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## **A case study of a secondary school's training for entry-level employability and its relationship to employers' demands.**

Ann J. Henry  
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# FIVE COLLEGE DEPOSITORY

A CASE STUDY OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL'S TRAINING  
FOR ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYABILITY AND ITS  
RELATIONSHIP TO EMPLOYERS' DEMANDS

A Dissertation Presented

by

ANN J. HENRY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February 1991

Education

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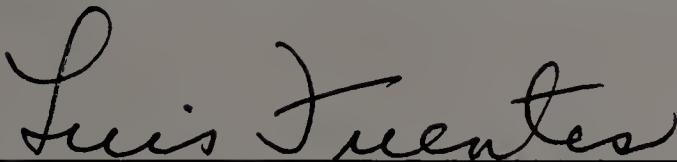
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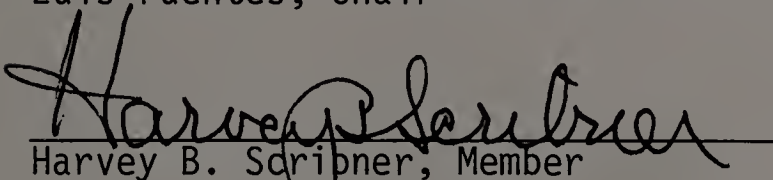
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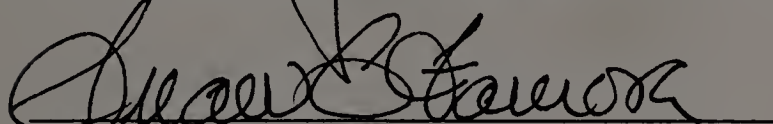
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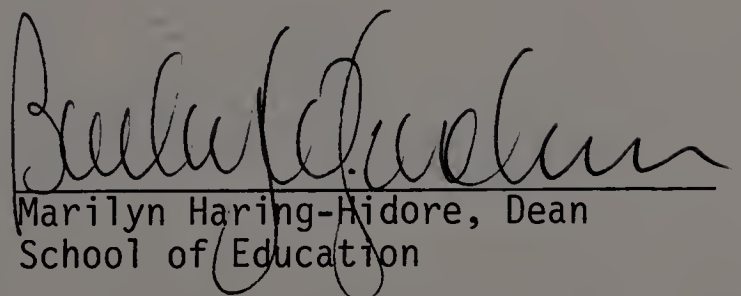
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School of Education

To

My Daughters:

Keanne and Kimberlee

May you be . . .  
never too young, never too old,  
and always strong enough  
to live and love and inquire,  
ever loving, ever kind.  
May life share its many blessings with you both.  
The wind at your backs,  
the sun in your souls,  
and my love in your hearts,  
now and always.  
May you always be proud to be yourselves,  
because you happen to be  
the loveliest girls I know.

With all my love,

Mommy

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ABSTRACT

A CASE STUDY OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL'S TRAINING  
FOR ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYABILITY AND ITS  
RELATIONSHIP TO EMPLOYERS' DEMANDS

FEBRUARY, 1991

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Directed by: Professor Luis Fuentes

American employers are concerned that our schools are continuing to produce an increasing number of graduates who are undereducated, unskilled, and unable to cope with the needs of business in this technological age. Schools are struggling to become accountable and must recognize the problems that affect the performance and success of students in and out of school.

This study focuses on the perceptions that secondary school students have of the training they receive for entry-level positions, how it affects their performance, and its relationship to the perceptions/expectations and level of satisfaction of employers in the workplace.

A Likert-style rating scale was used to measure the students' and businesses' perceptions of the secondary school training. One hundred eighty-students and twenty-eight businesses participated in the surveys.

Data analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics-- frequency distributions, measures of central tendency and dispersion, Pearson correlations, cross-tabulations, and chi-squares.

Four specific research questions guided the study. The analysis of the data indicated that the majority of students show positive perceptions toward their school training for entry-level positions. However, variables such as gender, grade level, ethnic background, academic achievement, and employment status influenced the perceptions held by students. There was a significant and positive relationship between students' academic achievement and their overall perceptions of their school academic training.

A large proportion of the participating businesses showed negative perceptions toward the secondary school training for entry-level positions in the workplace. Variable factors such as in-service training and type of product produced influenced the businesses' perceptions.

While businesses were satisfied with some aspects of the school training, the overall majority expressed dissatisfaction with such training and complained about spending thousands of dollars annually for in-service training. Data from the study indicate that indeed there is a mismatch between the training students receive in school and the skills needed for successful entry-level employment.

The researcher supports the recommendation offered by both students and businesses that School-Business partnerships are needed for improvement of student training and their success in the workplace.

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## C H A P T E R I

### INTRODUCTION

The United States, along with other developed parts of the world, is undergoing a transformation. America is shifting to a technological-informational economy. This economy has grown to become one with a global base.

The contemporary educational system developed as our nation emerged from an agricultural society, where the greater part of education was on-the-job training, into an industrial society, in which students went to school to learn the skills needed by that society. The demands of today's society are new and challenging. We need to analyze our economical and sociological needs and then seek educational methods that will direct us toward fulfilling our needs.

Meanwhile, American employers are concerned that our schools are continuing to produce an increasing number of graduates who are undereducated, unskilled, and unable to cope with the needs of business in this technological age. This sentiment is expressed in many current articles and other media around our nation (Maycock, 1989; Schmidt, 1990).

On the other hand, the schools are struggling to become accountable. Many sociological and economic problems affect the performance and success of students in school and out of school (Clarke & Picard, 1989). The schools must adapt to the individual and collective differences of all students if everyone is to be satisfactorily served.

While much has been done to turn around the lacking trend of our high school graduates, and while the number of students who graduate from high school has actually increased, the quality of the education they possess upon graduation seemingly has continued to decline. The youth of America, regardless of ethnicity, social standing, or gender, are failing and we must help them. A solution to the present crisis in education is needed. Everyone in our nation must join together to meet the present challenge.

#### Statement of the Problem

Numerous problems face contemporary American education. These problems create conflicts for individuals in our society and for society at large as well.

American businesses have indicated that there is a mismatch between what students learn in school and the experiences they need to succeed in the business world. They say that secondary school students are ill-prepared for the entry-level positions in this technological-information age. The schools are faced with the responsibility for this alleged situation.

Before any solution to a problem can be found, it is important that the circumstances and future implications of that problem be understood. It is necessary that the schools carefully analyze problems and revise and implement policies for dealing with them.

While the schools alone cannot solve the problems that affect our schools, educators and school administrators must become

knowledgeable of the various factors that affect the lives of their students, not only as students in school but throughout their adult lives.

Youth are an important part of our society, upon whom rests the future of our nation. It is, therefore, imperative that we consider all factors that affect their lives and provide them with viable curricula that would meet their needs in this society and in the future.

The present study investigates the factors that affect secondary school students' training for entry-level positions and businesses' perceptions of secondary school students' training for entry-level positions and their performance in the workplace.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the allegation by the contemporary American business community that secondary school students are ill-prepared for entry-level positions in the workplace. The study examined factors which affect student achievement in school. It sought to specify the population most affected by the allegation and provide information that is significant in providing viable alternatives for all students by educators, the business community, decisionmakers and policymakers, and the community at large.

Specifically, the study sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the secondary school students' perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions?



2. To what extent do secondary school students' perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions affect their academic achievement?
3. What are the businesses' perceptions/expectations of secondary school students' training for entry-level positions?
4. To what extent are businesses satisfied with the secondary school students' training for entry-level positions and their performance at the workplace?

#### Definition of Terms

To avoid ambiguities regarding the research questions, the following terms are considered necessary for the study:

1. School Training: Knowledge and experiences to which students are exposed in school through the curriculum that prepares them for participatory citizenship and work.
2. Entry-Level Positions: The initial jobs that students accept upon completion of formal secondary school training.
3. Academic Achievement: Knowledge or skills acquired in school courses usually determined by grades given by course instructors.
4. Businesses' Perceptions/Expectations: The ability or lack of ability of the business community to interpret

the training of secondary school students, as they relate to the needs of that community and the ability or capacity of those students to perform in the business world.

5. Level of Satisfaction: The degree of fulfillment or gratification of a need or a want. In the study, it refers to how students feel about what they have learned.
6. Self-Esteem: A student's perception and acceptance of himself or herself.
7. Student Achievement: Academic progress made by students toward attaining a specific level of proficiency as determined by the grades assigned by instructors.
8. Student Perceptions: Students' ability or deficiency to interpret the evaluation system in school. A subjective process by which individual students form their impressions and then change them into a total picture of their environment.

### Significance of the Study

Student performance and academic achievement are issues that have influenced curriculum development in education. What students are taught and what they are expected to learn are still contemporary educational issues. This study investigates the factors that affect

secondary school students' training for entry-level positions and businesses' perceptions of secondary school students' training for entry-level positions as well as their performance at work.

From a theoretical point of view, the study can provide information for all--schools and businesses included--who are concerned with the problems and needs of youth in our society. Careful attention to the data collected will encourage all segments of our society to commit themselves to providing realistic experiences that would furnish students with meaningful reasons for striving toward success and being all that their individual potentials allow them to be.

From a practical point of view, the study analyzes the factors that contribute to the lack of preparation of secondary school students for entry-level positions in business and identifies those that comprise the future American work force and thus are most subjected to the effects of not reaching their fullest potential.

The information acquired through this study can be utilized, in conjunction with the many innovations implemented previously and those that will follow, as a basis for developing viable curricula in the schools in order to meet the needs of all students with the ultimate goal of preparing them to be effective citizens and employees.

#### Limitations of the Study

This research study is limited to the following factors:

1. Only one school was involved in the study.

2. Only students enrolled in the business program were involved in the study.
3. All participants were self-selected. Parental consent was required for student participation.
4. The results of the study were determined by perceptions and attitudes of respondents, thus eliciting subjective information.
5. Participation in the study was restricted to students in Grades 10 to 12.
6. Only businesses in the immediate Springfield (Massachusetts) area were involved in the study.

### Organization of the Study

The research study is presented in five chapters. Chapter I introduces the alleged mismatch between secondary school students' training and the skills employers in the workplace demand, statement of the problem, and purpose of the study. A list of definitions useful in understanding the study is included in this chapter.

Chapter II furnishes a review of the research and literature on the factors that contribute to secondary school students' lack of training for entry-level positions as well as the demands of contemporary employers.

Chapter III provides the presentation of the methodology incorporated in the research; while Chapter IV details and analyzes the results of the study.

Chapter V relates the conclusions of the study and provides suggestions for finding meaningful alternatives for today's youth to reach their fullest potential in school, work, and throughout their lives, as well as suggestions for future research.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature dealing with the factors that contribute to the academic status of high school students outside of the school and in the school environment follows. Additionally, the demands of contemporary employers are discussed. The advantages, disadvantages, and obstacles to school-business partnerships are discussed as a means of improving the education of our youth.

#### Outside Factors

The educational system cannot be viewed apart from the society in which it functions (Bastian, 1989). The social dislocations that affect the lives of our youth must be considered if we are to find viable solutions that will help improve their educational pursuits.

The urgent need of American employers, and indeed all who have an interest in this democratic society, requires that all aspects of the contemporary high school students' life be reevaluated to ensure that the needs and demands of employers of adequately prepared graduates are met and that the educational system will effectively provide for the proper education of all to allow for success and happiness in life.

#### Student Background

The social, economic, and demographic changes added to the effect of technology is producing a "new" kind of student with different educational needs. If our secondary schools are to enable students to

lead meaningful, contributing, and productive lives, they must devote adequate attention to the realization that students are changing, educators are changing, and they must be able to meet the needs demanded by these changes.

In our schools today, increasing numbers of students experience difficulty with the three Rs--reading, writing, and arithmetic. Many students are allowed to go through the elementary grades and on into junior high school without having adequate knowledge of the basics. They are functionally illiterate before they reach high school. Upon entering high school with the skill deficiencies these difficulties entail, they are penalized. They become complacent. They fear failure. The resulting stress causes them to lose their natural desire to do well. Their once positive attitudes become negative.

According to Daggett and Branigan (1987), today's students possess a "gain without pain" philosophy as opposed to the traditional "no pain, no gain" belief of old. In the industrial age, working harder was valued and rewarded; in the age of technology, this has lessened. In school, therefore, students expect more for less effort. Students today are less disciplined, much less motivated to learn, and, due to all the various aspects that attract them in today's world and the social dislocations that they face, more separated from the classroom environment.

Kunisawa (1988) reports that many of today's students come to school unready for the discipline necessary for learning as well as the difficulties that can present themselves in the learning environment. He further states that economic inequity, racism, sexism, and class

rivalry present many problems for students, especially those from low-income families who are ethnic minorities or who are of the female gender; and that this society in general, not only the schools, has done little to enhance the value of the high school diploma.

Frady and Dunphy (1985) indicated that growing numbers of culturally deprived children are now collecting in our schools. These children, "casualties of poverty," come from decrepit homes in run-down neighborhoods with littered streets where drugs and violence are the norm. They live in homes, the authors indicated, where they are faced with generations of unemployment, welfare, single-parents, and lack of discipline. They desperately need motivation to succeed in order to improve their status in life. They have not been exposed to books, proper language, good health habits, positive decision-making, and ideas. They start school already behind.

Landau (1988) pointed out that these students very often go to school feeling like "outsiders" at a place where they must go daily. Oftentimes they find it impossible to separate their feelings and performances in school from the other negative experiences in their lives. These students present a special challenge to the schools.

### Socioeconomic Problems

School personnel are well aware that many students today, especially in urban schools, face hunger, poor health, financial or legal problems, and even homelessness. Drugs, alcohol, pregnancy, working parents, single-parent homes, and sometimes fear of abuse, lack of motivation and hopelessness are factors that can lower academic

achievement and cause students to lose interest in education and often drop out of school.

The level of poverty in the United States seems to be rising. Parnell (1985) stated that there appears to be a steadily increasing gap between low- and middle-income families and upper-income families. In 1979, 12.4 percent of the population in the United States (or 27.4 million people) were considered poor (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1985).

In America today, there is a marked increase of homes headed by a single parent. In most instances, that parent is the mother (Clarke & Picard, 1989). Stern (1987) stated that there was 16 percent of American families headed by women in 1984. This family type is caused, the author further cited, by fewer marriages, more unwed mothers, and more divorces. The U. S. Bureau of the Census (1985) indicated that a major problem of this nation is the high incidence of poverty among families having a female householder with no husband present. Most families headed by women are poor. Fifty percent of all Black families are headed by women. The poverty level of female-headed families, all races considered, was 40 percent in 1983, including 36 percent householders, 55 percent of children, and 22 percent of other family members. These families now make up 15 percent of all American families and 44 percent of all families living in poverty.

The proportion of children living with both parents has decreased 83 to 81 percent for Whites and 42 to 41 percent for Blacks. One child in five lives in a single-parent home headed by his or her mother. Another two percent live in single-parent homes headed by fathers.



Twenty-four percent of all children under the age of six and 20 percent aged six to 17 lived in poverty in 1984. Further, a full percent of households headed by women fell below the poverty threshold in 1984, which was \$10,609 for a family of four (Edmundson, 1985).

Stern (1987) and Moynihan (1986) pointed out that White families have always experienced a much lower poverty level than Black families. Nine percent of White families experienced poverty in 1984 compared to 31 percent of Black families. Studies further indicate that 1.3 million of the 1.8 million families considered to be "new poor" were White; 372,000 were Black.

The two segments of our society which suffer most from poverty are Black and Hispanic (Daggett & Branigan, 1987). As a new minority group, the Hispanic population has been increasing steadily. Petrovich (1987) indicated that in 1987 there was 4.4 million Hispanics in the United States. Of this group, 29 percent were reported poor in 1985. Approximately 53 percent of Hispanic families are headed by females and are poor.

Petrovich (1987) indicated in a report of the ASPIRA Institute for Policy Research that one out of every 15 Hispanics was poor in 1985 compared to one out of 22 Blacks and one out of 40 Whites. Petrovich further stated that the median family income of the Hispanic family was \$19,995 in 1986, which was \$10,000 less than the average for non-Hispanic families. Two out of every five Hispanic children lived in poverty in 1985--20 percent of the nation's poor child population.

Family stress, social alienation, and cultural dislocations caused by the many demographic changes to the nuclear family exist



across America. These factors affect the aspirations of children and make it imperative that proper guidance be given to them. American children are affected by the messages communicated to them from the family, the community, and the school.

Bastian (1988) stated that an estimated 30 to 50 percent of American children enter school with levels of deprivation that put them at risk of school failure. Hofferth (1987) illustrated that poor children experience higher incidence of lack of school time due to poor health, poor dental treatment, and their being children of parents who themselves lack adequate schooling and are therefore unable to motivate their children.

It is necessary to assist all of America's youth but especially its poor young--Blacks and Hispanics--whose population is increasing at a rate six times faster than the nation (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1985), in order to enable them to perceive positive change and improved self-image that would foster progress and success in their lives.

Poor families suffer lack of unemployment, poor health, low educational levels, poor housing, and a myriad of problems. As indicated previously, these obstacles hinder educational progress. The minority populations of America are growing much faster than the rest of the population. As a result, these minorities will be the dominant force in the twenty-first century. The entire nation will suffer if help is not provided to aid these children in order to improve expectations for them. This is an urgent matter in our educational, social, and economic health-related areas.

Hodgkinson (1985) outlined the demographic changes in the population of the United States for the year 2000 and described educational consequences of these changes as follows:

- More children entering schools from poverty households
- More children entering schools from single parent homes
- More children from minority backgrounds
- Fewer children with Headstart or similar experiences
- More children who were premature babies
- More children with teenage mothers
- Continued high dropout rates
- Continued drop in minority enrollment in higher education
- Decline in graduate studies in the arts and sciences
- Increase in college students needing both academic and financial assistance

Educators and other human service professionals, and indeed all Americans, must work together to address the problems of the family and its impact on education (Stern, 1987). Our future depends on it.

While the problems caused by the changing demography are difficult, it is necessary that everyone join together to help, otherwise everyone will suffer in the long run. Education is the key to improving these dark areas.

Clarke and Picard (1989) stated that knowledge and education are to the mind what food is to the body. No one can live without food, and no one can live a happy and consequential life without an education.

There are many economic and sociological reasons for the poor performances of minority youth. However, this does not mean that because people are poor or from a different culture they cannot become decent, productive citizens (Clarke & Picard, 1989). Kearns and Doyle (1988) stated that growing up in poverty is statistically correlated to higher levels of dropping out of school, poverty in later life, less likelihood of a stable work life and sufficient income level, and more likelihood of involvement in criminal or other anti-social activities. The authors further indicated that in the past our schools educated multitudes of children who came from poor families, whose conditions were appalling, and who did not even speak English. However, they did the job, and less cannot be expected of the schools today. Most children have a natural aptitude to succeed. If they are provided with the support, opportunities, and concern necessary for full development, they will succeed.

The time for excuses has long gone. We can succeed if we take seriously the idea that all children in our society are important. Education is the only factor in our society in which there is a place for all and in which we all have a stake. For many youngsters, school is the only place where good things happen to them. There are no unteachable children.

Kearns and Doyle (1988) stated that minorities have the most riding in school quality--the most to lose if the schools are bad, the most to gain if they are good. Inner-city Blacks, Hispanics, and poor Whites have no coupons to clip and few networks to tie into. Education

to them is serious business. Yet, they are the most educationally disenfranchised of all our citizens.

Goodlad (1984) indicated that education is needed that would embrace all intellectual skills and domains of knowledge--geared to the development of readiness for productive work and economic responsibility to prepare students for socialization into a complex society, and emphasizing the development of individual responsibility, talent, and free expression. For this type of education to be provided, everyone must join in the challenge of providing it. Our nation will be unable to compete in the global competition without the highest levels of academic success.

The strength of the nation will be judged by the manner in which it aids its least well-off as well as by its accomplishments. That is particularly important in a democracy. It is the moral responsibility of this nation--the richest society on earth--to take care of the least among its people. Children cannot be allowed to fail (Clarke & Picard, 1989). As the authors summed it up: "We all are the solution to the present crisis in education. We can, we must, and together we will triumph."

The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, and many subsequent reports have drawn public attention to secondary education all over America. Everyone recognizes and accepts that education is the way to improve life for all, but the attitudes of politicians, leaders, and decisionmakers do not reflect this concern.



Kearns and Doyle (1988) stated that education pays, and it pays handsomely. We know that educated people and societies with high levels of educational attainment do well.

Education, though, costs. It is ironic that politicians at state and local levels of governments all over our country are cutting educational budgets on one side of the problem and extolling excellence and new interventional and prescriptive cure-alls for the ills of education on the other side. Even the President of the United States, President George Bush, in his State of the Union Address (February, 1990), declared education to be one of his major priorities while he designated a meager two percent increase in the education budget.

The needs of education can be likened to being on one side of a river with the cures on the other. What is desperately needed is a bridge of real effort and support based only on the true needs of the end product--the children of America--in order to save our greatest human resource, our children, who will be the foundation of life in this country in the future.

### Family Structure

The American family is disintegrating. The social and economic situation of the American family has shifted over the last decade. Family life today is typified by mobile life-styles, two-career parents, single parents, multiple marriages, and altered family structures--all of which finds today's students exploring and trying life experiences with little supervision (Daggett & Branigan, 1987; Bastian, 1988).



The national average for single-parent families in the inner cities is between 50 and 60 percent and nearly 25 percent in other areas (Clarke & Picard, 1989; Johnston, 1989). The parent left behind to raise the children is almost always the woman. The men have disappeared from the family situation today.

Maeroff (1989) pointed out that American families are destroyed by approximately one million divorces each year. Broken homes place much burden on the parent left to raise the children and make it less likely for the children to receive "positive input" and guidance as when two parents are working and cooperating together in the best interests of the children. When family life in the home is of a weakened nature, it makes it difficult for students to imitate and/or identify and ultimately adopt the positive attitudes, values, and goals from their parents, friends, and extended family members which they need to be successful in school. Comer (1988) stated that children in this type of an environment are unable to develop the proper social-interactive, psycho-motor, moral speech and language, and intellectual-cognitive-academic strengths that contribute to success in school. These deficiencies cause students to present themselves in a manner that is disagreeable to the school. As a result, they are placed in the "low achiever" category and basically relegated to failure in later life.

Today, there are more teenage mothers in America. Most give birth out of wedlock. Lindsay (1989) indicated that more than a million teenagers become pregnant each year in the United States. This fact adds to the growing number of single-parent families in our society.

Johnston (1989) indicated statistics that have definite implications for the educational system in the United States. He cited that only 21 percent of the households of contemporary America have children in school. This means that "American homes don't get a child's eye view of school." Thus, there is a lack of support for education in the home from an economic point of view.

Mobile life-styles and "blended" families in which one parent is not the biological parent--one out of every three children today live in a blended family--add to the present disintegration of the traditional American family and the difficulties experienced by our youth.

Today, the number of women employed outside of the home is on the increase. Cetron, Gayle, and Soriano (1985) indicated that in 1990 it is expected that more than 60 percent of adult women will be employed and that 70 percent of young women between the ages of 25 and 44 will hold jobs.

It is evident that the traditional typical American family no longer exists. The days of "a working father, homemaker mother, and one or more dependent children is virtually extinct. . . . 'Normal' now means small minority households" (Johnston, 1989). The many social dislocations evident in the family structure leave students of today, as mentioned earlier, on their own to work their way through life. The lack of assistance in working through the many problems, temptations, and fears of adolescence experienced by our youth lead them to rebel in many ways. They often exhibit undesirable behavior in school.

A study developed by the Fullerton, California, Department of Education and the California Police Department (February, 1988) showed

that the nature of offenses committed by students in school in the last decade were drastic compared to those of students in the 1940s. The report presented the following evidence:

| <u>1940s</u>           | <u>1980s</u>  |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Talking                | Drug Abuse    |
| Chewing Gum            | Alcohol Abuse |
| Making Noise           | Pregnancy     |
| Running in the Halls   | Suicide       |
| Out of Place in Line   | Rape          |
| Improper Clothing      | Robbery       |
| Not Using Waste Basket | Assault       |
| Messy Locker           | Arson         |
| Holdings Hands         | Bombings      |

Startling indicators, such as the above, show that we are at a state in our existence where our students need and require more adult guidance than in days gone by. Yet, the various societal problems previously mentioned, as well as the economic necessity in families where two-career parents is the norm, leave less time available for the positive nurturing of children.

The literature indicates that many of the students who fail to do well in school and who graduate unable to get and hold a job that would enable them to take care of themselves and their families adequately come from low-income families. Poverty is a real problem which affects the American family structure (Stern, 1987). Poverty promotes low motivation in students and, thus, affects school performance. Poverty to poor students represents efforts to confront and deal with evident despair and hopelessness which is associated with the chances of their being able to improve their status in life.

Wilson (1987) related that the official poverty rates show that Whites comprise a majority of the poor population, yet many of the



social dislocations are reflected by the Black and Hispanic races. The poor, as defined by the public rolls, are in much larger proportion--Black, Mexican-American, and Puerto Rican. By the year 2000, it is expected that these minority groups will be 29 percent of the population (Cetron, Gayle, & Soriano, 1985).

Bastian (1988) indicated that we are living at a time in society when the rich keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer. These minority groups have traditionally suffered in all aspects of life in America. Kearns and Doyle (1988) stated that children of the low-income parent--the parent with limited education and limited access to conventional information sources--need a good school even more than middle-class youngsters do.

The only valid hope for improving the plight of those afflicted most by the inequities in our society and for the betterment of the entire society is quality education. As Clarke and Picard (1989) indicated, "We must now strive for it without the help of many strong families. But strive we absolutely must." We must improve our attitudes toward the problems we face and stop looking for excuses with which to justify our failures.

### Ethnic Composition

Large numbers of children from low-income and minority backgrounds do badly in school--they fail, get into a myriad of disciplinary problems, have high rates of truancy, drop out, and are not prepared to take advantage of opportunities for continuing study or rewarding jobs (Davies, 1987). Regardless of gender, color, or income level, they

come to school unprepared for the rigors of learning and the frustrations of accompanying setbacks. When the effects of economy inequity, racism, sexism, or class rivalry are added, there is a clearer and more complete picture of what today's educational experience is like for low-income, ethnic minority, and female students (Kunisawa, 1988). They bring with them the consequences of racial and ethnic prejudice, poverty, and family strife. Thus, they are prime candidates for failing in school and in life as well.

There is no disbelief that the public schools of America are failing in their quest to educate many minority students (Honig, 1985). If the nation's schools are to be effective, and if the long-term economic and social health of the nation is to be improved, educators-- administrators, teachers, and support staff--must understand the changes needed and prepare for them in order to make disadvantaged children more academically successful.

Gursky (1989) cited a report by Harold Hodgkinson which indicated that by the year 2000, America will be a nation in which one in every three people will be non-White, and that minorities will cover a broader socioeconomic range than ever before, making simplistic treatment of their needs less useful. Gursky further cited that 82 percent of the new workers in the next ten years will be females, minorities, or immigrants. Educators must understand the diversified backgrounds from which their students come and find ways to help them reach their potentials.

Usdan (1986) indicated that 25 percent of our public school population is of minority origin, and the proportion of Blacks, Hispanics,



Asian-Americans, and Native Americans continues to grow. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing segment of the minority population, with approximately two-thirds of the nation's Hispanics being located in California, Texas, and New York. Eighty-five percent are located in New Jersey, Florida, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, and Arizona.

Twenty-three of 25 of the nation's largest school systems are already "majority-minority" (Usdan, 1986). Gill (1989) indicated that non-White children constitute about one-third of the preschool population and their number is growing more rapidly than that of White children. The following statistics from the National Center for Educational Statistics for 1984-1985 show the percentages of students in public schools for Whites, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans:

|                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| White            | 71.2% |
| African-American | 16.2% |
| Hispanic         | 9.1%  |
| Asian-American   | 2.5%  |
| Native American  | .9%   |

Unless the quality of education and life is improved for these children, our society will suffer.

Honig (1985) cited that, overall, 13 percent of today's youth are functionally illiterate. Among Black males, the figure increases to 40 percent. In 1982, 14 percent of White students failed to reach the combined minimal verbal and mathematics Scholastic Aptitude Test score of 700, while 27 percent of Hispanics and 49 percent of Black students could not reach that score.

Among the large number of minority students who are not being educated by our public schools are bilingual students. Today, the

education system is trying to solve many problems with a monocultural design to educate multicultural and multilingual students. Fillmore and Valadez (1986) reported that language-related differences have been identified as main factors in the failure of minority students to do well academically.

Melendez (1989) indicated that although we tout ourselves as a nation of immigrants, we demand that immigrants forget their native language and culture, assimilate into the population, speak the English language, and practice the English-based American culture. For a "melting pot" nation, this is truly ironic. Perhaps, though, failure to reach out to Hispanic students stems from a deeper meaning.

Glazer and Cummins (1985) stated that bilingual education, understood in the context of competition between ethnic groups in contact--specifically, the emergence of the Hispanic population both demographically and institutionally--is clearly perceived as a threat by the dominant group; and bilingual education constitutes a particularly visible example of the institutional inroads made by Hispanic (and other) minority groups.

If American education is to improve, this sort of counter-productive behavior and negative attitude must change. Those in the political arena, along with the entire nation, must be truly committed and dedicated toward improving the future of our young people.

Wolk (1989) pointed out that one out of four students in the class of 2000 come from a poor family; 15 percent are non-English-speaking immigrants; as many as one-third are latch-key children; about 15 percent are children of teenage parents; and 15 percent are physically or

mentally handicapped. Usdan (1986) estimated that approximately one-third of the young will be socially and/or economically disadvantaged by 2000.

Children who are economically disadvantaged are very likely to be educationally disadvantaged as well. People who are educationally disadvantaged are likely to be economically disadvantaged. This revolving cycle has already produced "an underdeveloped country of 40 million people"--most of them poor, undereducated, unemployed, and often unemployable (Wolk, 1989).

Attention must be given to the minority population of America. Minority youth unemployment is higher than 20 percent, persisting at more than twice the unemployment rate of the entire country (Usdan, 1986). With help, the poor youth of America can be guided to successful lives.

The student population of our nation's urban schools will be 90 percent minority by 1990 (Usdan, 1986). These large numbers of minority students are valuable human resources necessary for the success of the nation. It is imperative that we develop the capabilities of all our youth to the fullest of their individual potentials. Our economic survival depends upon it. The future of our children and our nation depends upon it.

Raynolds (1989) reported that we can help our minority students by creating a hospitable school climate and a sense of belonging, of having someone who cares. We must unlock students' talents, tailor curriculum to fit their individual needs, and make our schools a

place where students can find solutions to the problems that they face.

### Other Variables

Schools today face the burden of educating students with many potential problems. There are many factors that affect the lives of our students that the schools should not be expected to solve. However, if education is to be improved, then the attitudes of the administrators, teachers, and other support staff toward these problems must be changed.

Of necessity, then, these factors must be considered in any effort to enhance the quality of education for all children in the schools of this nation.

### Students' Self-Esteem

Disadvantaged students have a perception of themselves based on the messages they receive from the society as a whole. They generally see themselves as failures. They sense the feelings of institutions and people who operate them. These students can succeed when they see themselves as having a worth, when they perceive that their teachers and the school believe in their worth. Brooks (1989) stated that with good self-esteem, students can learn from mistakes and failures because they believe that things can be changed. With low self-esteem, they believe that they cannot change so why should they even exert the energy to try. For these students, school and studying seem to have no purpose.



Self-esteem can be nurtured. Parents and educators--administrators and teachers alike--must foster self-esteem in students, especially minority students. These students are generally from homes where their parents were not successful in school and have parents from the consequences of social and economic dislocations. They expect the same cycle to repeat in their lives, and they tend to feel that success for them is determined by fate. Clarke, in Banks (1989), suggests that the most significant differences between successful and unsuccessful students are the patterns of behavioral norms and values, going back at least two generations into the families' past. These families live lives that tend to be inflicted with chaos and generally experience such problems as alcoholism, marital stress, physical and emotional abuse, stress-related illnesses, and sometimes an attitude of resignation that says "the best we can do is survive." This, for today's students, means doing only what is necessary to "get over."

On the other hand, parents of successful disadvantaged students reported, according to Clarke, in Banks (1989), a prevailing sense of orderliness in the home, a belief in the work ethic, strict adherence to rules of conduct and behavior, a very clear sense of right and wrong--often supported by church ties--and a belief in the power of education and hard work to improve their lives. Brooks (1989) indicated that in cases of low self-esteem, adolescents tend to attribute success to luck, chance, or fate. They do not take credit for their own accomplishments in the same manner in which adolescents with high self-esteem do.

Even though disadvantaged students come to school in many instances with a poor self-image, education can cause a change in their lives.



Brooks (1989) outlined that these students can be helped by educators through the following:

- Putting themselves in the shoes of their students
- Asking themselves how their students feel in the morning
- Promoting decision-making and a sense of autonomy
- Giving students "psychological" space
- Instilling inner discipline
- Praising students
- Admitting when they make mistakes

Kunisawa (1988) pointed out that youth, especially minority youth, have little confidence in the deferred gratification that education promises, or the mythical guarantee that a diploma translates into equitable career/employment opportunities. Kunisawa further stated that the commitment to struggle and sacrifice for the future requires a belief that such a future holds value.

A look at the national dropout rate indicates that educators cannot motivate students who see no real value of an education in their lives to succeed. The problems which face youth who have low self-esteem are problems for us all. Teachers, administrators, and the general public must pull together to help. Reynolds (1989), Commissioner of Education for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, reported that schools should reward students who recognize those values and expose those false values that young people are taught by the media which foster instant gratification. Education must encourage and nurture the highest possible values that can lead to true personal

success built on knowledge and self-esteem. Comprehensive programs geared to building children's self-image, beginning in preschool and kindergarten, must be developed. Through teachers' caring and expanding their relationships with parents, educators can develop a positive attitude for learning in all students. The problem is just not academics; we must build pride, self-esteem, and confidence.

Today, we see the opposite of this great need being demonstrated, and our youth take careful note of what they see. Politicians do not consider education a priority. We seem to be sending mixed messages to our children. We must require accountability from our political leaders for the part that they play in the education of our children. Sullivan (1989), Executive Director-Treasurer of the Massachusetts Teachers' Association, indicated that education has always borne the brunt of budget cuts in Massachusetts. In 1981, the first year of Proposition 2½, public education took far more than its share of cuts, resulting in 10,000 teacher layoffs, school closings, fewer course offerings, soaring class sizes, and reduced educational offerings for untold thousands of young people. Our children deserve a better fate, a higher placement on our list of priorities. Sullivan further noted that Massachusetts is unique in that it has no minerals, farms, oil wells, or natural resources to fuel its economy. Massachusetts has an information economy which is critically dependent on a well-educated work force. While other states may have other resources, children of all states in our nation deserve better educational consideration. Educational administrators, parents, and indeed all decisionmakers need to join together to make public officials more accountable for

our children's future and, ultimately, the future of this great nation.

#### Part-Time/Full-Time Employment

Many of America's high school students are simultaneously working and going to school. A recent survey of 2,510 students, completed by the Springfield (Massachusetts) School Department, showed that nearly 20 percent of those teenagers work more than 20 hours a week (Schmidt, 1990).

A May, 1988, survey by the Central High School (Springfield, Massachusetts) Student Government of the City's three high schools indicated that 58 percent of the students hold one job and 7.5 percent hold more than one. Fifty percent of the students polled indicated that they worked after school, while 43 percent said that they worked on weekends. Of the students polled, 8.6 percent worked between one and 12 hours a week; 20 percent worked between 13 and 20 hours a week; 16.3 percent worked between 21 and 30 hours a week; and 3.6 percent worked more than 30 hours a week (Schmidt, 1990).

Today's students are willing to work at minimum wage to earn money in order to be able to respond to the "pull" of the media. These students are potential consumers of automobiles, clothes, new fashion sneakers, and a host of other material items which businesses dangle for their attention. Businesses are happy because "the willingness of the students to work helps keep them happy and the economy healthy" (Mihalik, 1990).

The need to fill jobs and the need of today's teenagers for material objects, as well as the pressure exerted by the work force, create a new set of problems for our youth, especially those who are poor. Mihalik (1990) indicated that part-time jobs are seemingly more applicable to such problems as drugs, divorce, and social disease. "It's a cancer that's eating up excellence, and it's running our children," the author said.

For some students, part-time jobs are a necessity, especially for minority students who must work in order to help provide necessities in their families. Larregui (1990) indicated that part-time jobs can be seen in two different ways: negative or positive, but that depends on students' goals, interests, or priorities. Students who work excessively are "at risk" academically. Mihalik (1990) stated that often these students are absent with regularity one out of every five days--they are home catching up on sleep after working the closing shift, and therefore cannot play sports, be in the Key Club or on the Debate Team. There is no time for homework or studying. Thus, this is another problem that is destroying excellence in our schools.

Researchers indicate that part-time jobs can be good and helpful for students if they do not work in excess. Dubrovin (1988) indicated that working and studying has a lot of advantages and only one of the benefits is financial. The greatest benefit of working and studying at the same time comes from the opportunity to gain some exposure to the world of work and to gain some valuable skills and experience for the first entry-level position. Students who engage in part-time positions have an "edge" over those who do not.



While part-time work creates some problems for students and for schools alike, those problems are also created for the entire nation. The need is for everyone to deal with this growing national problem. Part-time jobs, more often than not, get in the way of students' performance in school, especially disadvantaged students who are more likely to be attracted by the effects of materialism. After-school work can give students self-worth and some independence, but it can also point out to them the true value of a good education. They will be stuck in low-paying jobs if they do not successfully complete school. Together, schools and businesses must cooperate to help save the education of our students and aid this dysfunction in our education system. If we do not direct our energies toward the ultimate goal of providing a better America for all Americans, regardless of race or economic status, through adequately educating all our children, then the entire nation will suffer the consequences in the long run.

### Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is an issue of national concern. It occurs in both urban and rural settings and in all ethnic groups. It can happen in any family anywhere. Lindsay (1989) pointed out that teenage pregnancy knows no socioeconomic, ethnic, or religious barriers. It happens to more than a million teenagers in the United States each year in traditional nuclear families, in blended families, and in single-parent families.

Gaston (1987) indicated that less than 50 percent of teenage mothers graduate from high school, and teenage fathers are 40 percent



less likely to graduate than their non-parent peers. One out of every six babies born in the United States is born to a teenage parent; 96 percent of teenage mothers keep their babies; 18 to 25 percent of teenage parents will be pregnant again one year after delivery; 4 out of every 10 teenagers will become pregnant during the teen years.

While teen pregnancy rates for Black and Hispanic young women are very high, the pregnancy rate for White teens in the United States is higher than the pregnancy rate for any other developed country in the world.

Spence (1986) cited that pregnancy is the single leading reason why female teenagers leave school. This problem is so evident in today's schools that psychologists, researchers, and social institutions have been searching for reasons why adolescents become sexually active so early in their lives and why they do not take precautions to avoid pregnancy. Some reasons, as indicated by Gaston (1987), are:

- Lack of Self-Esteem/Confidence. Teens with low self-esteem may enter into sexual activity because it makes them feel wanted and cared for by someone. Saying "no" may lead to loss of a boyfriend.
- Hopelessness About the Future. Those teens who have no hope for a good future life believe that it makes little difference how they behave. They believe in seeking momental pleasure.
- Dysfunctional Families. Families in difficult economic or emotional circumstances are unable to provide guidance and emotional support for their children.
- Media Influences. The many sexual innuendos and references to out-of-wedlock sexual activity and out-of-wedlock pregnancies indicate to youth that "everybody's doing it."
- Teens Are Risk-Takers. Teens seldom believe that anything bad will happen to them.

- Planning to Be Sexually Active Is Wrong. Many teens do not want to be sexually active and believe that early sexuality is wrong. They feel that by letting it happen "naturally" it is a mistake.
- Peer Pressure. "Everybody's doing it." If you are not, something must be wrong with you.
- Parents Are Uncomfortable Talking About Sex. Many teens do not get the guidance they need from their families.
- Teens Fear That Parents Will Find Out. Some teens fear their parents' angry reactions if they find them using contraceptives. They have less fear of becoming pregnant.
- Different Standards for Young Men. Double standard in society. All the responsibility for birth control is on the female teen.
- Young Teens' Inability to Plan Ahead. Teens are still in the developmental stage. It means little to them when the consequences of their behavior is pointed out.
- Contraceptive Methods Sometimes Not Accessible. To some teens, psychological, geographical, and financial reasons can make obtaining birth control inaccessible.
- Idle Time. Students have too much time to "hang out."
- Lack of Information. Some teens have too little or inaccurate information about the reproductive cycle, and about effective methods of contraceptives or how to get them.
- Pressures on Adolescents to Be Adults. Female teens can equate the birth process to being a woman and feelings of achievement; young men may feel that fathering a child proves their masculinity and makes them attain adult status.
- Parent-Teen Problems. Strong relationships with parents can cause teens to rebel by having sex. Having a baby may be seen as a way of being independent, or to overcome objections to a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Drug and Alcohol Influence. A significant amount of teenage sexual activity occurs when teens are under the influence of drugs or alcohol and their inhibitions are relaxed.

- Unhappiness. Bewilderment, despair, and frustration can cause some teens to believe that having a baby can bring them closer to their parents, enable them to create a happy family, or to experience love.
- Desire to Have Someone Love Them. Some teens want a child consciously or unconsciously, so that there will be another human being close to them who loves them.
- Lack of knowledge of the Parenting Responsibility. Few teens understand the real 24-hour-a-day responsibility of being a parent. Thus, they are unable to make a decision about becoming parents.

The issue of teenage pregnancy is not the causes. Whatever the reasons that cause it--psychological, societal, or just plain ignorance to the true understanding of parenting--it is too important an issue to be avoided. While we look the other way, America's teens are still becoming pregnant; the human and financial costs are growing steadily.

As it now stands, all educators and decisionmakers should be striving to understand the complexity of this mammoth problem which faces our youth today. We need to stop blaming the victims and look for meaningful alternatives to solve the problem which seems to be more blatant when socioeconomic problems also exist.

Efforts must be directed toward discouraging teens from becoming sexually active, to help prevent them from becoming pregnant, and to prevent or retard the negative consequences they experience when they do become pregnant. Only then will we be making meaningful contributions toward saving an important part of America's human resource.

Based on the researcher's involvement with teenagers, it is evident that, as noted earlier, adolescent pregnancy often comes as a

result of teenagers' attitudes about themselves, their perceptions of the world around them, and the part that they play in it. So often the researcher has heard pregnant students say, "Now I can get my own apartment; the welfare will pay for it." While research does not identify the sentiments expressed in this quotation as a reason why teenagers become pregnant, it serves to give evidence that teenagers are caught up in the trend of instant gratification. Research does not support the idea, either, that teenagers use pregnancy as a means of getting welfare benefits (Gaston, 1987). The researcher's own experiences indicate, however, that a significant number of students do use pregnancy as a means of obtaining those benefits. It appears that they do not quite realize what they are getting into until it is too late.

Most pregnant adolescents would like to remain in school and may even want to continue their education after high school but do not have the support to allow them to do so. Lack of child care often causes many of these so aspiring to be absent from school or eventually drop out of school. Other problems facing these adolescents may include help with living arrangements, transportation, and food.

Coordination of community support, not only from the schools, will imprint on the minds of these youth that others care about them and believe in their abilities, and can help them to feel better about themselves and about their futures. The threat to human potential, life, health, and to America's well-being is too great to let this problem slip by without providing intervention/alternative educational methods that would save our children as they face the "dark spot" teenage pregnancy places in their lives.



The complexity of the problem of school-age pregnancy, and the problems which evolve from it, indicate that our students need more, in terms of a support network, from the schools. Denial of the extent of this problem will only perpetuate it. The schools, however, cannot solve the problem alone. There needs to be combined effort that includes the entire community. A positive relationship fostered by parents, the home, school, churches, and other social institutions will help all our youth to imitate, identify with, and internalize the values, attitudes, and ways of success. Thus, it will be possible to motivate, guide, and counsel them through the crucial developmental adolescent years. Today's teens tend to think only in terms of today, tomorrow, and maybe the next day, but they need to realize that their actions today are related toward the make-up of a whole life. If we do not take positive action to help our youth adopt positive attitudes, America will be weak in the future because the direction that the country will take will rest upon weakened youth, ill-equipped to deal with the pressures of a flourishing society. As Adler (1977) indicated, a culture can endure and thrive only to the extent that it is possessed by individuals, some of whom may add to it, but all of whom should be the vehicles of passing it on to the next generation.

### Drugs

America has the most severe drug problem in the industrialized world. Dogoloff (1987) estimated that 60 percent of the world's illegal drugs are consumed in the United States and that more money is currently spent on drugs than food. Dogoloff further pointed out that



recent public opinion polls have demonstrated that Americans now perceive drug abuse to be the country's number one problem which cuts across social, racial, and economic lines.

Research indicates that while drug use is hazardous to all segments of our society, it presents a special risk to youth. Statistics on adolescent drug use, as reported by Dogoloff (1987), indicated the severity of drug use among adolescents:

- Nearly one-fourth of those aged 12 to 17 have used marijuana, with 14 the average age of first use.
- One out of 10 youth between 11- to 12-years-old drink alcoholic beverages.
- Forty-one percent of 1985 high school seniors reported using marijuana in the last year, and 26 percent reported using it at least once in the previous month.
- One in 20 high school seniors uses alcohol or marijuana daily.
- Sixty-one percent of 1985 high school seniors reported that they had used cocaine in the last year.
- Twenty percent of college students reported trying cocaine at least once.

Drug use presents unique dangers to adolescents. Among these include temporary or permanent illness or injury, altered or delayed growth patterns, or even death. Specific health hazards may include blurred vision, elevated blood pressure, slowed reaction times, heart problems, impaired ability to learn and remember, retarded sexual development, stroke, and cancer.

Perceptual, behavioral, and personality changes may be experienced and may be as destructive as the health hazards of drug use. Youth who use drugs are often disruptive and combative at home, are more accident

prone, and are likely to fail or drop out of school, to carry drug-related pregnancies, and to attempt or commit suicide (Dogoloff, 1987).

Dogoloff (1987) further pointed out that academic performance generally suffers markedly in relation to drug use by young people. Even students who previously excelled in school often demonstrate a marked reduction in attendance and achievement after beginning to use drugs. Attendance patterns also suffer from drug use. Adolescent drug users are more likely than non-drug users to skip school. Frady and Dunphy (1985) indicated that most students who are lured by drugs and alcohol are also unengaged by the school so they drop out.

The adolescent drug "epidemic" is not an isolated situation; it is a result of a widespread use of drugs by all sectors of American society. There are reasons why young people with so much potential become entangled in the web of drug use. Dogoloff (1987) indicated some reasons as:

- Curiosity: Children are naturally curious. They want to find out the "truths" about drugs for themselves.
- Modeling: Youth need role models and heroes. Some of the celebrities they sometimes choose are themselves entangled with drugs. Teenagers interpret their success as being related to drugs and seek to imitate the behaviors they observe.
- Sensation: Once adolescents begin to experiment with drugs they need to continue the "high."

If today's youth continue to engage in the destructive practice of drug use, they will be unable to function successfully in a demanding, stressful world. The problem facing this nation, facing our schools, and facing all of us is that if our adolescents are unable to

develop their intellectual and coping skills, they will eventually become the sick, ill-educated, unemployable, dysfunctional adults of tomorrow--"casualties of their own substance use in youth."

The stakes are too high. The risks to health, relationships, intellectual functioning, and personal responsibility are too great. It is imperative that the entire American society, including businesses, schools, law enforcement, local, state and federal government, and community leaders, make a direct decisive effort to come together in a partnership in order to provide the support network needed to overcome this deadly problem. It is the only way in which our children and our nation can be saved.

America is a materialistic society and that materialism has not escaped its youth. The schools have been places of social gatherings. Peer pressure is great upon teenagers to keep up with the newest fashion trends--sneakers, leather coats/jackets, automobiles, and the like. To obtain these "necessities," students join the crowd and turn to drugs where they can obtain "quick money" to fulfill their wants. Teenagers have become the biggest consumer group in America. Businesses can help by refraining from the instant "pull" they exert on this age group.

As Kunisawa (1988) stated, when our nation is willing to accept the loss of a generation of young people, we will have lost the heart and soul of a nation. The social and economic strengths of America depend upon our full commitment and participation in solving this dilemma that threatens the decline of our society. The risks are well documented, but the behavior persists.

Goonan (1990) recently reported that a 12-year-old boy had been arrested for selling drugs. This indicates that involvement in drugs start early in the lives of children and not necessarily in their teen years. Education and positive community action can be instrumental in preserving our youth from this destroying force. Businesses and schools must join together to provide drug-free alternatives for children and adults as well. The responsibility for action lies with everyone in this society. Recent reports indicate that even our teenagers themselves recognize the depth of this problem in their lives. We must find viable alternatives to help them; by doing so, we will help our entire nation.

### Inside Factors

In order to fully understand the problems and challenges that face the educational system, we must analyze the influences of the school environment upon the students. Various factors within the school bring about different outcomes for different groups of students as well as for individual students. To provide adequately for all students, all needs--individual and collective--that students have must be analyzed and provided.

### Curriculum

Curriculum has been defined in many ways by many different scholars. The term usually refers to what is taught in school or what is intended to be learned. It does not refer to what is to happen in the learning process. Curriculum, therefore, represents a set of intentions, a set



of intended learning outcomes. It suggests the nature and organization of the things that people who are responsible for the planning and designing of courses want to be learned in those courses basing them on the educational goals to be served. Goals and values underlie the reasons for including particular curricula content. We need to provide students with whatever experiences they need to do well in school and in job placement.

Curriculum is analyzed in terms of its many parts--theory, structure, content, implementation, and evaluation. Curriculum must be concerned with subject. This involves what it is that we want the student to learn--what students need to know in order to live life to the fullest. All students must be prepared in a manner that would enable them to express themselves creatively in vocations and avocations. The needs of the community in which they live must be taken into consideration. A business and school partnership would provide schools with valuable insights into what curriculum and training would best prepare students for our changing world. In addition, it would provide for nurturing the real-life needs of students and fostering motivation and determination by providing an outlet where they could demonstrate the applicability of what they learn in school. The interests, hopes, and aspirations of the individual learners, as well as the community-oriented values and problems, are important aspects to be considered in curriculum planning.

Curriculum must also be concerned with system--the process of managing education so that it is humane, accessible, meaningful, and exciting for all students. The disciplines included in a curriculum



must be organized to be independent, yet related, and discreet, yet balanced. The needs of the learner must always be considered. Curriculum then, the complex network of what to teach and how to teach it, exists for all students regardless of race or socioeconomic status. We must meet the children where they are and provide them with the support they need to succeed. Those students at risk of failing academically and socially especially need our support. By supporting them, we will encourage them to keep school and learning an important part of their lives, and, thus, reach their highest potential and provide for lifelong learning.

The High School of Commerce in Springfield, Massachusetts (according to the principal of the school) is a high school first and foremost, but it does have a specified function, which is to develop in each student maximum proficiency in some business skills with the ultimate goal of job placement in business. Approximately 35 percent of the school's graduates go directly into the work force.

The school offers several programs or courses which differ mainly in vocational objectives. Concentration may be in any of the following: College-Preparatory/Business Program, Accounting Program, Secretarial Program, Marketing Program, Data Processing/Computer Program, and a General Office Program. These programs are all intended to develop in students individually and collectively an appreciation and understanding of American heritage. While these courses are valid for students desiring to enter into the business arena and basic general education underlie each course, there are some inconsistencies in the offerings. For example, students in this business school are

all required to take at least one year of typewriting. However, students are not required to pass typewriting and can graduate from this business school without proper proficiency in typewriting. In this age of high computer use, and considering the mission of this school and the fact that everyone will be using computers for business and recreational purposes, it is evident that typewriting or keyboarding is an important skill for today's students. Yet, the students are able to graduate without passing the course. These kinds of inconsistencies send mixed messages to our students and frustrate faculty. The goals of the school and the actual reality in some instances do not agree.

Kunisawa (1988) indicated that societal institutions and related professionals are failing to provide children with evidence of the importance of honesty, integrity, responsibility, respect, trust, and commitment to their lives. The future of our democratic nation, Kunisawa further expressed, depends on our youth. As it is now, we may not have a future if we do not provide our children with a meaningful education with equal opportunities for all.

Businesses and schools must work together to give our youth a variety of real-life experiences. Through these experiences, students will gain self-esteem and will be more tolerant of others. As a result, they become independent, contributing citizens.

### Literacy

Butler (1989) pointed out that each year nearly one million children drop out of the nation's public schools. Most are marginally literate and virtually unemployable. Kearns and Doyle (1988) reported

that our schools graduate 700,000 functionally illiterate students annually. Walker (1989) indicated that more than 27 million Americans over age 17 are functionally illiterate and that more than 72 million Americans are either functional or marginal illiterates. These are individuals who can barely read or write well enough to meet the basic needs of everyday life and work, who lack creativity and are unable to think, and who cannot follow the simplest of instructions in the work arena. Thousands of others graduate but lack literacy skills at levels needed to qualify for productive employment. Many of these teens fall prey to a variety of social ills including drug abuse and crime. Many become parents prematurely, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty and failure.

As stated earlier, the problems experienced by secondary school students start early in their school experience. The schools are failing mostly minority students, although research indicates that illiteracy knows no socioeconomic class and is not limited to any race or religion. As also indicated earlier, minority students are comprising most of this nation's public schools. Due to this fact, if we do not change the way we deal with students who come from homes where poverty, discrimination, and neglect exists, this country will continue to face the certainty of a permanent and increased underclass.

The needs of poor, minority children and their families must be met, and the schools must provide for the whole education of disadvantaged children from the early days of their education. This will help to reduce the worldwide literacy problems which presently exist. Research indicates that if the current trends hold, the number of

illiterates worldwide could rise to 912 million by the year 2000.

Illiteracy is costly (an estimated 200 billion dollars annually to the United States). In many cases, it is a "repeat performance" in families. Many who fall into this category are from homes where their parents were not adequately educated and were unable to encourage their children toward the quest for academic excellence. It is important to help the parents, not only the children, if we are to help the children at all.

The sooner we get started on this cyclic problem, the better. The schools must ensure that students are held accountable; that they are not just pushed through the educational system. The learning styles and cultures of individual students must be taken into consideration and intervention and support must be given in adequate measure to help each student reach his or her fullest potential. No longer can we reward students just for showing up, for playing ball well and thus ensuring a good school team, and for sitting quietly in class. Creativity and innovativeness must be encouraged and nurtured for the well-being of our society.

An article in the Springfield Sunday Republican (22 June 1989), entitled "High School Grads Often Ill-Trained," indicated that as a result of the illiteracy problem, students are leaving high school without skills needed to advance in industrial, service, and manufacturing jobs.

Walker (1989) reported a story featuring a small metal-finishing shop that lost \$8,000 when a worker spoiled an airplane part because



he could not read English well enough. It could have been worse if the defect had not been caught before it caused an air disaster. This shows the seriousness of illiteracy.

Jorgensen (1989) estimated that businesses in the United States spend \$25 billion annually to teach workers basic skills that they should have learned in school. The author also noted that the New York Telephone Company screened more than 22,000 applicants before being able to find 3,600 employees who could meet minimum standards for vocabulary, number relationships, and problem solving. Businesses, regardless of the job area, feel that they are "forced to hire the best of the worst," because individuals coming to them need stronger communication, problem-solving, and employability skills.

Only through a school and business partnership will we, in this nation, be able to intervene in the present state of affairs. We must unite forces to provide meaningful alternatives to deal with this problem. It is time to get to the heart of the matter and stop talking about it.

### Extracurricular Activities

American youngsters today face many problems and changes in their lives. Many of these changes affect their social development and their school performance.

Parelius and Parelius, in Trent (1987), indicated that there is merit in students' participation in extracurricular activities. The authors expressed that students' life in school affect their sense of satisfaction and happiness and that their well-being is improved when



they are able to engage in extracurricular activities. The authors identified four reasons for extracurricular activities:

- To channel youthful energy into approved directions;
- To promote alternative means of achievement and success for less academically inclined students;
- To promote cohesion within and between schools and communities;
- To provide less formal contexts in which a more heterogeneous group of students may interact with one another and/or with teachers and administrators.

Extracurricular activities are important for all students, especially disadvantaged students for whom it is a big accomplishment just to make it to school and whose self-esteem is low. School should never be allowed to become drudgery to students.

Clubs, honorary clubs, before- and after-school programs, assemblies, and sports should all be directed toward academic improvement; the building of self-esteem; the heightening of awareness of career possibilities; guidance and crisis assistance; and the development of scholastic, community, and civic pride (Clarke & Picard, 1989).

Educators have a responsibility to guide their students toward the realization that learning is a delightful, valuable endeavor and that there is happiness in pursuing a career, as well as understanding that gratification can be obtained from delaying the acquisition of some material things in life. Extracurricular activities can be a vehicle to accomplish this goal. Some teachers, however, seem to view these types of activities as being counter-productive. Some school systems punish students whose grade averages fall below "C" by not allowing them to participate in extracurricular activities. The researcher's

experience with students indicates that this practice sometimes removes the one thing that provides an incentive for students to remain in school. When this happens, students become frustrated because they are no longer able to engage in the one activity that made them feel worthwhile.

The responsibility of the school is for the whole education of the whole student. Extracurricular activities encourage fulfillment.

Bailey, in Goodlad (1984), stated:

Surely, the education system has no higher function than to help people to have creative engagements with the world of the free self. For if the world of the free self is appropriately cultivated, its felicitous admixture of playfulness, concentration, and socialization can affect, infect, and help to liberate the world's of work and coping. The free self then becomes not a mere segment of existence but a quality of existence. (p. 242)

We must provide our students with as many opportunities as we can to help them to attain educational success. Removing extracurricular activities as a means of punishment serves no real purpose in high school. In most cases, those activities are motivational for students. In addition, we destroy the natural desire of some students who might succeed in these career areas. When this occurs, we hurt, rather than help, our students.

There is a valid place for extracurricular activities in the schools. We must find ways to provide for them, if we are to adequately provide our students with the skills they need for life and the workplace.

## School Rules

Clarke and Picard (1989) stated that without order and calm, learning cannot happen. Without mutual respect, learning cannot happen. This is why schools have rules. Sometimes when school administrators seek to enforce those rules, which are set for "the good of all students," problems erupt.

Spring (1985) argued that problems related to children of a lower social class tend to be considered behavior problems in school, whereas those related to the upper classes tend to be considered learning problems. Again, one can see that the poor, disenfranchised students bear the brunt of the system. It is no wonder, then, that these students who experience inconsistency when school rules are enforced fail to do well in school or drop out of school.

The researcher's experience indicates that school rules are used to push many students out. Most students would like to talk about their frustrations and concerns but are never provided the opportunity to do so. Educators must take seriously their responsibility to educate the people of the underclass, minorities, through a middle-class institution so that they can be equipped for life in a democracy.

Students are empowered through acquiring information. Using school rules to get them out of a dysfunctional system defeats the true purpose and sends a message of shirked responsibility.

A look at the school rules at the High School of Commerce and for all high schools in Springfield, Massachusetts, indicates that some rules are inconsistent with the goals of the school and, as a result, the goals of education in a democracy. The 1988-1989 School Handbook

for Parents and Students (Springfield Public Schools, 1988) gives the following as discipline procedures that may be used as needed:

- Student may be counseled by teacher, counselor, assistant principal, or principal.
- Student may be given detention, either before or after school.
- Student may be placed in In-House Suspension Room for part of a day or up to ten days.
- Student may be given short-term suspension (one day or up to ten days).
- Student may be given long-term suspension (ten or more days). This suspension requires a conference with the Bureau of Pupil Services before a child returns to school.
- Student may be expelled from the system.

The researcher's own experience with students in the High School of Commerce (Springfield, Massachusetts) indicates that often students are unable to get needed conferences with counselors or principals just to "talk over" their concerns. Just recently, one Hispanic, young lady said, "My counselor doesn't find time for you if you are Puerto Rican."

In-school suspensions seem to serve only to place the student receiving it behind his or her classmates because the students are placed in isolation from his or her peers. While students in suspension are expected to work (assignments are requested from each subject teacher for the student), students are unable to do very well with the plans prepared for them because they lack the assistance of their classroom teachers to guide them through difficult areas of understanding the subject matter. Although the teacher assigned to the In-House



Suspension Room is a certified professional in his or her field, he or she is unable to guide students with expertise in all subject areas.

Most of the schools' rules are ineffective because they are not applied with consistency. More often than not students receive unequal treatment. The manner in which rules are applied contribute to the desire of students to stay in school. The negative messages they send help only to alienate the student to a greater degree. Minority students, whose life-styles and backgrounds are in opposition to those of the school, seem to bear the burden of most of the rules. They often bear punishment that others do not because of their ethnic or racial background. We must find alternative ways from the early grades up in our education system to build equality into our methods so that students would not be punished because of the station in life at which they find themselves.

### Attendance

Educators and researchers have long recognized that time engaged in study is an important factor in learning both for individuals and for groups of students. Students absent from school are unlikely to acquire as many academic skills as do those students attending school regularly. This makes it imperative for students to attend school regularly, if they are to succeed.

Barth (1980) reported that 10 to 40 percent of the nation's high school students are absent from school each day without cause, many of them "habitually absent or truant." Poor attendance at school can lead to failure to do well in school or eventually to dropping out.

Chronic absenteeism contributes to disciplinary problems, suspension, and feelings of rejection which lead to failure to achieve academically.

Gay (1986) indicated that a variety of teaching and disciplinary actions may discourage at-risk students from attending school. The author stated that suspensions, for example, is one action used to discipline students who defy authority, use profanity, or are chronically tardy or absent. Gay further argued that standard testing procedures, lack of bilingual education, inequities in school financing, and the practice of steering minority and poor students into courses that discourage high academic achievement are other practices that contribute to non-attendance at school.

When students fall behind in their studies, have little interest in subject matter, or feel that school bears little or no relationship to the world of which they are a part, they become prime candidates first for non-attendance and eventually dropping out of school. Galloway (1985) reported evidence that teachers of chronically absent students see them as irresponsible individuals who are callous about school and what it offers them. The author also indicated, though, that these students need help. In most cases, they do not get the help they need because of the teachers' attitudes toward their behavior.

A look at the attendance report for any given year at the High School of Commerce in Springfield (Massachusetts) shows that students in Grade 10 at this school are the most habitually absent. This indicates that the problem of absenteeism starts before students arrive at the high school level. On any typical day at this school, 120 (or 21 percent) of the Grade 10 students; 73 (or 20 percent) of the 355 Grade

11 students; and 80 (or 20 percent) of the 389 Grade 12 students are absent. However on a typical examination day, when the students are required to be at school on time if they are to participate in their examinations, only 73 (or 13 percent) of the Grade 10 students; 27 (or .07 percent) of the Grade 11 students; and 25 (or .06 percent) of the Grade 12 students are absent. It can be concluded, then, that when administrators and teachers intervene and when students see a reason for being in school, they are in school.

At this particular school, attendance reports at intervals of 7, 14, and 21 days require that guidance counselors make telephone calls and send letters to parents as a matter of intervention in the problem. Little success has been gained. Other efforts to decrease the level of absenteeism at this school included having teachers make telephone calls during the evening hours to parents. This practice has been discontinued because of the effect of budget cuts on school personnel. There is evidence that some degree of improvement in attendance is usually realized when calls are made to the students' home. However, this was not the case at this particular school.

Most of the students who are habitually absent, based on the researcher's observation at the High School of Commerce, are from low-income families where the importance of a good education and professional values and ethics are not usually stressed.

Poor school attendance habits will become poor work attendance habits. It is not surprising, therefore, that those students who are allowed to continue this habit throughout their school years do not fit properly into the work force.

Presently, in the Springfield schools, the attendance policy is "on hold." Efforts are being made to revise it. While the decision-makers ponder over the policy, calls and letters to the students' parents informing them of their children's attendance patterns have ceased. Students, teachers, and administrators alike are perplexed. While the decisionmakers drag their feet on this important issue, our children are falling along the wayside.

Part-time jobs, too, lend to the absentee problem among teenagers in our schools. Students are often too tired after working the closing shifts or working too many long hours to get up to attend school or they lack the energy and desire to perform well in school. When asked about their poor attendance, it is not uncommon to hear students say, "They pay me to go to work not go to school." On the other hand, businesses are complaining about the lack of qualified entry-level employees, but they add to the problem by employing students for too many hours a day, even against the legally specified amount in some instances.

Once again, the children of our nation are suffering. When they suffer, we all do. If we are to improve our children's future and indeed all of our futures, we must join together to make education a more attractive and sought-after prize in the eyes of our youth. The business community, parents, and the schools must unite to find ways of dealing with this growing problem.



## Suspension

Discipline, according to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1983), means "to train by instruction." It means to teach. Discipline has to do with the learning of responsible ways of behaving in a variety of situations. Many school administrators and teachers as well as the public consider discipline in the schools to be a major problem. The discipline problem in the schools is a reflection of the social norms of the overall school learning climate and specific techniques of classroom management (Brookover et al., 1982).

Violence, vandalism, and disrespect for authority are usually the first aspects mentioned when discipline problems are discussed. Although these aspects do contribute to disruptiveness in school when they are evident, they are only part of the overall discipline problem. Jones, in Brookover et al. (1982), indicated that the major factor in school discipline is the continual, often trivial, undertone of inattention, talking, and interruption that occurs in most classes.

While minor misbehaviors, such as the above, are more prohibitive to teaching and learning, generally more attention is given to more blatant and attention-getting offenses, such as fights, drug-related incidents, truancy, and vandalism. Suspension is normally used as a treatment for these seriously disruptive behaviors.

Barth (1980) related that as a treatment to disruptive behavior on first inspection, it (suspension) seems to be logical, but other responses appear to have been declared illegal, immoral, or ineffective. When students are suspended from school, they are not allowed to attend school. Learning cannot take place when students are not present at

school. Any practice in the school which affects the academic performance of students must be attended to.

Suspension of students is a temporary solution to problems of discipline for counselors, teachers, and administrators. It allows for students interested in the learning process to continue their education without interruption. However, when the suspendees return to the classroom in most cases, the problems also return.

Brookover et al. (1982) reported that many educators believe that little can be done to resolve the problem of discipline, short of increasing the use of authoritarian and repressive control tactics. The authors further stated that several beliefs concerning this problem have become prevalent. Some of these beliefs, according to Canter, Canter, Jones, and Lyles, in Brookover et al. (1982), are in close relation to the reasons often cited why poor or urban youngsters cannot perform well academically. Some reasons are:

- "Those kids"--low achieving, low SES (socioeconomic status), minority, the emotionally disturbed--are "different."
- Children in general are uncontrollable because of the permissiveness of society.
- Parents are no longer supportive of the schools.
- Parents cannot control their own children.
- Court cases, giving due process to students, have tied the hands of the schools.
- Teacher training institutions do not deal adequately with this problem.

These attitudes are often apparent among administrators and teachers and lend themselves toward low expectations for students. Cooper,

Findley, and Good (1982) indicated that a self-fulfilling prophecy occurs: "A false definition of the situation evokes a new behavior which means the original false conception comes true." Thus, once an expectation is held, one tends to act in a manner that is in keeping with the belief; and as a result, his or her action may cause the expectations to become true. False teacher expectations can lead to misbehavior among students. Noblitt and Short (1985) reported that students who have been suspended usually return to the school in a week or two with more anger, resentment, and disobedience. It can be seen that suspension does not solve the problem of students' behavior; it simply relocates bad behavior.

In-school suspension has been implemented in an attempt to keep students in school while making an effort to change disruptive behavior. Noblitt and Short (1985) reported that the reality of in-school suspension is quite a different story. In practice, the authors indicated in-school suspension seems to be but another punitive alternative for schools. In-school suspension is intended to remove disruptive students from the classroom atmosphere, yet allow them to continue their educational pursuits.

At the High School of Commerce, students placed in in-school suspension are isolated while working on classroom assignments. They eat lunch isolated from others in the cafeteria. Talking is not allowed. The students are allowed restroom privileges at certain time intervals. Students are usually assigned to in-school suspension for three to five days. They are expected to work on individual assignments sent to them by their classroom teachers. There is no interaction

with other suspended students or other students in the halls or cafeteria. The only adult interaction is with the teacher assigned to the In-School Suspension Room. There is no intervention by the guidance counselors or any other professionals who could intervene and help students see the need for correcting their disruptive behaviors. It seems, then, that in this school the purpose of in-school suspension is punitive rather than corrective. Students are unable to keep up with their classmates because they lack the guidance of a teacher with expertise in the various areas they are studying.

Educators cannot allow themselves to become involved with how to deal with disruptive students, nor can they afford to take the easy way out by issuing suspensions--in-school or out-of-school. They cannot forget to look at the reasons for disruptive behavior.

Brookover et al. (1982) indicated that the overwhelming problem children are those pupils with learning problems who we are apparently not reaching. The authors further indicated that students know they go to school to learn; and when they are unsuccessful in this realm, they turn to other means of satisfying their need for success and attention.

School administrators and teachers must take seriously and share the responsibility of providing an atmosphere for teaching and learning where "academic pursuits are not disrupted." They must understand and relate to students' high expectations for all students where teaching, learning, and behavior are concerned regardless of race, color, or creed. Students receiving suspensions are usually those who need remedial help. Often suspension is just what they want as an excuse to



escape the classroom environment. School personnel must be aware of this and join together to find viable ways to help these students become motivated to learn, stay in school, and become enchanted with the joys which education can afford. In this manner, they can become effective participatory citizens of society.

### Tracking

According to Goodlad and Oakes (1988), tracking is the separation of students into curriculum patterns wherein the courses taken by different students vary widely in expectations, teacher ambience, and content. Tracking is a controversial practice in many American schools. In schools where this practice takes place, students are grouped according to their ability. Generally, schools designate tracks: high, middle, or low levels; but other designations are used to distinguish between ability groupings.

A study conducted by Stanford University in California during the 1960s and 1970s followed students through their high school years. It showed that the high school population was divided into four tracks: the honor track, with approximately 10 percent of all students; the remedial track, with about 10 to 15 percent; the college preparatory track, with about 35 percent; and the general track, with about 30 to 35 percent. Of the tracks, the general track students were the weakest and most incoherent, had to fulfill fewer requirements, and had more elective subjects to choose from. On the other hand, students from the college preparatory track had to take a specified number of courses in order to satisfy college entrance requirements.

When general track students are allowed to go through school without the rigors of meaningful instruction, they eventually receive diplomas which are significant of having fulfilled a course of study. In reality, the education they received did not adequately prepare them for their future lives in this society. They graduate lacking the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that they will need to succeed in life and work.

Oakes (1988) indicated that an equivocal fact about tracking is that it leads to substantial differences in the day-to-day learning experiences students have at school, and that the nature of these have access to far richer schooling experiences than other students. Thus tracking, the author stated, instead of providing appropriate learning opportunities to students of different abilities, appears to restrict what students can achieve by their own efforts.

In his book, A Place Called School, Goodlad (1984) related a national study of schools where he observed students in high-ability level English classes exposed to classic and modern literature, as well as instruction in expository writing, library research, and vocabulary, helped increase their scores on college entrance examinations. As a result of these exposures, students acquired critical thinking and problem-solving skills. On the other hand, in the low-ability level classes observed, students learned basic reading skills and were taught by workbooks, kits, easy-to-read stories, and rote memorization. These low-track students were not exposed to the skills that would eventually prepare them for college entrance examinations or give them the ability

to move into higher tracks. Tracking causes many students from ever being in higher level classes.

Felix-de Leon (1985) related that one problem with tracking is that teachers, students, and administrators are aware that upper-track classes are supposed to perform well and lower-track classes are not. Teachers of high-track students tend to be more encouraging and supportive of their students; while in the lower-level tracks, the teachers are seemingly less encouraging and more punitive in their behavior toward students.

In regard to classroom opportunities and the amount of time spent on teaching and learning where tracking is practiced, Oakes (1988) reported that high-ability students benefit more in terms of quality and quantity of instruction. They are expected to do more homework and enjoy many more motivational, engaging activities in class. In comparison, low-ability students are rewarded for being quiet and for not causing trouble. Disruption and discipline are constant factors in these classes.

Students who are categorized in the middle levels of ability grouping (those who fall in-between the high and low levels) experience low expectations from their teachers. Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985), in The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace, related that the wide variety of classes and special programs for students at the extremes--students with high abilities or with handicaps--had the effect of making students in the middle "unspecial" and guaranteeing that they were taught in "unspecial ways." This

attitude causes these students to lose out on the best of what is available in the school.

Those students who come to school with the proper attitude and readiness for learning are usually found in the high-ability groups. Those who come from disenfranchised backgrounds--minorities and poor students--are usually in the low-ability levels. Goodlad and Oakes (1988) stated that large numbers of children and youth are denied access to knowledge reserved for those who take readily to the customs and regularities and whose backgrounds prepare them and support them in what schools do. Once again, the poor and disadvantaged suffer and become victims of the educational system. As a result, these students who need most to benefit from a good education are deprived of the richness of one. They develop negative attitudes toward school and toward their personal development.

As Goodlad (1984) indicated, students often perceive that if they are not preparing to go to college, the school places less importance on their educational growth. However, when teachers perceive that students in the lower-ability groups are disinterested in school, have negative feelings about themselves, or that their futures look bleak, students behave accordingly and interest in achievement is lessened.

Goodlad and Oakes (1988) argued that tracking and rigid ability grouping are generally ineffective for addressing individual differences and, for many children, harmful. Further, the authors indicated that tracking prejudices how much children will benefit and results in the absence of some children from the places where academically and socially valued subjects are taught. Once students have experienced



the negativity of tracking, they seem to internalize mediocrity and then begin to behave in a manner which indicates that they expect less of themselves--have lower self-esteem. Poor and minority students, who comprise the fastest growing segment of our population, have been most disadvantaged by the effects of tracking. These are the ones who are found in disproportionate numbers in the general tracks in our nation's schools.

Goodlad and Oakes (1988) indicated that general laws of the land imply equal access not only to the schools but to the education schools are supposed to provide for children. In addition, the authors stated that state documents on schooling almost always include the concept of equity in some form and admonish school boards and educators to eschew practices that discriminate against students because of race, ethnicity, or religion.

The basis has been set by government regulations to ensure that provisions are made for administrators, teachers, and decisionmakers in the educational arena to make teaching and learning equitably available in all American schools. Teachers and administrators must hold high expectations of academic achievement for all students and provide the atmospheres that are conducive for them to succeed. Students differ from each other. For this reason, attention must be given to provide a curriculum that will meet the needs of all, individually and collectively. Alternatives must be provided to allow students to use the medium of learning that best suits their individual needs.

Education must be available that will provide for real-life, hands-on learning experiences. The community, school administrators,

and teachers must work together to find effective alternatives to tracking. A commitment to support the full development of the nation's youth, in all aspects of their lives, is necessary.

#### Attitudes/Perceptions of Teachers and Counselors

Schools in America today are deeply involved with extremely complex problems. These include racial issues, student learning disabilities, lack of student interest, and lack of parental support of the learning process, to name a few. The minority population of this country has been increasing steadily and it continues to increase. Consequently, the student population in America's schools is highly minority. However, most of the teachers in these schools are middle-class Americans, who are deeply inculcated in the values and cultures of the White middle-class in our society. Many teachers are insensitive toward the problems and difficulties faced by non-White, middle-class students. Researchers have noted correlations between the manner that teachers viewed student problems and academic behaviors students followed in school.

The decisions which teachers make, therefore, about what and how to teach are affected by conditions and circumstances and by expectations about what is good for students from different backgrounds and abilities. These expectations develop independent of the students' actual ability to learn. Teachers and expectations have been identified in the literature as important factors in academic success, self-esteem, and level of alienation and marginality. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), in Pygmalion in the Classroom, discussed the proposition that favorable teacher expectations could lead to increased intellectual competence of

students. Teachers have preconceived ideas of what student behavior should be and they are more receptive to students who behave as they expect them to.

Brookover et al. (1982) suggested that teachers should realize that if little is expected and little is taught, students develop feelings of hopelessness or futility in the school. Gandara (1989) reported that research has demonstrated that even the most well-meaning teachers tend to have lower expectations of the ability of minority children, call upon them less in class, and reinforce their responses less than those of majority culture children. Among the characteristics children bring with them to school are: ethnicity, native languages, and social status, level of ability, sex, and economic status. To the extent that students are divergent from the school, they are at risk of failing to succeed academically.

Oakes (1988) indicated that teachers of these students assign less homework, are more permissive, teach less, and offer less alternatives in the classroom. Students perceive, as a result of these teacher behaviors, that their teachers expect little of them so they give little. Good teachers can be identified by the beliefs that they hold of their students, themselves, their goals, purposes, and the teaching task and not so much by their knowledge or good methods of their subject matter (Combs, 1988).

Literature provides evidence that teachers can be trained to modify their behavior toward students who are less successful in school. Bastian (1988) stated that schools can offer children both a positive example and firsthand experience. Further, the author indicated that

schools can put premium on interaction, participation, initiative, and collaboration--not only between teachers and students but among teachers and students. By carefully analyzing the needs that individual students bring to the school, teachers can learn to respect diversity and explore it. Only when teachers communicate to all students that they are able to learn, and expected to learn, will the youth of our society understand that they can have greater expectation for their lives in the future and expect change, knowing that they control their own futures. If little is expected of them, little will be taught to them.

Guidance counselors play an important role in the lives of students. They are in the position to influence students in relation to their program of study as well as career or job paths. Gadwa and Griffs (1985) suggested that guidance counselors play an important role in identifying students at risk of dropping out, working with parents and teachers as well as administrators to develop strategies and interventions that are responsive to the characteristics and needs of the potential dropouts.

Brookover et al. (1982) indicated that counselors should take primary responsibility to see that all students have equal opportunity to choose whatever further schooling or career they want upon graduation from high school, without being excluded from certain options because they do not have the required course background. Counselors should be responsible in seeing that academic opportunities are maximized for all students. Too often, however, counselors, instead of encouraging positive student growth and placement, contribute to "tracking" within a school by advising students to avoid "difficult"



classes or teachers. By so doing, they communicate a "lack of ability" message to the students. Students, like most adults, often choose the easiest way out of situations. The reason for this is that they are only concerned with the present and are unable to focus on their needs for the future. The guidance counselor should provide academic help to such students and encourage them to work toward more difficult areas so that equal opportunities for success in continuing their education and in later life will be made available to them.

Counselors, like teachers, are identified as having lower expectations for minority students than they do for the cultural majority. Often there is a lack of positive counseling to encourage these students to take academic subjects that would prepare them to meet their aspirations. They are often encouraged only to apply to local community colleges because "You won't make it anywhere else." From the researcher's vantage point in the school, it is evident that many counselors are attentive only to the academic achievement of students and never stop to consider the other contributing factors that affect the performance of students in the classroom. Boggled down by extensive paper work, counselors find little time for students needing their services. One student recently remarked, "I've seen my counselor only once all year, when I got my program. I don't even know her name." This behavior toward students causes them to feel inferior and rejected. It affects their self-esteem and eventually their academic performance and future life.

The time for change is now in our schools. Teachers and counselors, alike, must join with parents, administrators, and businesses

to find realistic ways of motivating our children in order to help them prepare for rich experiences in life. Their success in school, work, and beyond depends upon this action.

### Dropouts

American schools are very concerned about the increasing number of dropouts. They are struggling to get students to stay in school. Around our nation, the public school systems are struggling to find alternatives for those students at risk of dropping out of school before they graduate.

While the number of students graduating from high school has increased, our schools are graduating many students who do not possess the academic quality desired by the workplace and, in many cases, schools of higher education.

Kunisawa (1988) stated that many youngsters, regardless of gender, color, or income, come to school unprepared for the rigors of learning and the frustrations of accompanying setbacks. When the effects of economic inequity, racism, sexism, or class rivalry are added, the complexity of the problem of dropouts is made clearer, the author further cited.

According to Gay (1986), a report by the National Board of Inquiry indicated that at least 8 million young people of the 40 million in public schools are not given adequate attention. The report also indicated that more poor and minority, than wealthy and non-minority, youth "are excluded and underserved by the schools." Wheelock (1986) indicated that it is not the students' background but the schools' response

to the students' background that is responsible for success of students in school.

Glenn (1988), in a report to the Massachusetts Board of Education, stated that secondary education in Massachusetts does not serve all students well. Urban poor and minority students are more likely to drop out of school before graduation and less likely to master skill and knowledge essential to full participation, as adults, in our society, economy, and political order. Female students are less likely than their male classmates, he said, to participate in high-payoff vocational programs.

McMillan (1989) indicated that dropouts constitute a vast number of teenagers in our society. He cited the following statistics:

- Twenty-seven percent of teenagers who enter eighth grade do not graduate from high school.
- Seven hundred thousand students drop out of high schools in the United States annually; 300,000 are chronically truant--a million students a year.
- Up to 85 percent of Native-American youth, 50 percent of all Hispanics, and 44 percent of all Blacks do not complete high school.
- In some cities, more than 50 percent of all high school students drop out before they graduate.

The dropout problem is not limited to any particular area of our nation. It is evident everywhere in our country. Kunisawa (1988) cited the following states as having the highest percentages of dropouts: Louisiana, 43.7%; Alabama, 37.9%; Florida, 37.8%; New York, 37.8%; Mississippi, 37.6%; Georgia, 36.9%; California, 36.8%; South Carolina, 35.5%; Arizona, 35.4%; and Texas, 35.4%.

Kunisawa (1988) further cited that these states all have minority enrollments that exceed 25 percent of the student population in the schools and six of them have minority enrollments of more than 35 percent. Those students that enrolled less than two percent ethnic minority students had the lowest dropout rates.

The general characteristics of the dropout has been identified by Kunisawa (1988) as:

- From low income or poor poverty settings;
- From a minority group background;
- Having low academic skills;
- Having parents who are not high school graduates, are not interested in their children's progress in school, and do not provide a support system for their success;
- English is not the major language;
- Children of single-parent homes;
- Male;
- Being bored in school;
- Perceiving themselves as failures in the school culture;
- Being alienated from the school.

Students drop out of school for many reasons. Those who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds are at a greater disadvantage. They often face limited opportunities and unsatisfactory home life and school life. The stresses they experience, as a result, cause them to feel alienated and drop out of school.

Often students who feel that the school is unresponsive to their personal needs drop out. They are not doing well academically and



may even experience problems such as a language barrier. They perceive that school is a waste of time for them. Sometimes students drop out because they must work to help support their families or to provide for their own well-being. This is mostly the case with male students. Female students most often drop out because of teen pregnancy or marriage.

Social pressures of teenage life sometimes add to the dropout problem. Drugs and crime play an important part in the decision of some students to drop out of school. The dropout problem in America has affected the entire nation. Fifty percent of dropouts are unemployed or receive welfare (a \$75 billion expense to taxpayers annually); 60 percent of prison inmates are high school dropouts; 87 percent of pregnant teenagers are dropouts (Kunisawa, 1988).

The breakdown in the family structure in our society, materialism, the unreadiness of our students for school, and the lack of value and moral education all contribute to the dropout problem. Research indicates that minority youth are, as stated earlier, most likely to drop out of school. Meanwhile this population is growing. If we continue to neglect to academically prepare the young members of our population to fill the future needs of our country, we will all have "dropped out." Poor and minority students are born disadvantaged. The choice of birth was not their choice. We cannot blame these victims for the circumstances in which they find themselves. Everyone in America who accepts the responsibility for a part in the future of this nation must join together to provide proper levels of personal, cultural, and

economic needs of our youth, in order to motivate them to high career and educational aspirations.

As Kunisawa (1988) indicated, the problem is not the dropouts. The problem is the dysfunctional education system that produces dropouts. Businesses and schools must lend their commitment to form partnerships that would make minority youth aware of the true value and gratification found in pursuing education. First, however, the leaders in America should recognize the value of education. If students realize that education is a priority for everyone, then they will also accept it as a priority.

#### Demands of Employers

Technology is bringing about many rapid changes which are evident in all aspects of our economy. The increased rate of industrial change resulting from automation and widespread computer use is changing the needs of contemporary business and industry. Our society has evolved into a technological-informational one with a global base. Businesses must have workers who can work effectively in this time of change.

Schmidt (1990), in an article written for The New York Times and recaptured in the Springfield Sunday Republican, indicated that for decades students who dropped out of school and graduates whose diplomas did not necessarily mean that they could read, write, or do basic mathematics had a refuge of sorts. They could usually find work in factories. Today, the factories are gone and these students are unemployable.

Ward, Executive Director of the Private Industry Council of Hampden County, in an article by Maycock (1989) in the Springfield Sunday Republican, argued that many students who are graduating from secondary schools leave those institutions without the skills needed to advance in industrial, service sector, and manufacturing jobs.

The lack of availability of employees to fill entry-level positions in the midst of all these changes and the lack of ability of those employees to remain employed present serious problems for businesses throughout the nation.

The Committee for Economic Development (1985), in a statement by the Research and Policy Subcommittee, reported that employers in both large and small businesses decry the lack of preparation for work among the nation's high school graduates. Too many students lack reading, writing, and mathematical skills; positive attitudes toward work; appropriate behavior on the job; and have not learned to solve problems, make decisions, or set priorities. Many high school graduates are virtually unemployable.

Statistics by the Committee for Economic Development (1985) demonstrated that well over one-quarter of the youth in America never complete high school and that many of those who do graduate and venture into schools of higher education need remedial reading and writing courses. Further, nearly 13 percent of all 17-year-olds still enrolled in our nation's schools are functionally illiterate, and 44 percent are marginally illiterate. Among students who do not complete high school, 60 percent are functionally literate.

Jorgensen (1989) indicated that economic competitiveness, which has been called the "Sputnik of the 80s" because of its ability to motivate educational reforms, has drawn much attention to what experts consider a mismatch between the skills our students learn or do not learn in school and what they will need to succeed in the world of work.

It is always comfortable to place blame on any system that does not function properly or as it is expected to. For the problem in our schools, the vicious circle of blame continues. Placing blame is useless. It is, rather, more important that everyone stop trying to place blame on any one sector--the schools, businesses, or the real victims, the children--and, instead, join forces to combine energies to prepare our youth to "exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship," recognizing that the real preparation of this important part of our population lies beyond preparing them for employment. Together, we must find ways to help our most important resource--our children--develop healthy attitudes, patterns of behavior and learning, and communication skills that will prepare them to be successful citizens and employees.

### Sociological Obligations

According to Adler (1977), a culture can endure and thrive only to the extent that it is possessed by individuals--some of whom may add to it, but all of whom should be the vehicles of passing it on to the next generation. If students are to compete successfully in the job market, employers believe that they must develop positive attitudes toward life and citizenship in the classroom.



Bastian (1988) indicated that there are generic skills and disciplines young people need to lead productive lives--as self-directed individuals, as family members and role models, as neighbors, and as citizens--regardless of their job status. American youth must be made aware that they have a valuable part to play in the future of their individual lives as well as the future of the democratic society of which they are a part.

The skills that are needed to be successful in life are the same skills that are needed in the workplace. The most important goal to be accomplished then, it seems, would be to help students realize their true worth. Everyone has potential; everyone counts.

Many of our students experience family stress, societal alienation, and cultural dislocation. These factors make it almost impossible for the public schools in our nation to motivate academic success and, as a result, career or job success.

Kearns and Doyle (1988) indicated that the schools should teach the following three sets of values:

- Democracy. Values of a free people who believe in justice and equality. Toleration of differences, fairness, and balance are traits that should be part of the school because they are essential to life in a modern democracy, as is integrity, self-respect, and respect for others.
- Citizenship. Virtues of compassion, charity, equality, duty, and justice; set values like punctuality, neatness, civility. These are values of the workplace. They demonstrate respect for others and for one's self. They provide for effective human interaction.
- Workplace. Children should be expected to deal with ethical problems early in their lives.

Family influences, school experiences, and economic standards are not the only influences on an education system. Students perceive what is expected of them and behave as they believe they are expected. The goal of education should be the development of good positive work patterns that meet the needs of society. Work behavior is learned from the totality of the educational experiences in the home, in the school, and in the community. The manner in which students respond to the experiences they have determines the failure or successes they will have in life.

Students must acquire the kinds of values which will allow them to cope with the problems and demands of a changing technological economy and culture. They must be able to define for themselves the role that they must play in our democratic society.

The society in which our youth will find themselves is different from the traditional one. The workplace is changing; the family and community are changing. Together we must provide them with experiences that will enable them to be successful as citizens and in the workplace.

Businesses can join with the schools to provide better probable outcomes for our students. Students need to be able to perceive upward mobility if they are to be motivated to do well. Equity in all areas of American life would motivate our students to respect and honor the responsibilities of citizenship which would evolve into behaviors demanded by businesses today. Those who are the decisionmakers must help to develop positive attitudes that, learned at an early age, can

be carried throughout life. The survival of our democratic nation depends upon the full participation of all in our society.

### Skills for Work and Citizenship

Business organizations are dependent on well-prepared workers. The strength of our economy lies in the work force. With qualified, productive employees, businesses can function effectively and our nation can maintain a competitive posture. A major responsibility of our public schools is to prepare students to enter the rapidly changing job market and to be effective citizens.

Most of today's students do not possess the self-discipline or confidence to accept a challenge and carry it through. When students are able to conceive success and believe it in their personal lives, they will achieve it not only in their personal lives but as citizens and employees. As Bastian (1988) stated, we can raise children's expectations for the future by giving them more than tools for a specific job. Schools can give students the tools to adapt and advance in the job market, along with the confidence they need to succeed.

In the publication Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want, the American Society for Training and Development and the U. S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (1988) provided evidence that there are skills that employers are demanding of today's employees. Some of these are discussed below.

### Learning to Learn

Constant changes in today's businesses require that employees shift jobs and the duties attached to those jobs rather frequently. Employees

who are able to "absorb, process, and apply new information quickly and effectively are more valuable and desired by employers" (American Society for Training and Development, 1988).

Eisner (1988) stated that the aim of curriculum and teaching is not simply to help students meet the demands of schooling but to help them use what they learn to meet the demands of life. Students must be motivated to continue learning.

Studies indicate that the students who are entering the job market directly after high school are, in many cases, the poor and disenfranchised, for whom further education seems unattainable. These are the students who feel that increasingly alienating forms of labor await them and for whom education means less in terms of standards of living, meaningful work, social influence, and self-determination. The message these students get from the world of work is "learn for what" (Bastian, 1988). Thus, if businesses expect more in terms of attitude and ability from today's students, then employers in America will have to motivate students, provide them with a reason for learning and continuing to learn, and make them a real part of the real American dream.

#### Communication Skills--Listening and Oral

Employers believe that today's high-technology business world requires the ability to communicate one's language orally and in writing clearly, accurately, and with tact and consideration. Additionally, employers believe that effective listening skills are frequently not included in the training of our students.



Quible (1989) indicated that of the various communication skills--reading, writing, listening, and speaking--listening consumes more time of most business employees than do the other three types of skills combined. Further, the author suggested that as much as 40 to 60 percent of employees' work day is spent listening. Good listening skills are critical to school, social, and job success.

Stearns (1983) indicated that even though listening is the first communication skill learned at birth, and the most frequently used, it is taught the least. Quible (1989) provided evidence of the presence of barriers to listening. Among these barriers are distractions, disinterest, timing, and speaker characteristics.

Poor and minority students constitute most of the marginal students who either eventually drop out of school or graduate ill-prepared for work. These are the students, unfortunately, who seek entry-level positions in America's business workplaces. It is little wonder, then, that employers find high school graduates unprepared. The pressures and disadvantages which these youngsters have experienced often accompany them to the school and take precedence over any formal training in any area being given in the classroom. These students are already disenchanting with the school and its offerings. The backgrounds of these students are often devoid of preparation for school. Many come from homes where their parents are unable to help them in school and who have not been able to provide them with good examples of their native language. Their language is that of the street. They must learn that this behavior is unacceptable in business and learn to use proper language instead of the slang practiced in their homes and communities.

The ability of Hispanic students, for example, is often misjudged. Often teachers allow their attitudes and misunderstanding of the Hispanic culture to affect the manner in which they relate to these youngsters. They seem to think that because the students speak the English language with "an accent" they are low achievers. As a result, these students move through the educational system in low-ability groups and are, therefore, never allowed to reach their fullest potential. Our education policymakers, our political leaders, and everyone in this country must begin to understand the limitations we are placing upon our bilingual students by forcing them to give up their language and culture. As Melendez (1989) related, "We as a nation must understand that having citizens who are bilingual, or multilingual, is beneficial to both individuals and our country."

Business and the schools must work together to create school environments that can impact the students' behavior at school and show them how they can benefit from the offerings of the school. It is important that everyone join together to find creative ways to meet these individuals where they are and build upon the individual experiences and successes they bring to school. The students cannot benefit from the school if they are unprepared for what goes on there--if they are uncomfortable in the learning environment. The business community must concern itself beyond the profit that their endeavors make. Freedom and prosperity for all in America depend on how well the children of this nation develop their individual potentials. The schools alone cannot provide all that is needed, but together business and the schools can form a coordinated effort to make the future brighter for our youth.

### Literacy: Competence in the 3 Rs

Increased numbers of students experience difficulties with reading, writing, and mathematics. Many students are allowed to go through the primary and middle school grades being functionally illiterate. The difficulties they experience become more apparent in high school. Often these students are allowed to graduate from high school. When they do graduate and enter the work force or continue higher education, they experience difficulties. This situation causes businesses in this country to express the concern that students cannot compete successfully and that they, themselves, cannot compete successfully without a work force that has sound academic skills. This concern has been transferred to all sectors of our society.

A statement by the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education of the National Business Education Association (1989) indicated that policymakers have often assumed that the increased emphasis on traditional academic subjects will prepare all students for whatever work in life they wish to pursue. Mandated changes generally have focused on required class time in academic subjects, rather than on student competence.

Today we live in an information-service society. While our students need to have a good, general academic education, they also need employability skills. Only when the curriculum in our schools is developed in a manner that would help students at all levels of their educational progress meet the challenges of lifelong learning and career preparation will the needs of our changing society be met.

Business and the schools can work effectively and creatively to meet these needs. Many students learn more effectively through applied learning. However, for marginal students, it is important that they see the correlation between what they are expected to learn and how they can use the learnings. When this atmosphere is created, the need to develop the strong basic skills required for successful competition in today's society and work arena will be appreciated by them. A business and school partnership could serve as a "powerful vehicle" for motivating and educating a large number of our students, including those who have been unsuccessful in learning the traditional academic subjects (National Business Education Association, 1989). Students who learn more effectively through active participation will be given an opportunity to understand the relationship of what happens in school to what occurs in the workplace. This continuity will aid them in reaching their fullest potential.

### Personal Management

Personal management is another demand which employers claim is missing among applicants for entry-level positions in business today. Literature indicates that employers feel that self-esteem, goal-setting, motivation, and plans for individual career development are lacking in employees.

In the publication Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want (American Society for Training and Development & U. S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 1988), it is indicated that employers place a premium on employees who take pride in work



accomplished, who set goals and meet them, and who do all they can to better equip themselves to meet the challenges of the positions they hold. Once again, the school system bears the weight for the deficiencies that exist in this area.

Oldham (1988) stated that many people today experience vague longing resulting from unfilled higher-level needs (belonging, esteem of others, self-esteem, and self-actualization). Oldham also suggested that the ever-increasing number of choices people face can make it difficult for them to decide what to do, how to spend their lives, and even to decide who they are. Decisions faced in the world of work often make the difference between success and failure. Our students must be taught to weigh the pros and cons of the choices they make. A successful person has a good feeling about himself or herself. Before a person is able to develop a positive relationship with others, he or she must like and respect himself or herself.

The manner in which a person thinks about and believes in himself or herself affects his or her behavior as well as his or her perceptions of other people's expectations of him or her. One evaluates oneself not as others do, but as one thinks and believes others do. Unless students have developed positive behavior patterns early in life which enable them to function productively as citizens, then it is unlikely that they will function effectively in the workplace.

The American work force is increasingly dependent upon the poor and disenfranchised. Cahill (1990) indicated that more than half of the new workers will be Blacks, Hispanics, and minorities. As stated earlier in this research paper, disadvantaged youth have a perception of

themselves. They generally see themselves as failures. When these behaviors are allowed to continue from the early grades into the high school, they do not stop there. They continue into the world of work and into entire life spans.

Often, the problems resulting from poor personal management are perpetuated through the disadvantaged families from which these students come. The students, who eventually become entry-level employees, cannot perceive change in their lives, so they see no point in even trying. They have long been turned off by the host of negative experiences which they received from the messages in their homes, schools, community, and from society in general (Bastian, 1988). They practice personal standards learned from others.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1983) defined esteem as something that is regarded highly and prized accordingly. Self-esteem is considered to be a confidence in oneself. Coopersmith (1967) explained that the concept of "self" is formed out of many diverse experiences and interactions with others. One can see that it would be difficult for our youth, who have experienced poverty, disenfranchisement, and hopelessness, to behave in a very positive manner.

Rehberg (1969) indicated that the more positive the adolescent's self-esteem, the more likely would he or she be to set high academic and career standards. People with high self-esteem are less troubled with fears, self-doubts, and, seemingly, can view and work toward personal goals more realistically.

Schools are expected to foster in students the ability to develop individual aspirations, the setting of goals, and commitment to reach

those goals. Many of our students today are unable to focus on long-term goals. They choose, rather, instant short-term gratification. This is not surprising since the students have been exposed to many difficult situations which make perseverance, the concept of success, and the reality of change seem unattainable for them. Students need to recognize that they will sometimes encounter obstacles which prevent success, but that they must plan and learn to overcome those obstacles. They need to be given encouragement, direction, as well as the help of emphasizing adults to guide them along.

Ethical behavior is another demand of employers. Paul (1988) indicated that ethical persons, however strongly motivated to do what is morally right, can do so only if they know what that is, and that this they cannot do if they systematically confuse their sense of what is morally right with their self-interest, personal desires, or what is commonly believed in their peer groups or communities. Many of the students entering the work force come from backgrounds where they observe that the weekly paycheck is all important. They believe that the only goal is to work to receive a paycheck and that there is no need for commitment to excellence or loyalty. They do not perceive themselves as an important part of the organization for which they work.

William Graham Sumner, in Paul (1988), pointed out that the most human behavior is a result of unanalyzed habit and routine based on standards and values unconsciously held. It is important that our students in all socioeconomic sectors be exposed to positive examples of ethical behavior if they are to succeed in their personal lives and in the workplace. Employers feel that employees should recognize and work

toward achieving the goals of the department and company they serve, while working toward their own goals. They must be able to function as part of a team, understanding the importance of keeping personal aspirations in place while encouraging the growth of the team of which they are a part.

Personal moral values, according to employers today, are often lacking in our high school graduates. Lanfried (1988) stated that many children today are growing up alone, developing their own personalities with little moral, ethical, or personal direction from any significant adult in their lives. As discussed earlier in this research paper, the breakdown of our families in America, and the many mixed messages given to our youth through the media, has contributed to the difficulties facing our children in the schools. Additionally, they are impacted greatly by many circumstances in our society. These include the arms race, the hypocrisy of adults, environmental degradation, famine, and greed. Kunisawa (1988) related that we have failed to teach our youth the critical importance of honesty, integrity, responsibility, respect, trust, and commitment. We have not convinced our youth that there is value in hard work.

America's youth, especially its minority youth who form the largest part of the employees in the workplace, have little confidence in the promises of the American dream. This lack of confidence affects their performance academically, as well as in the contribution they make to society. Schools alone cannot be held responsible for this situation. The larger society has destroyed its credibility by breaking treaties, contracts, codes of ethics, and laws for human and civil rights



(Kunisawa, 1988). The only viable solution is for business and the schools, and indeed all who have a stake in the betterment of our nation and our world, to join together to provide our youth with the proper examples they need to motivate them to success. We must help them to change the perceptions they have of failure as it relates to their country, their planet, their species--and their futures (Lanfried, 1988). All of our successes, not only the success of business, depend upon it. This can be achieved, if we guide our students toward positive, optimistic attitudes toward life; toward the future; and toward what they can already do successfully. Once again, this is everyone's responsibility. The entire community must become involved in setting goals and giving positive experiences for children rather than constantly placing blame on the victims and on the schools.

#### Adaptability-Flexibility

In the early days of the American economy, jobs were of the type that involved the learning of some relatively simple task that could be repeated over and over again. There was little room for innovation. Most employees were expected to take orders and follow through. Today, however, workers are expected to accept flexible job classifications and work rules, and generally take greater responsibility for the soundness and efficiency of the enterprise (Reich, 1989).

Reich (1989) indicated that increasing the value of our economy will rely on a work force capable of rapid learning. The author also related that the most important skills will be transferred informally among workers as they gain experience on the job, rather than gleaned

through formal education and training. The ability to learn on the job will depend on learning skills and attitudes developed long before students graduate and enter the work force.

Education in the United States can no longer be the type that prepares our youth for "cog" jobs. We must prepare our students to take responsibility and to take advantage of whatever opportunities present themselves in their lives. We need to educate our young to think critically and to love learning. Creativity, reasoning, and problem-solving must be encouraged.

Businesses today will not only depend on the decisions of top-level administrators as it did in the past. Reich (1989) indicated that the jobs of top managers will be to create environments in which people can identify and solve problems for themselves. Employees will need to be always ready to make needed adjustments that will "speed and smooth" business matters so that the organization can succeed.

The problem with our youth is that everyone in the schools and throughout society has always been making decisions for them without giving or offering them any participation in the process of decision-making. Yet, suddenly, business and the schools expect them, upon graduation, to be prepared to make effective decisions. Decision-making is a process, and it has to be taken as it is. It has to be learned early in life. Researchers indicate that the major source of the American labor force will depend on these students, the worst-prepared third of our young people who lack basic academic and reasoning skills. We must all join together to encourage the lowest achievers among our youth to have, at the least, minimal levels of

productive competence if our economy is to be healthy and our country strong.

We cannot wait until our students are in high school to find ways to help them. Many of the attitudes and habits that children take with them throughout life are learned early in their lives. We must establish ways to help our neediest children to develop the skills they will need early in their school experience. A partnership with business will provide the schools with valuable information into what curriculum and training will adequately prepare students for our changing society.

### School-Business Partnerships

For many years, working relationships between schools and the business community have existed. Today, however, this form of augmenting the experiences students receive in school is being encouraged throughout our nation. According to a report issued by the U. S. Department of Education, entitled America's Schools: Everybody's Business (Merenda, 1989), education partnerships (cooperative efforts between a school and the private sector to improve the equality of education) are truly a national movement permeating the entire education system.

Literature indicates that since 1983, the number of schools reporting partnerships have risen from 17 to 40 percent and that there are approximately 140,800 education partnerships throughout the nation (Merenda, 1989). The author further indicated that partners range from individuals or small companies to large corporations or government

agencies. The private sector participated in half of all partnerships in 1987-1988.

Since the A Nation At Risk report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), many efforts have been made to correct the situation which exists in America's schools in which many students graduate without having adequate employability skills and are unprepared for the rigors of further education. Among the many efforts made to correct the situation, numerous studies have been conducted in a quest to find viable solutions. One commonality among many of the reports of the various studies was the recommendation that the business community of the United States take a lead and devote its expertise, its employees as volunteers, its political and economic influence, and its money to school improvement and reform (Council for Aid to Education, 1989).

Zacchei and Mirman (1986) identified the main reasons for the involvement of business and the schools as the growing public awareness of the connection between good schools and a prosperous economy and the shortage of entry-level employees with sufficient job skills. Cetron, Gayle, and Soriano (1985) related that school and business partnerships are intended to have the schools teach concepts which the students need, and then put those concepts to work in the world of business. They provide the reasons for learning.

The future work force in America, as stated earlier, will consist of minorities and the poor. Literature has identified that those who fall into these categories often have been "general track" students, the weakest of the students in school. They ultimately end up with high school diplomas but lack a worthwhile education. They are persons who



were schooled for working below the reigns of their potential, who expect success in life to come easily, and who cannot perceive change in their lives.

School and business partnerships can enhance the school environment in ways that would reduce the marginal school behaviors these students, and eventually workers, experience and help them individually, as well as collectively, to develop to the best of their abilities. Everyone must participate in allowing our students to know why they are learning, how learning relates with other learning, and where this learning relates to real life (Parnell, 1985). Such experiences will help our students feel more confident about themselves and become independent, contributing citizens in society.

#### Advantages of School-Business Partnerships

Schools and businesses can benefit from partnerships. The success of the partnership, though, will depend on sustained commitment and cooperation from both groups involved.

Giovanni and Riley (1988) related the advantages to be expected by business from partnerships as:

- Provides employee in-service training by educational experts
- Allows access to school facilities for meetings and conferences
- Furnishes equipment for training purposes
- Provides retraining programs for employees
- Produces students who are potentially trained employees

- Creates and improves job opportunities through contract arrangements between school and business
- Allows business to have a say in the training of future employees

MacDowell (1989) cited the following advantages to businesses:

- Greater consumer understanding of the company's products, services, and policies
- Improved public image through direct involvement in socially responsible activities
- Fewer problems with employee job training, equal employment opportunities, and readiness for entry-level positions
- Improved morale in the workplace
- Creation of a means for measuring the impact of business' involvement in education

For the schools, the authors relate the following benefits from partnerships:

- Increased enrollment
- Provides workstations for students
- Gives teachers additional contract time
- Supplies resource people who are skilled and experienced workers from trades and industries
- Furnishes equipment for training purposes

MacDowell (1989) cited the following benefits for the school:

- New resources, ideas, commitments with which to pursue the goal of improving the school
- A broader sense of support from influential leaders and the public
- Improvement in morale as teachers experience a closer relationship with the community and a new dimension of community support
- Job experiences and opportunities for students

- Greater opportunities for students to learn about careers, the economy, and real-world applications of academic subjects
- Raising students' aspirations through interaction with adults who serve as career role models

The Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education, of the National Business Education Association (1985), indicated the linkage of schools and businesses as having the following benefits for students:

- Internships and cooperative education program opportunities
- Increased levels of relevancy in course work and other learning experiences which lead to successful careers
- Contacts and resources for future full-time employment

While school and business partnerships carry many benefits to all students, the schools, and businesses in this society, these partnerships can be extremely helpful to marginal students in high school. As indicated by researchers, marginal students (mostly minority and poor students) are most affected in a negative manner through school experiences. Many, regardless of their ability/potentials, are channeled into general, vocational, or special education programs (Oakes, 1988). These students need to be provided with opportunities that would encourage them to develop to the best of their abilities. By so doing, we will enable them to succeed at their own level and will eliminate or reduce numbers on the Welfare Department and social services rolls.

Schools and businesses are linked to solve concerns and problems that lead to better mutual understanding. By linking to support our

national educational process, schools and businesses will break down the isolation of the schools and work together to deal with the wide range of problems that face our society today. By so doing, our students will benefit from more equal educational opportunities regardless of their race or socioeconomic background.

The ultimate advantage of these partnerships is the better preparation of all youth who, through this avenue, will develop good leadership and fellowship skills by mirroring their adult role models.

#### Disadvantages of School-Business Partnerships

The Committee for Economic Development (1985) indicated that school and business partnerships are difficult to establish and maintain because they involve relationships between organizations. Schools and businesses differ markedly in ways in which people work and in which the work gets done. Whenever people from different walks of life are teamed together, there will always be friction. The friction itself is not harmful. Rather, it is how we deal with the friction that constitutes the affect it has.

The stakes are too high for any concerned individual involved in the planning, implementation, or support of the school-business partnership or any other school reform to allow personal feelings to interfere with what is best for our children. However, problems must be acknowledged and dealt with when they are present in any given situation.

While school-business partnerships can create many positive benefits for all parties, there are also some areas that give cause for concern. Scholars have been concerned with this issue.



MacDowell (1989) suggested that:

- School-business partnerships may not produce the results businesses or schools want in the time they expect;
- Schools often place a higher value on the survival of the partnership than on the success of their students;
- Objectives of the partnership may be so wide, they cannot be met; and if they fail, corporate interest in the school may diminish;
- Teachers might not be treated as professionals;
- Teachers and all involved in the program must be committed to making it work if it is to succeed.

Cetron, Gayle, and Soriano (1985) indicated the following disadvantages:

- Efforts to upgrade public schools may be undermined if colleges and universities fail to raise their standards;
- Proposed reforms are costly to implement--schools cannot begin improvements without assurance that funds will be available for the length of the project;
- Public willingness to support education reforms is tied to results in the classroom--the problem will be how to make improvements fast enough to convince the public that something is being done while avoiding "quick fixes."

Difficulties will always arise when efforts are made to correct dysfunctional situations. The important factor is to remain committed and to ensure that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. To make school-business partnerships as successful as possible, both parties must work toward the common goals and interests. The benefit of our children must remain of paramount importance.

Bastian, Fruchter, Gittell, Greer, and Haskins (1986) suggested that the Federal Government has a continuing and fundamental responsibility to investigate the educational effects of racial and sexual discrimination, as well as discrimination based on economic status, native language, national origin, and handicapping situations. Further, the authors indicated that any agenda for democratic education should have a strong, intervening federal participation to deter discrimination and should provide for corrective measures.

The responsibility for our youth belongs to all in this nation. We must work together to minimize those factors that affect positive outcomes, if our youth are to benefit. It is very important to keep in mind that the goal is to offer alternatives for our youth to improve and not to create/maintain a program for any other type of benefit.

### Obstacles

There are many benefits to school-business partnerships. These partnerships can be beneficial to the minority and poor students in our nation--those who need to benefit most from school experiences.

We cannot allow the factors that arise when planning is implemented for valuable experiences to prevent us from doing what is best for our youth. It is imperative that we view these perceived, and maybe even real, obstacles as challenges and work diligently to overcome them. Our children's future and the future of America depend upon the actions that we take or do not take.

Literature indicates the following as possible obstacles to the implementation of school-business partnerships:

- Funding
- Unsupportive principals and teachers--everyone must "buy" into the program if it is to be effective

Regarding the same concerns, Cetron, Gayle, and Soriano (1985) considered the following:

- Curriculum must be updated continually so schools can prepare students for newly-created careers in business and industry.
- Schools will have to develop policies, programs, and facilities that will allow them to move into the area of retraining workers.
- Businesses will have to develop ways to cover for employees who are volunteering in schools, teaching, or taking classes.
- Teacher certification requirements will have to be more flexible to allow for experts outside of the educational structure to teach special classes.
- As Blacks and other minorities gain educational and political power, tension will increase among minorities unless community planners foresee this possibility and deal with equity issues early on. Tension could spill over into the schools.
- The federal, state, and local governments must become more responsive to the growing minority population, and must ensure that high-quality education and training programs exist.

Many of the programs instituted thus far have not been effective enough in helping to save our youth. If we are to be successful in our determination to improve the education system, then we must make sure that the programs we support nurture, are well defined, are well-structured, and are focused on the welfare of our children. These programs must be treated as challenges to all involved with policy and decision making as it affects the schools. An evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the program will be necessary.

### Conclusions

The American educational system is facing a myriad of problems which jeopardize its goal (Glenn, 1988). It is clear to all that the strength of our nation depends upon the educational system. Kirkpatrick (1989), Chairman of the Cigna Corporation, summed up the importance of education in our society: "The answer is virtually all our national problems--from international competitiveness to improving our standard of living to the security of our nation--ultimately rests on one word. That word is 'education.'" Education will ensure that our nation remains a leader in technology, economics, and a model for democratic nations.

Many of the children in our schools are at risk of failure academically. Many do not finish high school, and many of those who do receive diplomas that do not attest to their having a worthwhile education. Bastian (1988) indicated that 30 to 50 percent of all American children enter the schools with levels of deprivation which contribute to the risk of their failure in school.

The decay of the family structure in this country; the large array of socioeconomic problems; teenage pregnancy; drugs; and the lack of positive support staff, teachers, and counselors for our youth all contribute to the problems which our youth face. It has been indicated that those who suffer most from the dysfunctions are the poor and minorities in this nation. These are the individuals who will form the majority of our work force. These are the victims of school failure.



It is recognized among the decisionmakers that there are serious problems. Efforts have been made to cure the problems, but they seem to have been ineffective in solving the problem of school failure. They do contribute to solving other problems, however, such as unemployment for some sectors of this society.

We are failing to reach a major section of our children. Administrators, teachers, and counselors are failing to motivate our youth to learning. Kunisawa (1988) indicated that institutions and related professionals are failing to provide children with proof of the importance of honesty, integrity, responsibility, respect, trust, and commitment in their lives. Students need to see these values demonstrated in order for them to recognize the value of hard work and the benefits of a good education.

Spring (1985) suggested that one of the greater burdens of being Black or of Spanish-American origin is that the economic value of each stage of education attainment is less than it is for the majority White population. We must find avenues to reach our children and help them make wise choices that will aid them in reaching their fullest potentials according to their individual interests.

It is evident that the future of our nation depends upon our youth. It is important that we provide each individual with equal opportunities for success otherwise, as Kunisawa (1988) indicated, we will not have a future.

Education will solve many of the ills of society. Our students, especially our minority and poor students, need help. We must find effective programs that combine work and education to help youth,

especially those who experience economic needs and those who have become disenchanted with school. We must find ways to deal with the problems that face our youth.

We must first determine that the problems we encounter in implementing programs are really worth the effort of finding workable solutions for them. Finally, we must be sure that the solutions we find will serve those intended to be served. It is important that we provide for all our youth, not just our minorities, if we are to provide all with the skills they need to be effective in the society at large.

The following chapter will present the methodology used in this study.

## C H A P T E R    I I I

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the procedures used in conducting this research study. It discusses the site of the study, the target population, the instruments used for data collection, the procedure used for field testing the instruments, and the analysis of the data.

#### Site of the Study

The study was conducted at a high school in the City of Springfield (Massachusetts) which was instituted for the designated purpose of training students interested in business occupations/careers to enter into the world of work. The goal of this school, established in 1910, is to provide "youth with a general education as well as prepare youth for employment in the business world."

In recent years, it has been alleged by the business community that secondary school students are inadequately prepared for entry-level positions in the workplace. A report in the Springfield Union News (19 June 1990) indicated that better job training is critical for America's future: "U. S. workers could face a lifetime of low-paying jobs and America will lose its global economic race unless drastic changes are made in training average workers."

A 1988 follow-up survey of that year's 278 high school graduates indicated that 91 (or 32.8%) of the graduating seniors sought gainful full-time employment upon graduation, 22 (or 7.9%) were gainfully

employed on a part-time basis, and another 19 (or 6.8%) were unemployed and seeking employment. Table 1 illustrates a general summary of the follow-up survey of the high school class of 1988.

According to data from the 1980 Census, the City of Springfield (Massachusetts) has a population of 154,896 inhabitants. Out of this populace, 115,873 (or 74.81%) are White, 25,219 (or 16.28%) are Black, and 13,804 (or 8.71%) are of Hispanic origin, mainly Puerto Rican (89.09%).

#### Target Population of the Study

The total school population of the City of Springfield (Massachusetts) in October of the 1989-1990 school year was 23,662. Of this number, 9,239 (or 39%) were White; 6,619 (or 28%) were Non-White; 472 (or .02%) were Asian; and 7,332 (or 31%) were Spanish surnamed.

The total population of the school participating in the study in October of 1989 was 1,224. Of this number, 238 (or 19%) were White; 445 (or 36%) were Black; 190 (or 16%) were Asian; and 351 (or 29%) were Spanish surnamed, mainly Puerto Rican.

The population of the high school system in the City does not represent an equal distribution of ethnic groups indicated by the Research Department of the Springfield Public Schools. (See Table 2.) The White population represents the majority of the City; while at the high school in this study, this population represents the minority: 238 (or 19%) White students versus 976 (or 81%) Non-White students. The sample of ethnic background of the participants in the study was



Table 1  
 General Summary--High School of Commerce  
 (Class of June, 1988)

|   | Number of Graduates | Percentage    |
|---|---------------------|---------------|
| Attending Four-Year Colleges                          | 35                  | 12.6          |
| Attending Two-Year Colleges                           | 75                  | 27.1          |
| Attending Other Schools                               | 3                   | 1.0           |
| United States Armed Forces                            | 10                  | 3.6           |
| Gainfully Employed--Full Time                         | 91                  | 32.8          |
| Gainfully Employed--Part Time                         | 22                  | 7.9           |
| Unemployed and Seeking Work                           | 19                  | 6.8           |
| Unemployed and Not Seeking Work<br>(Marriage, Health) | 9                   | 3.2           |
| Unable to Contact                                     | 14                  | 5.0           |
| TOTAL:  | <u>278</u>          | <u>100.0%</u> |

\*Data provided by the Guidance Department, High School of Commerce, Springfield, Massachusetts.

Table 2  
 Distribution of the Population by Ethnic Group  
 (October, 1989)

| Grade  | Non-White  | White      | Asian      | Hispanic   | Total       |
|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 10     | 182        | 93         | 122        | 138        | 535         |
| 11     | 114        | 80         | 36         | 100        | 330         |
| 12     | 149        | 65         | 32         | 113        | 359         |
| TOTAL: | <u>445</u> | <u>238</u> | <u>190</u> | <u>351</u> | <u>1224</u> |

\*Data provided by the Research Department, Springfield Public Schools, Springfield, Massachusetts.

based on their willingness to participate in the study and their parents' consent to such participation.

Due to the nature of this study, the students participating were enrolled in the Business Program. The study was concerned with the perception secondary school students have of the training they receive for entry-level positions, how it affects their performance and its relationship to perceptions/expectations, and the level of satisfaction of employees in the workplace.

This high school is the only business high school in Springfield (Massachusetts) dedicated to preparing students for business careers. Therefore, the majority of the students at the school are enrolled in a Business Program or a combination of Business and College Preparatory (over 60%).

In terms of gender, females represent the majority of the total school population. (See Table 3.) This fact is also represented in the sample of participants in the study where 122 (or 67.8%) were females, while 58 (or 32.2%) were males. (See Table 4.)

In terms of grade levels, out of 1,224 students in the school, 534 (or 44%) were enrolled in the tenth grade, 330 (or 27%) were enrolled in the eleventh grade, and 359 (or 29%) were enrolled in the twelfth grade. The City of Springfield is facing a dilemma with student dropouts. Table 5 illustrates the dropout incidence of the secondary public schools in Springfield between September and January of the 1988-1989 school year.

Table 3  
Distribution of School Population by Gender

| Grade   | Males | Females | Total |
|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| 10      | 210   | 325     | 535   |
| 11      | 115   | 215     | 330   |
| 12      | 140   | 219     | 359   |
| TOTAL : | 465   | 759     | 1224  |

\*Data provided by the Research Department, Springfield Public Schools, Springfield, Massachusetts.



Table 4  
Distribution of Survey Participants by Gender

| Gender  | Number | Percentage |
|---------|--------|------------|
| Males   | 58     | 32.2       |
| Females | 122    | 67.8       |
| TOTAL:  | 180    | 100.0%     |

\*Data provided by the Research Department, Springfield Public Schools, Springfield, Massachusetts.

Table 5  
 Secondary School Dropout Incidence  
 (September, 1988 - January, 1989)

| School                             | Number of Dropouts | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Springfield Central<br>High School | 18                 | 9          |
| High School of Commerce            | 105                | 49         |
| Putnam Vocational<br>High School   | 90                 | 42         |
| TOTAL:                             | 213                | 100%       |

\*Data provided by the Research Department, Springfield Public Schools, Springfield, Massachusetts.

### The Study

The study was designed to provide answers to four research questions. Two of these questions were designed to obtain data from students while the other two questions were designed to provide data from possible sources of employment in the area. The questions were as follows:

Question 1: What are the secondary school students' perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions?

Question 2: To what extent do secondary school students' perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions affect their academic achievement?

Question 3: What are the businesses' perceptions/expectations of secondary school students' training for entry-level positions?

Question 4: To what extent are businesses satisfied with the secondary school students' training for entry-level positions and their performance at the workplace?

### Instrumentation

Two survey instruments were designed to gather information needed to answer the four research questions which form the basis for the present study.

The initial step of the formulation of the questionnaires involved a review of the problem, the purpose of the study with its research questions, and questionnaires which were used previously in similar studies. It was determined that the Likert Rating Scale met the criteria established for the study, and it was thus chosen for the study.

The student questionnaire was prepared in two versions--English (see Appendix A) and Spanish (see Appendix B). The Spanish version was intended only to accommodate those Spanish/English bilingual students participating in the study who found it easier to respond in their native language. The bilingual program serves different language needs, such as Spanish, Asian, and Russian students, with the Spanish representing the largest segment. Eight-four (or 46.7%) students participating in the study were Spanish surnamed. The researcher felt that it would be ludicrous to conduct a research study in a school community, such as the one chosen for the present study, without considering the language needs of this linguistic population.

The student questionnaire involved the development of items that would determine the students' perceptions of their training at the secondary level for entry-level positions in the world of work. To achieve this goal, a number of questions were formulated for the variables of that section of the study.

The student questionnaire was composed of three parts. Part I was designed to provide demographic data, such as age, sex, ethnicity, and other information relevant to the study. Part II was arranged according to the Likert-style rating scale. It consisted of five possible responses: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Undecided;



(4) Agree; and (5) Strongly Agree. Part III consisted of two open-ended questions designed to provide students with the opportunity to offer additional comments and/or recommendations about the training they receive.

The second questionnaire was designed for data collection from the business community. (See Appendix C.) It was concerned with providing information to illustrate the level of satisfaction that business has about the training secondary school students received in school that prepared them for entry-level positions, as well as the perceptions/expectations that business has of that training.

The three parts of the business community questionnaire were constructed in the same manner as that of the student questionnaire, except that in Part I the demographic data was concerned with the type of business, size of the company, number of employees, and the product produced. Part III of this questionnaire was designed to offer businesses participating in the study the opportunity to offer additional information in terms of major problems regarding secondary student training for entry-level positions and possible recommendations to improve the relationship between school training and work performance.

#### Instrument Field Testing

Prior to implementation of the student questionnaire, the instrument was tested with fifteen secondary school students who had no opportunity to participate in the study but were representative of the school population enrolled in the Business Program.

Students were asked to read the instructions and make comments and suggestions. They did comment, both verbally and in writing, regarding how the instructions or terminology could be changed in order to make the questionnaire clearer and more effective.

It took students an average of two minutes to read the instructions and ten minutes to respond to items on the questionnaire. According to the students, the instructions and items on the questionnaire were clear. The questionnaire used to collect data from the students may be found in the Appendices: English version in Appendix A and Spanish version in Appendix B. The instrument used to survey the business community is included in Appendix C.

#### Data Collection Procedure

The researcher informally approached the school principal of the business high school in the City of Springfield (Massachusetts) concerning her interest in conducting the research study at the school. A formal, written request followed (see Appendix D), with a copy sent to the Superintendent of Schools. Upon receiving approval to conduct the study in the school, 200 letters were sent to parents requesting permission for their children to participate in the study. (See Appendix D.) One hundred eighty students received parental permission to participate in the study. Those students with parental consent were asked to respond to the questionnaire during study periods to avoid disruption of classes.

For the business survey, the researcher consulted the head of the Guidance Department of the school seeking information from the most recently available follow-up survey of graduating seniors. (See Appendix D.) The types of business establishments which employed these students were noted, and 50 questionnaires were mailed to businesses in the immediate area. Twenty-eight responses were received by the established deadline. Two others were received too late to be included in the study.

#### Statistical Procedures

The data collected from the study were coded numerically and then entered into the computer for statistical analysis. The most recent version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) [Nie, Bent, & Hull, 1989] was utilized in generating a computer program for analysis, tabulation, and interpretation of the findings. This facility provides the users with a comprehensive set of procedures and a large number of statistical routines commonly used for data analysis.

The data for the study were analyzed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive analysis of the data was achieved through the use of frequency distribution of the responses to individual items of the questionnaires as well as certain measures of central tendency and dispersion (i.e., mean and standard deviation of the ratings assigned by the survey participants to the individual items of the questionnaires). The inferential analysis of the data was accomplished by testing the relationship between students' academic

achievement and their perceptions of the school training programs for entry-level positions in the workplace. The Pearson Correlation technique, along with its test of significance, was employed to test the above relationship. In addition, cross-tabulation of the data was utilized to determine the degree to which perceptions of the survey participants are associated with their personal and demographic variables, such as gender, ethnic background, grade level, and employment status. The chi-square test of association was used to determine such relationships. The .05 level of significance was adopted to test any relationships between pairs of variables.

Chapter IV will present the findings of the study and a detailed statistical analysis and discussion of such findings. The chapter is organized in three parts: Part I--Analysis of the Student Survey; Part II--Analysis of the Business Survey; and Part III--Summary of the Findings.



C H A P T E R    I V  
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This chapter presents the results and analysis of the data collected for this research study. The findings are reported by organizing the chapter into the following major parts: Part I presents the findings related to the survey of secondary school students who participated in this study and the analysis of the open-ended section of that survey in a descriptive manner. Part II deals with the analysis of the data collected from the business community involved in the study, as well as the analysis of the open-ended section of the business survey in a descriptive manner. Part III presents a summary of the findings.

Part I: Analysis of the Student Survey

Analysis of the student survey will be presented through the following: Section A includes general information about the students who participated in the study; Section B presents the students' perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions in the workplace; and Section C examines the extent to which the students' perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions affect their academic achievement.

Section A: General Information

In this section, personal characteristics of the survey participants, their educational accomplishments, their employment status, and

family background will be discussed by tabulation of the findings and through the use of frequency distribution of the data.

Personal Characteristics. Table 6 presents a breakdown of the survey participants by sex, age, and ethnic group. As shown in this table, males represented 58 (or 32.2%) of the survey participants; while females represented 122 (or 67.8%) of the survey participants.

The age of the students ranged from 15 to 23 years, with an average of a little over 17 years. The distribution of students according to age was as follows: 7 (or 3.9%) were 15 years old; 36 (or 20.0%) were 16 years old; 65 (or 36.1%) were 17 years old; 60 (or 33.3%) were 18 years old; 11 (or 6.1%) were 19 years old; and 1 (or .6%) was 23 years old.

Whites represented 23 (or 12.8%) of the survey participants; Blacks represented 56 (or 31.1%) of the survey participants; Hispanics represented 96 (or 53.3%) of the survey participants; and the remaining 5 (or 2.8%) of the participating students were from other ethnic groups.

Educational Accomplishments. Table 7 presents a breakdown of the survey participants by grade level, native language, and grade-point average. According to this table, of the 180 students who participated in this study, 28 (or 15.6%) were tenth graders; 55 (or 30.6%) were eleventh graders; and the remaining 97 (or 53.8%) were twelfth graders.

The distribution of students according to native language was as follows: 89 (or 49.4%) were originally English language; 84 (or 46.7%) were originally Spanish language; 2 (or 1.1%) were originally

Table 6  
 Distribution of the Survey Participants  
 According to Sex, Age, and  
 Ethnic Group

| Personal Variables         | Number     | Percent      |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Sex:                       |            |              |
| Male                       | 58         | 32.2         |
| Female                     | 122        | 67.8         |
| Age Group:                 |            |              |
| 15 Years Old               | 7          | 3.9          |
| 16 Years Old               | 36         | 20.0         |
| 17 Years Old               | 65         | 36.1         |
| 18 Years Old               | 60         | 33.3         |
| 19 Years Old               | 11         | 6.1          |
| 23 Years Old               | 1          | 0.6          |
| Ethnic Group:              |            |              |
| White                      | 23         | 12.8         |
| Black                      | 56         | 31.1         |
| Hispanic                   | 96         | 53.3         |
| Other                      | 5          | 2.8          |
| <b>Total Participants:</b> | <b>180</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Table 7

Distribution of the Survey Participants According  
to Grade Level, Native Language, and  
Grade Point Average

| Educational Accomplishment | Number     | Percent      |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Grade Level:               |            |              |
| Tenth Graders              | 28         | 15.6         |
| Eleventh Graders           | 55         | 30.6         |
| Twelfth Graders            | 97         | 53.8         |
| Language:                  |            |              |
| English                    | 89         | 49.4         |
| Spanish                    | 84         | 46.7         |
| Portuguese                 | 2          | 1.1          |
| Korean                     | 1          | 0.6          |
| No Response                | 4          | 2.2          |
| Grade Average:             |            |              |
| Between 3 and 4            | 78         | 43.3         |
| Between 2 and 3            | 90         | 50.0         |
| Less Than 2                | 12         | 6.7          |
| <b>Total Participants:</b> | <b>180</b> | <b>100.0</b> |



Portuguese; 1 (or .6%) was Korean; and 4 (or 2.2%) failed to indicate their native language.

Of the total 180 students, 78 (or 43.3%) reported a grade-point average between three and four; 90 (or 50.0%) reported a grade-point average between two and three; and the remaining 12 (or 6.7%) reported a grade-point average of less than two.

Employment Status. Table 8 presents a breakdown of the survey participants according to their employment status and the number of hours worked per week. Only 4 (or 2.2%) of the survey participants reported to have had full-time jobs; whereas 74 (or 41.1%) had part-time jobs and the remaining 102 (or 56.7%) were unemployed.

The number of hours worked per week was reported to range from 3 hours to 56 hours, with an average of nearly 20 hours per week. Of those who held part-time or full-time jobs, 8 (or 4.5%) worked less than 10 hours per week; 26 (or 14.4%) worked between 10 to 19 hours per week; 33 (or 18.3%) worked between 20 to 29 hours per week; and the remaining 11 (or 61.1%) worked 30 or more hours per week.

Family Background. Table 9 presents a breakdown of the survey participants according to their family background. Of the total 180 students who participated in the study, 151 (or 83.9%) reported living with their parent(s); 22 (or 12.2%) reported living with others; and the remaining 7 (or 3.9%) reported living alone.

Twenty-five (or 13.9%) of the students reported that their mothers had 6 years or less of formal education; 19 (or 10.6%) reported that their mothers had between 7 to 9 years of formal education; 110 (or 61.1%) reported that their mothers had between 10 to 12 years of formal

Table 8  
 Distribution of the Survey Participants  
 According to Their Employment Status

| Employment Status          | Number     | Percent      |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Status:                    |            |              |
| Full-Time                  | 4          | 2.2          |
| Part-Time                  | 74         | 41.1         |
| Non-Employed               | 102        | 56.7         |
| Work Per Week:             |            |              |
| Under 10 Hours             | 8          | 4.5          |
| 10 to 19 Hours             | 26         | 14.4         |
| 20 to 29 Hours             | 33         | 18.3         |
| Over 30 Hours              | 11         | 6.1          |
| Not Applicable             | 102        | 56.7         |
| <b>Total Participants:</b> | <b>180</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Table 9  
 Distribution of the Survey Participants  
 According to Their Family Background

| Family Background          | Number     | Percent      |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>Living With Whom:</b>   |            |              |
| Parent(s)                  | 151        | 83.9         |
| Other(s)                   | 22         | 12.2         |
| Alone                      | 7          | 3.9          |
| <b>Mother Education:</b>   |            |              |
| 0 to 6 Years               | 25         | 13.9         |
| 7 to 9 Years               | 19         | 10.6         |
| 10 to 12 Years             | 110        | 61.1         |
| Over 12 Years              | 26         | 14.4         |
| <b>Father Education:</b>   |            |              |
| 0 to 6 Years               | 32         | 17.8         |
| 7 to 9 Years               | 23         | 12.8         |
| 10 to 12 Years             | 104        | 57.8         |
| Over 12 Years              | 21         | 11.6         |
| <b>Total Participants:</b> | <b>180</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

education; and the remaining 26 (or 14.4%) reported that their mothers had more than 12 years of formal education.

Similarly, 32 (or 17.8%) of the students reported that their fathers had 6 or less years of formal education; 23 (or 12.8%) reported that their fathers had between 7 to 9 years of formal education; 104 (or 57.8%) reported that their fathers had between 10 to 12 years of formal education; and the remaining 21 (or 11.6%) reported that their fathers had more than 12 years of formal education.

### Section B: The Students' Perceptions

The following research question will be examined in this section of the chapter: "What are the secondary school students' perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions in the workplace?"

The answer to this research question was provided by analyzing the frequency distribution of the responses to the individual items of the questionnaire. In addition, an analysis of the responses by selected variables, such as sex, grade level, ethnic background, and employment status, was performed through the use of cross-tabulation of the data. Table 10 presents the students' perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions. Based on the finding of this table, the majority of students felt that:

- Training in school stresses the importance of following directions (73.9%);
- Attendance at school is important for success (93.3%);
- The courses provide opportunity for students to make appropriate decisions and stay with them (82.8%);



Table 10

Students' Perceptions of Their School Training  
for Entry-Level Positions

| Areas of Concern  | Agree |      | Neutral |      | Disagree |      |
|---|-------|------|---------|------|----------|------|
|   | N     | %    | N       | %    | N        | %    |
| 1. Training in school stresses the importance of following directions.              | 133   | 73.9 | 28      | 15.5 | 19       | 10.6 |
| 2. The student's attendance at school is important for his or her success.          | 168   | 93.3 | 7       | 3.9  | 5        | 2.8  |
| 3. The courses provide for students to learn to make decisions and stay with them.  | 149   | 82.8 | 18      | 10.0 | 13       | 7.2  |
| 4. The courses prepare students to communicate well verbally as well as in writing. | 155   | 86.1 | 17      | 9.4  | 8        | 4.5  |
| 5. It is important for a student to reflect a good image of his or her school.      | 150   | 83.4 | 13      | 7.2  | 17       | 9.4  |
| 6. The way a student behaves in school affects his or her performance.              | 124   | 68.9 | 20      | 11.1 | 36       | 20.0 |

Continued, next page

Table 10--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Agree |      | Neutral |      | Disagree |      |
|--|-------|------|---------|------|----------|------|
|  | N     | %    | N       | %    | N        | %    |
| 7. The courses provide opportunity for students to work as part of a team.               | 109   | 60.6 | 40      | 22.2 | 31       | 17.2 |
| 8. It is important for a student to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise.      | 156   | 86.7 | 18      | 10.0 | 6        | 3.3  |
| 9. A student's success in life will depend upon his or her ability to keep learning.     | 167   | 92.8 | 9       | 5.0  | 4        | 2.2  |
| 10. A student who has been suspended from school is unable to keep up with work.         | 15    | 8.3  | 17      | 9.4  | 148      | 82.3 |
| 11. The rules at school encourage students to manage themselves in an acceptable manner. | 117   | 65.0 | 37      | 20.6 | 26       | 14.4 |
| 12. It is important for a student to get along with his or her peers.                    | 161   | 89.4 | 12      | 6.7  | 7        | 3.9  |
| 13. The courses provide opportunity for students to use their own initiative.            | 138   | 67.7 | 34      | 18.8 | 8        | 4.5  |

Table 10--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Agree |      | Neutral |      | Disagree |      |
|--|-------|------|---------|------|----------|------|
|  | N     | %    | N       | %    | N        | %    |
| 14. Good academic skills are important for a student's success at work.                    | 168   | 93.3 | 9       | 5.0  | 3        | 1.7  |
| 15. Students are usually involved in extra-curricular activities at school.                | 65    | 36.1 | 26      | 14.4 | 89       | 49.5 |
| 16. The school encourages parents to become involved in school training of students.       | 56    | 31.1 | 35      | 19.4 | 89       | 49.5 |
| 17. It is important for a student to get a good education for his or her life improvement. | 169   | 93.9 | 6       | 3.3  | 5        | 2.8  |

- The courses prepare students to communicate well verbally as well as in writing (86.1%);
- It is important for students to reflect a good image of their school (83.3%);
- The way students behave in school affects their performance (68.9%);
- The courses provide an opportunity for students to work as part of a team (60.6%);
- It is important for students to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise (86.7%);
- The success of students in life will depend upon their ability to keep learning (92.8%);
- The rules at school encourage students to manage themselves in an acceptable manner (65.0%);
- It is important for students to get along well with their peers (89.4%);
- The courses provide an opportunity for students to use their own initiative (76.7%);
- The students felt that good academic skills are important for their success at work (93.3%);
- It is important for students to get a good education if they are to improve their status in life (93.9%).

Only 8.3% of the students indicated that they have been suspended from school too many times and were unable to keep up with their work; 36.1% were involved in extracurricular activities; and 31.1% indicated



that the school encourages parents to become involved in their school training.

Table 11 provides a descriptive analysis of the data through the use of certain measures of central tendency and dispersion, such as mean and standard deviation of the ratings assigned by students to the individual items of the questionnaire. The rating scale ranged from "1" for a strong degree of disagreement to "5" for a strong degree of agreement to items related to the students' perceptions. As shown in the findings presented in this table, the top three items accepted by students to the highest degree of agreement were as follows:

- It is important for a student to get a good education if he or she is to improve his or her status in life (mean = 4.59);
- A student's success in life will depend upon his or her ability to keep learning (mean = 4.53);
- A student's attendance at school is important for his or her future success (mean = 4.46).

The top three items rejected by students to the highest degree of disagreement were as follows:

- A student who has been suspended from school too many times is unable to keep up with his or her work (mean = 1.61);
- The school usually encourages parents to become involved in students' training (mean = 2.72);
- Students are usually involved in extracurricular activities at school (mean = 2.83).

Table 11

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Rank Order of Students' Perceptions  
of Their School Training for Entry-Level Positions  
in the Workplace

| Areas of Concern  | Mean | Standard Deviation | Rank |
|---|------|--------------------|------|
| 1. Training in school stresses the importance of following directions.              | 3.81 | 0.91               | 11   |
| 2. The student's attendance at school is important for his or her success.          | 4.46 | 0.73               | 3    |
| 3. The courses provide for students to learn to make decisions and stay with them.  | 4.01 | 0.83               | 9    |
| 4. The courses prepare students to communicate well verbally as well as in writing. | 4.12 | 0.77               | 7    |
| 5. It is important for a student to reflect a good image of his or her school.      | 4.02 | 0.95               | 8    |
| 6. The way a student behaves in school affects his or her performance.              | 3.78 | 1.21               | 12   |

Continued, next page

Table 11--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Mean | Standard Deviation | Rank |
|--|------|--------------------|------|
| 7. The courses provide opportunity for students to work as part of a team.               | 3.58 | 1.00               | 14   |
| 8. It is important for a student to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise.      | 4.18 | 0.76               | 6    |
| 9. A student's success in life will depend upon his or her ability to keep learning.     | 4.53 | 0.72               | 2    |
| 10. A student who has been suspended from school is unable to keep up with work.         | 1.61 | 1.11               | 17   |
| 11. The rules at school encourage students to manage themselves in an acceptable manner. | 3.69 | 1.04               | 13   |
| 12. It is important for a student to get along with his or her peers.                    | 4.23 | 0.76               | 5    |
| 13. The courses provide opportunity for students to use their own initiative.            | 3.88 | 0.74               | 10   |

Continued, next page

Table 11--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Mean | Standard Deviation | Rank |
|--|------|--------------------|------|
| 14. Good academic skills are important for a student's success at work.                    | 4.41 | 0.69               | 4    |
| 15. Students are usually involved in extracurricular activities at school.                 | 2.83 | 1.34               | 15   |
| 16. The school encourages parents to become involved in school training of students.       | 2.72 | 1.25               | 16   |
| 17. It is important for a student to get a good education for his or her life improvement. | 4.59 | 0.74               | 1    |



An analysis of the students' perceptions by sex is included in Table 12. Based on the findings presented in this table, male and female students tended to have similar perceptions about their school training for entry-level positions on 13 out of the 17 areas of concern. The four areas of concern that revealed significant differences between the perceptions of male and female students were as follows:

- A significantly larger proportion of female students believed that courses prepare them to communicate well verbally as well as in writing;
- A significantly larger proportion of female students indicated that they have not been suspended from school too many times and that they are able to keep up with their work;
- A significantly larger proportion of female students agreed that the courses provide opportunity for them to use their own initiative;
- A significantly larger proportion of male students felt that it is important for them to reflect a good image of their school.

The findings also indicate that both male and female students have shown significant degrees of disagreement to the following areas of concern:

- A student who has been suspended from school too many times is not able to keep up with his or her work;
- The school encourages parents to become involved in school training of students;

Table 12

## Cross-Tabulation of the Students' Perceptions by Sex

| Areas of Concern  | Male Students |          | Female Students |          |
|---|---------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
|   | Agree         | Disagree | Agree           | Disagree |
| 1. Training in school stresses the importance of following directions.              | 77.6          | 10.3     | 72.1            | 10.7     |
| 2. The student's attendance at school is important for his or her success.          | 94.8          | 1.7      | 92.6            | 3.3      |
| 3. The courses provide for students to learn to make decisions and stay with them.  | 82.8          | 8.6      | 82.8            | 6.6      |
| 4. The courses prepare students to communicate well verbally as well as in writing. | 75.9          | 8.6      | 91.0            | 2.5      |
| 5. It is important for a student to reflect a good image of his or her school.      | 89.7          | 8.6      | 80.3            | 9.8      |
| 6. The way a student behaves in school affects his or her performance.              | 69.0          | 17.2     | 68.9            | 21.3     |

Continued, next page

Table 12--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Male Students |          | Female Students |          |
|--|---------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
|  | Agree         | Disagree | Agree           | Disagree |
| 7. The courses provide opportunity for students to work as part of a team.               | 51.7          | 22.4     | 64.8            | 14.8     |
| 8. It is important for a student to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise.      | 86.2          | 3.4      | 86.9            | 3.3      |
| 9. A student's success in life will depend upon his or her ability to keep learning.     | 89.7          | 3.4      | 94.3            | 1.6      |
| 10. A student who has been suspended from school is unable to keep up with work.         | 5.2           | 75.9     | 9.8             | 85.2     |
| 11. The rules at school encourage students to manage themselves in an acceptable manner. | 62.1          | 15.5     | 66.4            | 13.9     |
| 12. It is important for a student to get along with his or her peers.                    | 87.9          | 5.2      | 90.2            | 3.3      |
| 13. The courses provide opportunity for students to use their own initiative.            | 67.2          | 5.2      | 81.1            | 4.1      |

Continued, next page

Table 12--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Male Students |          | Female Students |          |
|--|---------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
|  | Agree         | Disagree | Agree           | Disagree |
| 14. Good academic skills are important for a student's success at work.                    | 93.1          | 1.7      | 93.4            | 1.6      |
| 15. Students are usually involved in extracurricular activities at school.                 | 39.7          | 43.1     | 34.4            | 52.5     |
| 16. The school encourages parents to become involved in school training of students.       | 34.5          | 50.0     | 29.5            | 49.2     |
| 17. It is important for a student to get a good education for his or her life improvement. | 94.8          | 1.7      | 93.4            | 4.1      |



- Students are usually involved in extracurricular activities at school.

Table 13 presents a cross-tabulation of the students' perceptions by employment (i.e., employed vs. non-employed students). As shown in this table, except for one issue, there are no significant differences between the perceptions of employed and non-employed students about their school training for entry-level positions in the workplace. The only difference between the two groups was on the issue of extracurricular activities. In fact, a larger proportion of employed students indicated that they are not involved in extracurricular activities.

A cross-tabulation of the students' perceptions by their grade level is presented in Table 14. According to the data in this table, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders tended to show similar perceptions about their school training for entry-level positions on 12 out of the 17 areas of concern. The five areas of concern that revealed significant differences between the perceptions of the three groups were as follows:

- A significantly larger proportion of eleventh and twelfth graders felt that it is important for them to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise;
- A significantly smaller proportion of the eleventh graders indicated that they are involved in extracurricular activities at school;
- A significantly larger proportion of tenth and twelfth graders agreed that the courses provided them the opportunity to make decisions and stay with them;

Table 13

Cross-Tabulation of the Students' Perceptions  
by Employment Status

| Areas of Concern  | Employed |          | Non-Employed |          |
|---|----------|----------|--------------|----------|
|   | Agree    | Disagree | Agree        | Disagree |
| 1. Training in school stresses the importance of following directions.              | 75.6     | 10.3     | 72.5         | 10.8     |
| 2. The student's attendance at school is important for his or her success.          | 93.6     | 3.8      | 93.1         | 2.0      |
| 3. The courses provide for students to learn to make decisions and stay with them.  | 82.1     | 9.0      | 83.3         | 5.9      |
| 4. The courses prepare students to communicate well verbally as well as in writing. | 84.6     | 6.4      | 87.3         | 2.9      |
| 5. It is important for a student to reflect a good image of his or her school.      | 80.8     | 11.5     | 85.3         | 7.8      |
| 6. The way a student behaves in school affects his or her performance.              | 73.1     | 19.2     | 65.7         | 20.6     |

Continued, next page

Table 13--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Employed |          | Non-Employed |          |
|--|----------|----------|--------------|----------|
|  | Agree    | Disagree | Agree        | Disagree |
| 7. The courses provide opportunity for students to work as part of a team.               | 65.4     | 16.7     | 56.9         | 17.6     |
| 8. It is important for a student to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise.      | 84.6     | 5.1      | 88.2         | 2.0      |
| 9. A student's success in life will depend upon his or her ability to keep learning.     | 93.6     | 3.8      | 92.2         | 1.0      |
| 10. A student who has been suspended from school is unable to keep up with work.         | 6.4      | 82.1     | 9.8          | 82.4     |
| 11. The rules at school encourage students to manage themselves in an acceptable manner. | 65.4     | 15.4     | 64.7         | 13.7     |
| 12. It is important for a student to get along with his or her peers.                    | 89.7     | 3.8      | 89.2         | 3.9      |
| 13. The courses provide opportunity for students to use their own initiative.            | 74.4     | 6.4      | 78.4         | 2.9      |

Table 13--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Employed |          | Non-Employed |          |
|--|----------|----------|--------------|----------|
|  | Agree    | Disagree | Agree        | Disagree |
| 14. Good academic skills are important for a student's success at work.                    | 91.0     | 2.6      | 95.1         | 1.0      |
| 15. Students are usually involved in extracurricular activities at school.                 | 37.2     | 56.4     | 35.3         | 44.1     |
| 16. The school encourages parents to become involved in school training of students.       | 29.5     | 50.0     | 32.4         | 49.0     |
| 17. It is important for a student to get a good education for his or her life improvement. | 96.2     | 1.3      | 92.2         | 3.9      |



Table 14

Cross-Tabulation of the Students' Perceptions  
by Grade Level

| Areas of Concern  | Grade 10 |          | Grade 11 |          | Grade 12 |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|   | Agree    | Disagree | Agree    | Disagree | Agree    | Disagree |
| 1. Training in school stresses the importance of following directions.              | 75.0     | 10.7     | 67.3     | 12.7     | 77.3     | 9.3      |
| 2. The student's attendance at school is important for his or her success.          | 96.4     | 3.6      | 94.5     | 3.6      | 91.8     | 3.1      |
| 3. The courses provide for students to learn to make decisions and stay with them.  | 85.7     | 3.6      | 72.7     | 9.1      | 87.6     | 7.2      |
| 4. The courses prepare students to communicate well verbally as well as in writing. | 89.3     | 3.6      | 83.6     | 5.5      | 86.6     | 4.1      |
| 5. It is important for a student to reflect a good image of his or her school.      | 89.3     | 3.6      | 85.5     | 9.1      | 80.4     | 11.3     |

Continued, next page

Table 14--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Grade 10 |          | Grade 11 |          | Grade 12 |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|  | Agree    | Disagree | Agree    | Disagree | Agree    | Disagree |
| 6. The way a student behaves in school affects his or her performance.                   | 71.4     | 7.1      | 65.5     | 23.6     | 70.1     | 21.6     |
| 7. The courses provide opportunity for students to work as part of a team.               | 46.4     | 17.9     | 65.5     | 9.1      | 61.9     | 21.6     |
| 8. It is important for a student to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise.      | 89.3     | 3.6      | 74.5     | 5.5      | 92.8     | 3.1      |
| 9. A student's success in life will depend upon his or her ability to keep learning.     | 85.7     | 3.6      | 90.9     | 1.8      | 95.9     | 2.1      |
| 10. A student who has been suspended from school is unable to keep up with work.         | 10.7     | 82.1     | 3.6      | 83.6     | 10.3     | 81.4     |
| 11. The rules at school encourage students to manage themselves in an acceptable manner. | 71.4     | 17.9     | 54.5     | 12.7     | 69.1     | 14.4     |

Continued, next page

Table 14--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Grade 10 |          | Grade 11 |          | Grade 12 |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|  | Agree    | Disagree | Agree    | Disagree | Agree    | Disagree |
| 12. It is important for a student to get along with his or her peers.                      | 89.3     | 3.6      | 89.1     | 1.8      | 89.7     | 5.2      |
| 13. The courses provide opportunity for students to use their own initiative.              | 78.6     | 7.1      | 78.2     | 3.6      | 75.3     | 8.2      |
| 14. Good academic skills are important for a student's success at work.                    | 92.9     | 3.6      | 96.4     | 1.8      | 91.8     | 2.1      |
| 15. Students are usually involved in extracurricular activities at school.                 | 42.9     | 35.7     | 20.0     | 60.0     | 43.3     | 47.4     |
| 16. The school encourages parents to become involved in school training of students.       | 50.0     | 35.7     | 25.5     | 58.2     | 28.9     | 48.5     |
| 17. It is important for a student to get a good education for his or her life improvement. | 96.4     | 3.6      | 96.4     | 1.8      | 91.8     | 4.1      |

- A significantly smaller proportion of tenth graders agreed that the courses provided them with the opportunity to work as part of a team;
- A significantly smaller proportion of eleventh graders believed that the rules at school encourage them to manage themselves in an acceptable manner.

Table 15 presents a cross-tabulation of the students' perceptions by ethnic group. Based on the findings reported in this table, students of different ethnic backgrounds tended to show similar perceptions about their school training for entry-level positions on 11 out of the 17 areas of concern. The six areas of concern that revealed significant differences between the perceptions of the three groups were as follows:

- A significantly larger proportion of White students felt that it is important for them to reflect a good image of their school;
- A significantly larger proportion of White students indicated that the courses provide opportunity for them to work as part of a team;
- A significantly larger proportion of Hispanic students believed that the courses provided for students to learn to make decisions and stay with them;
- A significantly smaller proportion of Hispanic students felt that the way a student behaves in school affects his or her job performance;



Table 15

Cross-Tabulation of the Students' Perceptions  
by Ethnic Background

| Areas of Concern  | Black |          | Hispanic |          | White |          |
|---|-------|----------|----------|----------|-------|----------|
|   | Agree | Disagree | Agree    | Disagree | Agree | Disagree |
| 1. Training in school stresses the importance of following directions.              | 76.8  | 12.5     | 74.0     | 8.3      | 65.2  | 17.4     |
| 2. The student's attendance at school is important for his or her success.          | 96.4  | 1.8      | 91.7     | 3.1      | 91.3  | 4.3      |
| 3. The courses provide for students to learn to make decisions and stay with them.  | 80.4  | 8.9      | 85.4     | 4.2      | 78.3  | 13.0     |
| 4. The courses prepare students to communicate well verbally as well as in writing. | 82.1  | 7.1      | 88.5     | 4.2      | 91.3  | 4.3      |
| 5. It is important for a student to reflect a good image of his or her school.      | 69.6  | 19.6     | 86.5     | 6.3      | 95.7  | 4.3      |

Continued, next page

Table 15--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Black |          | Hispanic |          | White |          |
|--|-------|----------|----------|----------|-------|----------|
|  | Agree | Disagree | Agree    | Disagree | Agree | Disagree |
| 6. The way a student behaves in school affects his or her performance.                   | 71.4  | 17.9     | 63.5     | 22.9     | 82.6  | 17.4     |
| 7. The courses provide opportunity for students to work as part of a team.               | 51.8  | 25.0     | 60.4     | 13.5     | 78.3  | 17.4     |
| 8. It is important for a student to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise.      | 87.5  | 1.8      | 85.4     | 3.1      | 87.0  | 8.7      |
| 9. A student's success in life will depend upon his or her ability to keep learning.     | 91.1  | 1.8      | 92.7     | 2.1      | 95.7  | 4.3      |
| 10. A student who has been suspended from school is unable to keep up with work.         | 10.7  | 87.5     | 7.3      | 78.1.    | 4.3   | 91.3     |
| 11. The rules at school encourage students to manage themselves in an acceptable manner. | 64.3  | 17.9     | 64.6     | 11.5     | 65.2  | 21.7     |

Table 15--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Black |          | Hispanic |          | White |          |
|--|-------|----------|----------|----------|-------|----------|
|  | Agree | Disagree | Agree    | Disagree | Agree | Disagree |
| 12. It is important for a student to get along with his or her peers.                      | 85.7  | 5.4      | 89.6     | 4.2      | 95.7  | 4.3      |
| 13. The courses provide opportunity for students to use their own initiative.              | 75.0  | 3.6      | 75.0     | 4.2      | 87.0  | 8.7      |
| 14. Good academic skills are important for a student's success at work.                    | 94.6  | 3.6      | 91.7     | 2.1      | 95.7  | 4.3      |
| 15. Students are usually involved in extracurricular activities at school.                 | 35.7  | 57.1     | 34.4     | 44.8     | 34.8  | 60.9     |
| 16. The school encourages parents to become involved in school training of students.       | 26.8  | 60.7     | 32.3     | 42.7     | 39.1  | 47.8     |
| 17. It is important for a student to get a good education for his or her life improvement. | 92.9  | 1.8      | 93.8     | 4.2      | 95.7  | 4.3      |

- A significantly larger proportion of White students believed that it is important to get along well with their peers;
- A significantly larger proportion of White students felt that the courses provide opportunity for them to use their own initiative.

Open-Ended Section. When the students were asked, "How would you improve the courses so that they will better prepare you to get a good job," they suggested the following areas of improvement:

- Emphasize the overall quality of the courses offered by the school;
- Offer additional job-related training programs;
- Provide more opportunities for students to benefit from internship programs;
- Upgrade communication skills courses;
- Offer more foreign language courses, especially in Spanish;
- Encourage student participation in decision-making for future job aspiration;
- Increase emphasis on the application aspects of the courses;
- Include more job training programs in the school curriculum or as part of the extracurricular activities;
- Hire more qualified and competent teachers;
- Expose students to the world of work;



- Provide after-school assistance to slow learners and those who need extra academic attention;
- Consider changes in some course objectives to make them in harmony with sound principles of learning as well as consistent with the needs and interests of the students;
- Prepare more adequate equipment and other facilities to fulfill the goals and objectives of the school training for the world of work;
- Increase and update course materials and library resources for additional study;
- Offer more elective courses pertinent to the world of business in order to fulfill the needs and interests of various students;
- Eliminate those courses from the school curriculum that are not useful for the Business Program;
- Make the courses more challenging in order to get students to think;
- Include more specialized training and job-related subjects in the school program;
- Assign teachers to the program who really care about students' success;
- Offer more advanced college preparation courses;
- Put more emphasis on the teachers' job performance through the student evaluation;
- Help change teachers' attitudes toward students;

- Pay more attention to the student placement in various courses;
- Encourage students to study more by giving them additional course requirements;
- Reduce class enrollments so that the instructors can handle the groups properly;
- Ask teachers to encourage brainstorming and open-ended discussions about a variety of business-related subjects in the classroom;
- Make the secretarial courses more like the real business world;
- Set up higher standards for the college preparation courses;
- Make more courses available to more students that are in the best interest of their future careers;
- Establish priorities in curriculum development for technical, vocational, and occupational courses;
- Ask teachers to take a little more time to show interest in their students;
- Provide better career counseling services for students;
- Invite business leaders and professionals into the school to share their career success with students;
- Arrange more field trips for students to get more educated about the world of work;

- Establish cooperative efforts between the school and the business community;
- Include more simulated business training in a variety of the course units;
- Introduce more computer courses, especially in word processing, spreadsheets, data base, and other necessary packages;
- Provide more opportunities for students to learn more in-service training programs for the teachers;
- Let the students feel free to make suggestions for improvement of the school programs.

In response to the question, "What is missing from the school course offerings that is needed in today's job market," the students addressed the following areas of concern:

- Need for business and school cooperative programs;
- Lack of adequate job-related courses;
- Need for more career training activities;
- Lack of sufficient career counseling services;
- Need for on-the-job-training opportunities;
- Lack of proper opportunity to work in today's job market;
- Need for more team work opportunities for students;
- Lack of sufficient communication skills for students;
- Need for more computer training programs;
- Lack of opportunity for students to learn how to use business machines and other office equipment;

- Need for more updated books and other teaching-learning materials;
- Need for a real view of the working world and how to become more successful;
- Need for more advanced college preparation courses;
- Lack of sufficient elective courses related to the job market;
- Need for more foreign language courses;
- Need for essential courses, such as public relations, health services, psychology, insurance, law, real estate, and accounting;
- Lack of sufficient rules, including student discipline, especially on attendance, participation, and sense of responsibility;
- Need for more qualified and competent teachers;
- Need for more teachers who really care about the students' success;
- Need for a course or a training program to teach students how to seek a job, how to apply for a job, how to prepare a resume, and how to prepare for a job interview.

### Section C: Relationship Between Students' Perceptions and Their Academic Achievement

The following research question will be examined in this section of the chapter: "To what extent do secondary school students'

perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions affect their academic achievement?"

The Pearson Correlation technique, along with its test of significance, was used to determine the relationship between academic achievement of students and their perceptions of the school training for entry-level positions. The findings are summarized in Table 16. The statistical test revealed a significant and positive relationship between academic achievement of students and their overall perceptions of the school training for entry-level positions ( $r = +.20$  and  $p = .004 < .05$ ). The findings also revealed significant and positive relationships between academic achievement of students on 9 out of the 17 items of the questionnaire. The 9 items which were found to be significantly correlated with academic achievement of students are as follows:

- The courses prepare students to communicate well verbally as well as in writing ( $r = +.18$  and  $p = .008 < .05$ );
- It is important for students to reflect a good image of their school ( $r = +.13$  and  $p = .046 < .05$ );
- It is important for students to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise ( $r = +.13$  and  $p = .041 < .05$ );
- The rules at school encourage students to manage themselves in an acceptable manner ( $r = +.14$  and  $p = .029 < .05$ );



Table 16

Relationship Between Academic Achievement of Students  
and Their Perceptions

| Areas of Concern   | Correlation | p value |
|--|-------------|---------|
| 1. Training in school stresses the importance of following directions.             | +0.12       | 0.058   |
| 2. The student's attendance at school is important for his or her success.         | +0.11       | 0.072   |
| 3. The courses provide for students to learn to make decisions and stay with them. | +0.04       | 0.307   |
| 4. The courses prepare students to communicate well verbally and in writing.       | +0.18       | 0.008*  |
| 5. It is important for a student to reflect a good image of his or her school.     | +0.13       | 0.046*  |
| 6. The way a student behaves in school affects his or her performance.             | +0.02       | 0.374   |

Continued, next page

Table 16--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Correlation | p value |
|--|-------------|---------|
| 7. The courses provide opportunity for students to work as part of a team.               | +0.12       | 0.060   |
| 8. It is important for a student to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise.      | +0.13       | 0.041*  |
| 9. A student's success in life will depend upon his or her ability to keep learning.     | +0.03       | 0.322   |
| 10. A student who has been suspended from school is unable to keep up with work.         | -0.13       | 0.037*  |
| 11. The rules at school encourage students to manage themselves in an acceptable manner. | +0.14       | 0.029*  |
| 12. It is important for a student to get along with his or her peers.                    | +0.15       | 0.023*  |
| 13. The courses provide opportunity for students to use their own initiative.            | +0.18       | 0.008*  |

Continued, next page

Table 16--Continued

| Areas of Concern   | Correlation | p value |
|--|-------------|---------|
| 14. Good academic skills are important for a student's success at work.                    | +0.18       | 0.007*  |
| 15. Students are usually involved in extracurricular activities at school.                 | +0.17       | 0.018*  |
| 16. The school encourages parents to become involved in school training of students.       | +0.09       | 0.103   |
| 17. It is important for a student to get a good education for his or her life improvement. | +0.13       | 0.038*  |

Note: \* Denotes a significant relationship at the 0.05 level ( $p < 0.05$ ).

- It is important for students to get along well with their peers ( $r = .15$  and  $p = .023 < .05$ );
- The courses provide students with the opportunity to use their own initiative ( $r = .18$  and  $p = .008 < .05$ );
- Good academic skills seem to be important for students' success at work ( $r = .18$  and  $p = .007 < .05$ );
- Students seem to be involved in extracurricular activities at school ( $r = .16$  and  $p = .018 < .05$ );
- It is important for students to get a good education if they are to improve their status in life ( $r = .13$  and  $p = .038 < .05$ ).

The items which were not significantly correlated with academic achievement of students are as follows:

- The school training stresses the importance of following directions ( $r = .12$  and  $p = .058 < .05$ );
- Attendance at school is important for students' success ( $r = .11$  and  $p = .072 < .05$ );
- The courses provide for students to learn to make decisions and stay with them ( $r = .04$  and  $p = .307 < .05$ );
- The way students behave in school affects their performance ( $r = .02$  and  $p = .374 < .05$ );
- The courses provide an opportunity for students to work as part of a team ( $r = .12$  and  $p = .060 < .05$ );
- Students' success in life will depend upon their ability to keep learning ( $r = .03$  and  $p = .322 < .05$ );

- The school encourages parents to become involved in the school training of their children ( $r = .09$  and  $p = .103 < .05$ ).

There was also a significant but negative relationship between the academic achievement of students and their perceptions that suspension from school too many times makes them unable to keep up with their work ( $r = .13$  and  $p = .037 < .05$ ).

## Part II: Analysis of the Business Survey

Analysis of the business survey will be presented through the following: Section A provides general information about the businesses that participated in this study; Section B deals with the businesses' perceptions and expectations of secondary school students' training for entry-level positions in the workplace; and Section C examines the extent to which businesses are satisfied with the secondary school students' training for entry-level positions and their performance at the workplace.

### Section A: General Information

In this section, factors such as type of business, type of product, location of the business, number of employees, and type of in-service training provided for employees will be discussed by tabulation of the findings and through the use of frequency distribution of the data (see Table 17).

Of the 28 businesses involved in the study, 4 (or 14.3%) dealt with the banking industry; 8 (or 28.6%) offered human services; 3 (or



Table 17  
General Information About the  
Participating Businesses

| Business Information       | Number    | Percent      |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| <b>Type of Business:</b>   |           |              |
| Banking                    | 4         | 14.3         |
| Human Service              | 8         | 28.6         |
| Insurance                  | 3         | 10.7         |
| Manufacturing              | 7         | 25.0         |
| Retail                     | 6         | 21.4         |
| <b>Type of Product:</b>    |           |              |
| Sales                      | 6         | 21.4         |
| Service                    | 15        | 53.6         |
| Production                 | 7         | 25.0         |
| <b>Number of Staff:</b>    |           |              |
| Less Than 100              | 8         | 28.6         |
| 100 to 1,000               | 11        | 39.3         |
| More Than 1,000            | 9         | 32.1         |
| <b>Training:</b>           |           |              |
| Provided                   | 17        | 60.7         |
| Not Provided               | 11        | 39.3         |
| <b>Compensatory:</b>       |           |              |
| Provided                   | 16        | 57.1         |
| Not Provided               | 12        | 42.9         |
| <b>Voluntary:</b>          |           |              |
| Provided                   | 5         | 17.9         |
| Not Provided               | 23        | 82.1         |
| <b>Total Participants:</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

10.7%) were insurance agencies; 7 (or 25.0%) were manufacturers; and the remaining 6 (or 21.4%) were retail businesses. The distribution of the businesses according to the type of product was as follows: sales (6 businesses, or 21.4%); service (15 businesses, or 53.6%); and other productions (7 businesses, or 25.0%). These productions included metal manufacturing, handguns and handcuffs, agriculturing, plastic containers, paper, chemicals, envelopes, utility, cables, chips and popcorn, and an ice cream factory. The businesses were located in Agawam, Chicopee, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Springfield, West Springfield, and Wilbraham (Massachusetts). The number of employees ranged from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 4,200, with a mean of 782 employees.

Eight (or 28.6%) of the businesses reported to have less than 100 employees and 11 (or 39.3%) of the businesses reported to have between 100 to 1,000 employees. Seventeen (or 60.7%) of the businesses provided in-service training for their employees; among them, 16 (or 57.1%) provided compensatory training programs. In addition, 5 (or 17.9%) of the businesses offered some in-service training programs on a voluntary basis. The types of in-service training programs included hands-on computer training, videotapes and their uses in classrooms, job orientation, product training, basic business and management skills, supervisory training, insurance-related programs, customer service and sales training, production work, office work, systems management, mandated safety programs, clinical management, development programs, and other formal and informal job-related training programs.

## Section B: The Businesses' Perceptions

The following research question will be examined in this section of the chapter: "What are the businesses' perceptions of secondary school students' training for entry-level positions in the workplace?"

The answer to this question was provided by analyzing the frequency distribution of the responses given to the 17 items of the questionnaire. In addition, an analysis of the perceptions by certain variables, such as type of business, size of business according to the number of employees, and availability of training, was performed through the use of the cross-tabulation of the data. Table 18 presents the businesses' perceptions of secondary school students' training for entry-level positions in the workplace. Based on the findings of this table, a relatively large proportion of the businesses believed that:

- The entry-level employees are capable of performing well (64.3%);
- The entry-level employees like to learn new things (60.7%);
- Additional training is necessary for entry-level employees to be acceptable workers (89.3%);
- Good citizenship skills are the foundation for good performance at work (67.9%);
- More communication between businesses and schools is needed to better coordinate the efforts to improve student training (92.9%);
- There is a substantial need for budget to train the entry-level employees (71.4%).

Table 18

The Businesses' Perceptions of Students' Training  
for Entry-Level Positions

| Areas of Concern  | Agree |      | Neutral |      | Disagree |      |
|---|-------|------|---------|------|----------|------|
|   | N     | %    | N       | %    | N        | %    |
| 1. Businesses employ many secondary school students upon high school graduation.          | 14    | 50.0 | 7       | 25.0 | 7        | 25.0 |
| 2. The entry-level employees are usually capable of performing well.                      | 18    | 64.3 | 5       | 17.9 | 5        | 17.9 |
| 3. The courses secondary school students take in school prepare them adequately for work. | 7     | 25.0 | 10      | 35.7 | 11       | 39.3 |
| 4. The entry-level employees are responsible and can adapt readily to situations.         | 11    | 39.3 | 10      | 35.7 | 7        | 25.0 |
| 5. The entry-level employees possess good academic skills.                                | 4     | 14.3 | 14      | 50.0 | 10       | 35.7 |
| 6. The entry-level employees can communicate well orally and in writing.                  | 6     | 21.4 | 7       | 25.0 | 15       | 53.6 |

Continued, next page

Table 18--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Agree |      | Neutral |      | Disagree |      |
|---|-------|------|---------|------|----------|------|
|   | N     | %    | N       | %    | N        | %    |
| 7. The entry-level employees typically like to learn new things.                      | 17    | 60.7 | 7       | 25.0 | 4        | 14.3 |
| 8. The entry-level employees are usually trained to listen effectively.               | 2     | 7.1  | 16      | 57.1 | 10       | 35.7 |
| 9. The entry-level employees possess good time management skills.                     | 1     | 3.6  | 11      | 39.3 | 16       | 57.1 |
| 10. The entry-level employees possess good personal management skills.                | 6     | 21.4 | 11      | 39.3 | 11       | 39.3 |
| 11. The entry-level employees are trained satisfactorily upon high school graduation. | 5     | 17.9 | 8       | 28.6 | 15       | 53.6 |
| 12. Additional training is necessary for the entry-level employees to perform well.   | 25    | 89.3 | 1       | 3.6  | 2        | 7.1  |
| 13. The secondary schools do an adequate job of preparing students for future work.   | 3     | 10.7 | 12      | 42.9 | 13       | 46.4 |

Continued, next page



Table 18--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Agree |      | Neutral |      | Disagree |      |
|---|-------|------|---------|------|----------|------|
|   | N     | %    | N       | %    | N        | %    |
| 14. The secondary schools should prepare students for specific jobs.                  | 9     | 32.1 | 7       | 25.0 | 12       | 42.9 |
| 15. Good citizenship skills are essential for good performance at work.               | 19    | 67.9 | 8       | 28.6 | 1        | 3.6  |
| 16. More communication between businesses and schools is needed for student training. | 26    | 92.9 | 1       | 3.6  | 1        | 3.6  |
| 17. Organizations allocate sufficient budget to train their entry-level employees.    | 20    | 71.4 | 4       | 14.3 | 4        | 14.3 |

On the other hand, a relatively large proportion of the businesses felt that:

- The entry-level employees do not possess good academic skills (53.6%);
- The entry-level employees do not possess good time management skills (57.1%);
- The training entry-level employees possess upon graduation from high school is not satisfactory (53.6%).

However, 50% of the businesses indicated that they employ many secondary school students upon their graduation from high school.

An analysis of the businesses' perceptions according to the size of business is included in Table 19. Based on the findings presented in this table, small and large businesses tended to show similar perceptions about students' training for entry-level positions on 11 out of the 17 areas of concern. The six areas of concern that revealed significant differences between the perceptions of small and large businesses were as follows:

- A significantly higher proportion of large businesses felt that the courses secondary school students take in school do not prepare them adequately for work;
- A significantly higher proportion of large businesses were dissatisfied with the training of entry-level employees provided by high schools;
- A significantly higher proportion of small businesses agreed that secondary schools should prepare students for specific jobs;

Table 19

The Businesses' Perceptions of Students' Training  
According to the Size of Business

| Areas of Concern  | Small Businesses |          | Large Businesses |          |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|
|   | Agree            | Disagree | Agree            | Disagree |
| 1. Businesses employ many secondary school students upon high school graduation.          | 57.1             | 14.3     | 42.9             | 35.7     |
| 2. The entry-level employees are usually capable of performing well.                      | 64.3             | 14.3     | 64.3             | 21.4     |
| 3. The courses secondary school students take in school prepare them adequately for work. | 21.4             | 21.4     | 28.6             | 57.1     |
| 4. The entry-level employees are responsible and can adapt readily to situations.         | 28.6             | 35.7     | 50.0             | 14.3     |
| 5. The entry-level employees possess good academic skills.                                | 14.3             | 42.9     | 14.3             | 28.6     |
| 6. The entry-level employees can communicate well orally and in writing.                  | 21.4             | 57.1     | 21.4             | 50.0     |

Continued, next page

Table 19--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Small Businesses |          | Large Businesses |          |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|
|   | Agree            | Disagree | Agree            | Disagree |
| 7. The entry-level employees typically like to learn new things.                      | 57.1             | 21.4     | 64.3             | 7.1      |
| 8. The entry-level employees are usually trained to listen effectively.               | 7.1              | 28.6     | 7.1              | 42.9     |
| 9. The entry-level employees possess good time management skills.                     | 7.1              | 64.3     | 7.1              | 50.0     |
| 10. The entry-level employees possess good personal management skills.                | 14.3             | 42.9     | 28.6             | 35.7     |
| 11. The entry-level employees are trained satisfactorily upon high school graduation. | 35.7             | 50.0     | 14.3             | 57.1     |
| 12. Additional training is necessary for the entry-level employees to perform well.   | 92.9             | 7.1      | 85.7             | 14.3     |
| 13. The secondary schools do an adequate job of preparing students for future work.   | 21.4             | 35.7     | 7.1              | 57.1     |

Continued, next page

Table 19--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Small Businesses |          | Large Businesses |          |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|
|   | Agree            | Disagree | Agree            | Disagree |
| 14. The secondary schools should prepare students for specific jobs.                  | 57.1             | 21.4     | 14.3             | 64.3     |
| 15. Good citizenship skills are essential for good performance at work.               | 78.6             | 7.1      | 57.1             | 14.3     |
| 16. More communication between businesses and schools is needed for student training. | 92.9             | 7.1      | 92.9             | 7.1      |
| 17. Organizations allocate sufficient budget to train their entry-level employees.    | 50.0             | 21.4     | 85.7             | 14.3     |



- A significantly higher proportion of large businesses agreed that they spend a substantial amount of money to train their entry-level employees;
- A significantly higher proportion of large businesses agreed that the entry-level employees are responsible and can adapt readily to situations;
- A significantly higher proportion of small businesses believe that good citizenship skills are the foundation for good performance at work.

Table 20 presents a comparison of the perceptions of businesses which offer in-service training for entry-level employees and those businesses that do not offer such in-service training programs. According to the data in this table, both groups of businesses tended to show similar perceptions about students' training for entry-level positions on 10 out of the 17 areas of concern. The seven areas of concern that revealed significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of businesses were as follows:

- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer in-service training for entry-level employees felt that the courses secondary school students take do not prepare them adequately for work;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who do not offer in-service training for entry-level employees felt that these employees are usually responsible and can adapt readily to situations;

Table 20

The Businesses' Perceptions of Students' Training  
According to In-Service Training

| Areas of Concern  | Offered Training |          | Did Not Offer Training |          |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
|   | Agree            | Disagree | Agree                  | Disagree |
| 1. Businesses employ many secondary school students upon high school graduation.          | 58.8             | 23.5     | 36.4                   | 27.3     |
| 2. The entry-level employees are usually capable of performing well.                      | 58.8             | 23.5     | 72.7                   | 9.1      |
| 3. The courses secondary school students take in school prepare them adequately for work. | 17.6             | 52.9     | 36.4                   | 18.2     |
| 4. The entry-level employees are responsible and can adapt readily to situations.         | 29.4             | 29.4     | 54.5                   | 18.2     |
| 5. The entry-level employees possess good academic skills.                                | 17.6             | 47.1     | 9.1                    | 18.2     |
| 6. The entry-level employees can communicate well orally and in writing.                  | 23.5             | 64.7     | 18.2                   | 36.4     |

Continued, next page

Table 20--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Offered Training |          | Did Not Offer Training |          |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
|   | Agree            | Disagree | Agree                  | Disagree |
| 7. The entry-level employees typically like to learn new things.                      | 58.8             | 17.6     | 63.6                   | 9.1      |
| 8. The entry-level employees are usually trained to listen effectively.               | 5.9              | 41.2     | 18.2                   | 27.3     |
| 9. The entry-level employees possess good time management skills.                     | 5.9              | 64.7     | 9.1                    | 45.5     |
| 10. The entry-level employees possess good personal management skills.                | 17.6             | 47.1     | 27.3                   | 27.3     |
| 11. The entry-level employees are trained satisfactorily upon high school graduation. | 11.8             | 58.8     | 27.3                   | 45.5     |
| 12. Additional training is necessary for the entry-level employees to perform well.   | 88.2             | 11.8     | 90.9                   | 9.1      |
| 13. The secondary schools do an adequate job of preparing students for future work.   | 5.9              | 58.8     | 18.2                   | 27.3     |

Table 20--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Offered Training |          | Did Not Offer Training |          |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
|   | Agree            | Disagree | Agree                  | Disagree |
| 14. The secondary schools should prepare students for specific jobs.                  | 29.4             | 41.2     | 36.4                   | 45.5     |
| 15. Good citizenship skills are essential for good performance at work.               | 76.5             | 5.9      | 54.5                   | 9.1      |
| 16. More communication between businesses and schools is needed for student training. | 94.1             | 5.9      | 90.9                   | 9.1      |
| 17. Organizations allocate sufficient budget to train their entry-level employees.    | 70.6             | 11.8     | 72.7                   | 18.2     |

- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer in-service training for entry-level employees believed that these employees usually do not possess good academic skills;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer in-service training for entry-level employees felt that these employees usually cannot communicate well orally and in writing;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer in-service training for entry-level employees believed that the secondary schools do not adequately prepare students for entry into the world of business;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who do not offer in-service training for entry-level employees agreed that these types of employees are usually capable of performing well;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer in-service training for entry-level employees believed that good citizenship skills are the foundation for good performance at work.

A comparison of the perceptions of businesses who offer compensatory in-service training for entry-level employees and those who do not offer such service is shown in Table 21. The findings indicate that both groups of businesses have similar perceptions regarding students' training for entry-level positions on 10 out of the 17 areas of concern. The seven areas that revealed significant differences



Table 21

The Businesses' Perceptions of Students' Training  
According to Compensatory Training

| Areas of Concern  | Compensatory |          | No Training |          |
|---|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|
|   | Agree        | Disagree | Agree       | Disagree |
| 1. Businesses employ many secondary school students upon high school graduation.          | 56.3         | 25.0     | 41.7        | 25.0     |
| 2. The entry-level employees are usually capable of performing well.                      | 56.3         | 25.0     | 75.0        | 8.3      |
| 3. The courses secondary school students take in school prepare them adequately for work. | 12.5         | 56.3     | 41.7        | 16.7     |
| 4. The entry-level employees are responsible and can adapt readily to situations.         | 31.3         | 31.3     | 50.0        | 16.7     |
| 5. The entry-level employees possess good academic skills.                                | 18.8         | 50.0     | 8.3         | 16.7     |
| 6. The entry-level employees can communicate well orally and in writing.                  | 25.0         | 68.8     | 16.7        | 33.3     |

Continued, next page

Table 21--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Compensatory |          | No Training |          |
|---|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|
|   | Agree        | Disagree | Agree       | Disagree |
| 7. The entry-level employees typically like to learn new things.                      | 62.5         | 18.8     | 58.3        | 8.3      |
| 8. The entry-level employees are usually trained to listen effectively.               | 6.3          | 43.8     | 16.7        | 25.0     |
| 9. The entry-level employees possess good time management skills.                     | 6.3          | 68.8     | 8.3         | 41.7     |
| 10. The entry-level employees possess good personal management skills.                | 18.8         | 50.0     | 25.0        | 25.0     |
| 11. The entry-level employees are trained satisfactorily upon high school graduation. | 12.5         | 62.5     | 25.0        | 41.7     |
| 12. Additional training is necessary for the entry-level employees to perform well.   | 87.5         | 12.5     | 91.7        | 8.3      |
| 13. The secondary schools do an adequate job of preparing students for future work.   | 6.3          | 62.5     | 16.7        | 25.0     |

Continued, next page

Table 21--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Compensatory |          | No Training |          |
|---|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|
|   | Agree        | Disagree | Agree       | Disagree |
| 14. The secondary schools should prepare students for specific jobs.                  | 25.0         | 43.8     | 41.7        | 41.7     |
| 15. Good citizenship skills are essential for good performance at work.               | 75.0         | 12.5     | 58.3        | 8.3      |
| 16. More communication between businesses and schools is needed for student training. | 93.8         | 6.3      | 91.7        | 8.3      |
| 17. Organizations allocate sufficient budget to train their entry-level employees.    | 68.8         | 12.5     | 75.0        | 16.7     |

between the perceptions of the two groups of businesses were as follows:

- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who do not offer compensatory in-service training felt that the entry-level employees are usually capable of performing well;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who do not offer compensatory in-service training believed that the entry-level employees are usually responsible and can adapt readily to situations;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer compensatory in-service training agreed that the entry-level employees cannot communicate well orally or in writing;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer compensatory in-service training felt that the entry-level employees do not possess good time management skills;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer compensatory in-service training indicated that the entry-level employees do not possess good personal management skills;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer compensatory in-service training felt that the secondary schools do not adequately prepare students for entry into the world of business;

- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer compensatory in-service training believed that good citizenship skills are the foundation for good performance at work.

Table 22 presents a comparison of businesses' perceptions about the students' training for entry-level positions according to the type of product they offer (that is, sales and production versus service). Based on these findings, both groups of businesses showed similar perceptions regarding students' training for entry-level positions on 12 out of the 17 areas of concern. The five areas which revealed significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of businesses were as follows:

- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who deal with sales and production felt that the entry-level employees are usually capable of performing well;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses who offer services believed that their entry-level employees cannot communicate well orally or in writing;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses dealing with sales and production felt that the entry-level employees are not trained satisfactorily upon graduation from high school;
- A significantly larger proportion of businesses dealing with sales and production suggested additional training for the entry-level employees in order for them to perform well;



Table 22

The Businesses' Perceptions of Students' Training  
According to the Product Produced

| Areas of Concern  | Sales/Production |          | Other Services |          |
|---|------------------|----------|----------------|----------|
|   | Agree            | Disagree | Agree          | Disagree |
| 1. Businesses employ many secondary school students upon high school graduation.          | 53.8             | 23.1     | 46.7           | 26.7     |
| 2. The entry-level employees are usually capable of performing well.                      | 69.2             | 7.7      | 60.0           | 26.7     |
| 3. The courses secondary school students take in school prepare them adequately for work. | 23.1             | 35.8     | 26.7           | 40.0     |
| 4. The entry-level employees are responsible and can adapt readily to situations.         | 30.8             | 30.8     | 46.7           | 20.0     |
| 5. The entry-level employees possess good academic skills.                                | 7.7              | 35.8     | 20.0           | 33.3     |
| 6. The entry-level employees can communicate well orally and in writing.                  | 23.1             | 46.2     | 20.0           | 60.0     |

Continued, next page

Table 22--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Sales/Production |          | Other Services |          |
|---|------------------|----------|----------------|----------|
|   | Agree            | Disagree | Agree          | Disagree |
| 7. The entry-level employees typically like to learn new things.                      | 61.5             | 15.4     | 60.0           | 13.3     |
| 8. The entry-level employees are usually trained to listen effectively.               | 7.7              | 30.8     | 6.7            | 40.0     |
| 9. The entry-level employees possess good time management skills.                     | 7.7              | 61.5     | 6.7            | 53.3     |
| 10. The entry-level employees possess good personal management skills.                | 23.1             | 46.2     | 20.0           | 33.3     |
| 11. The entry-level employees are trained satisfactorily upon high school graduation. | 23.1             | 61.5     | 13.3           | 46.7     |
| 12. Additional training is necessary for the entry-level employees to perform well.   | 92.3             | 7.7      | 80.0           | 13.3     |
| 13. The secondary schools do an adequate job of preparing students for future work.   | 15.4             | 46.2     | 6.7            | 46.7     |

Table 22--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Sales/Production |          | Other Services |          |
|---|------------------|----------|----------------|----------|
|   | Agree            | Disagree | Agree          | Disagree |
| 14. The secondary schools should prepare students for specific jobs.                  | 38.5             | 38.5     | 26.7           | 46.7     |
| 15. Good citizenship skills are essential for good performance at work.               | 69.2             | 7.7      | 66.7           | 6.7      |
| 16. More communication between businesses and schools is needed for student training. | 92.3             | 7.7      | 86.7           | 6.7      |
| 17. Organizations allocate sufficient budget to train their entry-level employees.    | 61.5             | 15.4     | 80.0           | 20.0     |

- A significantly larger proportion of businesses offering services reported spending thousands of dollars annually to train their entry-level employees.

Open-Ended Section. In response to the question of the need for improvement of entry-level employees, the majority of the businesses who participated in the survey emphasized the need to strengthen the basic communication and citizenship skills. Skills that were also considered to be in need of improvement were mathematics, writing, reading, and speaking and verbal skills. Some businesses specifically indicated that English grammar, spelling, arithmetic, and quantitative skills were needed; while some others required typewriting proficiency, office management skills, the ability to handle telephone calls, business writing, and listening and speaking skills. Another group of businesses emphasized the need for computer literacy, office automation, and the ability to operate office machines as important for adequate student preparation. Other personal, professional, and technical improvements necessary for entry-level employees, as perceived by the participating businesses, are listed as follows:

- Ability to accept and assume responsibility;
- Commitment to self-development;
- Building self-confidence and common sense;
- Time and personal management skills;
- Ability to establish good work relations as well as better interpersonal skills;
- Ability to understand the business environment and what it takes to grow professionally;

- Understanding work-life skills and basic work ethics;
- Improvement of career orientation and motivation aspects of work life;
- Ability to learn and willingness to continue learning as a lifelong process;
- Good personal hygiene;
- Punctuality, dependability, reliability, and honesty.

The following suggestions were also made by the participating businesses for improving the secondary school training of the students for the world of work:

- Provide consistent and required course work in general business skill development;
- Improve educational standards for those students not planning to attend college;
- Involve community and business interests in curriculum planning for the school;
- Include courses and/or course units on values and responsibilities in the workplace;
- Establish cooperative efforts between the school and the business community;
- Improve the students' decision-making skills;
- Include simulated business training in the school setting;
- Arrange more student internships with the business community;



- Offer more non-core courses related to the needs of businesses;
- Establish school-business partnerships;
- Develop better coordination between the school curriculum and the world of work;
- Arrange more field trips for students to a variety of professional, technical, and industrial organizations;
- Adhere to basic skills proficiency examinations;
- Include more communication skills courses, including mathematics, writing, reading, and oral skills;
- Introduce computer literacy courses as they relate to the world of work;
- Emphasize student discipline, including attendance, participation, and sense of responsibility;
- Hire more qualified, competent, and dedicated teachers;
- Invite business professionals into the school for training programs;
- Enhance independent, as well as teamwork, skills among students;
- Increase emphasis on the need for more technical knowledge of students and improvement of their work-life skills to maintain/obtain employment in an increasingly technical and vocational world;

- Teach students how to seek for jobs, how to fill out job applications, how to write a resume, and how to improve their interviewing skills.

### Section C: Satisfaction of the Businesses with Students' Training

The following research question will be examined in this section of the chapter: "To what extent are businesses satisfied with the secondary school students' training for entry-level positions and their performance at the workplace?"

A descriptive analysis of the data using mean and standard deviation of the ratings assigned by businesses to the individual items of the questionnaire was performed in order to provide answers to the above research question. The following ratings scales were used to determine the extent to which businesses were satisfied or dissatisfied with the secondary school students' training for entry-level positions and their performance at the workplace:

- 1 = Very Dissatisfied
- 2 = Dissatisfied
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Satisfied
- 5 = Very Satisfied

The findings are summarized in Table 23. Based on these findings, the businesses tended to show some degree of agreement with the following aspects of students' training for entry-level positions:

- Good citizenship skills are the foundation for good performance at work;

Table 23

The Extent to Which Businesses Are Satisfied with the Students' Training for Entry-Level Positions and Their Performance at the Workplace

| Areas of Concern  | Mean | Standard Deviation | Rank |
|---|------|--------------------|------|
| 1. Businesses employ many secondary school students upon high school graduation.          | 3.46 | 1.11               | 6    |
| 2. The entry-level employees are usually capable of performing well.                      | 3.46 | 0.79               | 5    |
| 3. The courses secondary school students take in school prepare them adequately for work. | 2.82 | 0.86               | 10   |
| 4. The entry-level employees are responsible and can adapt readily to situations.         | 3.14 | 0.80               | 8    |
| 5. The entry-level employees possess good academic skills.                                | 2.75 | 0.75               | 11   |
| 6. The entry-level employees can communicate well orally and in writing.                  | 2.57 | 0.96               | 15   |

Continued, next page

Table 23--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Mean | Standard Deviation | Rank |
|---|------|--------------------|------|
| 7. The entry-level employees typically like to learn new things.                      | 3.39 | 1.03               | 7    |
| 8. The entry-level employees are usually trained to listen effectively.               | 2.68 | 0.67               | 13   |
| 9. The entry-level employees possess good time management skills.                     | 2.39 | 0.69               | 17   |
| 10. The entry-level employees possess good personal management skills.                | 2.71 | 0.94               | 12   |
| 11. The entry-level employees are trained satisfactorily upon high school graduation. | 2.45 | 0.92               | 16   |
| 12. Additional training is necessary for the entry-level employees to perform well.   | 4.00 | 0.72               | 2    |
| 13. The secondary schools do an adequate job of preparing students for future work.   | 2.61 | 0.74               | 14   |

Continued, next page

Table 23--Continued

| Areas of Concern  | Mean | Standard Deviation | Rank |
|---|------|--------------------|------|
| 14. The secondary schools should prepare students for specific jobs.                  | 2.89 | 0.99               | 9    |
| 15. Good citizenship skills are essential for good performance at work.               | 3.96 | 0.88               | 3    |
| 16. More communication between businesses and schools is needed for student training. | 4.43 | 0.63               | 1    |
| 17. Organizations allocate sufficient budget to train their entry-level employees.    | 3.71 | 1.12               | 4    |



- More communication between businesses and schools is needed to better coordinate the efforts to improve student training;
- Additional training is usually necessary for entry-level employees to be acceptable workers in the world of business;
- Many organizations spend thousands of dollars annually to train their entry-level employees.

The businesses also tended to show some degree of disagreement with the following aspects of students' training for entry-level positions:

- The entry-level employees possess good time management skills;
- The businesses are satisfied with the training that entry-level employees are equipped with upon graduation from high school.

However, the businesses moderately agreed or were somewhat neutral about the following aspects of secondary school students' training for entry-level positions:

- The businesses employ many secondary school students upon graduation from high school;
- The entry-level employees are capable of performing well;
- The entry-level employees like to learn new things;
- The entry-level employees are usually responsible and can adapt readily to situations;
- The entry-level employees possess good academic skills;

- The courses secondary school students take in school prepare them adequately for work;
- The entry-level employees possess good personal management skills;
- The entry-level employees are trained to listen effectively;
- The secondary schools do an adequate job of preparing students for entry into the world of business;
- The entry-level employees can communicate well orally and in writing.

### Part III: Summary of the Findings

This chapter has provided answers to the research questions through the use of descriptive and inferential analysis of the data. The descriptive analysis of the data was achieved through the use of certain measures of central tendency and dispersion, as well as frequency distribution of the ratings assigned by the survey participants, to the individual items of the questionnaires. The inferential analysis of the data was accomplished by testing the research questions through the use of the Pearson Correlation technique and the chi-square test of association. The findings derived from analysis of the research questions are summarized as follows:

1. The majority of students who participated in this study tended to show positive attitudes toward their school training programs for entry-level positions

in the workplace. However, only a small proportion of the students felt that:

- a) A student who has been suspended from school too many times is unable to keep up with his or her work;
- b) Students are provided opportunities at school to get involved in extracurricular activities;
- c) The school encourages parents to become involved in the school training of their children.

2. Factors, such as gender, grade level, employment status, and ethnic background, were found to be somewhat influential in the perceptions of the students about a variety of the issues related to the school training programs for entry-level positions in the workplace.
3. There was a significant relationship between the academic achievement of students and their perceptions about a variety of the issues related to the school training programs for entry-level positions in the workplace.
4. A relatively large proportion of the participating businesses tended to show negative attitudes toward the school training programs for entry-level positions in the workplace. However, a relatively

moderate proportion of the participating businesses believed that:

- a) The entry-level employees can communicate well orally and in writing.
  - b) The entry-level employees possess good time management skills;
  - c) The entry-level employees are trained satisfactorily upon graduation from high school.
5. Factors, such as provision of in-service training programs by the businesses and the type of product produced, were found to be influential in their perceptions toward a variety of the issues related to the school training programs for entry-level positions in the workplace.
  6. The participating businesses tended to be satisfied with some aspects of the school training programs for entry-level employees and dissatisfied with some other aspects of the school training programs for entry-level employees in the workplace.

Overall, the findings of the study seem to support some training aspects of the secondary school programs for entry-level employees and reject some other aspects of the training of secondary school programs for entry-level employees in the workplace.

While businesses were satisfied with some aspects of the school training, the overall majority expressed dissatisfaction with such training and complained about spending thousands of dollars annually

for in-service training. Data from the study indicate that indeed there is a mismatch between the training students receive in school and the skills needed for successful entry-level employment.

The researcher supports the recommendation offered by both students and businesses that School-Business partnerships are needed for improvement of student training and their success in the workplace.



C H A P T E R   V  
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the dissertation has two main goals. The first goal is to discuss the most important conclusions derived from this research study. The second goal is to offer recommendations to improve the training of our secondary school students for entry-level positions in the workplace as a means of meeting the demands of our employers, as well as offer recommendations for future research efforts in the field.

Conclusions

In this section, the four research questions that guided the study will be examined.

Question 1: What Are the Secondary School Students' Perceptions of Their School Training for Entry-Level Positions?

Data collected from the study indicated that students' perceptions of their school training for entry-level positions in the workplace are very high. They highly agreed with the following statements:

- Attendance at school is very important for success (93.3%).
- Success in life depends upon their ability to keep learning (92.8%).
- Good academic skills are important for their success at work (93.3%).

- It is important to get a good education if they are to improve their status in life (93.9%).

A significantly higher number of female students believed that their courses prepared them to communicate well orally and in writing, as well as provide opportunities for them to use their own initiative.

Students indeed felt that a good training for entry-level positions at the workplace is needed in order to be successful. According to the data, it is obvious that the students have confidence in the training they receive.

Only a significantly lower number of respondents indicated that they have been suspended from school too many times and were unable to keep up with their work at school. This finding is not surprising since the students had indicated that they considered their training very important for their future and their job performance.

A larger proportion of employed students indicated that they were not involved in extracurricular activities. It is obvious that if they are working twenty or more hours after school hours, they do not have the time to participate in extracurricular activities. This finding supports Mihalik (1989) who found that students who work too many hours cannot play sports, participate in a club, or serve on a debate team.

It is important to consider, however, that participation in extracurricular activities has proven to be helpful in helping students attain educational success as well as improve their self-esteem. Parelius and Parelius, in Trent (1987), indicated that there is merit in students' participation in extracurricular activities. The authors expressed that students' life in school affects their sense of

satisfaction and happiness and that their well-being is improved when they are able to engage in extracurricular activities. According to Clarke and Picard (1989), clubs, honorary clubs, before- and after-school programs, assemblies, and sports should all be directed toward academic achievement; the building of self-esteem; the heightening of awareness of career possibilities; guidance and crisis assistance; and the development of scholastic, community, and civic pride.

Question 2: To What Extent Do Secondary School Students' Perceptions of Their School Training for Entry-Level Positions Affect Their Academic Achievement?

There was a significant and positive relationship between academic achievement of students and their overall perceptions of the school training they received for entry-level positions. Item 4 ("My courses prepare me to communicate well verbally as well as in writing"); Item 5 ("It is important for me to reflect a good image of my school"); Item 8 ("It is important for me to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise"); Item 11 ("The rules at school encourage me to manage myself in an acceptable manner"); Item 12 ("I feel that it is important for me to get along with my peers"); Item 13 ("My courses provide opportunity for me to use my own initiative"); Item 14 ("I feel that good academic skills are important for my success at work"); Item 15 ("I am involved in extracurricular activities at school"); and Item 17 ("It is important for me to get a good education if I am to improve my status in life") revealed this relationship. Students are indeed content with their secondary school training; and the more content they are, the better their academic achievement is.

However, the students indicated that the training they receive could be improved if the following were added:

- Offer students job-related training programs;
- Emphasize the application of aspects of the courses;
- Include job-training programs in the school curriculum;
- Offer more elective courses pertinent to the world of business;
- Make career counseling available for students;
- Invite business leaders and professionals into the schools to share their career success with students;
- Incorporate field trips to educate students with the world of work;
- Encourage cooperative efforts between the schools and the business community.

Question 3: What Are the Businesses' Perceptions/Expectations of Secondary School Students' Training for Entry-Level Positions?

Data analysis indicated that a significantly higher proportion of businesses felt that the courses secondary school students take in school do not adequately prepare them for work. Businesses, especially those dealing with sales and production, indicated that the level of training provided by the secondary schools for entry-level positions does not meet their expectations. This finding supports the statements in an article in the Springfield Sunday Republican (22 June 1989), in which businesses in the area indicated a common concern for the illiteracy problem. They argued that students are leaving high school without



the necessary skills needed to perform in the workplace. It also supports Jorgensen's (1989) statement that businesses are forced to hire the best of the worst because individuals coming to them are in need of stronger communication, problem-solving, and employability skills.

A significant number of respondents indicated that there is a substantial need for training the entry-level employees after they are hired and that thousands of dollars are spent annually toward this end. These statements were also in agreement with Jorgensen (1989) who estimated that businesses in the United States of America spend billions of dollars annually to teach workers basic skills that they should have learned in school.

Overall, those businesses offering in-service training strongly indicated that the entry-level employees do not possess the necessary skills to succeed in the workplace, while those who do not offer such training, do not see the need for it.

Question 4: To What Extent Are Businesses Satisfied with the Secondary School Students' Training for Entry-Level Positions and Their Performance at the Workplace?

Data analysis indicated that a significant proportion of respondents to the business questionnaire are dissatisfied with the training of entry-level employees provided by the secondary schools. They indicated that, consequently, they need to spend thousands of dollars in in-service training.

Specifically, a relatively large proportion of the businesses indicated:



- The entry-level employees do not possess good academic skills;
- The entry-level employees do not possess good time-management skills;
- The training the entry-level employees possess upon graduation from secondary school is unsatisfactory.

The analysis of the open-ended section of the business questionnaire indicated that the majority of the businesses emphasized the need to strengthen the basic communication and citizenship skills. Mathematics, writing, reading, and speaking and verbal skills were also considered in need of improvement. Some businesses required typewriting proficiency, office management skills, telephone skills, business writing skills, and listening and speaking skills as being in need of improvement.

In terms of improvement in the secondary school training for the students, the businesses suggested:

- The establishment of cooperative efforts between the schools and the business community;
- Arranging more field trips for students to a variety of professional, technical, and industrial organizations.

After analyzing all the data, the researcher arrived at the conclusion that there is indeed a mismatch between the training secondary school students receive in school and the skills that are required by employers in the workplace.

### Recommendations for Improving Secondary School Student Training

A competitive democratic society depends upon a nation consisting of effective contributing citizens. The schools have traditionally carried the blame for the dysfunctions of society. However, the schools alone cannot provide all that is needed to change the present conditions that exist. The following are suggestions for improving the training that is provided our students:

- Redesign and restructure course offerings to ensure that the needs of poor, minority, and linguistically different students are addressed.
- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities as a means of motivation to encourage students to stay in school, improve their self-esteem, and increase their sense of belonging in school.
- Encourage parental participation in the educational process of their children.
- Institute corrective measures in the lower grades.
- Reunite the efforts of our social organizations, churches, parents, and indeed the entire community.
- School-business partnerships are urgently needed. These partnerships can improve student learning, as MacDowell (1988) and survey businesses in the study indicated. These partnerships can support areas of the curriculum that are comfortable for them. Through the formation of many partnerships, the entire curriculum can benefit

from input. They must foster literacy. In addition, the presence of the business community involvement in the school can motivate those in the political arena to use their influence and strengths to form public policy that would serve to alleviate the problems facing our schools.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

There is a need to continue seeking ways to improve the education of our children. The following are suggestions for future study:

- More research should be conducted in the study of school-business partnerships in order to offer viable alternatives and solutions to the problem existing of a mismatch between expectations and attitudes in the area.
- School administrators, teachers, and all support staff must unite and engage in workshops and seminars to become aware of the problems that face our youth today and as a means of understanding and relating to the cultural diversity of all our students.
- Businessmen should be invited to form and/or participate in advisory committee activities in order to provide them avenues of offering valid and realistic alternatives to our youth.
- More delineated methods must be instituted for the follow-up of secondary school graduates if we are to

unite our efforts and work together with the common goal of the improvement of our youth in the workplace and throughout their lives.

By considering the recommendations for improving secondary school students' training, as well as those for future research in the field, we will be uniting efforts toward providing our students with the tools needed for success and lifelong learning. Our success in preparing students for the workplace lies in our ability to incorporate the suggestions from the businesses, the revision of our curriculum, and the ability to create and maintain meaningful school-business partnerships.

## APPENDICES



APPENDIX A:  
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE  
(ENGLISH VERSION)

## STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

Please respond to each statement by indicating your opinion based on the scale below:

- (5) Strongly Agree
- (4) Agree
- (3) Undecided
- (2) Disagree
- (1) Strongly Disagree

Place a check mark (✓) in the space provided according to the number that best indicates your opinion of each statement.

While some statements might seem difficult, please respond to each one. There are no right or wrong answers.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

## STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Ethnic Group:
  - White
  - Black
  - Hispanic
  - Other (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
2. Sex:
  - Male
  - Female
3. Grade:
  - Tenth
  - Eleventh
  - Twelfth
4. Program of Study:
  - College Prep
  - Business
  - Career
  - Bilingual
5. Native Language:
  - English
  - Spanish
  - Other (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
6. Family Size: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Income Level: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Mother's Highest Grade Completed in School: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Father's Highest Grade Completed in School: \_\_\_\_\_
10. With Whom Do You Live:
  - Mother
  - Father
  - Both Parents
  - Other (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

11. Are You Employed: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If Yes:

\_\_\_\_\_ Full-Time  
\_\_\_\_\_ Part-Time

Number of Hours Per Week: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Grade Average: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

|   | Strongly Agree<br>(5) | Agree<br>(4) | Undecided<br>(3) | Disagree<br>(2) | Strongly Disagree<br>(1) |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I feel that my training in school stresses the importance of following directions. |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 2. Attendance at school is important for success.                                     |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 3. My courses provide for me to learn to make decisions and stay with them.           |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 4. My courses prepare me to communicate well verbally as well as in writing.          |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 5. It is important for me to reflect a good image of my school.                       |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 6. The way I behave in school affects my performance.                                 |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 7. My courses provide opportunity for me to work as part of a team.                   |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 8. It is important for me to learn how to adapt to situations as they arise.          |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 9. My success in life will depend upon my ability to keep learning.                   |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |



|   | Strongly Agree<br>(5) | Agree<br>(4) | Undecided<br>(3) | Disagree<br>(2) | Strongly Disagree<br>(1) |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 10. I have been suspended from school too many times and I am unable to keep up with my work. |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 11. The rules at school encourage me to manage myself in an acceptable manner.                |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 12. I feel that it is important for me to get along well with my peers.                       |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 13. My courses provide opportunity for me to use my own initiative.                           |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 14. I feel that good academic skills are important for my success at work.                    |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 15. I am involved in extracurricular activities at school.                                    |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 16. My school encourages my parents to become involved in my school training.                 |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |
| 17. It is important for me to get a good education if I am to improve my status in life.      |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |



APPENDIX B:  
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE  
(SPANISH VERSION)

## CUESTIONARIO PARA EL ESTUDIANTE

Estimado Estudiante:

El cuestionario que sigue ha sido diseñado con el propósito de recopilar información acerca de cómo te sientes respecto a tus clases y preparación en general en la escuela secundaria.

No necesitas escribir tu nombre. Por favor, contesta todas las preguntas. Si no estás decidido, puedes marcar el espacio que dice Sin opinion.

Gracias por tu cooperación.

## CUESTIONARIO PARA EL ESTUDIANTE

1. Grupo Étnico:  
 Blanco  
 Hispano  
 Negro  
 Otro (Especifica: \_\_\_\_\_)
2. Sexo:  
 Masculino  
 Femenino
3. Grade:  
 10  
 11  
 12
4. Programa de Estudio:  
 CP  
 Comercio  
 Carrera  
 Bilingue
5. Lenguaje Nativo:  
 Inglés  
 Español  
 Otro (Especifica: \_\_\_\_\_)
6. Tamaño de la Familia: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Ingreso: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Educación de la Madre: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Educación de la Padre: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Vives Con:  
 Madre  
 Padre  
 Ambos  
 Otro (Especifica: \_\_\_\_\_)



11. ¿ Estás Empleado/a?

Sí  
 No

Si Contestaste Afirmativamente:

Tiempo Completo  
 Tiempo Parcial

Número de Horas: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Promedio: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Edad: \_\_\_\_\_

|   | Totalmente De Acuerdo<br>(5) | De Acuerdo<br>(4) | Sin Opinion<br>(3) | De Acuerdo<br>(2) | Totalmente De Acuerdo<br>(1) |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Mi entrenamiento en la escuela pone énfasis en la importancia de seguir direcciones. |                              |                   |                    |                   |                              |
| 2. Asistir a la escuela es muy importante para tener éxito.                             |                              |                   |                    |                   |                              |
| 3. Mis clases me preparan para poder hacer decisiones y seguir con ellas.               |                              |                   |                    |                   |                              |
| 4. Mis clases me preparan para comunicarme efectivamente en forma oral y escrita.       |                              |                   |                    |                   |                              |
| 5. Es importante para mí reflejar una imagen positiva de mi escuela.                    |                              |                   |                    |                   |                              |
| 6. Mi conducta afecta mi aprovechamiento en la escuela.                                 |                              |                   |                    |                   |                              |
| 7. Mis clases me dan la oportunidad de trabajar como parte de un equipo.                |                              |                   |                    |                   |                              |
| 8. Es importante para mí aprender a adaptarme a situaciones cuando estas surjan.        |                              |                   |                    |                   |                              |

|  | (5) Totalmente De Acuerdo | (4) De Acuerdo | (3) Sin Opinion | (2) De Acuerdo | (1) Totalmente De Acuerdo |
|--|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 9. El éxito de mi vida depende de mi habilidad para de continuar aprendiendo.                                    |                           |                |                 |                |                           |
| 10. He sido suspendido/a de la escuela muchas veces y me resulta difícil continuar con el trabajo en las clases. |                           |                |                 |                |                           |
| 11. Las reglas de la escuela me ayudan a comportarme en una manera positiva.                                     |                           |                |                 |                |                           |
| 12. Es importante llevarme bien con mis compañeros.  |                           |                |                 |                |                           |
| 13. Mis clases me proveen la oportunidad de usar mi iniciativa.  |                           |                |                 |                |                           |
| 14. Pienso que las buenas destrezas académicas son importantes para el éxito en el trabajo.                      |                           |                |                 |                |                           |
| 15. Estoy envuelto/a actividades en la escuela y fuera de la escuela.  |                           |                |                 |                |                           |
| 16. Mi escuela estimula a los padres a involucrarse en la educación de sus hijos.                                |                           |                |                 |                |                           |

|  | (5)<br>Totalmente De Acuerdo | (4)<br>De Acuerdo | (3)<br>Sin Opinion | (2)<br>De Acuerdo | (1)<br>Totalmente De Acuerdo |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 17. Es importante para mí obtener una buena educación para mejorar mi vida futura. |                              |                   |                    |                   |                              |

Sección Abierta:

1. c Cómo mejorarías tú las clases para ayudar a los estudiantes a prepararse mejor para obtener un buen trabajo cuando se gradúen?

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2. c Qué piensas tú que falta en los cursos o las clases que es necesario para tener éxito en los trabajos de hoy?

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APPENDIX C:  
BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE



## BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

Please respond to each statement by indicating the position of your business according to the following scale:

- (5) Strongly Agree
- (4) Agree
- (3) Undecided
- (2) Disagree
- (1) Strongly Disagree

Place a check mark (✓) in the appropriate space provided according to the number that best indicates your opinion of each statement.

It is important that a response be given for each statement.

Your cooperation is appreciated.

## BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Type of Business: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Location: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Number of Employees: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Product Produced: \_\_\_\_\_
5. In-Service Training Provided for Employees:  
      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No
6. In-Service Training:  
    Compensatory:  
      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No  
    Voluntary:  
      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No
7. Type of In-Service: \_\_\_\_\_

|  | (5) Strongly Agree | (4) Agree | (3) Undecided | (2) Disagree | (1) Strongly Disagree |
|--|--------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1. My business employs many secondary school students upon high school graduation.                 |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 2. The entry-level employees we hire are capable of performing well.                               |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 3. The courses secondary school students take in school prepare them adequately for work.          |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 4. The entry-level employees my company hires are responsible and can adapt readily to situations. |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 5. Entry-level employees possess good academic skills.   |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 6. Entry-level employees can communicate well orally and in writing.                               |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 7. The entry-level employees we hire like to learn new things.                                     |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 8. Entry-level employees are trained to listen effectively.  |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 9. Entry-level employees possess good time management skills.                                      |                    |           |               |              |                       |

|   | (5) Strongly Agree | (4) Agree | (3) Undecided | (2) Disagree | (1) Strongly Disagree |
|---|--------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 10. Entry-level employees possess good personal management skills.  |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 11. I am satisfied with the training entry-level employees are equipped with upon graduation from high school.                |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 12. Additional training is usually necessary for entry-level employees to be acceptable workers in my organization.           |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 13. I feel that the secondary schools do an adequate job of preparing students for entry into the world of business.          |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 14. I feel that secondary schools should prepare students for specific jobs.  |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 15. Good citizenship skills are the foundation for good performance at work.  |                    |           |               |              |                       |
| 16. More communication between businesses and schools is needed to better coordinate our efforts to improve student training. |                    |           |               |              |                       |

|   | Strongly Agree<br>(5) | Agree<br>(4) | Undecided<br>(3) | Disagree<br>(2) | Strongly Disagree<br>(1) |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 17. Our organization spends thousands of dollars annually to train our entry-level employees. |                       |              |                  |                 |                          |

Open-Ended Section:

1. Based on your experiences, what are the areas in which entry-level employees need improvement?

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2. What are your specific suggestions for improving our secondary school training?

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APPENDIX D:  
CORRESPONDENCE

April 10, 1990

Mr. Gene F. Basili, Principal  
High School of Commerce  
415 State Street  
Springfield, Massachusetts 01105

Dear Mr. Basili:

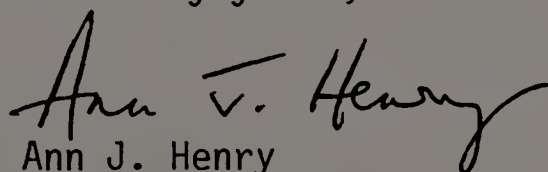
I am hereby requesting permission to conduct a survey to obtain data at the High School of Commerce.

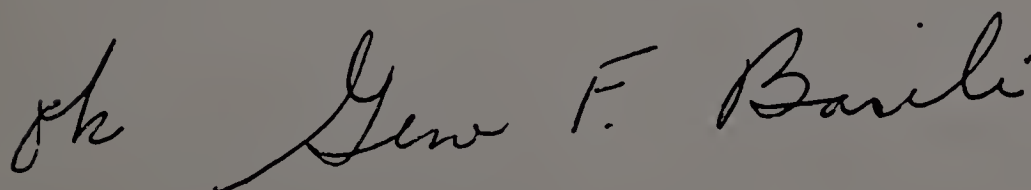
As we discussed on April 9, 1990, I am a doctoral candidate at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. At the present time, I am constructing the proposal for my dissertation, which will be a case study of a secondary school's training for entry-level employability and its relationship to the demands of employers in the workplace.

A report of the research findings will be presented to you and to the Research Department at the Central Office in an effort to provide an understanding of the problems encountered by our students and businesses.

Thank you for your help and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

  
Ann J. Henry



April 10, 1990

Dear Parents:

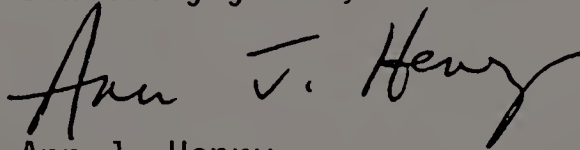
I am a candidate for a doctoral degree at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. I have obtained permission to conduct research at the High School of Commerce. The purpose of my study is to consider the training secondary school students receive for entry-level positions and its relationship to the demands of employers in the workplace.

To determine the perceptions and attitudes students have of the training they receive, they will be requested to fill out a questionnaire during school hours. To ensure the rights and welfare of the students participating, the data will be coded by numbers and all information will be known only to the researcher. All data will be destroyed upon the completion of the study.

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission for your son/daughter to participate in this research study. Please indicate your agreement by filling out and returning the consent form at the bottom of this letter.

Thank you for your help and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Ann J. Henry

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PERMISSION FORM

Dear Mrs. Henry:

My son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ has my permission to participate in your dissertation research.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

April 10, 1990

Dear Sir/Madam:

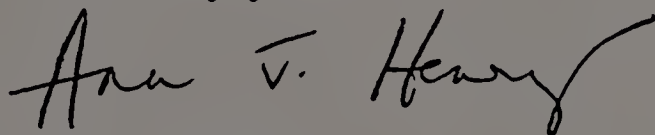
I am a doctoral candidate at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Currently, I am working on my dissertation. The research that I am undertaking will be a case study of a secondary school's training for entry-level employability and its relationship to the demands of employers.

I am hereby requesting your help in obtaining the necessary data to conduct the study. As a participant in the study, I am requesting that you take a few minutes from your busy schedule to respond to the enclosed questionnaire. Your prompt response would be greatly appreciated.

A final report with the research findings will be given to the Principal of the school and the School Department in an effort to provide an understanding of the problems encountered by our students and businesses.

Again, thank you for your help and your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann J. Henry". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Ann J. Henry

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