 33.5).

Table 4.43.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and current effort: vocational options.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	99.357	2	49.679	1.311	.271
Residual	17772.352	469	37.894		
Total	17871.710	471	37.944		

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	192	15.61
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	237	16.46
3	\$4,000-HI	43	16.83

4. Community outreach/involvement. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for community outreach/involvement based on district expenditure per pupil. This is shown by the F-value of 4.376, which was significant at the .013 level (Table 4.44). In the category of community outreach/involvement, the richest districts reported significantly greater current effort than both of the poorer districts. The effort expended for community outreach/involvement was substantially greater for these

"rich" districts (13.6 versus 11.4). No significant difference was found between the poorest and middle groups for community outreach/involvement.

Table 4.44.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and current effort: community outreach/involvement.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	225.346	2	112.673	4.376	.013*
Residual	11921.231	463	25.747		
Total	12146.577	465			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	189	11.0847
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	235	11.7447
3	\$4,000-HI	42	13.6190

Test of Least Significant Difference:
Community Outreach/Involvement

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			
\$2,801-\$3,999			
\$4,000-HI	*	*	

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

5. Staff/program development. The ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences for staff/program development based on expenditure per pupil (Table 4.45). Means for staff and program development were low, ranging from 7.49 to 8.11, compared with means ranging from 28.2 to 33.5 for curriculum options. Means for community outreach/involvement were also low; these ranged from 11.0 to 13.6. However, whereas the "richest" districts reported significantly more effort than poorer districts for community outreach/involvement, no significant differences were found between groups for staff/program development.

Table 4.45.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and current effort: staff/program development.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	41.379	2	20.689	1.225	.295*
Residual	6923.324	410	16.886		
Total	6964.702	412	16.905		

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	163	7.49
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	212	8.14
3	\$4,000-HI	38	8.11

Expenditure per pupil and current effort--specific programs.

In addition to ANOVA, chi-square tests were done for specific programs to determine whether there was a relationship between

expenditure per pupil and current effort on specific program options. The results were significant for only 7 out of 30 program options. Schools with higher expenditures per pupil scored significantly higher on current effort on the following program options:

- *Individualized instruction
- *Early at-risk identification
- *Systematic planning and evaluation
- *Suicide prevention
- *Community-based career education
- *Staff development re: children at risk
- *Work experience

*The differences were significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Summary of expenditure per pupil and current effort. Results of the ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences between groups with different expenditures per pupil for two of the five program categories--vocational options and staff and program development. For the other three categories, however, there were significant differences. On identification and monitoring/attendance, districts with higher expenditures reported significantly greater effort. On curriculum options, districts in groups 2 and 3 (\$2,801-above \$4,000) reported significantly greater effort than those in group 1 (\$1,992-\$2,800), but there was no significant difference in effort between districts in the highest expenditure-per-pupil group and those in the middle group. On community outreach/involvement, the "richest" districts reported significantly greater effort than the "poorest" districts, but there

were no significant differences between groups 2 and 1 or between groups 3 and 2 for this program category.

The chi-square test showed that "richer" districts expended significantly greater effort than "poorer" districts on the following program options: individualized instruction, early at-risk identification, systematic planning and evaluation, suicide prevention, work experience, community-based career education, and staff development re: children at risk.

Expenditure per pupil and desired effort. Results of the ANOVA for desired effort in each of the five program categories are shown in Tables 4.46 through 4.50.

1. Identification and monitoring/attendance. The ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in desired emphasis for this factor based on district expenditure per pupil (Table 4.46). Desired effort for identification and monitoring/attendance varied little depending on expenditure per pupil. Means ranged from 27.5 to 29.1, and there were no significant differences between means for any two of the groups.

2. Curriculum options. The ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in desired emphasis for curriculum options based on district expenditure per pupil (Table 4.47). Means on desired emphasis for curriculum options were very high for districts in all groups (42.7 to 44.7). All districts appeared to have a strong desire to offer more curriculum options.

Table 4.46.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and desired effort: identification and monitoring/attendance.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	127.397	2	63.699	1.588	.205
Residual	18973.536	473	40.113		
Total	19100.933	475			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	194	27.55
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	240	28.39
3	\$4,000-HI	42	29.19

Table 4.47.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and desired effort: curriculum options.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	445.920	2	222.960	2.089	.125
Residual	50283.059	471	106.758		
Total	50728.979	480			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	194	42.7887
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	238	44.6905
3	\$4,000-HI	42	44.7731

3. Vocational options. According to the ANOVA, no significant differences were found between "rich" and "poor" districts on desired effort for vocational options (Table 4.48). The

significance of F was .487, and means for the three groups ranged from 20.8 to 21.7. The level of desired emphasis for this factor was moderate.

Table 4.48.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and desired effort: vocational options.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	47.883	2	23.942	.721	.487
Residual	15505.864	467	33.203		
Total	15553.747	469			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	192	21.15
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	236	21.72
3	\$4,000-HI	42	20.88

4. Community outreach/involvement. The significance of F on the ANOVA of .857 indicates that there were no significant differences between districts in various expenditure-per-pupil groups for this factor (Table 4.49). All districts, regardless of expenditures per pupil, reported a moderate level of desired emphasis (means = 21.05 to 21.39) for community outreach/involvement.

5. Staff/program development. Based on the ANOVA, there were no significant differences between any two groups on this factor (Table 4.50). Desired effort for staff/program development for all

districts regardless of expenditure per pupil was very low. Means for the three groups ranged from 15.32 to 16.50, less than half those for curriculum options.

Table 4.49.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and desired effort: community outreach/involvement.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	10.992	2	5.496	.154	.857
Residual	16567.153	465	35.628		
Total	16578.145	467			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	191	21.09
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	235	21.39
3	\$4,000-HI	42	21.05

Table 4.50.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and desired effort: staff/program development.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	50.516	2	25.258	.928	.396
Residual	12409.524	456	27.214		
Total	12460.039	458			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	185	16.50
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	234	16.50
3	\$4,000-HI	40	15.33

Expenditure per pupil and desired effort--specific programs.

In addition to ANOVA, chi-square tests were done for specific programs to determine whether there was a relationship between expenditure per pupil and desired effort. Significant relationships were shown for seven programs. Although the relationship was significant at $p < .05$, there was no clear trend for the following programs. This may have been a result of the high percentage of cells that had frequencies less than five.

Multidimensional programs
 Job Training Partnership Act
 Community awareness education
 At-risk coordinator
 Systematic planning and evaluation
 Substance-abuse programs
 Community-based career education

Summary. The results of the ANOVA showed that there were no significant differences between means of any groups for desired effort. Thus, districts did not appear to differ significantly with respect to desired effort because of their expenditures per pupil. Results of the chi-square tests for specific options also indicated that there were several significant relationships, but examination failed to identify clear trends with one exception. "Rich" districts reported a significantly greater "desired emphasis" for substance-abuse programs than did "poor" districts.

Expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors. Expenditure per pupil appears to be related to inhibiting factors since poorer districts had significantly higher ratings on 10 of the 15 inhibiting factors than did richer districts. The results of the

ANOVA for expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors are shown in Tables 4.51 through 4.65.

1. Insufficient funding. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for insufficient funding based on district expenditures per pupil. This was shown by the F-value of 31.049, which was significant at the .000 level (Table 4.51). Districts in the lowest expenditure-per-pupil groups (\$1,992-\$2,800 and \$2,801-\$3,999) reported significantly more difficulty with insufficient funding than did districts in the "richest" group (\$4,000 and above). Means for the groups reflected the relationship between expenditures per pupil and need for funding since the mean for the poorest group was highest. Means for districts in the two "poorest" groups were above 5.0, whereas the mean for the "richest" group was only 3.74. No significant difference was found between districts in the two poorest groups for insufficient funding.

2. Lack of parental interest. Based on the ANOVA, significant differences between means for "rich" districts and "poor" districts were evident for lack of parental interest (Table 4.52). This was indicated by the F-value of 9.196, which was significant at the .0001 level. Each district size group was significantly different from the others. Thus, lack of parental interest created significantly more problems in districts with lower expenditures per pupil and decreased with higher expenditures per pupil.

Table 4.51.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: insufficient funding.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	97.439	2	48.719	31.049	.000*
Within groups	756.306	482	1.569		
Total	853.744	484			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	5.4010
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	5.1714
3	\$4,000-HI	43	3.7442

Test of Least Significant Difference:
Insufficient Funding

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			*
\$2,801-\$3,999			*
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

**Table 4.52.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and
inhibiting factors: lack of parental interest.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	21.763	2	10.881	9.196	.0001*
Within groups	570.340	482	1.183		
Total	592.103	484			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	5.0152
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	4.7714
3	\$4,000-HI	43	4.2558

Test of Least Significant Difference:
Lack of Parental Interest

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800		*	*
\$2,801-\$3,999			*
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

3. Insufficient evaluation tools. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for insufficient evaluation tools based on district expenditure per pupil (Table 4.53). This was shown by the F-value of 7.381, which was significant at the .001 level. Districts with less than \$3,999 in expenditures per pupil differed significantly from those with more than \$4,000 in expenditures per pupil on the factor insufficient evaluation tools. Since means for this factor were relatively low (2.48 to 3.40), the lack of evaluation tools did not appear to be one of the gravest problems for any of the districts. However, "rich" districts had a significant advantage over poorer districts for this factor.

4. Ineffective prosecution. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for ineffective prosecution based on district expenditures per pupil (Table 4.54). This difference was shown by the F-value of 6.391, which was significant at the .002 level. Means for ineffective prosecution were generally moderate, but "rich" districts reported a significantly lower level of difficulty with this factor than districts with expenditures per pupil under \$4,000. The mean for the poorest districts (\$1,992-\$2,800) was lower than that for the middle districts (\$2,801-\$3,999), but this difference was not significant.

**Table 4.53.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and
inhibiting factors: insufficient evaluation tools.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	30.221	2	15.110	7.381	.001*
Within groups	982.603	480	2.047		
Total	1012.824	482			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	196	3.4031
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	244	3.3156
3	\$4,000-HI	43	2.4884

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Insufficient Evaluation Tools**

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			*
\$2,801-\$3,999			*
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Table 4.54.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: ineffective prosecution.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	37.890	2	18.945	6.391	.002*
Within groups	1425.967	281	2.965		
Total	1463.857	283			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	4.3046
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	244	4.0410
3	\$4,000-HI	43	3.2791

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Ineffective Prosecution**

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			*
\$2,801-\$3,999			*
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

5. Difficulty establishing school/family links. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for this factor based on district expenditures per pupil. This was shown by the F-value of 8.222, which was significant at the .003 level (Table 4.55). "Poor" districts differed significantly from both middle-income and "rich" districts with respect to the difficulty they had in establishing school/family links. The mean for "poor" districts was significantly higher than those for middle and "rich" districts. "Rich" districts reported less difficulty with this factor than did middle districts, but this difference was not statistically significant.

6. Unstable family situations. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for unstable family situations based on district expenditures per pupil. This was shown by the F-value of 4.912, which was significant at the .008 level (Table 4.56). All districts reported having a high level of difficulty with unstable family situations. Means ranged from 4.88 to 5.38 for the three groups. "Rich" districts, despite their high mean (4.88), reported significantly fewer problems than "poor" or middle-income districts.

7. Lack of curriculum options. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for lack of curriculum options based on district expenditures per pupil. This was shown by the F-value of 3.886, which was significant at the .021 level (Table 4.57). Means for districts in all groups for "lack of curriculum options" were similar. The means ranged from 3.1 to 3.7. However, despite the

Table 4.55.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: difficulty establishing school/family links.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	28.190	2	14.095	8.222	.003*
Within groups	824.560	481	1.714		
Total	852.7500	483			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	196	4.0561
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	3.6776
3	\$4,000-HI	43	3.2791

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Difficulty Establishing School/Family Links**

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800		*	*
\$2,801-\$3,999			
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

**Table 4.56.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and
inhibiting factors: unstable family situations.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	9.744	2	4.872	4.912	.008*
Within groups	478.062	282	.992		
Total	487.806	284			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	5.3858
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	5.2122
3	\$4,000-HI	43	4.8837

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Unstable Family Situations**

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			*
\$2,801-\$3,999			*
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

**Table 4.57.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and
inhibiting factors: lack of curriculum options.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	15.416	2	7.708	3.886	.021*
Within groups	956.159	482	1.984		
Total	971.575	484			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	3.7411
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	3.4857
3	\$4,000-HI	43	3.1395

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Lack of Curriculum Options**

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			*
\$2,801-\$3,999			
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

small range, the "poor" districts differed significantly from "rich" districts on this factor.

8. Lack of social services cooperation. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for this factor based on district expenditures per pupil. This was shown by the F-value of 3.818, which was significant at the .023 level (Table 4.58). Means for districts in all groups for lack of social services cooperation were low. The means ranged from 2.32 to 2.88. "Poor" and middle-income districts differed significantly from "rich" districts on this factor. "Rich" districts reported significantly fewer problems due to lack of social services cooperation.

9. Low parental expectations. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for low parental expectations based on district expenditures per pupil. This was shown by the F-value of 3.208, which was significant at the .042 level (Table 4.59). Districts in all groups reported a substantial level of problems with low parental expectations. Means ranged from 4.11 to 4.58. Again, however, "poor" districts reported significantly more difficulty with this factor than "rich" districts.

10. Lack of school/community/business coordination. The ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences for this factor based on district expenditures per pupil. This was shown by the F-value of 3.058, which was significant at the .048 level (Table 4.60). Lack of school/community/business coordination was seen to be a problem for districts in all groups, but those in the highest

Table 4.58.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: lack of social services cooperation.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	12.148	2	6.074	3.818	.023*
Within groups	765.297	281	1.591		
Total	777.444	283			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	2.8883
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	244	2.8770
3	\$4,000-HI	43	2.3256

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Lack of Social Services Cooperation**

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			*
\$2,801-\$3,999			*
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

**Table 4.59.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and
inhibiting factors: low parental expectations.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	8.743	2	4.372	3.208	.042*
Within groups	655.137	480	1.365		
Total	663.880	482			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	196	4.5867
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	244	4.4139
3	\$4,000-HI	43	4.1163

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Low Parental Expectations**

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			*
\$2,801-\$3,999			
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Table 4.60.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: lack of school/business/community coordination.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	11.825	2	5.912	3.058	.048*
Within groups	928.055	280	1.933		
Total	939.880	282			

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	3.8782
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	243	3.8066
3	\$4,000-HI	43	3.3023

**Test of Least Significant Difference:
Lack of School/Business/Community Coordination**

Expenditure	Expenditure Category		
	\$1,992-\$2,800	\$2,801-\$3,999	\$4,000-HI
\$1,992-\$2,800			*
\$2,801-\$3,999			*
\$4,000-HI			

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

expenditure-per-pupil category fared best. Means for this factor ranged from 3.30 to 3.87. Means for districts in both "poor" and middle expenditure groups differed significantly from the mean for the "rich" districts.

11. Ineffective truancy laws. The ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences for this factor based on district expenditures per pupil (Table 4.61). "Poor" districts reported having more problems with ineffective truancy laws than did "rich" districts; however, this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 4.61.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: ineffective truancy laws.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	16.458	2	8.229	2.638	.073
Within groups	1497.161	280	3.119		
Total	1513.619	282			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	195	3.8923
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	3.7551
3	\$4,000-HI	43	3.2093

12. Low teacher expectations. Based on the ANOVA, no significant differences between means were found for low teacher

expectations based on district expenditures per pupil (Table 4.62). Although "rich" districts reported fewer problems with this factor (mean = 3.25) than "poor" districts (mean = 3.56) or middle districts (mean = 3.36), these differences were not statistically significant. The range between the lowest mean and the highest was very narrow.

Table 4.62.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: low teacher expectations.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	5.948	2	2.974	1.620	.199
Within groups	883.314	481	1.836		
Total	889.262	483			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	3.5685
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	244	3.3689
3	\$4,000-HI	43	3.2558

13. Lack of law enforcement support. As indicated by the significance of F (.230) for lack of law enforcement support, no significant differences between means based on district expenditures per pupil were found for this factor (Table 4.63). As with low teacher expectations, the range of means was very small (2.58 to 2.96). Again, however, the trend was consistent, with "poor"

districts reporting a higher level of difficulty with this factor than middle or "rich" districts.

Table 4.63.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: lack of law enforcement support.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	6.367	2	3.184	1.474	.230
Within groups	1039.011	481	2.160		
Total	1045.378	483			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	196	2.9643
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	2.7959
3	\$4,000-HI	43	2.5814

14. Inappropriate instructional techniques. Based on the ANOVA, no significant differences between means were found for this factor based on district expenditures per pupil (Table 4.64). Differences between groups for inappropriate instructional techniques were very small. Means ranged from 3.21 to 3.52.

15. Teacher burnout. Based on the ANOVA, no significant differences between means were found for this factor based on district expenditures per pupil (Table 4.65). Differences between groups on teacher burnout were very small. Means for the groups ranged from 2.9 to 3.1.

Table 4.64.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: inappropriate instructional techniques.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	3.963	2	1.981	1.079	.340
Within groups	883.019	481	1.836		
Total	886.981	483			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	3.5228
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	3.5429
3	\$4,000-HI	42	3.2143

Table 4.65.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors: teacher burnout.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Between groups	1.952	2	.976	.504	.605
Within groups	934.097	482	1.938		
Total	936.050	484			

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	197	3.1421
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	3.1020
3	\$4,000-HI	43	2.9070

Summary. On 7 out of 10 inhibiting factors that showed a significant difference on the ANOVA, "poor" districts in groups 1 and 2 (\$1,992-\$3,999) reported significantly greater difficulty than "rich" districts in group 3. These inhibiting factors were as follows:

- Insufficient funding
- Lack of parental interest
- Insufficient evaluation tools
- Ineffective prosecution
- Unstable family situations
- Lack of social services cooperation
- Lack of school/business/community coordination

In every instance in which significant differences were found, the poorest districts reported significantly greater difficulty than the richest districts. In addition to the inhibiting factors listed above, the poorest districts also reported more problems than rich districts with the following:

- Difficulty establishing school/family links
- Lack of curriculum options
- Low parental expectations

Thus, it seems that poor districts differed significantly from rich districts with respect to most inhibiting factors. For nearly half of these factors (7 out of 15), districts in the average-expenditure-per-pupil group also reported significantly greater difficulty than the richest districts.

Conclusions regarding expenditures per pupil and inhibiting factors. This section included information and conclusions about the relationship between size and effort and between size and inhibiting factors. Data were also presented showing the relationship between expenditure per pupil and effort and

expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors. Although there was a significant relationship between size and effort in many instances, there were fewer significant relationships between expenditure per pupil and effort.

With respect to inhibiting factors, smaller schools suffered from a lack of curricular options, lack of evaluation tools, and lack of social service cooperation, but larger schools reported greater difficulty with all other inhibiting factors. All respondents expressed a high level of concern about insufficient funding and lack of parental interest.

Section IV: Dropout Rate and District Size, and Dropout Rate and Expenditure Per Pupil

Dropout rate and district size. The first question in this section was:

Do smaller districts in Michigan have lower dropout rates than larger districts?

Research has suggested that small schools have lower dropout rates than large schools. The results of the ANOVA showed that the dropout rate for small districts was significantly lower than that for large districts (Table 4.66). The trend was also consistent, as shown in the table.

With one exception, the larger the district, the higher the dropout rate. Dropout rates for districts in group 3 (2,500-9,999 students) were not significantly different from those for districts in group 2 (1,000-2,499 students). In all other instances, districts with more students had significantly higher dropout rates

than those with fewer students. Also, the mean for the largest district (15.4) was more than twice that of the next largest district (6.4). Thus, despite the small number in the largest group, the difference between this group and all other groups was significant.

Table 4.66.--Relationship between size and dropout rate.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	447.552	4	111.888	15.971	.000*
Residual	3383.692	483	7.006		
Total	3831.245	487	7.867		

*The difference between means was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

Group	Size	N	Group Mean
1	0- 999	125	2.8648
2	1,000- 2,499	197	4.0766
3	2,500- 9,999	145	4.4938
4	10,000-49,999	20	6.4500
5	50,000-HI	1	15.4000

Test of Least Significant Difference

Size	Size Category				
	0-999	1,000- 2,499	2,500- 9,999	10,000- 49,999	50,000- HI
0- 999					
1,000- 2,499	*				
2,500- 9,999	*				
10,000-49,999	*	*	*		
50,000-HI	*	*	*	*	

*The difference between means for these two categories was significant at $\alpha < .05$.

The chi-square test relating to district size and dropout rate also showed a statistically significant relationship (.000) between size and dropout rate (Table 4.67). Nearly half (46.4%) of the smallest districts (0-999 students) had low dropout rates, whereas no large districts reported a low dropout rate.

Table 4.67.--Relationship between size and dropout rate, as shown by chi-square tests.

Dropout Rate		District Size				
		0-999	1,000-2,499	2,500-9,999	10,000-49,999	50,000-HI
0-2.1%	No. of districts	58	46	29	0	0
	Col. %	46.4	23.4	20.0	0	0

2.2%-5.0%	No. of districts	49	86	66	11	0
	Col. %	39.2	43.7	45.5	55.0	0

5.1%-HI	No. of districts	18	65	50	9	1
	Col. %	14.4	33.0	34.5	45.0	100.0

	Col. total	125	197	145	20	1

Chi-square significance = .000.

As shown in Table 4.67, only 14.4% of the small districts had high dropout rates, whereas 55% of the large districts had average

dropout rates and 45% had high dropout rates. The largest district had the highest dropout rate. In the next-to-largest group (10,000-49,999 students), no districts reported a low (0-2.1%) dropout rate.

However, the benefits of size were considerably reduced when the district was larger than 1,000 students. Whereas 53.6% of the smallest districts had average or high dropout rates, 76% of the districts in the next-to-smallest group had an average or high dropout rate; 79% of the districts in the middle group (2,500-9,999 students) had an average to high dropout rate. In addition, 23.4% of the districts in group 2 (1,000-2,499 students) had low dropout rates, and 20% of the districts in group 3 (2,500-9,999 students) had low dropout rates. Forty-six and four-tenths percent of the districts in the smallest group had a low dropout rate.

Still, the fact that 20% or more of the districts in these middle categories had low dropout rates, whereas NO districts in the largest categories had low dropout rates, suggests that low dropout rates are associated with districts that have fewer than 10,000 students.

Dropout rate and expenditure per pupil. The second question in this section was:

Do districts with larger expenditures per pupil have lower dropout rates?

No significant differences were found between means for expenditures per pupil and dropout rate according to the ANOVA or the chi-square test. The results of the ANOVA showing the

relationship between expenditure per pupil and dropout rate are shown in Table 4.68.

Table 4.68.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and dropout rate.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F
Main effects	22.752	2	11.376	1.449	.236
Residual	3808.493	485	7.853		
Total	3831.245	487	7.867		

Group	Expenditure	N	Group Mean
1	\$1,992-\$2,800	200	3.98
2	\$2,801-\$3,999	245	4.15
3	\$4,000-HI	43	3.36

No significant differences were found between means for districts in the three expenditure-per-pupil groups. The lowest mean for "rich" districts suggests a lower dropout rate than that for other groups, but perhaps because of the small number of districts in this group (43) there was no significant difference between this group and either of the other groups.

On the chi-square test (Table 4.69), there were also no significant differences between means for the various groups. Thirty-one and five-tenths percent of "poor" districts had a high dropout rate (5.1% or more), whereas only 20.9% of "rich" districts had a high dropout rate. Also, only 25% of "poor" districts had a

low dropout rate (0-2.1%), whereas 34% of "rich" districts had a low dropout rate. This difference may not have been significant because of the small number of districts (43) in the "rich" group.

Table 4.69.--Relationship between expenditure per pupil and dropout rate, as shown by chi-square tests.

Dropout Rate		Expenditure Per Pupil		
		\$1,992- \$2,800	\$2,801- \$3,999	\$4,000- HI
0-2.1%	No. of districts	50	68	15
	Col. %	25.0	27.8	34.9

2.2%- 5.0%	No. of districts	87	106	19
	Col. %	43.5	43.3	44.2

5.1%- HI	No. of districts	63	71	9
	Col. %	31.5	29.0	20.9

	Col. total	200	245	43

Chi-square significance = .611.

Summary. The relationships between size and dropout rate and between expenditure per pupil and dropout rate were reviewed in this section. The ANOVA showed significant differences between districts in various groups with respect to size and dropout rate. With one exception, the ANOVA indicated that districts with more students had significantly higher dropout rates than districts with fewer

students. Despite the small "n" for the largest district, the dropout rate for this district was significantly higher than those for districts in all other size groups.

The chi-square test showed a significant relationship between size and dropout rate, particularly with respect to the smallest districts (0-999 students). Trends on the chi-square tests showed that smaller districts did have lower dropout rates. Only 14.4% of the smallest districts had a high dropout rate (5.1% or above), whereas 46.4% of these districts had a low dropout rate (0 to 2.1%). By contrast, neither of the two largest districts had a low dropout rate, and 45% of the next-to-largest districts had a high dropout rate. The largest district also had a high dropout rate. Districts with more than 1,000 students fell between these two groups, with 20% and 23% of districts in the low-dropout-rate group and 33% and 34% of districts in the high-dropout-rate group.

Neither the ANOVA nor the chi-square test showed significant differences or a significant relationship between expenditure per pupil and dropout rate. The trends on these tests indicated that districts with higher expenditures per pupil had fewer dropouts. However, these differences and relationships were not statistically significant.

Section V: Open-Ended Questions

Survey questions. The last section of the survey included two open-ended questions. The first of these questions was:

What circumstances unique to your school district or district population do you think affect the dropout rate?

Respondents' answers to this question included both positive and negative circumstances that affected the dropout rate in their communities. Respondents who noted negative factors seemed highly frustrated by the power of the obstacles facing them in their work with young people.

Positive factors. Many respondents were very much aware of the advantages they enjoyed in their districts because of circumstances not always related to school programs. The positive factors most frequently mentioned were:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Effective education/shared values, parental support, stable families	47	30.5
Small size	38	24.6
Alternative school/programs	25	16.2
Location (rural)	10	6.5
High-socioeconomic community	6	3.8
High employment opportunities	2	1.2

Judging by the comments on the questionnaire, the two most prevalent positive factors--shared values/stable families and small size--reflected respondents' belief in a need for closeness, unity of purpose, and stability in preventing dropouts. Written comments (Appendix L) show educators' strong feelings about the importance of stable families, of close interpersonal relationships within the community, of frequent interaction between adults and students, and of shared values in which education is considered to be important. Those who commented on their location in rural areas almost uniformly saw it as an advantage. In some cases, respondents

commented that students stayed in school because there was "nothing else to do" in the area. In other instances, the school became the focal point of the community.

The availability of alternative programs and schools was considered by many respondents to be a key to dropout prevention. It was thought that more of these programs were needed at the middle school level or even upper elementary. Respondents who wrote about this factor agreed that funding is a key to providing alternatives, particularly for small schools that lack the resources and numbers to provide for these programs.

Negative factors. Negative factors were cited more frequently than positive factors by respondents answering this question. Again, comments (Appendix L) show that feeling runs high with respect to negative circumstances that educators face when trying to keep students in school. Nonschool factors predominated, and families, once again, played a key role. The negative factors most frequently cited by respondents were:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Low-socioeconomic community	97	63.0
Unstable families, transients, minorities	76	49.3
Lack of parental involvement, support, low expectations	70	45.5
Lack of parental education	38	24.6
Lack of employment opportunities	33	21.4
Lack of adequate programs	28	18.1
Alcohol/substance abuse	23	14.9
Graduation requirements/rules	13	8.4
Size (too large or too small)	6	3.8
Inadequate truancy laws, prosecution	5	3.2

Families and socioeconomic factors appeared to be the major issues for respondents citing negative factors. These two elements appeared to engender feelings of powerlessness among respondents. Respondents stated that students from low-income families, particularly those on welfare, appeared to lack motivation to finish high school. Lack of parental education was often cited as a factor, as were lack of employment opportunities and parental indifference or alienation. Substance abuse was another source of frustration and concern, along with opposition to more rigorous graduation requirements, which, respondents said, added to the dropout problem. Overly rigid attendance rules also exacerbated the situation, according to several respondents.

Respondents citing negative factors showed great concern with the lack of programs in their district. Many felt strongly that help and/or funding should be provided to meet the needs of students whose problems are so difficult to solve.

The second question in Section V was:

What information or assistance would you like to receive from the Michigan Department of Education?

The help that districts said they would like to have primarily involved getting information about programs and about funding. The information requested was as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Information about programs (survey results, technical assistance, workshops)	107	69.4
Funding or information about funding sources	126	81.0
Staff-development assistance	38	24.6
Definition and early identification	24	15.6
guidelines and procedures	24	15.6
Counseling	14	9.0
Getting the community involved	8	5.1
Assessment and evaluation	6	3.8
Opportunities to meet with other districts	3	1.9
Better enforcement of truancy laws	3	1.9
Other	12	7.8

Program requests. Requests for programs included numerous appeals for information about programs in districts of similar sizes. Respondents in rural areas particularly wanted help in planning programs. Many requests were received for low-cost programs and advice about how to serve children at risk on a restricted budget. Much interest was expressed in developing collaboration with other districts and in workshops for staff development and help with program planning. Respondents frequently requested programs that have a "proven research base" or programs that "have been evaluated and proven effective." Respondents were also interested in programs for middle school children at risk.

Numerous respondents asked for the information that has been included in the Resource Manual. Educators asked for a bibliography of programs used throughout the state, with names and numbers of contact persons for these programs, information about the survey results, resource lists, information about funding, and so on.

Funding. Feelings about funding ran high. One respondent complained that the annual scramble for money made consistency impossible. He wrote, "Every year--everything is up for 'financial grabs'--ridiculous!" Others also complained about the lack of continuity in programs. One wrote, "We are constantly cutting programs because of lack of funds from the state!"

Many respondents had a clear idea of how children at risk might best be helped in their districts and felt frustrated about not being able to do the job. One requested "funds adequate enough to implement the procedures we know will work." Much concern was expressed about the difficulty of keeping basic programs going with the current level of funding. A respondent wrote, "We need to start an alternative education program, but lack the funds to keep current programs going."

Staff development. Many respondents also wanted information about staff development, some suggesting that children at risk pose special problems for teachers. One respondent asked for "staff training ideas to help staff become more sensitive to and capable of working with these youth and their families."

Getting the community involved. Some interest was expressed in getting the community involved, particularly families of children at risk, but those who wrote mentioned that this takes time and expertise. One respondent requested funds for a part-time coordinator who would "make contact with parents and business leaders and develop a system to turn these students' attitudes

around." The respondent suggested that such a coordinator could "work with the business leaders to set up work-study programs."

Counseling. The complexity of the problem and the difficulty of bringing about change was a concern of those who wrote about financial support for guidance and counseling. One respondent wrote, "We need to look at helping the root of the problem--the home. Need home/school coordinators to develop parenting skills, etc., work on values." Another wrote, "Need additional counseling services with the ENTIRE school system--waiting until problems get to the high school level is too late to be effective."

Michigan Department of Education. Other comments centered on frustrations with the Michigan Department of Education and other state agencies. Several respondents complained that rural districts receive little recognition for the fine job they do with limited resources. Concern was expressed about graduation requirements and the difficulty of remaining flexible while still adhering to the graduation standards dictated by the State Board of Education.

Many expressed concern that children at risk need extra assistance in order to meet these graduation requirements. One respondent wrote, "Will there be money available for developing and staffing Alternative Education classes or even high schools for students who cannot meet general education requirements?" This respondent requested "money to back up concern regarding children at risk, especially at the preschool level." He asked, "What impact have increased graduation requirements had on the dropout rate?"

Finally, several respondents complained about lack of coordination within the Department of Education and among state agencies in general. One asked for "leadership--consistent message across all departments, every division attending to the at-risk students' problems. More state-level efforts to get other state departments (DSS) to work in coordinated fashion with schools."

Summary. Information obtained from the open-ended questions both confirmed the conclusions drawn from the rest of the survey and expanded upon them. Educators clearly stated their strong concerns about the influence of the family and the importance of programs designed to strengthen families and enhance their support for education. The need for funding was stressed here as in previous sections of the study.

Factors not included in the survey--socioeconomic factors, level of parental education, community support for education, and the need for children-at-risk programs at the elementary and middle school levels--came out in this section of the questionnaire. Respondents' feelings about the need for information and assistance from the Michigan Department of Education would seem to contradict the data from closed-ended questions. Educators who responded to the open-ended questions clearly stated a need for more help.

Written comments from this section of the questionnaire reflected strong feelings about the problems faced by children at risk. Frustration with the magnitude and severity of the program as

well as with the lack of adequate resources was evident in these comments. Respondents who took the time to write, sometimes copiously, in answering these questions felt strongly about the points they were making but expressed some skepticism about whether they would be heard. A compilation of the comments is included in Appendix L.

Interview questions. Interviews with contact persons were carried out in an effort to obtain more information about what is actually happening in individual districts, about what educators think ought to be done for children at risk, and about the problems they face in working on this problem. Interviewees were chosen from 15 districts of varied types--large and small; rural, suburban, and urban; "rich" and "poor." Many were selected because their districts appeared to be providing successful, innovative programs for children at risk. Most interviewees were contact persons from the districts. They held many different administrative positions. These were as follows:

Superintendent	1
Assistant Superintendent	5
Principal	1
Assistant Principal	2
Director of Planning	1
Director of Special Programs	1
Director of Curriculum	1
Director of Research	1
Substance Abuse Coordinator	1
Counselor and Coordinator	1

Since the original list of 20 interview questions proved too long in field testing for a half-hour to an hour interview, and because most of the relevant information seemed to fall within the

scope of fewer questions, only three questions were asked of all interviewees. These were:

1. What are you currently doing in your district that works best for children at risk?
2. What are the most serious problems you face in attempting to help children at risk?
3. If you could add one program or approach to what you are currently doing, what would you choose to add?

Most effective approaches--What works best. Respondents' answers to this question varied widely, and the list of "most effective approaches" is long. The approaches listed below were all mentioned frequently by respondents, but no attempt was made to rank them in order of importance.

Alternative schools and alternative programs
 Counseling at all levels
 Parenting education
 Small-group sessions for discussion of personal problems,
 substance abuse, family issues, etc.
 Flexibility in programming with respect to choice of courses
 and scheduling (half-days, no first hour)
 Short-term follow-up
 Serious attention to attendance
 Positive feedback--a success orientation
 Getting to know individual students
 Lots of parent contact
 Cooperation among staff and between staff and parents
 Know how to use the community
 Teaching strategies--especially learning styles
 Co-teaching
 Staff development

Despite the wide variation in opinions, there was widespread agreement on a number of points. Children at risk, respondents said, need more attention, closer follow-up, and more help with self-esteem than students achieving at an acceptable level.

Interviewees reported that family and personal problems are rampant and severe, making counseling and small discussion groups essential. Many respondents felt strongly that children at risk can be better helped in small groups than individually, yet everyone agreed that personal attention by adults is vital. Interviewees who had experience with alternative schools and alternative programs thought that these alternatives were often the best way to provide the kind of help with the variety of academic and personal problems children at risk usually face.

Some topics or strategies were discussed at length by most interviewees and seemed to be of greatest importance in looking at "what works." These were:

- Caring
- Flexibility
- Attendance
- Alternative programs

1. Caring. The one factor most highly emphasized by interviewees was caring. Whether discussing caring per se or the development of programs by individuals on the staff who "just cared," respondents stressed that the dedication and caring of the staff is a key factor that cannot be measured in preventing students from dropping out. Many of the programs that had been developed arose out of the concern and interest of specific staff members. Interviewees described specific ways in which their staff helped children at risk in special ways that demonstrated their dedication to students and their belief that all students can succeed.

2. Flexibility. All respondents talked about the need for flexibility. Respondents said that children at risk have difficulty following rules and meeting academic standards deemed acceptable for others their age. They cited numerous instances in which willingness to "bend" a rule for a good reason was a way to show a student they see him as an individual and care about his/her success.

Because their difficulties vary so widely, each at-risk student needs to be treated as an individual. For this reason, interviewees said, attendance policies may need to be adjusted slightly, and options need to be made available for meeting academic goals.

All districts represented by interviewees used many different approaches to meeting these students' varied needs. Some offered a study-skills class to help students learn study skills. Others used peer tutoring, small support groups that met during the school day, scheduling adjustments, vocational options, and so on.

Respondents stressed that flexibility did not mean abandoning standards and expectations but, rather, finding new ways to reach these expectations. Several expressed concern that state-mandated graduation requirements tie their hands in this respect. Basic math skills taught in a vocational course do not count for math credit. English skills taught in other courses cannot be counted for English credit. Most interviewees who discussed the issue of flexibility thought that staff members need to look at progress and reward

improvement instead of becoming rigidly attached to a set standard of performance for all students.

3. Attendance. Attendance, respondents said, is the first line of defense. Close monitoring of attendance and personal follow-up with students and parents help staff identify and deal with problems early. Several respondents expressed the need for one person at each level to be responsible for monitoring attendance and for personally contacting truant students. Again, several respondents talked about ways in which attendance monitoring shows students an adult cares about them and wants them to succeed. They also said that the staff needs to know which students are frequently absent and have some idea about why they are missing school. This helps the staff to be supportive of students who have special problems, particularly those involving the family.

4. Alternative programs. According to the review of literature, most alternative programs provide small classes, caring, individualized instruction, and opportunities for cooperative learning, which may be lacking in the regular program. Interviewees who talked about alternative programs were very enthusiastic about them for these and other reasons. They said that alternative programs make a difference for students because students receive more personal attention in small classes and receive instruction more appropriate to their needs. Also, they said, teachers in alternative programs can often maintain close contact with parents, offering suggestions for handling discipline problems or providing other help parents might need.

One interviewee in charge of an alternative school said that teachers' attitudes toward at-risk students may be particularly positive in alternative programs because most teachers in these settings volunteer to work with children at risk. Some teachers, respondents said, are more suited to working with children at risk and are better able to motivate them.

Several interviewees stressed immediate feedback as an important factor in the success of alternative programs. Most alternative schools or classes have structured programs in which short-term follow-up is a key. They found that daily monitoring of work often helps students develop persistence and fosters self-esteem and success.

Most difficult problems. The problems identified by respondents were the same as those identified as inhibiting factors on the survey questionnaire. Although some problems were school-related, such as lack of funding, ineffective teaching strategies, or problems with coordination and planning, the most often mentioned and persistent problems remained with families and society in general. Although, again, no attempt was made to rank problems in order of their importance or severity, those most frequently cited by respondents were:

- Dysfunctional families
- Lack of adequate counseling
- Substance abuse
- Lack of self-esteem
- Language skill deficits
- Short attention span
- Lack of motivation

1. Dysfunctional families. Without question, family instability and dysfunctional families were considered by all respondents to be the most serious and persistent obstacle to their efforts to help children at risk. Particularly in areas where unemployment is a problem, respondents said that many parents do not value education or, if they do, do not know how to teach their children to be responsible for their own learning.

Respondents from large urban districts found family problems to be a greater obstacle than did interviewees in rural or suburban districts except in areas of high unemployment. Family problems in these areas often involved parents' and children's substance abuse.

Respondents pointed out that while many people may say that these issues should not be part of the school's responsibility, the fact that students have serious personal problems is directly related to their difficulties with learning at school. Thus, educators have to concern themselves with these issues in order to make progress with education.

2. Counseling. Respondents expressed the concern that teachers cannot be expected to deal adequately with the personal and family problems of students. Many schools have initiated substance-abuse programs to help in dealing with this problem and related family and personal issues.

More than half of the interviewees discussed the need for more counselors, particularly at the elementary level. Relatively few schools have counselors at the elementary level, and many respondents expressed concern about the fact that high school

counselors have little time for counseling because of other duties. More responses about counseling are given in the last part of this section.

Another concern expressed by several respondents was that social services resources in the community were lacking. School counselors who determine that individual students need extensive outside help may have no one to whom they can refer the student or his/her family. In some cases, respondents reported, the help is there, but it is too expensive for many families who need it. One respondent expressed a desire for school counselors trained in the social-work field who know how to get whatever help is available in the community and how to involve parents in solving children's problems.

3. Substance abuse. Some respondents expressed concern about the problem of substance abuse. All agreed that students who have major problems of this nature have great difficulty with staying in school unless they receive and accept help. All of the districts represented by the respondents had substance-abuse programs. In numerous cases, the programs had existed for some time and had proven to be very effective.

According to several respondents, the presence of a substance-abuse coordinator may be a key to the effectiveness of a district's work with these schools since individual teachers may be reluctant to identify students as having a problem unless they can remain anonymous. A substance-abuse coordinator can help by taking

referrals from teachers, using his/her training and expertise to deal tactfully with parents, referring students to treatment, and providing activities and options especially designed to help students returning from treatment or involved in substance-abuse programs.

4. Lack of self-esteem. All respondents agreed that lack of self-esteem is a core problem for children at risk. Several respondents described programs specifically designed to raise self-esteem. Most of these programs involved small-group sessions. Some of them asked parents to help. One interviewee thought that self-esteem was the most difficult of all the problems to solve, but explained that the many and varied small-group programs provided by their district had a strong effect on students and had significantly contributed to lowering their dropout rate.

5. Language skill deficits. According to several respondents, language skill deficits are also a major problem for some children at risk. Language problems, which respondents said often result from lack of parental education and parents' lack of parenting skills, often cannot be remedied in school alone. Language skills can sometimes be learned at the preschool level if the children have enough time in an effective program. By the time students get to elementary school, they have already fallen behind in terms of language skills.

6. Short attention span. Respondents in urban districts mentioned problems with attention span, whereas others did not. They expressed concern that children who are left with television too

much of the time learn to expect everything to happen quickly and have great difficulty concentrating for a reasonable period of time. Also, they thought that many parents did not know how to teach their children to focus on a task at hand. They thought that neglect contributed to the children's problems in attending to lessons in the classroom.

7. Lack of motivation. Also, respondents in urban districts expressed the most concern about lack of motivation. According to these interviewees, the option of finding work for students to keep them in school does not help because students do not have the skills at the age of 14 or 15 to do classroom work or work for pay. In some large cities, students in the eighth grade may have been retained twice already and may not be capable of doing passing work in any basic subject. Without alternative programs, respondents reported, these students simply cannot succeed. When they participate in alternative programs, they may progress, but they still may not graduate with basic skills adequate to hold most jobs. After years of failure, respondents stated, it is difficult to motivate these students.

According to respondents, high unemployment is another problem that occurs in many school districts, but this problem is particularly serious in large urban areas. Respondents reported that when students see that high school graduates cannot find jobs, they have little motivation to continue in school. The problem is further aggravated when students see high school dropouts making large incomes selling drugs or engaging in other illegal activities.

Programs to add. Programs that respondents said they would most like to add, which those respondents thought were most needed, were:

Alternative schools/programs
Counselors at all levels
Attendance monitoring
Parenting education
Community involvement
Staff development

1. **Alternative schools/programs.** According to the review of literature, the major premise behind the need for alternative schools and alternative programs is that children at risk, like children in special education, have particular needs that are not being met in regular general education programs. Respondents discussed many in-school approaches to dropout prevention. In most instances, though, special options, in whatever form, constitute alternative programs. Whether they create small discussion groups so students can talk together about their personal problems, or institute peer tutoring so students can get help from their peers with academic work, or institute remedial programs, or hire counselors, or initiate a separate school apart from the regular school, many educators are looking to alternative programs as a solution to the manifold problems of children at risk. Some of the forms that alternative programs and schools are taking, according to the interviewees, are:

Preschool programs to enhance language skills and teach positive learning behaviors
Elementary compensatory education programs, including the use of aides and volunteers in school and after school to prepare all students for middle school

Peer tutoring groups at the middle and high school levels
Alcohol- and substance-abuse programs at all levels
Adopt-a-student programs
Work-study programs
Remedial classes
Schools of choice
Adult education programs

According to respondents, alternative programs should have several characteristics in order to be successful. First, they should be staffed by dedicated, caring professionals who have volunteered for this assignment. Second, they should offer varied alternatives for learning, including some instruction in group-process skills. Respondents most closely involved with alternative schools thought they should provide practical, hands-on types of learning experiences, which children at risk often particularly need in order to become motivated to learn. Several interviewees expressed the view that alternative schools also need to be separate, in some way, from the regular program, preferably in a separate building some distance from the regular school.

An alternative school principal pointed out that one major advantage of alternative schools as compared with alternative programs within the regular school is that they can be completely separated from the regular school environment. This means that students in the alternative school can build ownership for their program. They are distanced from the influences that caused problems for them in the regular school.

He further explained that staff can work with students in a more collaborative way without coming into conflict with regular school rules. Curriculum can be created to meet the special needs

of children at risk. Even scheduling can be arranged to allow for small-group discussions, for work assignments, for tutoring sessions, or for other special activities. This administrator thought that, as separate entities, alternative schools can best take advantage of their small size to ensure that every student feels a part of the school. Each student has more opportunities for leadership and participation than would have been possible in the regular program.

2. Counselors. Whether or not alternative schools and programs are available, counselors are seen as essential to helping with identification, with planning for children at risk, and with individual and family counseling. According to interviewees, counselors can help with family and personal problems, provide limited help with interpersonal skills and problem solving, and work with parents on parenting skills.

Interviewees reported that there are several problems, however, with counseling. One administrator discussed these at length. He said that it is difficult for districts to find the money for counselors. Counseling, he pointed out, does not produce tangible, measurable results and is difficult to justify to boards of education. Second, many school counselors find that they are given so many other duties to perform that there is little time left for counseling. Finally, even if counselors do nothing but work with students and their families, they cannot begin to provide the kind of in-depth, long-range help that many students and families need in

order to change. Thus, although counseling is a high priority, in many cases the first priority for "programs to add," many districts may choose other, more measurable options if they are able to come up with additional funds.

3. Attendance monitoring. All respondents supported the value of carefully monitoring attendance and, most especially, of following up in person with students who miss school and with their parents. Many schools have hired attendance officers whose job consists solely of meeting this responsibility. Interviewees from smaller schools seemed more persuaded of the value of attempting to reach all students who have attendance problems. Respondents from large urban districts were less enthusiastic about this approach. As one administrator explained, enforcing attendance rules is very time consuming when large numbers of students are absent. Often, he said, parents are difficult to reach, particularly when the family has no telephone. Also, as another administrator said, talking to the parents does not help when they do not think the child needs to finish high school. In other circumstances, he said, parents have too many problems in their own lives to supervise their children.

4. Parenting education. This type of program received theoretical support from most respondents. A few pointed out the problems involved in providing parenting education. First, particularly in large urban districts, educators have difficulty contacting parents at all, let alone persuading them to come to the school for parenting classes. Another problem is finding a person to provide the instruction for classes. One administrator said that

even when some funding is available, it is not possible in some districts to find a trained person willing to teach the parenting classes. Finally, a parenting class per se is only the first step in helping parents provide appropriate support for their children. For many parents of children at risk, parenting skills require major changes in the way they relate to their children, in their expectations, and, in some cases, in their values. So, while most respondents thought these programs were very much needed, no respondent cited parenting classes as the one thing he/she would most like to add.

5. Community involvement. Only two respondents described their experiences in involving the community in education for children at risk. Most respondents expressed their concern that this approach should be a top priority for the district, and some thought their district was doing a good job of involving the community. Others had not used this approach extensively.

6. Staff development. Most respondents expressed confidence in their staff's interest and competence in serving children at risk. Interviewees from small schools most often thought their teachers and administrators worked well with these students and made many efforts to meet their needs. In large urban districts, administrators expressed more concern about negative teacher attitudes and about lack of attention to individual students' needs.

Summary. Interviews with contact persons resulted in a more comprehensive view of the practical problems educators around the

state face when serving children at risk. While interviewees generally confirmed the findings from the survey questionnaire, the seriousness of family problems and the urgent need for counseling and for special dropout-prevention programs at the elementary and middle school levels were brought out clearly only in the interviews. The extent and effect of substance-abuse programs can only be appreciated by talking with educators who have spent the past five to ten years developing these very successful approaches to a devastating problem. Most of all, interviewees conveyed a sense of intense caring linked with frustration caused by the lack of funding and support from parents, the community, and society as a whole.

Differences in the extent of the problem in different types of districts became apparent, too, in the interviews in which respondents from large urban districts expressed concern over basic problems such as language skill deficits, which were not mentioned by any respondents in smaller rural or suburban districts. Respondents in smaller districts talked about monitoring attendance, about counseling, and about parenting education, whereas respondents in large urban districts tended to describe alternative schools and a multiplicity of alternative programs for children at risk.

Overall, respondents expressed empathy for the students and concern for their future and for the future of society. All urged the Department of Education to emphasize programs that serve students at the elementary level and to enlist the support of other government agencies in helping the parents and families of children

at risk. Respondents expressed concern, too, about continuity of programs and distress that so many programs that have been created as a result of many hours of dedication and effort are abandoned when funds are no longer available. Finally, interviewees seemed ever determined to continue working, despite the obstacles, to find new ways and to expand on those being used successfully to ensure that children at risk receive the education they so badly need to become self-supporting citizens in our society.

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, findings were reported from the statistical analysis of the survey questionnaire, from a careful study of the open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire, and from examining responses to questions posed in interviews with educators from 15 districts throughout the state. Qualitative data confirmed the results of quantitative analyses and expanded on them.

The results from the statistical analysis showed what efforts were being made in Michigan to reduce the dropout rate and to prepare students with the skills they need for the world of work. Where funding from state and federal grants has been available, programs have been developed. Many alternative schools and alternative programs have been implemented, particularly in large urban districts. Effort was lowest in the areas of community involvement and staff and program development. Low-dropout-rate districts stressed attendance monitoring and early at-risk identification, whereas high-dropout-rate districts provided more specific, remedial

approaches to dropout prevention. Three of the five most significant inhibiting factors involved the family, while the second strongest factor was the need for funding. Ineffective prosecution and truancy laws were also considered to be major obstacles in dropout prevention.

In interviews, the major concern was also for problems related to the family and the urgent need for more counselors at all levels, but particularly in the elementary schools. Administrators thought that remedial programs were helping students with academic deficiencies, even at the elementary level, but few counselors were available at this level to help with family-related problems. Counselors at the high school and middle school had many duties other than counseling and, according to respondents, were often unable to give students with emotional problems the help they needed.

Funding was another strong concern. It became clear that many of the low-cost special programs that have been created resulted from the commitment of individual staff members who took it upon themselves to spend hours after school or in the evening to provide a special option for students. Administrators from the smallest districts referred most often to the efforts their teachers made to work with families and students after school. In every interview, lack of funding was the reason given for not adding the one program they would most like to add.

Options administrators wanted most to add did not include community involvement or staff and program development, although administrators expressed their belief in the effectiveness of these approaches. Administrators from several districts that were successfully involving the community spoke enthusiastically of the benefits of these efforts.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to bring together the various parts of the study of dropout-prevention programs in Michigan, to summarize the results from different viewpoints, to make recommendations for policy and further research, and to reflect on the research experience and related ideas.

Summary

In this study, data were gathered and analyzed to obtain information about what Michigan K-12 public school districts were doing to serve children at risk, what they would like to be doing, and what obstacles they faced in meeting the needs of children at risk. Information gathered included statistical data from Michigan Department of Education publications, quantitative and qualitative data from the survey questionnaire, and additional qualitative data from interviews with educators from 15 districts.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study was to learn more about what programs Michigan K-12 public school districts were providing for children at risk. In addition, relationships between several variables--size, expenditure per pupil, program efforts, and dropout

rate--were studied in an effort to determine how they relate to students' dropping out. The purpose of studying these relationships was to determine the effect of programming efforts, size, and expenditure per pupil on dropout rate. To the extent that relationships exist, the information can be helpful to educators at state and local levels in planning and making decisions about how best to meet the needs of children at risk.

Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from Michigan Department of Education documents and from the survey questionnaire sent to all 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts. Completed questionnaires were returned from 497 or 94.7% of the districts. Additional qualitative data were also gathered from interviews with educators from 15 districts around the state.

The data were analyzed using a variety of statistical procedures, including t-tests, ANOVA, and chi-square tests. Programming efforts were examined by frequency and degree of emphasis. Inhibiting factors were also studied using t-tests and ANOVA. Relationships among the variables of size, expenditure per pupil, dropout rate, and programming efforts were examined. Written comments about information and assistance respondents desired from the Michigan Department of Education were read and analyzed.

Research Questions

Research questions were formulated to gather information relating to each of the above objectives. Thus, questions were

asked about programs offered and inhibiting factors, size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rates. Research questions examined in this study were:

- I. Questions relating to all 526 Michigan public school districts:
 - A. What programs or approaches are Michigan K-12 public school districts currently providing in an effort to reduce dropout rates among children at risk?
 - B. What programs or approaches would Michigan K-12 public school districts most like to offer?
 - C. What inhibiting factors are being experienced by the 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts?
 - D. In which program options are the greatest discrepancies found between current efforts and desired efforts toward meeting the needs of children at risk among Michigan K-12 public school districts?
- II. Questions relating to districts with high dropout rates as compared to those with low dropout rates:
 - A. What differences exist in current efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?
 - B. What differences exist in desired efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?
 - C. What differences exist in inhibiting factors related to meeting the needs of children at risk between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?
- III. Questions relating to school districts in categories according to size and expenditure per pupil:
 - A. Do school districts in various size categories differ with respect to:
 1. current efforts?
 2. desired efforts?
 3. inhibiting factors?

B. Do school districts in various expenditure-per-pupil categories differ with respect to:

1. current efforts?
2. desired efforts?
3. inhibiting factors?

IV. Questions relating to relationships between the variables size, expenditure per pupil, and dropout rate:

A. Do smaller school districts in Michigan have lower dropout rates than larger schools?

B. Do districts with larger expenditures per pupil have lower dropout rates?

In addition, two open-ended questions were included on the survey. The first question was designed to elicit information related to the research questions. The second was intended as a means of determining what help districts need and want from the Michigan Department of Education. The two open-ended questions were:

1. What circumstances unique to your school district or district population do you think affect the dropout rate?
2. What information or assistance would you like to receive from the Michigan Department of Education?

Importance of the Study

This project was undertaken because researchers have suggested that programs can best be improved when baseline data are available and when program planners share information about what works and what problems they are most likely to encounter in implementing programs. It is hoped that this study can contribute to the further improvement of programs and options for children at risk in Michigan.

State planners can use the data as a base for improving the state's program, for longitudinal studies of programming for children at risk, for making policy decisions about what programs should be funded, and for making decisions about what technical assistance and information should be provided to individual districts.

Individual districts can use the information to assist them in planning and setting priorities and in comparing their efforts with those of other districts of similar sizes and/or expenditures per pupil. Finally, the study can be used by researchers in other states to examine the same variables and compare results, expanding knowledge about factors related to students' dropping out and about programs for children at risk.

Discussion and Conclusions Based on Research Questions

In this study, the efforts being made in local school districts throughout Michigan to prevent students from dropping out before graduation were examined. Problems educators face in meeting this challenge were studied. Districts were compared by size, dropout rate, programming efforts, and expenditure per pupil. These conclusions should not be generalized beyond the population, which included all Michigan K-12 public school districts. Further, all data were based on perceptions of those surveyed rather than on objective data.

Data were sought to answer research questions relating to program efforts and problems of schools grouped in four different ways:

1. All Michigan K-12 public school districts.
2. Districts with high dropout rates compared with districts with low dropout rates.
3. Districts grouped by size and expenditure per pupil.
4. Size and expenditure per pupil related to dropout rate.

Section I: All Michigan
Public School Districts

- A. What programs or approaches are Michigan K-12 public school districts currently providing in an effort to reduce dropout rates among children at risk?

Programs currently being provided by most districts were often school-based programs designed to serve all students. These options included:

Communication between staff and parents
Attendance policies
Daily attendance monitoring
Individualized instruction
Curriculum planning committees

Other programs that most districts offered were specifically designed for children at risk. These were:

Remedial instruction
Vocational programs
Substance-abuse programs

These programs were funded, for the most part, by state and federal grants. When funds were available for special programs, they were widely offered.

In addition to these funded programs, most districts (88.7%) had a board-approved attendance policy; more than half of the schools enforced this policy. Some districts have no policy, however, and nearly half of the districts did not enforce their policy. Since research has shown that most students who drop out

have poor attendance, it is not clear why some districts did not stress attendance to a greater extent.

B. What programs or approaches would Michigan K-12 public school districts most like to offer?

Of the top ten programs on the "desired emphasis" list, eight were being provided by 70% or more of the districts. Other costly programs respondents desired to emphasize, however, were often unavailable in half or more of the districts. Some of these were district counseling programs, staff development, systematic planning and evaluation, community awareness education, alternative schools and programs, and at-risk parent education. In interviews, respondents expressed the most concern about their district's inability to provide counseling and staff development.

Other options or strategies recommended by respondents answering open-ended questions and also recommended by researchers were:

- Multidimensional programs
- Community involvement
- At-risk coordinator
- Small size (district, school, and class)
- Flexibility
- Close and caring relationships

The first three options were included on the survey questionnaire. The last three factors were stressed by researchers and by respondents to open-ended questions on the survey and in interviews.

The importance of small size and close relationships was repeatedly stressed both in the literature and by practitioners, some of whom stated their conviction that these factors were more important than any others in preventing students from dropping out.

The results from the survey questionnaire would appear to reinforce this notion because large districts offered many more options designed to prevent dropouts, yet small districts had lower dropout rates.

Respondents who lived in small districts and researchers stressed that planners should provide smaller classes, smaller schools, and groups within schools instead of building larger schools to provide an increasingly specialized curriculum. Both respondents and researchers suggested that the need for close relationships should be considered when determining class loads. Respondents also urged that teachers, administrators, professional counselors, and volunteers all be involved in fostering close, caring relationships with students at risk.

Since little research has been done to compare the effectiveness of different approaches, it is not known whether adding certain strategies such as curriculum options can compensate for large classes and/or schools. Information that could be used to choose among these and other strategies is also not available.

Further, although few studies have been done on program effectiveness, almost no information is available on the cost effectiveness of various strategies and options. Also, these facts would probably vary from district to district and state to state. Thus, many districts may add programs when personnel are willing to take on the added responsibility or when funding becomes available.

C. What inhibiting factors are being experienced by the 526 Michigan K-12 public school districts?

Both qualitative and quantitative data from the survey as well as information from the literature stressed the deepening concern of educators about unstable families, lack of parental support and interest, and lack of funding. Difficulty of establishing school/family links also presented a major problem according to respondents. Interviewees reported feeling hard pressed to teach basic skills when children come to school in poor physical and/or emotional health. Respondents stated that this problem becomes especially grave in communities with high unemployment as students see that high school graduates have difficulty supporting themselves without further education. Urban administrators discussed the problems created by dropouts who make large incomes selling drugs.

The strong emphasis on ineffective prosecution and ineffective truancy laws as inhibiting factors suggests that, quite often, legal remedies are being sought to keep children in school. Small districts did not report significantly fewer problems with legal remedies than large districts, but districts with high expenditures per pupil reported significantly less difficulty with the legal system.

D. In which program options are the greatest discrepancies found between current efforts and desired efforts toward meeting the needs of children at risk among Michigan K-12 public school districts?

Most of the options selected as priorities by combining "desired emphasis" and discrepancies between means for current and

desired emphasis require extensive funding and/or involve families and community resources. The "most needed" options were as follows:

- Systematic planning and evaluation
- State and federal grants for dropout prevention
- Staff development re: children at risk
- District counseling programs
- Michigan Department of Education technical assistance
- Early at-risk identification
- At-risk coordinator
- Joint school/business partnership
- Multidimensional programs
- School/community advisory committee
- At-risk parent education

Discussion of most needed programs. According to quantitative and qualitative data gathered in this study and based on research from the review of literature, the above strategies were considered to be most needed. For this reason, a discussion of the strategies is presented here. Other factors not included in the quantitative portion of the survey questionnaire--small size, flexibility, and close relationships--were discussed previously.

Systematic planning and evaluation. Systematic planning and evaluation, although considered to be the most needed option, was often lacking. Formal structures for planning dropout-prevention programs were uncommon in districts throughout the state. Although most schools had curriculum planning committees, very few had an at-risk advisory committee or at-risk coordinator. Administrators who were interviewed expressed concern about the need for more time to devote to systematic planning. Survey respondents from all districts asked for assistance in planning dropout-prevention programs. Survey data indicated that systematic planning and early identification and intervention were offered to a significantly

greater extent in districts with high expenditures per pupil than in those with low expenditures per pupil.

Funding. According to many respondents, funding is a major key to improving education today. Lack of funding was identified by survey respondents as the second most serious obstacle in providing programs for dropout prevention. Also, funding was cited as the second most needed option based on discrepancies between current and desired emphasis. Only 19.6% of the districts reported receiving federal or state grants for dropout prevention.

Respondents to open-ended survey questions rated funding as their second most important need (after information and assistance from the Michigan Department of Education). Further, state and federally funded programs such as vocational education and substance-abuse programs were provided by most districts regardless of dropout rate, size, or expenditure per pupil. These data indicated that districts would do much more if funds were available and that options such as elementary counseling are unavailable because funds are lacking.

Staff development re: children at risk. New teaching strategies that have been used effectively to raise standards of achievement for all students include experiential learning, cooperative learning techniques, and the use of learning-styles strategies. Research has confirmed that peer tutoring and meaningful small-group activities can boost the academic performance, social skills, and confidence of all participants.

Teachers who use learning-styles strategies have been able to reach such students as tactile-kinesthetic learners who have had difficulty learning through traditional methods.

Although innovative strategies have proven effective, educators have been slow to adopt them. Interviewees pointed out that staff development is often needed before teachers and administrators can use these techniques effectively. Districts with high expenditures per pupil provided significantly more staff development relating to children at risk than districts with low expenditures per pupil. On open-ended questions, survey respondents expressed concern about the need for staff development to help teachers develop positive attitudes toward students at risk and learn new strategies for working with them.

Counseling. Interviewees expressed particularly strongly the need for counseling, especially at the elementary level. Schools today are heavily involved with meeting the social and emotional needs of students. Counseling for at-risk students and dysfunctional families, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels, was seen as the fourth most needed approach. Educators thought they lacked both the time and the expertise to meet the needs of students with serious family problems.

Michigan Department of Education technical assistance. Survey respondents emphasized the need for more technical assistance from the State Department of Education both on the quantitative and qualitative portions of the survey. When asked what information and assistance they would like from the Department, respondents

mentioned technical assistance of various kinds more often than they mentioned funding. Respondents seemed particularly interested in getting help with planning programs for children at risk and with learning more about what other districts are doing. They also asked for information about programs that had been evaluated and proven to be successful in reducing the dropout rate.

Early identification and intervention. Of the top ten most frequently offered programs, only one was also identified as "most needed" based on the combination of "desired emphasis" and discrepancies--early identification and intervention. Administrators who were interviewed and the research literature repeatedly confirmed that changes intended to reduce dropouts must be made for students before they reach high school--at the preschool, elementary, and middle school levels. Districts with high expenditures per pupil provided early identification and intervention significantly more than did those with low expenditures per pupil. The cost effectiveness of preschool programs has been well documented, yet recent federal funding is expected to meet the needs of only 20% of the children from low-income families.

Interviewees expressed concern about the lack of options currently being used at the elementary level. For the most part, schools rely on classroom teachers to provide adequate help for at-risk students. Respondents who discussed the language and motivation programs of early elementary students thought the struggle had been lost long before students reached middle or high

school. Also, although nearly 76% of the districts reported having early identification, no information was gathered about specific options at the elementary level. Several urban interviewees thought that ALL their children were "at risk" and that intervention strategies were more urgently needed than elaborate identification efforts.

Community outreach/involvement. Several options involving the community were also among the "most needed" programs. High discrepancies between current and desired emphasis were found on options relating to community involvement--school/community advisory committees, joint school/business partnerships, and at-risk parent education. This indicates that educators perceived an urgent need to obtain assistance and support from various sources within the community. These options may require funding because they were emphasized significantly more in "rich" districts than in "poor" ones.

These activities for which high discrepancies were found also represented, in some instances, departures from or expansions of traditional efforts. The need for increased effort on planning, staff development, coordination, multidimensional programs, and early at-risk identification reflects, it would seem, recognition that long-term, systematic, coordinated efforts will be needed to bring about changes. This view was reinforced by respondents who were interviewed.

Multidimensional programs. Researchers have indicated that multidimensional programs are needed because at-risk students have a

variety of problems, including low achievement, lack of self-esteem, negative attitudes toward school, lack of motivation, and family and/or peer relationship problems. Programs such as remedial instruction provide help with one of these areas, but students need help with other problems as well. Researchers have indicated that well-coordinated multidimensional programs best meet the needs of children at risk.

Summary of conclusions for Section I. For all K-12 public school districts, the most needed programs involved counseling options for students with nonacademic problems, especially at the elementary level; more funding; staff development re: children at risk; options for involving the community (joint school/business partnerships, at-risk parent education, and at-risk advisory committee); systematic planning and evaluation options including multidimensional programs, at-risk coordinator, and early at-risk identification and intervention; and Michigan Department of Education technical assistance. Out of 11 "most needed" options, half involved systematic planning. Interviewees also expressed concern about the need for more planning from two perspectives. First, administrators felt pressed for time and personnel to do adequate long-range planning for children at risk. Second, they expressed frustration about grants that last for only a year. Short-term grants limit the schools' capacity for designing and implementing quality programs. Finally, grant proposals often arrive too late for planners to do a careful job of fitting new programs in with what is already available.

Researchers, teachers, administrators, and students all stressed the correlation between close relationships or caring and school success. Failure to participate in extracurricular activities, one important means of fostering relationships, is an often-ignored key indicator of dropping out.

Respondents mentioned numerous ways in which administrators could help at-risk students. According to the literature review, administrative strategies should foster collegial relationships, collaboration among teachers, and sharing of new instructional techniques. Interviewees and respondents suggested that greater flexibility be used in enforcing rules and designing student schedules. Some administrators arranged special schedules for individual students who were unable to cope with a full day of classes.

Section II: Districts With High and Low Dropout Rates

- A. What differences exist in current efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?

The difference in high- and low-dropout-rate districts' approaches to programming reflected their different problems and needs. Low-dropout-rate districts, which may have had fewer children at risk, focused on preventative or proactive approaches such as attendance monitoring and enforcement and early at-risk identification and intervention. These districts also stressed systematic planning and evaluation and communication between staff

and parents to a greater extent than did high-dropout-rate districts. It may be noteworthy that most low-dropout-rate schools were also small, making such approaches less time consuming and, perhaps, more productive.

High-dropout-rate districts stressed significantly more than low-dropout-rate districts alternative programs and more often had alternative schools, an at-risk coordinator, a school/community advisory council, and school-age-parent programs. High-dropout-rate districts provided significantly more comprehensive vocational education and work experience programs and had significantly more state and federal dropout-prevention funds than low-dropout-rate districts. While most of these specific programs can be preventative, many appeared to have been initiated in response to the high dropout rate.

Data from this portion of the survey showed that there were significant differences between high- and low-dropout-rate districts. However, it is not possible to conclude that the programs chosen by low-dropout-rate districts would necessarily prove more effective in high-dropout-rate districts than the programs currently being used in these districts. Effort to prevent students from dropping out was higher for nearly all options in high-dropout-rate districts. Based on research and interviews, high-dropout-rate districts must cope with many difficult problems that are less problematical for low-dropout-rate districts. Further study may show that, just as instruction needs to meet the

individual needs of students, so dropout-prevention efforts may need to be tailored to the individual needs of districts.

B. What differences exist in desired efforts between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?

High-dropout-rate districts expressed a significantly greater need for 25 out of 30 options than did low-dropout-rate districts. High-dropout-rate districts displayed a significantly greater desire to emphasize community outreach/involvement, staff/program development, and vocational options than did low-dropout-rate districts. Both high- and low-dropout-rate districts wanted to continue emphasizing attendance monitoring, remedial instruction, substance-abuse programs, communication between staff and parents, and individualized instruction.

C. What differences exist in inhibiting factors related to meeting the needs of children at risk between Michigan K-12 public school districts with high dropout rates and districts with low dropout rates?

High-dropout-rate districts reported significantly greater problems than low-dropout-rate districts with all inhibiting factors except for lack of curriculum options, inappropriate instructional techniques, insufficient evaluation tools, and unstable families. Interestingly, the problem of unstable families appeared nearly as serious in low-dropout-rate districts as in high-dropout-rate districts. On the other hand, low-dropout-rate districts reported significantly fewer problems with lack of parental interest and low parental expectations. High-dropout-rate districts reported a significantly higher level of problems with establishing school/

family links, teacher burnout, community coordination, lack of social service support, and ineffective prosecution.

It would appear, then, that families in low-dropout-rate districts may be more highly motivated to work with schools in helping their children succeed in school. Also, high-dropout-rate districts reported a broad spectrum of serious problems. Interviewees from urban districts expressed more clearly a feeling of being overwhelmed by the problems staff in their schools face in working with children at risk and their families.

Summary of conclusions for Section II. Not surprisingly, high-dropout-rate districts reported having many more serious problems than low-dropout-rate districts, and high-dropout-rate districts provided more programs designed specifically for at-risk students. There is no evidence that all programs that have proven effective in low-dropout-rate districts would be equally effective in high-dropout-rate districts because some problems faced by these districts are different. Based on research and on responses from interviewees, some options (i.e., early identification and intervention, elementary school counseling, staff development, and systematic planning) are seen as much needed by all districts.

Section III: Districts Grouped by Size and Expenditure Per Pupil

- A. Do school districts in various size categories differ with respect to:
 - 1. current efforts?
 - 2. desired efforts?
 - 3. inhibiting factors?

District size and current effort. With respect to efforts in various program categories, the smallest districts reported significantly less effort than that of most larger districts in four out of five categories--curriculum options, vocational options, community outreach/involvement, and staff/program development. The largest district expended significantly greater effort than all other districts on community outreach/involvement and more effort than the smallest district for staff/program development.

On specific program options, smaller districts emphasized individualized instruction more than large districts, whereas large districts stressed specialized add-on options for at-risk students. Since large districts have more problems and higher dropout rates than small districts, these additional options appear to be both needed and appropriate.

District size and desired effort. Significant differences were found between districts in different size groups with respect to desired emphasis. Larger districts reported a significantly higher desired emphasis than the districts in the smallest group for every program category. In two categories, curriculum options and vocational options, the middle-sized districts (2,500-49,999 students) reported a significantly greater desired effort than districts in group 2 (1,000-2,499 students). Larger districts reported a greater desire than smaller districts to offer many curriculum options and, based on reported current emphasis, they succeeded in offering more curriculum options than the smallest districts.

Chi-square tests showed that large districts reported a significantly greater "desired effort" for specific options designed especially for at-risk students. Many of these options require systematic planning and evaluation, another option for which large districts reported a significantly greater desired emphasis. Although large districts did not place significantly more emphasis on the need for attendance and communication between staff and parents than smaller districts, the desired emphasis on preventative measures such as these was high for all districts.

Size and inhibiting factors. Based on a comparison of means, the largest district reported having a significantly higher level of difficulty than other districts for low teacher expectations. For eight other factors, the largest district reported a much higher level of difficulty than other districts, but these differences were not significant, perhaps because of the "n" of one for the largest district.

The middle-range districts reported significantly greater problems than the smallest districts with five inhibiting factors--lack of funding, low teacher expectations, lack of school/business/community coordination, inappropriate instructional techniques, and teacher burnout. The smallest districts reported significantly more problems than some of the larger districts for low parental expectations and lack of curriculum options.

All respondents expressed a high level of concern about unstable family situations, insufficient funding, and lack of

parental interest. Also, the smallest districts reported the fewest problems with inhibiting factors. The largest district reported a high level of difficulty on 9 out of 15 inhibiting factors, indicating that this district faced greater obstacles than others with at-risk students.

The issue of size as opposed to curriculum options does not appear to have been discussed in the literature. Despite considerable research on the benefits of small size, planners at both state and local levels often focus on the cost and curriculum benefits of increased size. According to a recent news article, a proposal has been made at the state level to reduce the number of school districts in Michigan from 526 to 250. This would presumably result in administrative cost savings. The advantages of a rich and diverse curriculum seem obvious, whereas the advantages of small classes, schools, and districts may be less visible.

- B. Do school districts in various expenditure-per-pupil categories differ with respect to:
 - 1. current efforts?
 - 2. desired efforts?
 - 3. inhibiting factors?

Expenditure per pupil and current effort. With respect to program categories, the current effort was significantly higher for "rich" districts than for "poor" districts in three program categories--identification and monitoring/attendance, curriculum options, and community outreach/involvement. Also, on specific options, "richer" districts expended significantly greater effort than "poor" districts on seven options--early at-risk identification, individualized instruction, systematic planning and

evaluation, suicide prevention, community-based career education, staff development re: children at risk, and work experience. Although it is not surprising that districts with higher expenditures per pupil reported providing more programs for children at risk, it seems worth noting again that, when funding is available, educators choose to spend it on valuable programs for at-risk students. In interviews, administrators seemed to know what they needed to do but lacked the funds to do it.

Expenditure per pupil and desired effort. No significant differences were found between groups of districts for desired effort, regardless of expenditure per pupil. Regardless of available funds, respondents reported a need to increase efforts across the board for children-at-risk programs. This was also consistent with comments made by administrators who were interviewed.

Expenditure per pupil and inhibiting factors. Expenditure per pupil appears to be related to inhibiting factors because poorer schools had significantly higher ratings on 10 of the 15 inhibiting factors.

Summary of conclusions for Section III. Results for districts by size were similar to those for districts grouped by dropout rate. Smaller districts provided significantly more individualized instruction and attendance monitoring, whereas larger districts stressed alternative schools and programs, work experience, and joint school/business partnerships. Large districts appeared much

more motivated to involve businesses and community agencies in dropout-prevention efforts than did small districts, in part it would seem because of the availability of these resources in large cities. Respondents from small districts stressed the value of close relationships that exist there, an "approach" that was not included in the quantitative data but that took on major importance in both the literature and the qualitative data.

Size was considered to be vital from two perspectives. First, as mentioned above, respondents from small districts discussed the importance of close relationships, which are possible in small districts. This would explain the increase in dropout rates in districts of 1,000 or more students. Size and close relationships have been linked, again, in the literature and in qualitative data from interviews with alternative school staff. Some researchers have believed that the major reason for the success of alternative schools is the caring that becomes possible in schools of limited size.

Expenditure per pupil, while related to some extent to dropping out, was much less influential than size. Programs that were provided more often by "rich" schools included some of those considered to be most needed by all schools--early at-risk identification, systematic planning and evaluation, and staff development re: children at risk. "Poor" schools generally experienced greater problems than "rich" schools since poorer schools had higher ratings than "rich" schools on every inhibiting factor. In some cases, however, the differences were very minor

but, as might be expected, "poor" schools stressed most their problem with lack of funding.

Section IV: Size and Expenditure
Per Pupil Related to Dropout Rate

- A. Do smaller school districts in Michigan have lower dropout rates than larger schools?
- B. Do districts with larger expenditures per pupil have lower dropout rates?

Size related to dropout rate. Evidence was presented to show that smaller districts had significantly fewer dropouts than larger districts. The benefits of size were greatest in districts with fewer than 1,000 students.

Expenditure per pupil related to dropout rate. Expenditure per pupil was not significantly related to dropout rate, but "richer" districts, on the whole, had fewer dropouts than "poorer" ones.

Summary of conclusions for Section IV. The data on size and expenditure per pupil differed because it seems possible to identify the effects of size alone on the dropout rate. Expenditure per pupil is a variable that is closely related to and dependent on many others--funding levels, program options, dropout rate, and so on. Expenditure per pupil can be increased without automatically bringing with it other major changes. However, the data suggested that when class size, school size, or district size decreased, close relationships, upon which so much depends, tended to follow. At the same time, size is a factor that may depend on expenditure per pupil. When funds are restricted, size may increase.

Additional Research Questions

Information was sought regarding situations or circumstances relating to dropout prevention and the assistance districts would like to receive from the Michigan Department of Education. This information was gathered from respondents' answers to open-ended questions included on the survey questionnaire and through interviews. The open-ended questions were as follows:

1. What circumstances unique to your school district or district population do you think affect the dropout rate?
2. What information or assistance would you like to receive from the Michigan Department of Education?

Unique circumstances or situations. Educators stated their strong concerns about the influence of the family and the importance of programs designed to strengthen families and enhance their support for education. Factors not included in the survey--socio-economic factors, level of parental education, community support for education, and the need for children-at-risk programs at the elementary and middle school levels--came out in this section of the questionnaire. Respondents frequently mentioned the importance of small size and close relationships within the school and between the school and the community as factors that helped reduce the dropout rate in their districts.

Information or assistance needed. Respondents reported a very strong need for both information and technical assistance from the Michigan Department of Education. Respondents asked for information about programs that had proven effective for children at risk and about programs being offered by other districts of similar sizes.

Workshops, technical assistance with identification, staff development, and program planning were also requested.

The need for funding was stressed here as in previous sections of the study. Respondents from smaller districts, particularly those in rural areas, expressed the opinion that large, urban districts were receiving most of the funding for at-risk students. Inequity in funding generally was reported to be a problem.

Written comments from this section of the questionnaire reflected strong feelings about the problems faced by children at risk. Frustration with the magnitude and severity of the problem as well as with the lack of adequate resources was evident in these comments. Respondents who took the time to write, sometimes copiously, felt strongly about the points they were making, but they expressed some skepticism about whether they would be heard. A compilation of the comments is included in Appendix L.

Overall Summary of Conclusions

In this chapter, conclusions have been drawn from the statistical analysis of the survey questionnaire, from a careful study of the open-ended questions on the questionnaire, and from examining responses to questions posed in interviews with educators from 15 districts around the state. Qualitative data from responses to open-ended questions and from interviews confirmed the results of the quantitative analyses and expanded on them.

The results from the statistical analysis showed that much is being done in Michigan to reduce the dropout rate. Where funding

from state and federal grants is available, programs have been developed. Many alternative schools and programs have been created, particularly in large urban districts. Effort was lowest in the areas of community involvement and staff and program development for children at risk. Low-dropout-rate districts stressed attendance monitoring and early at-risk identification, whereas high-dropout-rate districts stressed more specific, remedial approaches to dropout prevention. Three of the five most significant inhibiting factors involved the family, while the second strongest factor was the need for funding.

In interviews, the major overwhelming concern was also for problems related to the family and the urgent need for more counselors in the elementary schools. Administrators thought that remedial programs were helping students with academic deficiencies, but counselors were lacking at all levels to help with family-related problems. Counselors at the high school and middle school levels had many duties other than counseling and, according to respondents, were therefore often unable to give students with emotional problems the help they needed.

Funding was another strong concern. It became clear that many of the low-cost special programs that have been created resulted from the commitment of individual staff members who took it upon themselves to spend hours after school and in the evening to provide a special option for students. Administrators from the smallest districts referred most often to the efforts their teachers made to

work with families and students after school. In every interview, lack of funding was the reason given for not adding the one program they would most like to add.

Policy Recommendations

Policy recommendations based on this study fall into two categories: recommendations for the Michigan Department of Education and recommendations for individual Michigan K-12 districts.

Michigan Department of Education

In the past ten years, a substantial amount of work has been done by the Michigan Board of Education and by the Department of Education on assessing the needs of children at risk throughout the state and on establishing programs for at-risk students. No study has been done, however, of what individual districts are actually doing and of the problems they are encountering in their efforts to serve children at risk. Districts have not been asked what information or assistance they think they need from the Department of Education.

Results of this study indicated that, to serve at-risk students' needs, the State Board of Education and the Michigan Department of Education and its staff, working with the support of the governor and the legislature, should give priority to the following:

1. Providing financing for education.
2. Providing direct services to districts.

3. Coordinating efforts of state agencies and/or among districts.
4. Facilitating and encouraging successful strategies and incorporating results of research.
5. Providing funding for model programs.
6. Examining state rules (i.e., graduation requirements) for their effects on at-risk students.

Recommendation 1: To conduct a study of ways to solve the problem of school finance.

The current practice of funding education through property taxes has been heavily criticized and is very much resented by low-socioeconomic districts. Everyone agrees that funding in districts throughout the state is very unequal. Administrators from rural districts tend to think that large urban districts get too much money. Those from large urban districts see their problems as requiring more money than they are receiving.

Funding for education in Michigan, regardless of the formula, appears to be a low priority. Out of all state departments, education is next to last in funding received from the legislature.

Recommendation 2: To find the means to provide services and technical assistance to individual public school districts.

Local public school districts throughout Michigan are urgently requesting information and technical assistance with programming for children at risk. Some of the services for which respondents have indicated a need are:

1. The dissemination through the already created network and clearinghouse of information to schools about programs currently being provided, about model programs for children at risk, and about sources of funding.
2. Technical assistance in developing and implementing programs, preparing staff, identifying at-risk students, and so on.
3. The sponsorship of regional workshops to foster collaboration among districts.

4. Assistance to districts of like sizes and needs to create networks for sharing experiences and providing mutual support.

1. Dissemination of information. Information collected from this study showed that many districts currently are implementing innovative and effective options for involving parents and other community resources in efforts to serve at-risk students. Other excellent programs have also been created for these students. These options should be studied carefully to evaluate their effectiveness. This knowledge could be shared with other districts through workshops, newsletters, or manuals so that they can adopt and/or adapt such strategies and develop more effective programs in their districts.

2. Technical assistance. Technical assistance should focus on promoting efforts shown to be most needed--early at-risk identification, community involvement, staff development, systematic planning and evaluation, and at-risk parent education. This assistance should be provided because (a) local districts perceive a substantial need to increase the current emphasis of these efforts, (b) such programs are often least common among all efforts presently being used, and (c) the literature has supported these types of programs as important to successfully keeping children at risk in school.

3. Regional workshops. Regional workshops offer several advantages. First, because workshops are offered close to districts involved, more staff members are able to attend. Second, by meeting and talking with others who work nearby, educators can more easily

continue dialogues begun at the workshop. Last, when educators within a region meet to work on a shared problem, they are encouraged to collaborate on solutions on a long-term basis.

4. Assistance to districts of like sizes and creation of networks. Survey respondents expressed a need to learn about what other districts like theirs were doing for at-risk students and to form networks to facilitate communication and sharing of ideas and strategies. Small districts, particularly, thought they were not getting the information and help they needed.

Recommendation 3: To appoint a full-time statewide coordinator with full responsibility for coordinating at-risk efforts within the department, with other state departments, and through intermediate school districts throughout the state.

Survey respondents expressed concern about the lack of coordination within the Department of Education and between the Department of Education and other departments serving at-risk students (the Department of Labor, Department of Social Services, Department of Health, and so on).

It should be noted that responsibility for the coordination of children-at-risk efforts has recently been delegated to the Deputy Superintendent, and plans have been made to hire a statewide coordinator to handle responsibilities delegated by the Deputy Superintendent.

Recommendation 4: Facilitating and encouraging successful strategies and incorporating the results of research.

The Michigan Department of Education has been facilitating dropout-prevention programs such as Operation Graduation and PREP (a

preschool program). Funding has also been made available for innovative programs, some of which could be designed for at-risk students. Through both technical assistance to local districts and funding, the Department could extend these efforts, focusing on counseling, systematic planning and evaluation efforts, and staff development re: children at risk. These are all areas researchers have found to be critical in dropout prevention. They were also identified as needed by local districts.

Recommendation 5: To provide state funds or assist districts in securing federal funds for a variety of programs, which will be evaluated and compared.

Currently, the Michigan Department of Education provides funding for two major types of children-at-risk programs--preschool programs and Operation Graduation, a high school alternative program. The basic format for the approximately 45 Operation Graduation programs is the same. Eighty percent of the money for these programs goes to pay students for work. Although this program, which was originally designed for 16 to 18 year olds, has been expanded for middle school students, guidelines have not been rewritten to provide for activities other than jobs. Therefore, only one district is currently implementing the program for younger students.

In view of the evidence provided in this study, it would seem beneficial if the Department of Education were to fund different kinds of model programs in order to provide a basis for comparison among programs. Funding a wider variety of programs would better

enable the Department to begin comparing the effectiveness of different programs in the same and different settings.

In addition to the need for varied programs for evaluation purposes, it has been shown that programs are urgently needed at the elementary and middle school levels. The Michigan Department of Education could encourage and help individual districts to develop and evaluate programs at these levels. Also, while the Department will focus on districts with the highest dropout rates, funding programs in districts that have proven their ability to serve children at risk may also be effective in terms of determining which programs work best in districts with average or below-average dropout rates.

Recommendation 6: To examine state rules (i.e., graduation requirements) for their effects on students at risk.

Because survey respondents and interviewees expressed concern about the effect of state regulations on at-risk students, these rules could be examined to determine ways in which they might be modified. For example, some vocational-education courses might be modified to include work with basic skills (math, reading, and/or writing) in ways that would allow students to obtain credit for basic academic coursework without sacrificing their work in vocational education.

Michigan Local Public School Districts

Based on current dropout rates they report, a majority of Michigan public school districts urgently need to take steps to improve services for children at risk. Results from this study

indicated that local school districts need to focus on the following objectives:

1. To provide more low-cost options (especially early at-risk identification and attendance monitoring).
2. To ensure on-going and continuous systematic planning and evaluation for dropout-prevention programs.
3. To improve techniques for obtaining state and federal funds for dropout prevention.
4. To reassess staff-development programs and design and implement options for staff development, stressing strategies for children at risk.
5. To hire more counselors and/or social workers, especially at the elementary school level.
6. To examine ways to enhance community involvement in children-at-risk efforts and to implement these strategies.
7. To plan and implement varied options for parent education.
8. To increase options for flexibility that can be built into programs.
9. To protect small class and school sizes.
10. To strive for a caring atmosphere and promote close relationships wherever possible.
11. To provide alternative schools and programs as needed, especially in very large districts (10,000 students and above).

Except for flexibility, size, and caring, all the options were included in this study as program approaches. Caring, flexibility, and size are factors that survey respondents and interviewees indicated make an important difference in meeting the needs of at-risk students. Low-cost options are related to the issue of funding and are discussed first because, regardless of their relative value in dropout prevention, low-cost options can be provided by all districts.

Recommendation 1: To provide more low-cost options for at-risk students.

Because of the shortage of funds, survey respondents demonstrated a high interest in low-cost options. Since all of these are

considered effective in reducing the dropout rate even though careful studies and evaluation have not been done, all districts could provide the following low-cost options:

- Board-approved attendance policy
- Daily attendance monitoring
- Communication between staff and parents
- Districtwide curriculum planning committee
- Early at-risk identification
- Community awareness education
- At-risk advisory committee

Some of these options may be provided on a limited level where funds are lacking. For example, the advisory committee might consist of volunteers from the staff who agree to examine approaches currently being used and to explore the possible addition of new options. Early at-risk identification can be done by teachers once guidelines and forms have been provided for this purpose. The effectiveness of community awareness education can be greatly enhanced by funding. However, some low-cost efforts can be made, using parent nights, community volunteers, and options such as adopt-a-school programs.

The major danger with low-cost options is that so often they require extra effort on the part of a staff that is already overextended. Research has suggested that teachers need to be part of the decision-making process when new responsibilities are added, and administrators need to be sensitive to ways in which paperwork can be kept to a minimum.

Recommendation 2: To provide systematic planning and evaluation of dropout-prevention programs.

Survey data showed that districts need more systematic planning and evaluation. Such measures can help districts make the most of the time, effort, and funds they have and to set priorities for the future.

Setting priorities requires not only looking at available resources and the ease of instituting options, but also examining a hierarchy of needs. For example, in a district in which students and parents are alienated from the schools, the first priority may be to reestablish trust. Where trust is lacking, elaborate, expensive programs may be ineffective.

Recommendation 3: To improve techniques for obtaining state and federal funds for dropout prevention.

Local districts can appoint or hire an administrator to write and/or coordinate the work of others on all dropout-prevention proposals. This person could also take responsibility for checking on funding sources, working with prevention proposals, consulting with grant writers from other districts, and maintaining a file of proposals.

Recommendation 4: To reassess staff-development programs and design and implement options for staff development, stressing strategies for children at risk.

Data from all segments of the study supported the need for more staff development, particularly with respect to helping teachers learn strategies for working with at-risk students. This option was among those considered to be most needed, according to the quantitative data. Respondents on the survey commented that they had concerns about teachers' attitudes toward these students.

Several interviewees mentioned the need for staff development both to change teachers' negative attitudes toward these students and to enable teachers to provide more experiential learning experiences and small-group learning opportunities. Both of these instructional strategies were supported by the research as effective for children at risk. Individual instruction, a teaching approach used more extensively in small districts than in large districts according to the data, also seems to be effective in meeting students' individual needs.

Recommendation 5: To hire more counselors and/or social workers, especially at the elementary school level.

The need for counseling was expressed repeatedly throughout the study--in the review of literature, the survey data, the open-ended questions, and the interviews. Administrators discussed their urgent need for more professional help for troubled students and their families. Because counselors are expensive, no administrators thought their districts were close to meeting the need in this area, especially at the elementary school level.

Recommendation 6: To examine ways to enhance community involvement in children-at-risk efforts and implement these strategies.

Although numerous interviewees spoke enthusiastically about their experience with getting community groups and individuals involved in dropout prevention, data from the survey indicated that there is little emphasis statewide on community involvement in districts and little desire to increase community involvement. Community awareness education was considered to be a need, but

school/community at-risk advisory committees and school/community/business partnerships were not highly valued.

This finding in Michigan contradicts the results of the Wisconsin study (Fredisdorf, 1987), in which districts were also not making substantial efforts to draw on community resources, but indicated that this was a very high priority for them. The literature also stressed the vital importance of recruiting the efforts of individuals and groups throughout the community. Superintendents of local districts may need to become more aware of the benefits of drawing on business and community volunteers.

Recommendation 7: To plan and implement varied options for parent education.

Both the survey and interviews showed that education is needed for parents of at-risk students and that this education should begin as early as possible. The literature showed that helping troubled children early is both vital and cost effective. Research has indicated that with earlier identification of children at risk, parents can be alerted and helped before problems become too severe and resistance both from the student and the parents sets in (Garbarino, 1986). Varied techniques and strategies for parent education can be used.

Recommendation 8: To increase options for flexibility.

Interviewees stressed repeatedly the importance of flexibility in planning options for children at risk. They expressed frustration with state-mandated rules about courses and/or attendance. Although respondents agreed that standards are

necessary, all urged that teachers and administrators be given some latitude in deciding how students will meet requirements. Varied programs and varied scheduling arrangements were seen as ways to help students who are simply unable to succeed within the usual system. Many students who would have dropped out in the past are now graduating with the help of adult education programs, which enable them to complete work a little later than originally planned.

Recommendation 9: To protect small class and school sizes.

Size has been identified as a crucial factor in dropout prevention. This study has shown that there is a significant correlation between size and dropout rate. Each district could examine ways in which size affects children at risk in the district. For example, rather than closing schools as enrollment declines, districts could choose to keep these schools open. Administrative strategies could be used to promote various kinds of groups and divisions within larger schools to enhance the feeling of belongingness both for staff and for students. Perhaps most important, administrators and boards of education can always strive to value small class sizes when looking at choices for allocating funds.

Recommendation 10: To strive for a caring, supportive atmosphere and to promote caring and close relationships wherever possible.

Caring is probably the single most important factor in dropout prevention. While most students need to achieve in order to feel good about themselves, those who have difficulty will often persist if they believe teachers care. Close relationships have been shown

to be vital to the success of alternative schools and alternative programs. Teachers are continually reminded of the importance of "covering the material" and often are rewarded for doing so, but in many schools there is little recognition for teachers who take the time and effort to be flexible and use learning-styles strategies or other techniques to help at-risk students. Teachers who talk with students before and after class, send positive messages home, call parents, provide extra help, and maintain a positive, friendly manner in class all show they care.

Recommendation 11: To provide alternative programs and alternative schools as needed, especially in very large districts (10,000 or more students).

Data from this study, including the review of literature, indicated strongly the need for alternative programs for children at risk. According to the literature, these are children with special problems that prevent them from succeeding in school. Because of their failure, children at risk suffer from lack of self-esteem. Alternative programs, whether offered in schools or as counseling or academic options outside of the regular school program, provide a means by which children at risk can establish close, supportive relationships, acquire needed academic and social skills, and rebuild self-esteem.

Research has shown that when these programs are offered early as preschool and elementary programs, they cost less and are more effective. Middle school programs are also needed to a greater extent, and many schools still do not have adequate provisions for children at risk at the high school level.

Because the needs of children at risk vary, alternative programs should take varied forms and meet different needs. Some will be designed primarily for academic remediation, others for helping students learn group process skills. Some will focus on the family, others on personal problems such as substance abuse. All will focus on building success, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

At the high school level, many respondents preferred the alternative school. At this point students may benefit most from a totally separate program that responds to all their varied needs at once. By the time students are in their teens, repeated failures have become a set pattern, and major action is required to bring about change. Research and interviews indicated that, at this age, students need more than ever to develop a feeling of ownership about their school. This can be more easily done in a new and different environment from that in which they experienced conflict and failure.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Immediate Application of Research Results

Several recommendations based on the outcomes of this research may be implemented immediately in schools where these approaches are not already being used.

Administrators should:

1. Become knowledgeable about children at risk, their problems, and proven strategies for working with at-risk students.
2. Appoint a children-at-risk representative in each building in the district.

3. Establish a planning and advisory committee made up of children-at-risk representatives and other interested personnel to study programs currently being offered and to recommend changes.

4. Design and implement a children-at-risk identification process to be used by each teacher.

5. Plan staff-development activities that focus on instructional strategies proven effective with at-risk students and on attitudes and beliefs about at-risk students.

6. Request assistance from the Michigan Department of Education and intermediate school districts on planning and on obtaining funding for children at risk.

7. Begin planning education options for parents of at-risk students.

Teachers should:

1. Identify each at-risk student, using the district's identification process.

2. Learn about and begin using teaching strategies proven effective with students at risk.

3. Be aware of the special social and emotional needs of children at risk.

4. Set short-term goals for children at risk and follow up closely.

5. Examine their attitudes and beliefs about children at risk.

6. Communicate frequently and positively with parents of students at risk.

The preceding recommendations are currently being followed to some extent. Their implementation depends, in most cases, on the resources provided for this purpose. Schools are already stretched to the limit. While better allocation of current resources must always be considered, there are finite limits to the time, energy, and money available. Dropout prevention must become everyone's job.

Recommendations for Further Study

Extensive study is needed concerning programs and approaches used to serve children at risk. Some of the topics that need further study are:

1. Program effectiveness
2. Role of the Michigan Department of Education in the innovation process
3. Curriculum review
4. Adult and vocational education
5. Community involvement
6. Family and parent issues
7. Class size and student/staff ratio
8. Early identification and intervention
9. The role of counseling
10. Funding issues
11. Comparison of learning styles of at-risk students and those of successful students

1. Program effectiveness. Further systematic study of program effectiveness is urgently needed. In the Wisconsin study it was recommended that qualitative on-site research focusing directly on individual programs be done to determine the relationship between effort and dropout rate for specific at-risk programs.

By studying both in-school programs and alternative schools, researchers can draw some conclusions about which are most effective and why. Question researchers should ask include:

- a. How do alternative schools compare with in-school options for children at risk?
 - b. How do costs per student for various programs compare?
 - c. What are the long-range effects of various programs on participating students?
2. Role of the Michigan Department of Education in the innovation process. Studies that focus on the process of initiating and implementing children-at-risk programs and the role of the Michigan Department of Education in the innovation process would be useful. Since research has indicated that facilitating collaboration among districts can foster innovation, and since the Department of Education now has some measure of the extent of effort currently being made by districts and an informal needs assessment has been done through this study, groundwork has been laid for a study of the effects of State Department efforts on curriculum innovation. Questions researchers might ask are:

- a. Do regional workshops enhance collaboration efforts among districts? Do these efforts appear to be effective?
 - b. What is the role of intermediate school districts in dropout prevention? Do they have the funds needed to meet their responsibilities in this area?
 - c. How do dropout-prevention efforts by the Michigan Department of Education compare with those of other state departments of education with respect to funding, information dissemination, technical services, materials, and so on?
3. Curriculum review. Much study remains to be done relating to curriculum. Some of the questions researchers should ask are:
- a. What is the effect of graduation requirements on the dropout rate?
 - b. What is the role of vocational education in dropout prevention?

- c. What are the effects of certain teaching strategies on learning? For example, right-brain activities, small-group cooperative learning, peer tutoring, experiential learning, teaching to learning styles, teacher-pupil planning, and so on.

4. Adult and vocational education. The role of adult education, vocational education, and the community in our educational system is another issue that needs to be examined. Further study of the number of high school dropouts receiving basic academic work and vocational training after dropping out through adult education classes and community colleges may affect policy relating to the K-12 program. Studies might be conducted to examine the role of adult education and community colleges in preparing young people for employment and to explore new options for using these resources.

5. Community involvement. Districts that have succeeded in preventing students from dropping out often seem to have close ties with the community. Further study of the ways in which schools get communities involved and the effect of this involvement on children at risk would be useful. Questions researchers might explore include:

- a. What strategies can best be used to increase the level of involvement of groups and individuals?
- b. In what ways can community resources best be used to support schools in their mission?

6. The problem of students from dysfunctional families was perceived by survey respondents as the number one problem in meeting the needs of children at risk. For many of these students, major changes in attitude and behavior must be made before successful academic learning can occur. Questions researchers might ask are:

- a. What strategies are educators now using to overcome the social and emotional problems of these students?
 - b. What strategies have been found effective in helping parents of at-risk students to change?
7. Class size and student/teacher ratios. Research on class size is sometimes contradictory. Long-range studies are needed of both class size and composition. Questions researchers might ask are:

- a. How do small class sizes (under 20 students) differ from larger class sizes with respect to such factors as student attitudes, teacher attitudes, student self-concept and self-esteem, students' sense of belonging, and students' achievement?
 - b. What is the effect on classroom climate and classroom activities when there are more than five children at risk in the class? At what point do teachers begin to feel they do not have enough time for individual students who need extra help or who have behavior problems?
8. Early identification and intervention. In Chapter II, research was presented explaining the cost benefits of early identification and remediation. Interviewees not only urged that more programs be provided at the elementary level, but several stated that without early intervention, students in their districts fall too far behind to recover, regardless of programs offered later.

Researchers studying the effect of early identification and remediation should do formal experimental studies, if possible. In studying this issue, studies need to be longitudinal as well. Questions researchers might ask about early identification and remediation are:

- a. What strategies are most effective at the elementary and middle school levels?
- b. What is the effect on behavior, attendance, achievement, and dropout rate of providing different programs at the elementary level?

9. The role of counseling. Many educators believe that students have more social and emotional problems today than in the past. Because of the number and severity of student problems, administrators stressed the need for more counselors, particularly at the elementary level. School boards are often reluctant to provide money for counselors. Interviewees noted the difficulty of assessing a counselor's work. A question that could be explored with further research on counseling is:

In what ways do elementary school counselors help children at risk?

10. Funding issues. Funding is a source of much controversy and strong feeling for educators. Many questions need to be answered related to funding. Two of these are:

- a. How does funding make a difference in programming for children at risk? Are certain expensive programs more valuable than others? Are some costly programs vital?
- b. What is the effect of funding sources--state or federal versus local funding--on programs and their success? What is the importance of long-term commitment of funds versus annual budgets?

11. Instructional strategies. Research has indicated that at-risk students may learn differently from successful students. In particular, some educators believe that many children at risk learn best using tactual-kinesthetic activities, and activities that allow for creativity, experiential learning, and cooperation with others

rather than competition among individuals. Questions researchers might ask about learning styles and appropriate instructional strategies are:

- a. Do many at-risk students learn differently from successful students? If so, what are these differences?
- b. If at-risk students learn differently from those who are now successful in school, how should instruction be modified to improve at-risk students chances of success?

Conclusion

This section included extensive recommendations for further study. Work is already under way in many of these areas. Educators in some local districts have studied these issues in their own districts. Researchers need to draw on the expertise and experience of teachers and administrators in exploring each of these topics.

Reflections

This study was initiated because of the researcher's personal experiences with children at risk--in and out of the classroom. Many thoughts and feelings resulted from the three years spent on this study. Among these were:

that all types of students become dropouts--bright and gifted students as well as slow academic learners, students from well-to-do homes as well as those who are poor;

that tremendous effort is required to make a difference and that the relevant research and comprehensive action needed will require a major public commitment in funds and other support;

that there is a pervasive hopeless feeling on the part of many, both in communities and in schools, about the possibilities of bringing about change in schools, which have historically been the most change-resistant institution in our society.

Dropping out of school is a decision made after years of failure, rejection, and alienation. For most, dropping out is a personal admission of defeat, a move brought on by intense feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. Although some who drop out go on to other constructive work, others have little confidence in their ability to do anything recognized as "good" by society. For many, dropping out is the beginning of a life of subsistence-level living and hand-to-mouth struggle or of a life dominated by substance abuse and/or crime.

The complexity and severity of the problem of children at risk have been demonstrated throughout this study. Many efforts are being made to solve the problem at all levels of the educational system. Because of the persistence of their social and emotional problems as well as the severity of academic deficits of students at risk, traditional methods have not worked. Working with potential dropouts can be discouraging; results are often slow and uncertain.

In addition to the problems at-risk students bring to schools, educators today are setting unprecedented goals for education. In a world in which students must attain higher skill levels in order to find meaningful work, schools must stress academic excellence. Still, as Tyler (1987) pointed out, those who strive for higher standards must consider the problems of at-risk students. He wrote:

The effort to achieve equity in educational opportunity and simultaneously to impose a SINGLE standard of excellence does not come to grips with the problem of learning how to help students from limited educational backgrounds gain competence in pursuing school learning.

Educators of the 1990s share a new dilemma: how to provide academic excellence at a higher level than ever before for all students while, at the same time, lowering the dropout rate. This must be done at a time when minority populations, historically most dropout-prone, are increasing rapidly. Since 1980, federal funds for education and social services have decreased. Research in education and the successful implementation of new administrative and instructional strategies have shown that educators know how to reach this dual goal.

Although major changes have been made in curriculum, too little has changed in the individual classroom and in the way students experience school. Research on teaching has stressed the value of cooperative learning, of teaching to learning styles, of experiential learning and multidisciplinary curricula, but most teachers still focus on teaching single subjects in teacher-directed classrooms. Many students function well in this system, achieving at high levels.

What about the others? What are schools doing now to encourage students who learn best in other ways? Do we believe that schools can change in order to meet the needs of these students. Several issues that need to be addressed are related to this study.

1. The gap between expectations and resources. Our expectations for schools today are higher than in the past. Instead of being satisfied when a majority of students graduate with adequate academic skills, we now expect our public schools to educate everyone, including special-needs students. To the traditional basic

goals of reading, writing, and arithmetic, we have added computer literacy, health and sex education, more math and science, and more foreign language. For the less academically oriented students, we offer vocational education, special education, and remedial classes.

In addition, schools have been given and, by default perhaps have accepted, responsibility for students' social and emotional needs. Veteran teachers report that many children today are unable to learn because of social and emotional problems. The traditional family is disappearing, and many parents find the new challenges of being parents too great. Substance abuse and unemployment among parents deprive children of the role models and motivation they need to find satisfaction in work.

Some resources have been provided for special programs designed to meet the needs of these children. But many programs are short-term additions to the regular program. The real need, as alternative schools and programs have proven, is for smaller classes, different instructional strategies, and, most of all according to this study, more caring adults who can invest the time and effort required to help these students learn to work effectively.

Counselors at the elementary level can provide skilled professional help to troubled children and their families in elementary school. With staff development focusing on the needs of at-risk students, teachers can be given time and guidance in learning to use more effective instructional strategies. Teachers

and administrators should have time, too, for systematic planning and evaluation of current approaches.

Since accepting the failure of one million students a year has been shown to be costly as well as damaging to society, other options for special-needs children should be considered. Alternative schools have proven that at-risk students learn effectively in small classes. Many of these schools cost no more than regular classrooms because they are housed in modest facilities, have a stripped-down curriculum, and may use old or used textbooks. For these students, caring and close relationships must come first.

2. The role of teachers/school climate. In this study the writer focused primarily on programs and neglected the role of the teacher and of school climate in dropout prevention. In Schools of Excellence for All People, Raywid (1985) wrote, "What school means and feels like to those who work in it is probably the single most important feature of a school for those who inhabit it daily" (p. 14).

What goes on in the classroom determines, to a great extent, what children will feel about school. As Brown (1985) pointed out, "it is the teacher who controls what happens in each classroom when the door closes and class begins" (p. 220). Teachers, ultimately, determine school climate for students. Yet teachers who are overwhelmed by large class sizes, multiple expectations, long hours, and little support from parents and the community may have

difficulty creating a comfortable, but productive, atmosphere in which students can learn.

Teachers today are placed in a nearly impossible situation. They must learn, to some extent, to screen out the feelings of students if they are to survive. However, if teachers lose the ability to care, they are no longer teachers of children, but only teachers of subjects.

Research has already shown that when caring teachers are given fewer students, more planning time, and more latitude in decision making about how to teach, at-risk students learn to work together constructively, gain self-esteem, and achieve at high levels in academic subjects (Benedict et al., 1987).

3. Administrative leadership. While research has indicated that alternative schools have proven more effective than traditional schools in serving at-risk students, traditional schools can match or exceed the results of alternative schools. At one urban junior high school, for example, test scores are the highest in the district, absenteeism rates are lower than those at most alternative schools, morale is high, and there is little staff turnover. The key to this success appears to be dedicated and effective administrative leadership.

The principal of this school has used a number of techniques in ensuring that students at his school succeed. Among these are:

- a. Setting numerous specific goals and clearly communicating these to teachers and students.
- b. Working with teachers in setting school goals.

- c. Setting high expectations for teachers and students.
- d. Asking teachers specific questions about how they will meet their responsibilities to students and parents.
- e. Establishing high expectations about attendance and developing numerous incentives and alternatives to suspension to encourage students to attend school.
- f. Establishing a "buddy system" for teachers to encourage them to work together.
- g. Providing numerous workshops and other staff-development activities for teachers and strongly encouraging them to take advantage of these opportunities.
- h. Requiring parents to come to school when their children are not meeting expectations and working with parents to solve the problem.
- i. Involving the community in numerous school/business partnerships through which the school receives funding, has an extensive mentor program serving 100 students, and obtains assistance with substance-abuse prevention and health problems.
- j. Building school spirit in a wide variety of ways.

All of these measures both demonstrate and enhance the caring climate of the school. All require time, energy, and commitment on the part of the entire school staff.

However, this administrator's use of effective leadership has resulted in a school where nearly all students attend regularly and achieve at high levels. This success has been achieved in a district of low-income families, many of which are led by single parents. Although these techniques may be successful in part because of this administrator's special talents and personality, it would seem that many of the strategies he uses could be adopted by others with good results. Every administrator can find his own ways

of helping students by continuing to seek new ways to solve problems and by refusing to accept failure for any student.

4. The importance of reading. Research has indicated that many students who drop out of school have difficulty reading. Teachers at junior and senior high levels know how discouraging it is to teach students other subjects when they have serious difficulty reading the textbook. While extensive Chapter I programs have been established nationwide to solve this problem, reading teachers stress that reading needs to be taught in all classes if students are to learn to read competently.

In Michigan, all K-12 teachers are now required to take six credit hours in reading. However, principals and reading consultants need to ensure that teachers are using this training in their classrooms. Consultants need to help content-area teachers incorporate reading strategies into their history, science, or math lessons. Most often, experts say, decoding is not the problem. Rather, students fail because they lack comprehension skills. Understanding text structure, imagery, relating concepts to their own experience, comparing, making inferences, predicting, critical thinking, summarizing, and other reading-comprehension skills can help students achieve at considerably higher levels in all subjects.

Students who graduate from high school still have difficulty finding and keeping jobs when they cannot read well. Despite this, literature on children at risk often does not include reading as a major concern. Teachers of other subjects continue to view reading as the English teacher's job. Reading is the single most important

academic skill children learn in school. Teaching students to read must become a major goal for all teachers.

5. Long-term comprehensive approaches. In recent years, educators have become more aware of the need for long-term effort in bringing about change. In school-improvement plans and staff development, administrators have begun using three- to five-year plans. Dropout prevention, also, requires systematic planning for comprehensive, long-term changes. Beginning with early identification, schools should gradually build programs that respond to every facet of the problems facing children at risk.

Specific options such as remedial instruction and counseling need to be integrated. Some schools use a case manager for each student to provide coordination of resources. Schools that lack options for at-risk students should introduce these gradually, beginning with a limited number of students. But each added option should be part of a planned whole, and the comprehensive plan should be modified periodically as staff members gain experience with each approach.

Time must be set aside for discussion and formative evaluations of approaches being used. Teachers involved in working with children at risk will have valuable insights into problems and ideas for solutions. They should be included in deliberations with administrators, counselors, community agencies, and parents.

6. Parent and community involvement. The extent to which parents and community members will be involved in dropout-prevention

efforts will have to depend on their current involvement in the schools, in the relationship that the school currently has with community members, and in the abilities and experience parents and community people can bring to the effort. While research has indicated that parent and community involvement in dropout prevention is vital to success, planners should examine ways to build trust if that has not been established.

Parent and community involvement should be carefully planned so that commitments made to those outside the school can be kept. By starting small and informally, a network of support can be built up without extensive commitments that staff members are unprepared to meet. With continuing and expanding efforts, school staff should find that parents and community volunteers can make an invaluable contribution to the dropout-prevention effort.

Conclusion

Society today is faced with a massive and almost overwhelming problem--the increasing numbers of students dropping out of school before graduation. Dropouts affect everyone--socially, economically, and personally. Most of all, each student who drops out represents a personal tragedy, a human being scarred and wasted; incapable, in many instances, of feeling competent and worthwhile, unable to make a constructive contribution to society.

Similarly, dropout prevention requires the attention and efforts of all of us--teachers, administrators, parents, community members. Although the problem did not originate solely with the

school, educators are best equipped to lead the effort to solve it. To be successful, however, educators must integrate their efforts with those of other agencies and institutions (health, welfare, labor, and so on). Substantial and extensive changes will need to be made in the way students experience school today. Many of these changes can only be made possible with the provision of additional resources inside and outside the school environment.

More funding for education is essential because more professionals are needed to solve this problem. Coordination among community groups and agencies, systematic planning and evaluation, effective staff development, and more extensive counseling services are all expensive options. The cost of providing these, however, is a fraction of the costs of students' dropping out.

The children of this nation are our most important investment. What they become will affect all of us. Much remains to be done and to be learned, but we know enough to move forward. The solution to this problem lies within us all.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTERS TO SUPERINTENDENTS



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Lansing, Michigan 48909

April 14, 1988

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
BARBARA ROBERTS MASON
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GOV. JAMES J. BLANCHARD
Ex-Officio

Dear Superintendent:

The Michigan Department of Education is currently developing guidelines for dropout prevention and building a network of information among schools in Michigan. We are aware that many school districts have already developed various programs to serve children whose learning and school progress may become "at risk."

To more effectively provide assistance and information to schools engaged in these efforts, we are collecting information about dropout prevention or dropout remediation programs in each Michigan school district. Toward that end, the enclosed survey has been developed to gather information about your efforts in helping children at risk.

This survey is not designed to evaluate programs provided in your district. It is, however, a significant part of our work to build a statewide informational network. The information collected will enable Department staff to publish a children at risk program planning guide and an annotated bibliography of successful children at risk programs currently operating in Michigan schools. This guide will be available to you and interested members of your district by December 1988. Information on specific program approaches and ways of getting started is also being gathered for the at-risk youth program clearinghouse being established at the Michigan Department of Education, Detroit Metropolitan Office.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of receiving completed questionnaires from all school districts. Your cooperation is vital. Please return the questionnaire as soon as possible, but no later than May 18, 1988.

I appreciate your cooperation in this effort. I have assigned responsibility for this project to the Department's Detroit Metropolitan Office. If you have any questions or concerns about survey procedures, please contact Dr. Kenneth Harris, Michigan Department of Education, Detroit Metropolitan Office, at 313/256-2100.

Sincerely,

Gary D. Hawks

Enclosures



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DETROIT OFFICE
1200 Sixth St., Suite 316, Detroit, Michigan 48226
(313) 256-2100

20 May 1988

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
BARBARA ROBERTS MASON
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Vice President
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ANNETTA MILLER
NORMAN OTTO STOCKMEYER, SR.
GOV. JAMES J. BLANCHARD
Ex-Officio

Dear Superintendent:

In April, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Gary D. Hawks asked for your help in completing a survey of programs for at-risk youth in your district.

According to our records, we have not yet received a completed survey from your district. It is very important that we receive completed surveys from all school districts. The information that you provide will be used to assist the Michigan Department of Education in building an information network and to develop an annotated guide of successful programs in Michigan schools.

Please help us by designating a contact person who will complete the survey and return it to us as soon as possible. We have included a duplicate form and return envelope for your convenience.

Your cooperation will help ensure that we provide clear and accurate information to local districts regarding programming for children at risk in Michigan schools.

If you have questions about the survey, please contact me.

Yours truly,

Kenneth A. Harris 140.

Kenneth A. Harris
Director

enclosures

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO CONTACT PERSONS



GARY D. HAWKS
Interim Superintendent
of Public Instruction

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Lansing, Michigan 48909

April 14, 1988

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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GOV. JAMES J. BLANCHARD

Ex-Officio

TO: District At-Risk Youth Designated Contact Persons

FROM: Gary D. Hawks

SUBJECT: The Michigan Children At Risk Survey

The Michigan Department of Education is collecting information about local school district programs currently serving educationally at-risk children. The enclosed survey is designed to gather information about your efforts which address the needs of children at risk. The survey has no qualitative components. It is not intended to be used to evaluate programs in your school district.

Your completion of the survey will enable us to collect, publish, and disseminate an annotated bibliography of programs which address the needs of Michigan's children at risk. This guide and the annotated bibliography of programs will be available by December 1988.

Please complete the survey form and return it in the envelope provided. Mail it to: Michigan Department of Education, Detroit Metropolitan Office, Executive Plaza Building, Suite 316, Detroit, Michigan 48226 by May 18, 1988.

For purposes of the survey, "children at risk" means dropouts and other pupils (K-12) whose school achievement, progress toward graduation, or preparation for employment are in serious jeopardy (potential dropouts) due to one or more of the following:

- o one or more years behind their grade level in reading or math basic skills achievement (K-8)
- o three or more credits behind their age/grade level in credits earned for graduation (9-12)
- o chronic truancy or absenteeism
- o school age parent
- o adjudicated delinquent
- o personal or family drug or alcohol abuse
- o family trauma; such as, death, divorce, violence, separation, or unemployment
- o physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- o ethnically, economically, or linguistically disadvantaged

Thank you for your time and cooperation in this survey. If you have any questions or concerns about the survey or procedures, please contact Dr. Kenneth Harris at 313/256-2100.

APPENDIX C

CHILDREN AT RISK SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DETROIT OFFICE**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF CHILDREN AT RISK SURVEY

1 Designate a contact person to be responsible for completing this survey and who can be available for later communications from the Michigan Department of Education.

2 Part 1, the survey itself, should only take about fifteen minutes to complete and should be done first. In this part of the survey, you are asked to identify broadly whether or not your district has certain types of programs, the current or desired level of emphasis of the programs, and any inhibiting factors.

3 You can duplicate as necessary the final page to provide a synopsis of each of your district's programs. This specific information will be used to compile an annotated bibliography of programs that address the needs of Michigan's children at risk.

Please assist us in this effort and return the survey by May 18, 1988. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kenneth Harris at (313) 256-2100.

Michigan Department of Education
CHILDREN AT RISK SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete and return to:
SUE CARTER
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DETROIT OFFICE
EXECUTIVE PLAZA BUILDING, SUITE 316
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226

☐ Check if you desire a copy of survey results.

District Name		Address	
Contact Person for Children at Risk Programs	Title	Telephone (Area/No.)	
Address of Contact Person if different than district address		District/School Code	1,2,3,4,5

1. The following are some programs and approaches used in meeting the educational, social, and career needs of children at risk. First, please indicate whether the approach/program exists in your district/community and the current level of emphasis. Then, indicate the emphasis you would like to place on this approach/program (desired emphasis).

Item	Exists		Current Emphasis						Desired Emphasis						FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
	Y	N	Low	Circle One	High	Low	Circle One	High	Low	Circle One	High				
A. Identification & Monitoring/Attendance															
1) Early identification of children at risk	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7,8,9
2) Systematic planning and evaluation procedures to ensure that educational progress of children at risk is monitored and documented	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	10,11,12
3) A pupil accounting system to monitor attendance and inform parents daily about absences	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	13,14,15
4) A designated school attendance officer in your district	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	16,17,18
5) Innovative enforcement of school attendance policies	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	20,21,22
6) A board-approved district attendance policy	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	23,24,25
B. Curriculum Options															
7) Remedial instructions in reading/math	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	26,27,28
8) Alcohol and drug abuse program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	29,30,31
9) Individualized instruction	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	32,33,34
10) School-age parent program	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	35,36,37
11) Suicide prevention program	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	38,39,40
12) Alternative High School	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	41,42,43
13) Alternative classroom(s)/day, after-school, or evening classes/programs	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	44,45,46
14) Integrated, multi-dimensional program for dropout prevention/remediation	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	47,48,49
15) A district-wide curriculum planning committee	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	50,51,52
16) A district-wide developmental guidance & counseling program	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	53,54,55

Item	Exists		Current Emphasis					Desired Emphasis					FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		
	Y	N	Low	Circle One	High	Low	Circle One	High							
C. Vocational Options															
17) Comprehensive vocational educational program(s) designed to prepare students for employment	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	56,57,58
18) Job Training Partnership Act Program	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	59,60,61
19) Job Placement Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	62,63,64
20) Work Experience Program (e.g., Cooperative education)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	65,66,67
21) Community-based career education program	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	68,69,70
D. Community Outreach/Involvement															
22) Systematic procedures for communication between school staff and parents	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	71,72,73
23) Community education awareness programs to generate support for the importance of school attendance and achievement	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	74,75,76
24) Education programs for parents of children at risk	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	77,78,79
25) A school/community/business children at risk advisory committee to plan and recommend programs for children at risk	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	80,81,82
26) Joint school/business or school/community partnership program(s) serving children at risk	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	83,84,85
E. Staff Development/Program Development															
27) Local staff development programs to enable school staff to work more effectively with children at risk	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	86,87,88
28) A designated children at risk district leader responsible for coordinating children at risk programs	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	89,90,91
29) Technical assistance from the Michigan Dept. of Education in training school personnel, developing model programs, and providing materials and curriculum	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	92,93,94
30) State and federal grants to your school district to develop dropout prevention programs	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	95,96,97
OTHERS—Specify															
31) _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	98,99,100,101,102
32) _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	103,104,105,106,107
33) _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	108,109,110,111,112

2. **INHIBITING FACTORS:** Meeting the needs of children at risk is a complex and difficult task. Often school districts must overcome obstacles and inhibiting factors in accomplishing this task. Indicate to what degree the following obstacles and inhibiting factors limit your school's effectiveness in meeting the needs of children at risk.

Item	Low Degree	Circle One	High Degree	FOR OFFICE USE ONLY			
a) Insufficient assessment and evaluation tools for early and accurate identification of children at risk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	113,114,115
b) Ineffective truancy enforcement laws.	1	2	3	4	5	6	116,117,118
c) Ineffective prosecution of truants and parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	119,120,121
d) Insufficient funding available to hire additional administrators, teachers and/or aides to work with children at risk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	122,123,124
e) Difficulties related to establishing school/family linkages.	1	2	3	4	5	6	125,126,127
f) Low teacher expectations of children at risk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	128,129,130
g) Low parental expectations of children at risk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	131,132,133
h) Unstable family situations among children at risk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	134,135,136
i) Lack of parental interest or support for school efforts regarding children at risk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	137,138,139
j) Lack of support from local law enforcement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	140,141,142
k) Lack of curriculum options for children at risk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	143,144,145
l) Inappropriate instructional techniques for children at risk considering their level of interest/ability (remedial or gifted programs).	1	2	3	4	5	6	146,147,148
m) Lack of systematic coordination among school/community/business/industry programs and resources.	1	2	3	4	5	6	149,150,151
n) Lack of cooperation with health and social services providers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	152,153,154
o) Teacher "burn-out" from working with children at risk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	155,156,157
OTHERS—Specify							
p) _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	158,159,160,161,162
q) _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	163,164,165,166,167

Comments/Questions: Requests for Information or Assistance

1. What circumstances unique to your school district or district population do you think affect the dropout rate?

2. What information or assistance would you like to receive from the Michigan Department of Education?

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DETROIT OFFICE
AT-RISK YOUTH PROGRAM SYNOPSIS

TITLE: _____

TARGET POPULATION: _____

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM: _____

EVALUATION: How has program been evaluated? _____

WHAT ARE REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION: _____

COSTS: _____

FUNDING SOURCE(S): _____

CONTACT: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

Reviewed by: _____ *Date reviewed/updated:* _____

APPENDIX D

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Initial Interview Questions

1. To what extent are children at risk considered to be a problem at your school? If this is a major concern, who at your school is most involved in working on programs or approaches for children at risk?
2. To what extent do you feel your community is concerned and involved in helping potential dropouts? What evidence do you have of this concern and involvement?
3. What are your major strengths as a staff and as a community in working with children at risk?
4. What inhibitory factors present the greatest problem for your district in reducing the dropout rate?
5. What would you like the Michigan Department of Education to do to help you serve children at risk?
6. What kind of leadership would you consider helpful?
 - a. At the state level?
 - b. At the county level?
 - c. At the local district level?
7. Do you feel the Michigan Department of Education in any way interferes with your work with children at risk?
8. Of the programs/approaches that are currently being used in your district, which do you feel are most effective? Why?
9. What one program would you add if you could choose to add one regardless of cost? Considering cost? Why?
10. Have educators in your district made efforts to learn about what is being done for children at risk in other school districts similar to yours? Do you value information of this nature? If not, why not?
11. Is there coordination in your district among programs that serve children at risk? If so, how is this coordination provided? Is any one person in charge of an at-risk effort at your school?
12. How do you feel about alternative education programs--either special classes or separate schools? Do you feel such a program would be effective at your school? Why? Why not?
13. Do you feel that you need more information about why children in your district become dropouts?

14. Is information available in your district about how many children are at risk of dropping out? If so, how is this information obtained, and who has it?
15. Has there been an effort in your district to involve the community in helping children at risk? If so, what specifically is being done?
16. What is the cost of your program(s) specifically created for children at risk?
17. If you have one or more programs that have proven to be highly successful, to what do you attribute their success? (i.e., to the structure of the program, to the teachers, to student motivation, to other factors, to some combination of these factors)?
18. How many students participate in programs specifically designed for children at risk? What percentage of the student body is this?
19. If you had unlimited funds, do you believe you could reduce the dropout rate to 3% or below? How would you do this? What should be done first?

APPENDIX E

**SUPERINTENDENT RUNKEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
MICHIGAN LEGISLATURE, 1987**

Recommendations Made by Superintendent Runkel to
the Michigan Legislature, 1987

In February 1987, the Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction submitted a report to the State Legislature in which he proposed 21 objectives to be carried out by the Superintendent and the Department of Education (Runkel, 1987). All of these objectives could be carried out with "little or no funding" (Runkel, 1987, p. 17). These objectives were as follows:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction will:

1. Request each state agency currently involved in dropout prevention to appoint appropriate staff members to a Dropout Prevention Task Force, to be coordinated by the Department of Education. Such coordination will be designed to avoid duplication of efforts and assure more efficient and effective delivery of services.
2. Ask the State Board of Education to articulate and define an appropriate definition of a "school dropout." Such a standardized definition is needed to avoid the varying descriptions of students who cease attending public schools.
3. Recommend that all Michigan school districts submit an annual dropout report to the Department of Education. Such a report, based on a standardized definition of "dropout," would provide more current information than is now available through the present bi-annual reporting system now in effect.
4. Encourage each Michigan school district superintendent to appoint one staff member per district and per school building as that unit's Dropout Prevention Coordinator. That person's responsibility should be to analyze each such unit's current dropout rate and coordinate efforts to reduce it.
5. Recommend a series of Dropout Prevention Goals, each with appropriate strategies, for adoption by the Michigan State Board of Education. A timetable will be developed for implementation of each of these goals.

Dropout prevention will be a major priority of the Department of Education. To that end, the Department will:

1. Establish a statewide network on dropout-prevention strategies.
2. Collect and disseminate to school districts dropout-prevention information from the federal government, other states, and the research community.

3. Work cooperatively with education, civic, labor, and business groups to develop a comprehensive statewide dropout-prevention campaign.
4. Convene forums, workshops, and conferences where students, educators, civic, labor, and business representatives can develop cooperative strategies for dropout prevention.
5. Collect follow-up data on students who have dropped out of school, those who have re-entered school, and at-risk students who have graduated.
6. Collect and disseminate instructional strategies that are effective in early assessment of student academic needs and effective instructional strategies for improving academic performance of high-risk children and youth.
7. Develop cooperative support models for at-risk students, incorporating counseling, social work, health, and career-development activities.
8. Encourage community and technical colleges to expand their role in job training and remedial education programs.
9. Study the effectiveness of adult education programs in reducing school dropouts.
10. Encourage colleges and universities to provide courses and related experiences for high-risk students, for teacher trainees, and student-support-personnel trainees.
11. Identify successful alternative school programs and disseminate information to local and intermediate school districts.
12. Encourage institutions of higher education to work cooperatively with school districts and communities in addressing the school dropout problem.
13. Encourage institutions offering continuing education training and staff-development activities to offer classes or programs on dropout prevention.
14. Under the School-Business Partnership Program, encourage local businesses to "adopt" a local school building with a chronically high dropout rate. Representatives of the business will be encouraged to work with the school staff and with parents on dropout-prevention efforts.
15. Use modern technology (cable television, interactive two-way television, etc.) to promote the state's dropout-prevention campaign.

16. Develop a recognition program to identify school buildings/districts that make substantial progress in reducing school dropouts.

In addition, Runkel proposed that six dropout-prevention programs be funded by the legislature, requiring a total of \$12.9 million. These were:

1. **Support for High-Risk Preschool Students.** The Department of Education supports the Governor's request for \$7.5 million to be made available for high-risk preschool students.
2. **Hispanic Dropout Prevention Project.** The Hispanic Dropout Prevention Project has not received adequate funding since its endorsement by the State Board of Education in December 1985. To fully carry out the key components of the project, \$500,000 is requested.
3. **Student Support Services.** A paper recently submitted to the State Board of Education strongly supported the full use of counselors in the preschool through middle school years. The literature also consistently endorses the active use of support services to curb student dropouts. It is recommended that adequate staff be provided to coordinate student support services throughout the state. An appropriation of \$200,000 is requested for this purpose.
4. **Grants for School Districts/Buildings with Chronically High Dropout Rates.** Districts/buildings with abnormally high dropout rates should be targeted for additional financial support to address the school dropout problem. Competitive grants in the amount of \$3 million per year for three years is requested for this activity.
5. **Grants for Summer Institutes on Teaching High-Risk Students.** Teachers, administrators, and support staff must become familiar with instructional, administrative, and support strategies that are effective with high-risk students. The expertise of our teacher-training colleges and universities will be sought for this activity; \$1 million is requested.
6. **Continue Funding for "Operation Graduation."** In the FY 1987 Department of Education appropriation bill, the Legislature designated \$700,000 for pilot school dropout-prevention projects throughout the state. We are confident that evaluation of these projects will warrant continued funding. An appropriation of \$700,000 is requested for that purpose.

APPENDIX F

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON
DROPOUT PREVENTION

Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on
Dropout Prevention

The Ad Hoc Committee on Dropout Prevention developed objectives that include some of those recommended in the Runkel report. In addition, considerable emphasis was placed on early identification. The objectives that the Committee then proceeded to work on were as follows:

1. Drafting a new definition of school dropout that will reflect the new and future realities of Michigan's public schools and in accordance with the spirit and the letter of related school laws and policies by November 18, 1987.
2. Developing an early identification system of at-risk students in K-12 education, which would incorporate the most recent and sound research findings on the subject, along with input from practitioners by November 18, 1987.
3. Profiling at-risk students by age/grade groupings using the information on programs aimed at the following cohorts:
 - a. prekindergarten-third grade (early intervention)
 - b. fourth-ninth grade (prevention), and
 - c. tenth-twelfth grade (recovery)by December 18, 1987.
4. Establishing a clearinghouse for the cataloging and dissemination of information on effective dropout-prevention programs and projects; for the collection, production, and distribution of related audio-visual materials; and for the development of other technical/professional resources on the subject by January 29, 1988.
5. Planning the development of a professional network on at-risk students at the intermediate school district, local school district, and school building levels to facilitate the diffusion of information and the feedback to state officials on the subject by January 29, 1988.
6. Drafting program standards of quality that can be used to assess program effectiveness and to identify exemplary programs for at-risk students across the state by September 30, 1988.
7. Proposing State Board of Education guidelines/policies on at-risk students/school dropouts in consistency with current laws and policies related to the subject by September 30, 1988, including the mandatory reporting of school dropout data by race/ethnicity and gender.

APPENDIX G

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADULT LITERACY TASK FORCE

Recommendations

1. Adopt a new "work-readiness" goal and "workforce literacy" definition to drive all adult training and education programs in Michigan.
2. Establish a professionally staffed public/private policy board to oversee the design and implementation of an integrated, outcome-oriented adult training, education and supportive services system.
3. Simplify access to all adult training and educational services, focusing on a common system so that all Michigan citizens can participate in the development and management of their own skill-enhancement plan.
4. Develop a standard skills assessment tool for measuring Michigan's work-readiness goal and definition to use with each participant in all training and educational programs. The assessment will be used in determining incoming skill levels (and thus the appropriate mix of services required), progress toward completion, and in measuring effectiveness of programs.
5. Foster joint investments that encourage individuals, the public sector, and the private sector to participate in building Michigan's workforce skills by: 1) creating incentives, and 2) encouraging partnerships. This effort would be enhanced by establishing a statewide partnerships and incentives clearinghouse.
6. Create a Human Resources Research and Development Institute as a joint venture between the state and the private sector. The Institute would develop, maintain, and evaluate the profile of Michigan's workforce work-readiness, conduct necessary research on workforce skill needs, and develop curricula and materials consistent with the statewide goal.
7. Support Michigan adult training and educational providers with formal training and technical assistance to strengthen their ability to design and deliver programs which meet the statewide goal and definition.
8. Initiate a public information /marketing campaign from the highest level of state government that promotes a new workforce training and educational system that is based on individual choice, life-long learning, and accountability.

The purpose of this report is to provide a strategic plan for the Governor and the State of Michigan in addressing the workforce skill shortage that lies before us. These are, indeed, unconventional times, and the next 12 months will be critical in initiating this comprehensive program. The total commitment of our highest state leaders and program managers, combined with the motivation and energy of our people, will be essential. With such commitment, energy, and redirection, Michigan can build the workforce of the future -- and a future for our workforce.

APPENDIX H

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MICHIGAN INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE
ON THE BLACK CHILD**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

THE FAMILY: STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE

1. **The Governor, Legislature and co-sponsoring Departments** should support formation of a pilot, community-based Black Child and Family Institute. The Institute should coordinate activities and research in the four areas of health, family, education and employment. The Institute should be monitored by a commission appointed by the Governor.
2. **The Governor** should appoint a statewide interagency committee to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the recommendations and the activities of the state agencies in their responses to the Report of the Public Forums and Symposia on the Black Child in Crisis.
3. **The Legislature** should make a 10-year funding commitment to analyze, manage and treat issues concerning the Black family and child.
4. **The Legislature and Departments of Commerce and Social Services** should expand rent-supplement programs and low-interest rate programs for homesteading by poor families.
5. **The Department of Corrections and the Courts** should establish an independent monitoring committee to ensure fairness and consistency in sentencing of Black defendants.
6. **The Department of Transportation** should conduct a study every two years on the affordability and accessibility of public transportation to major agencies and businesses in cities and suburbs.
7. **The Departments of Public Health, Education and Social Services** should develop community education and outreach efforts to present clearly the problems of teenage parenthood and to develop practical options to pregnancy and parenthood for adolescents.
8. **The Departments of Social Services and Education** should provide for low-income families to operate cooperative day-care and preschool programs in their homes.
9. **The Department of Social Services** should place a priority on home-based prevention services and consider removal of children only as a last resort.
10. **The Department of Social Services** should remove deterrents to the reunification of families.
11. **The Department of Social Services** should increase the child-care reimbursement rate for AFDC recipients to the approximate costs of the care.
12. **The Department of Social Services** should implement programs to encourage Black families to consider adopting Black children.
13. **The Department of Social Services** should develop policies to reduce the duration of foster-home care.
14. **The Departments involved** should remove from their procedures and documents the phrase "illegitimate child."

EDUCATION: THE WAY OUT AND UP

Preschool and Early Childhood Education

15. **The Department of Education** should provide for affordable and accessible preschool and early childhood education programs for working and single parents.

16. **The Governor's Human Services Cabinet** should develop a state plan for preschool children at risk (those considered likely to have major education problems) that would include quality, free, day-care and preschool education.
17. **The Legislature** should expand the state-aid formula to include per capita funding for education for at-risk and low-income preschool children.
18. **The Department of Education** should convene a committee to develop practical, affordable and accessible *private* alternative preschool programs for children not served under Headstart and other state and federally funded programs. The committee should include representatives from a range of business, civic, church and government agencies and groups.
19. **Local school districts** should use competent Black students from high schools and colleges as volunteer tutors to serve as role models.
20. **Local school districts** should train and encourage parents to reinforce the child's preschool activities at home and to participate in the planning for children already in school.

Kindergarten-Elementary Education

21. **Local school districts** should promote pupils only when they master course content.
22. **Local school districts** should provide in-service training to teachers on test administration.
23. **Local school districts** should adopt plans to ensure that students are taught reading in *all* classrooms.
24. **Local school districts** should ensure that teacher and administrator expectations of students are high and realistic.
25. **Local school districts** should recruit parent volunteers to work in school buildings during the regular school day.
26. **Local school districts** should increase efforts to employ Black male teachers in kindergarten and elementary grades.

Secondary Education

27. **The State Board of Education and the Department of Education** should "adopt" a high school that largely serves Black students where there is a disproportionate number of low-achieving, at-risk students and provide special technical assistance to that school.
28. **Local school districts** should require reading instruction for all high school students who are reading below grade level.
29. **Local school districts** should encourage all students to take national assessment examinations *before* their senior year and provide test-preparation instructions.
30. **Local school districts** should develop partnership programs with local businesses.
31. **Local school districts** should discourage requests for rigid "tracking" and placement of students.
32. **Local school districts** should provide programs to encourage school-age parents to remain in school.

Curriculum

33. **Local school districts** should provide child-care programs in the school so that school-age mothers can continue their education.
34. **The State Board of Education** should allow reimbursement for the transportation needs of teenaged parents.
35. **Local school districts** should form a committee to monitor Black children at risk, including school practices of suspension, expulsion and dropouts.
36. **Local school districts** should promote the positive attributes of vocational education and inform parents of the benefits of vocational and technical education as preparation for careers.

- 37. **Local school districts** should expand course offerings to include classes on sex education, parenting, nutrition and health, African-American history and culture, family economics, personal and interpersonal skills, and test preparation.
- 38. **Local school districts** should reduce class sizes and provide tutors for students.

Special Education

- 39. **The State Board of Education** should increase the requirements for teacher certification in special education to include courses on multi-cultural education or courses on African-American history and culture.
- 40. **Local school districts** should evaluate the validity of assessment criteria that result in the overrepresentation of Black students in special education classes.
- 41. **Local school districts** should offer more ways to integrate special education pupils into the general student body.
- 42. **Local school districts** should establish a panel of teachers, parents and community persons to review the initial assessment for placement and to monitor regularly the progress of students placed in special education.

School Dropouts

- 43. **The Legislature** should amend the State School Code to include a uniform definition of a school dropout.
- 44. **The Legislature** should require each school district to establish a committee to plan and monitor dropout-prevention programs and report results annually to the State Board of Education.
- 45. **The Legislature** should increase funding for programs in dropout prevention.
- 46. **The State Board of Education** should establish a School Dropout Prevention Committee to explore new approaches, with members drawn from community, civic, church and parent groups.
- 47. **The State Board of Education** should analyze the effect of the compulsory school attendance law on the dropout problem.
- 48. **Local school districts** should eliminate school practices that "push students out."
- 49. **The Department of Education**, with the assistance of the **Michigan Department of Civil Rights**, should monitor the suspension and expulsion of minority students.
- 50. **Local school districts** should work with local departments of parks and recreation to establish after-school programs aimed at keeping Black youth in organized activities during their leisure time.
- 51. **The Legislature** should sponsor a legislative conference on school dropouts and invite participants from states that receive legislative support for dropout prevention.

School Management

- 52. **Local school boards and districts** should set short and long-range plans that clearly state the goals for Black student achievement.
- 53. **Local school boards and districts** should include parents and students in the selection of the district superintendent and building administrators.
- 54. **Local school boards and districts** should require principals and central office administrators to develop annual action plans for improving Black student achievement.
- 55. **Local school boards and districts** should report annually to the community on the education progress of all students by race and sex.

Teachers

- 56. **The State Board of Education** should develop a plan to recruit more Blacks into teaching.

- 57. **The State Board of Education** should appoint Black educators, psychologists and citizens to the committee that develops competency tests for teachers and school administrators.
- 58. **The State Board of Education** should change the teacher certification rules to require all prospective teachers to have courses in African-American history and culture.
- 59. **Local school districts** should provide in-service programs for current teachers and staff to increase their understanding of children from various backgrounds and cultures.

School Finance

- 60. **The State Board of Education** should appoint a blue-ribbon committee to study and make recommendations to improve school finance.
- 61. **The State Board of Education** should mount a campaign to inform citizens on the need for school-finance reform.
- 62. **The Legislature** should appropriate more funds for general-assistance aid to schools to decrease the dependence on local property taxes.
- 63. **The Legislature** should continue the task force that is working with the **Department of Education** to develop a program to fund school districts based on needs and resources.

Parent and Community Involvement

- 64. **The local school and community** should initiate performance contracts with parents, teachers and principals.
- 65. **The State Board of Education** should develop guidelines on how school districts and communities can work cooperatively to build excellent education programs.
- 66. **The State Board of Education** should recognize exemplary school-community relations programs.
- 67. **Every school** should be used as a community multi-purpose activity center.
- 68. **The local school and community** should develop outreach programs, such as home visits by teachers, principals and other support staff.
- 69. **Local schools and the community** should establish student advocacy programs and use community volunteers to build the self-esteem and positive self-image of Black students.
- 70. **The local school and community** should initiate partnerships with corporations and business to provide job opportunities for poor school-age parents.
- 71. **The local school and community** should form partnerships with churches, social and fraternal organizations for "Adopt-A-School" programs.
- 72. **The local school and community** should establish a committee to explore alternatives to having uniformed police officers in the school building.

Higher Education

- 73. **Community Colleges and Universities** should work with school districts, community, civic and religious groups to recruit Black youth.
- 74. **Community Colleges and Universities** should work with school districts to provide counseling and mentor relationships between faculty and students, and to provide campus visitation programs.
- 75. **Community Colleges and Universities** should establish goals and timelines for improving Black student enrollment and retention.
- 76. **Colleges of Education** should provide opportunities in teacher-training programs to help prepare future teachers to work directly with students likely to have major problems.
- 77. **The Department of Education, the Legislature, Colleges and Universities** should fully implement the 1986 *Report on Minorities, Handicappers and Women in Michigan's Colleges and Universities* by the State Superintendent's Special Advisory Committee.

HEALTH: A SOUND MIND IN A SOUND BODY

Accessibility

- 78. **The Governor** should improve coordination among state agencies in administering existing programs for improving the health of Blacks and to increase the availability of health professionals to Blacks.
- 79. **The Departments of Public Health and Mental Health** should work with the state Office of Medical Affairs to develop an accessibility plan that assures that community health and mental health care service centers are established in low-income neighborhoods.
- 80. **The Governor, Legislature and Departments of Public Health and Mental Health** should provide state-paid physicians, dentists, psychiatrists and other health professionals to practice in high-risk and underserved urban and rural areas.
- 81. **The Department of Transportation** should consider providing low-cost or free transportation to health and mental health facilities for low-income people.
- 82. **The Department of Public Health**, with the help of county health departments, should adopt an outreach campaign for minority populations to furnish health information and education materials.
- 83. **The Governor** should direct the Office of Medical Affairs to develop a statewide comprehensive health-insurance plan free of any deductibles or co-insurance for all residents.

Blacks in the Health Field

- 84. **State Departments, professional organizations and Colleges and Universities** should develop a program to recruit Blacks and other minority persons for careers in health and mental health care.
- 85. **The Legislature, Department of Education and Colleges** should increase financial aid to minority students through scholarships and low-interest loans for those entering medical school or health-related fields.

Preventive Medicine

- 86. **The Governor** should issue a clear and comprehensive policy on prevention in health and mental health, accompanied by objectives and schedules, and the **Legislature** should appropriate the necessary funds to support it.
- 87. **The Department of Mental Health** should cease its approval of waivers for prevention services now granted to community health boards for prevention services.
- 88. **The Legislature** should appropriate funds to allow health screening annually for low-income and other children at risk.

Hunger and Nutrition

- 89. **The Governor** should convene a Task Force on Hunger to determine the number of hungry and nutritionally poor children in Michigan and devise a response that will assure that all children get an adequate diet.
- 90. **The U.S. Department of Agriculture** should expand its efforts and develop a plan to ensure that surplus foods are provided to all children in need.
- 91. **State Departments** should launch a statewide campaign to make food-stamp recipients aware of the best ways to use nutrition benefits.

Infant Mortality

- 92. **The Legislature** should appropriate state funds to supplement federal aid to expand the eligibility requirements of the Women, Infant and Children nutritional program (WIC) to

include all pregnant women and nursing mothers eligible for Medicaid or prenatal care funded by the Department of Public Health.

- 93. The Department of Public Health** should take the necessary steps to amend the Public Health Code to include prenatal care as a basic health service.

Mental Health

- 94. The State Police and Department of Corrections**, with the cooperation of local law enforcement agencies and courts, should develop a "Drug Bust" program aimed at children and youth who sell or distribute drugs.
- 95. The Governor's Human Services Cabinet** should develop a process coordinated through local agencies to ensure that "busted" children and youth, and their families, received individual support and rehabilitative services.
- 96. The Department of Education** working with the **Department of Mental Health** should develop model educational programs for the school curriculum to teach students how to deal with stress, depression and anger.
- 97. The Department of Natural Resources** should plan with local parks and recreation departments to provide adequate neighborhood parks, playgrounds, neighborhood centers, and sports equipment.
- 98. The Department of Corrections** should work with the **Departments of Mental Health and Social Services** to implement a program of services for children of jailed parents.
- 99. The Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court** should convene a task force to review racial inequities in sentencing of Black youth and adults, and to provide a process to apply the judicial system more fairly to Blacks.

JOBS AND ECONOMIC SECURITY: FIGHTING POVERTY, CREATING SELF-RESPECT

Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment

- 100. State Departments Involved** should adopt a state policy to combat the high rate of unemployment among Michigan's Black citizens.
- 101. The Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Education** should jointly develop a Black Family Employability State Plan, with the primary goal of raising all Michigan families out of poverty.
- 102. The Legislature** should enact legislation on plant closings and business relocations to give communities greater flexibility in adjusting to long-term economic changes.
- 103. The Department of Civil Service, the Lieutenant Governor's Office and Michigan Equal Employment and Business Opportunity Council** should set formal goals to hire and promote Blacks within state service, especially in light of early retirement programs that may create additional job opportunities. The Lieutenant Governor should work with state department directors to hire and promote Blacks at all classification levels.

Black Youth Unemployment

- 104. The Legislature** should oppose sub-minimum wage policies for youth.
- 105. The Legislature and Departments of Labor and Education** should ensure that all state youth-unemployment programs include education, training and work.
- 106. The Department of Civil Rights, the directors of other departments, the Legislature, and the Lieutenant Governor's Office** should set guidelines and measurable standards to ensure that civil rights and affirmative-action mandates are understood and enforced.
- 107. The Department of Education** should require local school districts to implement basic academic programs that prepare Black students for employment, including intensive remedial efforts.

- 108. **The Legislature, Departments of Labor and Commerce and the private sector** must insure through increased affirmative-action efforts that more disadvantaged Black youth are hired and trained for good jobs.
- 109. **The Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce** should promote development of private-industry, "Adopt-A-School" programs.
- 110. **The Legislature, and Departments of Labor and Civil Service** should increase internship and apprenticeship opportunities for Black students and adults interested in careers in state government.

Assistance Subsidies

- 111. **The Departments of Labor, Social Services, Public Health, Commerce and Education** should establish a state income-security system with the following elements:
 - Adequate and equitable benefits:
 - Benefits not conditional on work:
 - No stigmas on benefits:
 - Benefits indexed for inflation.
- 112. **The Legislature and the Department of Social Services** should eliminate public-assistance rules that hinder Black economic independence and the ability of Black families to stay intact.
- 113. **The Governor's Human Services Cabinet** should adopt child-care policies that provide low-cost or no-cost care so that parents can work or participate in job-training or education programs. The care should be educational and developmental, not merely custodial.

Housing

- 114. **The Legislature and the Department of Commerce** should expand the Fair Housing Act to specifically include families with children.
- 115. **The Department of Commerce** should review policies to insure that families have safe, sanitary, energy-efficient housing.
- 116. **State and local building codes** should be revised to permit the economy of mass production with the use of new materials, extensive prefabrication and modern construction methods.
- 117. **The Legislature and Department of Commerce** should create a special lending pool to enable low-income families to buy homes.

Transportation

- 118. **The Department of Transportation**, in conjunction with other state departments, should encourage policies in private business and industry to provide transportation for employees and trainees who need such help.

APPENDIX I

RANKING OF PROGRAMS OFFERED AND DESIRED

Programs Offered and Programs Desired--Ranking

Comparing the emphasis by ranking on programs currently offered ("what is") and those respondents said they would like to offer ("what ought to be") illustrates that numerous approaches were being given the same emphasis as that desired by respondents. In other instances, current emphasis was ranked higher than desired emphasis. Where desired emphasis was higher, it would appear that programs were needed more than they were being offered. The programs appeared with the following rankings:

Current Emphasis Compared With Desired Emphasis

Program Option	Current Emphasis	Desired Emphasis
1. Bard-approved attendance policy	1	5
2. Remedial instruction	2	1
3. Daily attendance monitoring	3	7
4. District curriculum planning committee	4	3
5. Comprehensive vocational programs	5	9
6. Communication between staff and parents	6	2
7. Substance abuse	7	6
8. Attendance-policy enforcement	8	10
9. Work experience	9	15
10. Early at-risk identification	10	4
11. Individualized instruction	11	12
12. Job placement	12	16
13. Job Training Partnership Act	13	22
14. Other alternative programs	14	21
15. District counseling programs	15	8
16. District attendance officer	16	23
17. Community education awareness	17	13
18. Systematic planning and evaluation	18	8
19. Alternative high school	19	19
20. Community-based career education	20	24
21. Suicide prevention	21	18
22. Staff development re: children at risk	22	12
23. School-age-parent program	23	30
24. Multidimensional program	24	25
25. At-risk parent education	25	15

Program Option	Current Emphasis	Desired Emphasis
26. State/federal grants for dropout prev.	26	20
27. Designated children-at-risk coordinator	27	27
28. Joint school/business partnership	28	26
29. At-risk advisory committee	29	29
30. Michigan Department of Education technical assistance	30	28

The following options were being given similar priority from both perspectives:

- Remedial instruction
- Individualized instruction
- Substance-abuse programs
- District curriculum planning committee
- Alternative high schools
- Suicide prevention
- Multidimensional programs
- At-risk coordinator
- School/business partnerships
- At-risk advisory committee
- Michigan Department of Education technical assistance

Some heavily emphasized programs were not always those most desired. Programs for which the current emphasis ranking was higher than the ranking for desired emphasis were:

- Attendance options
 - Board-approved attendance policy
 - Daily attendance monitoring
 - Attendance policy enforcement
 - District attendance officer
- Vocational options
 - Comprehensive vocational programs
 - Work experience
 - Job placement
 - Job Training Partnership Act
 - Community-based career education
- Other alternative programs

Although some of the attendance and vocational options did not show a large discrepancy between rankings, as a group it seems

important that all were currently offered at a higher level than they were desired, based on the relative rankings. In some cases, such as attendance measures, the lower "desired emphasis" ranking may have resulted from a respondent's focusing on needs not being met. On the other hand, educators may have thought that curriculum options were more important than attendance options.

For a number of other approaches, the desired emphasis ranking was considerably higher than the current emphasis, suggesting that these programs were needed more than they were being offered. Programs for which the desired emphasis ranking was higher than the current emphasis ranking were:

- Family and Community options
- Community education awareness
- District counseling programs
- At-risk parent education
- Communication between staff and parents
- Staff development re: children at risk
- Systematic planning and evaluation
- Early at-risk identification
- State/federal grants for dropout prevention

It is apparent that in some cases there was a relatively large discrepancy between "what is" and "what ought to be." A few options, such as district counseling programs, early at-risk identification, and communication between staff and parents, fell considerably higher on the "desired emphasis" list than on the "current emphasis" one. Other programs that appeared among the top 16 programs desired were currently offered by fewer than half of the districts.

In terms of both frequency and emphasis, state and federal grants for dropout prevention again were sought much more than they

were provided. At-risk parent education, offered by only 28.4% of the districts, was thought to be a strong priority (desired emphasis = 4.679). Staff development re: children at risk and community education awareness were two other options respondents considered to be important, but which were provided by only half of the districts.

APPENDIX J

DEGREE OF EMPHASIS OF PROGRAMS OFFERED

Programs Offered--Degree of Emphasis

Looking at means for current emphasis by program category, it became apparent that the most heavily stressed approaches were school based and focused on direct services to students rather than on planning. The 30 programs were grouped into five categories. These were used as part of the statistical analysis. Programs most frequently provided were in the categories Identification and Attendance Monitoring, Curriculum Options, and Vocational Programs. Community Outreach/Involvement and Staff and Program Development fell behind. Means for the categories were:

Emphasis by Program Category

Program Category	Mean
1. Identification and Attendance Monitoring	3.40
2. Vocational Programs	3.21
3. Curriculum Options	2.99
4. Community Outreach/Involvement	2.31
5. Staff/Program Development	2.00

Means for specific programs reinforced the conclusion that programs most heavily emphasized were those that provided direct school-based services to children at risk. Efforts to correct academic deficiencies were reflected in the emphasis on remedial instruction and individualized instruction, and heavy emphasis was also placed on vocational options. Recognition that dropout prevention is important and that taking action early makes a difference was reflected in the strong emphasis on early identification of children at risk. The role of substance abuse as

a factor in dropping out also appeared to be recognized, and action was being taken to remedy this problem. Following are the specific programs studied and the means for current emphasis.

Programs Most Stressed by Reporting Districts

Rank	Program Option	Mean
1.	Board-approved attendance policy	4.765
2.	Remedial instruction	4.692
3.	Daily attendance monitoring	4.345
4.	District curriculum planning committee	4.273
5.	Comprehensive vocational programs	4.268
6.	Communication between staff/parents	4.246
7.	Substance abuse programs	4.129
8.	Attendance policy enforcement	3.983
9.	Work experience programs	3.868
10.	Early at-risk identification	3.653
11.	Individualized instruction	3.598
12.	Job placement	3.445
13.	Job Training Partnership Act	3.430
14.	Other alternative programs	3.330
15.	District counseling programs	3.302
16.	District attendance officer	3.258
17.	Community education awareness	3.225
18.	Systematic planning and evaluation	3.186
19.	Alternative high school	3.123
20.	Community-based career education	2.893
21.	Suicide prevention	2.876
22.	Staff development re: children at risk	2.852
23.	School-age-parent program	2.671
24.	Multidimensional programs	2.364
25.	At-risk parent education	2.280
26.	State-federal grants for dropout prevention	2.214
27.	Designated at-risk coordinator	2.011
28.	Joint school/business partnership	1.951
29.	At-risk advisory committee	1.808
30.	Michigan Department of Educ. technical assist.	1.795

Programs Desired--Degree of Emphasis

Means for "desired emphasis" were examined to determine what respondents perceived to be the most needed programs. This information can be helpful in setting priorities for planning. As

might be expected, programs districts would most like to offer (desired emphasis) were often the same as those they were currently offering (current emphasis). They were largely school-based programs that provided direct services to students. Many of the programs were not, however, specifically designed for at-risk students. The 30 programs included in this study and the means for desired emphasis are listed below:

Programs Most Desired by Reporting Districts

Rank	Program Option	Mean
1.	Remedial instruction: reading/math	5.430
2.	Communication between staff and parents	5.278
3.	District curriculum planning committee	5.264
4.	Early at-risk identification	5.244
5.	Board-approved attendance policy	5.217
6.	Substance-abuse programs	5.206
7.	Daily attendance monitoring	5.148
8.	Systematic planning and evaluation	5.138
9.	Comprehensive vocational programs	5.083
10.	District counseling programs	5.073
11.	Attendance policy enforcement	4.893
12.	Staff development re: children at risk	4.805
13.	Community education awareness	4.796
14.	Individualized instruction	4.765
15.	At-risk parent education	4.679
16.	Work experience programs	4.617
17.	Job placement	4.506
18.	Suicide prevention	4.423
19.	Alternative high school	4.391
20.	State/federal dropout-prevention grants	4.385
21.	Other alternative programs	4.340
22.	Job Training Partnership Act	4.294
23.	District attendance officer	4.290
24.	Community-based career education	4.227
25.	Multidimensional programs	4.197
26.	Joint school/business partnership	4.060
27.	Designated at-risk coordinator	4.005
28.	Michigan Department of Educ. technical assist.	3.894
29.	At-risk advisory committee	3.869
30.	School-age-parent program	3.831

APPENDIX K

LETTER TO INTERVIEWEES

Dear

This will serve as a follow-up to my recent telephone conversation with you concerning a study of programs and options for dropout prevention and remediation undertaken in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Education. The purpose of this project is to assess the perceptions of administrators, teachers, counselors, and others regarding dropout-prevention and remediation programs. I hope that you will be willing to help me with this study.

The written survey completed by all K-12 districts contributed to considerable baseline data concerning each district's response to children at risk. In order to gain more information about the ways in which educators are dealing with the problems involved in serving children at risk--the role of the community, financial limitations, staff development, etc.--I am interviewing persons in selected districts appearing to have developed effective programs for dropout prevention. Your personal insight about how your district has addressed problems and developed solutions will contribute to suggestions which might be shared with other districts concerning this significant problem.

If you agree to the interview, neither you nor your district will be identified in reporting results. In taking notes, I will record such information as your position, the size of your school, extent of programs and options offered, community involvement, and the expenditure per pupil. These are variables which were examined in the written survey and which may be of interest in comparing information gained from interviews. My notes will not be seen by anyone other than myself. A letter of authorization to use the material is attached. Each person interviewed will be provided with a copy of the project results, as well as a copy of the Resource Manual containing programs for students at risk currently in use in Michigan's public schools.

A list of questions to be used in the interview is also attached. For your convenience, the interview will be planned to take approximately one-half hour. Since each school is unique, the emphasis on questions will vary, and not all questions will be answered at length for each school. If you wish to spend more time talking about the programs your school offers and problems you have encountered, I will be happy to spend more time with you.

[Last paragraph will include Option 1 or Option 2, depending on the results of the phone conversation.]

[Option 1: For those who have agreed to the interview]:

This will confirm _____ as the time we agreed upon for the interview when we talked on the telephone. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me and to help with this study.

[Option 2: For those who wish to see the questions first]:

I will call after you have had a chance to review this letter of explanation and the interview questions to confirm your willingness to meet with me and to set a time to meet. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me earlier.

Sincerely,

Sue Carter

APPENDIX L

RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED SURVEY QUESTIONS

Responses to Open-Ended Survey Questions

I. What circumstances unique to your school district or district population do you think affect the dropout rate?

<u>Positive circumstances</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
1. <u>Small size</u>	38
"Promotes positive interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, opportunities for growth, individual attention, school-community ties." "Small school. Positive staff, peer, parent, and community pressure to stay in school and graduate. Everyone notices when a person is out of school." "Small school promotes interactions and development of attitudes of self-worth not possible in larger, more autonomous setting." "More identification between staff and community in small district. . . . Staff has contact with 'at risk' pupils outside usual school setting, knows families, etc." "Our attendance person has been a school district resident for 47 years and is familiar with 90% of the families. She contacts each person absent each day." "Being a small district in a rural community allows for a very special closeness between the staff and students. The social interaction itself allows us to find and react to the target population you are referring to. Our dropout rate is very low, and that is partially due to the individual attention that student may receive." "Our district has a high percentage of students in the 'at risk' category, and a drop-out rate of 1/2 of one percent. We're just a small district that employs people who care about kids." "Individual students in small schools, with their relatively underpopulated settings, live under greater day-to-day attraction, pressure, and responsibility felt toward taking part in the voluntary activities of their school environments. They are more motivated to take part." Big School, Small School, p. 135.	

"A small, rural community like ours has little encouragement for students to leave school--nothing to do."

2. Geographical location 10
Rural community related to stronger families

"Our district is rural Upper Peninsula, therefore students at a very early age come to realize that the school is THE center of activity. Students and parents become more oriented to being in and around school; school becomes the place to be; therefore, there are very few dropouts. I think this is generally true of rural areas."

3. Effective education-shared values 47
(parental support, stable families)

"We have a relatively low dropout rate because the schools and the community share high expectations. Our middle school organizational pattern identifies and provides for high-risk students. Our high school guidance department tracks at-risk students."

"Our district is a German community with great belief in the work ethic. For the most part, students are highly motivated, goal-oriented, and the families support the schools quite well. Our students at risk often feel very isolated because they are a distinct minority and not at all acceptable to the other students."

"We have a low dropout rate due to our district's sense of community. Churches, government, parent groups and staff share like values and cultural priorities. We have blended our alternative education, remedial and special services into a cooperative effort to creatively solve individual student problems."

"High productive expectation by parents including cooperative support. Attendance calling process administered by counselors, administrators, and machine. Alternative education retrieval and counseling system. Student organization involved with policy establishment."

4. High socioeconomic status of community 6

5. Alternative school/programs 24

"We have established an option high school at a different facility than the high school. The program is theirs as much as it is ours. This alternative education program has

helped over 30 students remain in school. Without this they would be on the streets in their various communities."

"An excellent alternative ed program currently handling drop-out/at-risk students 16 years of age and over. Lack of Junior High alternative ed. program."

"Students being allowed to take classes in our adult ed program their senior year, helps save them."

"Dropout prevention programs starting at grade 5 and 6, a dropout recovery program, and an emphasis on making students successful in school at an early age so they won't want to miss or drop out."

6. High employment opportunities 2

Negative circumstances Number of Responses

1. Low socioeconomic level 97
(rural area: poverty, unemployment, lack of education detrimental to achievement)

"Low family self-esteem, many second-generation failures."

"Many parents on welfare, don't value education."

"We operate a court-ordered desegregation program that combines rural students with inner-city students. Both groups have low skill achievement levels, poor self-concepts, and an inability to set appropriate goals."

"Rural area--parents do not feel 'schooling' is a major goal for a person."

"A number of our families do not have telephones, which makes communication difficult."

2. Lack of parental involvement, support; low parental expectations 70

"High influx of D.S.S. people. Most do not have work-related backgrounds and are 3rd and 4th generation Social Service clients. Lack of parental concern. Lack of 2-parent families, lack of sufficient job opportunities."

"Socio-economic make-up of the population. Lack of good work ethic--'I've worked at Olds, it's good enough for me, then it's good enough for my boy.' 'I don't have a high

school diploma and I'm doing o.k.' Welfare mentality. Unrealistic about how much money you need to earn to 'make it.'"

"Lack of concern on the part of parents of these children, especially in the area of attendance and progression of academic progress."

"Low expectations of at-risk potential? (parents? teachers?)"

3. Lack of parental education 38

"We have a large number of parents who do not have a high school education. Success is based on marriage and owning a car--not on education and financial stability."

"40% of adults don't have a high school diploma."

"Many of the parents of these children were dropouts so they have low regards toward an education."

"Single parent families or no parents--many families on welfare--not interested in education. Parents are uneducated; therefore they see no purpose in education of children. Children are unmotivated. Too easy for children to live on own--supported by government department. Too much easy money for young adults."

4. Unstable families; minorities, transients 76

"Problems associated with meeting the needs of Native American students. . . ."

"Our district is affected by its 10.5% Hispanic population (including migrant students). This is the first year we have had a bi-lingual program. It is the second year for an Article III program. These are helpful, but we need to develop curriculum for at-risk students (especially in the high school). Teachers could benefit from re-training to better know how to address the needs of at-risk students. Our elementary counseling position should be expanded to full-time (presently 1-1/2 days) to develop more preventative programs. More programs to assist parents are needed."

5. Lack of employment opportunities 33

"Persistently low wages and high unemployment not providing the reward (good job) for completing high school."

"Lack of perceived relationship between education, job, and income."

"A number of intermingling factors influence the dropout rate of our district. Many of our students drop out because of the cumulative effect of too many negatives. Living in poverty, single parent, pregnancy, lack of employment, alcoholic parent, truancy, lack of positive role models, poor grades, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, and finally alienation toward the school."

"People become apathetic, they feel they cannot help themselves."

6. Alcohol/substance abuse 23

"High incidence of substance abuse."

7. Lack of adequate programs 25

"No remedial programs other than adult ed. No organized procedures for dealing with readmission of substance-abuse rehabilitation students. No alternative education school locally. No sex education classes offered in curriculum. No substance abuse coordinator or organized support group."

"Boredom of full-time academics--I believe 1/2 the day should be in vocational training."

8. Inadequate truancy laws, prosecution 5

9. Lack of early childhood education 3

"Early education--our failure--identifying/labeling children of early age as learning disabled; K-2 curriculum."

10. Size (too large, or disadvantages of small size) 6

"A very small student population makes it difficult to offer options."

"As a rural community we have VERY limited funds for alternative programs and a VERY high need."

"Being a small school on a limited tax base inhibits the hiring of personnel and class offerings for our at-risk students."

11. Graduation requirements: rules 13

"Due to graduation requirements, students have a little time for elective vocational classes."

"A too narrow, rigid curriculum demand from the State will affect our dropout rate in an adverse manner."

"Increased graduation standards. . . . Lock-step curriculum (Drill and Kill!). lack of basic courses at the high school."

"This district has more of a drop-in problem--students who attend school (but skip classes) and make little headway toward graduation. There is much community-parent pressure for more difficult graduation requirements that are 'academic' as opposed to 'vocational.'"

"The fact that the administration and Board of Education have established some tough rules, regulations, and policies. In turn, many students choose not to come to school rather than follow the rules."

"Severity of attendance policies."

12. Other 7

"Students feel that they are labelled."

"Very large Christian school system attracts many low-risk students, leaving all at-risk students to the public schools."

"Teacher cynics."

II. What information or assistance would you like to receive from the Michigan Department of Education?

Number of
Responses

1. Information, help with programs 107

"Information on effective programs: results of survey, assistance in getting program started."

"We are forming a county-wide task force on dropouts. We are interested in any and all information that would describe existing programs."

"A bibliography of successful programs and a statewide network for inter-district collaboration would be helpful."

"Workshops."

"Workshops on updated innovative programs."

"Technical assistance perhaps through ISD to develop programs for students and provide training to staff."

"Research for rural areas. Total emphasis is on urban and is irrelevant to us. Our kids stay in school, but don't do much."

"PLEASE use some common sense when promoting incentive programs for funding which increase certain requirements. Those required are some of which a potential dropout becomes a dropout because he/she cannot succeed because of a lack of a high level of intelligence. Theory: the more requirements, the greater number of dropouts. Alternatives must be allowed for these kids."

"Fewer mandates--more local \$ to develop a program that will benefit all children."

"We would like information about programs that work which would not cost a good deal of money."

"How to deal with at-risk children on a very limited budget."

"Information about low cost or innovative no cost programs that have a proven research base to help children at risk."

"Exemplary programs that OBJECTIVE data prove are exemplary."

"Identifying programs that have been evaluated and proven effective. Must be able to integrate into existing curriculum. Not an alternative school."

"General assistance--strategies, specific programs, and professional development activities designed to address needs of at-risk students."

"Model intervention programs at middle school level or later elementary, with black males."

"All successful programs in operation. A list of good and workable suggestions. An MDE expert coming in to show how

it works. Constant mailing of all tried and true innovations."

"We would appreciate any feedback you could offer about how we compare with other districts. What's working and why."

"We request a copy of survey results as well as a listing of grant sources for At-Risk Programs."

"Resource lists and contact people for providing programs that fire up educators and stimulate students."

"An annotated bibliography of programs which currently exist in the state."

"Information on how other small, rural program are run, how their participants are chosen, teachers' background, etc."

"Information on successful programs involving parents of at-risk students."

"Information on effective VALIDATED programs and processes."

"Any information regarding programs targeted for MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL students would be desired."

"RESEARCH-based programs that work with these students AND THEIR PARENTS."

"More specific programs on how to work with at-risk students."

"Successful programs from SIMILAR size and socioeconomic communities!"

"Examples of successful programs and PRESENTATIONS."

"Workshops on successful programs."

"Names and addresses of those schools which already have successful programs in operation."

"I would like "at risk-evaluation tools, model programs, and a STATE CONTACT PERSON."

"DOCUMENTED model programs which work to modify for use within our system."

"We need to start an alternative education program, but lack the funds to keep current programs going."

"We could use assistance in strategies, policies, practices, and programs that can create a positive school climate for the at-risk students."

"What is available for SMALLER districts to help start children-at-risk programs."

"Early childhood--successful programs that are working throughout the state."

2. Grant money to facilitate programs/
information on funding sources 126

"Money to really do a consistent effort over the years. Every year--everything is up for 'financial grabs'--ridiculous! The funding of Michigan schools (process) is a disgrace!"

"School personnel fashioned alternative education/dropout prevention programs for implementation in the fall of 1987. The program was not initiated because of two millage defeats. Funding needed."

"We either need money and information on how to implement an effective program or we need some inservice on how to implement an effective program with no additional money, staff or work for the present staff."

"Financial support of our newly proposed "Academic Academy" for at-risk students."

"Funds adequate enough to implement the procedures we know will work--attendance counselors, elementary counselors, truant officers, etc."

"More money to run existing programs. We are constantly cutting programs because of lack of funds from the state!"

"Direct financial assistance so that we can offer more than a 'bare bones' minimum program."

"Specific funding for additional personnel/programs for working with Native American students."

"\$ and a plan of action--We can do the rest!"

3. Assessment strategies 1

4. Identification procedures 24
 - "Statistical information concerning clues and signs to be aware of when identifying potential at-risk students."
 - "Research-based recommendations for accurately identifying at-risk children at an early age."
 - "Methods to recognize 'at-risk' students and to help them in the EARLY GRADES with direction and guidance."
5. Evaluation procedures 5
6. Staff development 38
 - "Information on worthwhile professional development programs for all staff working with at-risk students."
 - "Teacher training workshops would be useful and necessary."
 - "Staff training ideas to help staff become more sensitive to and capable of working with these youth and their families."
7. Getting the community/parents involved 8
 - "Successful programs to communicate with high-risk parents."
 - "Program assistance for assisting families (particularly at the K-5 level) would be useful."
 - "Money to hire a part-time coordinator to make contact with parents and business leaders and to develop a system to turn these students' attitudes around. This person could work with the business leaders to set up work-study programs where the students could work for part of the day (with pay) while they were attending school."
8. Opportunities to meet with other districts to work together 3
 - "More attention to local success and sharing of ideas. Fewer mandated programs and practices."
9. Better enforcement of truancy laws 3
10. Lower emphasis on MEAP scores 1
 - "Funds, rather than ranking kids and schools with MEAP. With so many things pulling on kids, teachers, and schools, your MEAP tests are a low priority for kids and their futures. Disaffected kids and low MEAP scores correlates

high for us. Probably others too. Curriculum content is not the question--motivation and intervention is the real question. But we continue to play the game."

11. Counseling services

14

"Need additional counseling services within the ENTIRE school system--waiting until problems get to the high school level is too late to be effective."

"Funding for K-12 developmental counseling programs is a priority."

"We need to look at helping the root of the problem--the home. Need home/school coordinators to develop parenting skills, etc., work on values."

"Financial support for establishment of elementary guidance programs."

12. Other

12

"The local option to grant academic credit for practical application of identified objectives exceeding specified minimum time for math, science, or English as a designated portion of a vocational course."

"A precise interpretation of incentive funding rules."

"A little recognition of the small schools would be a big plus."

"Recognition of the rural districts."

"Less forms, more direct money for county truant officers, court system, special counseling, and remedial programs."

"I think we are asking all schools to do things that may be more of a problem for bigger school systems or big cities."

"Generate more publicity and concern on a state-wide basis for the at-risk student."

"Pressure on legislators to change the funding of schools."

"Just give us a decent state aid formula so we can keep operating."

"Leadership--consistent message across all departments, every division attending to the at-risk student's problems. More state-level efforts to get other state department (DSS) to work in coordinated fashion with schools."

"Resentment on the part of taxpayers that money is not available for students that are good being channeled to 'at risk' students."

"We need equity in financing to solve our problems in house. WE have a highly motivated and competent staff but lack resources needed to direct a focus."

"The adoption of the new Blueprint takes away a great deal of our flexibility in scheduling. Students who fail math, science, English, in 9th and 10th grades may not be able to attend vocational classes in 11th and 12th grades. This will cause the dropout rate to increase. Please let us know how other small schools are handling this scheduling flexibility problem."

"There simply is not enough money to ease the dropout problem. Mandated programs will simply be ignored by LEA's."

"How do we solve the money problems which would allow us to hire additional counselors, lower student-teacher ratios and develop programs, inservice, etc., to reach out to these kids?"

"Information for potential dropouts as to how that will affect their future as to earnings, life-styles, etc."

"Money to back up concern regarding children at risk, especially at the preschool level? What impact have increased graduation requirements had on the dropout rate? Will there be money available for developing and staffing Alternative Education classes or even high schools for students who cannot meet general education requirements?"

"Development of programs which teach parenting skills. Alternative programs for students who are having difficulty in coping with the normal program. Workshops to expose teachers to methods of motivating and assisting students at risk."

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