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EFFECTS OF AN URBAN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT
PREVENTION AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM ON THE
ATTENDANCE, ATTITUDE AND ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

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B.S. May 1960, Hampton Institute
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Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

EFFECTS OF AN URBAN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM ON THE ATTENDANCE, ATTITUDE AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

Margaret Shearin Bell
Old Dominion University, 1990
Director: Dr. Jack E. Robinson

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of a dropout prevention program on at-risk high school students who returned to their home schools. The study was conducted in Newport News, Virginia at four high schools and an alternative school site, housing the dropout program. The subjects were divided into two independent treatment groups: Group One (N=30) who participated in the program in the fall semester of 1988 and returned to their home schools in the spring semester of 1989, and Group Two (N=21) who participated in the program in the spring semester of 1989 and returned to their home schools in the fall semester of 1989. Subjects who entered the program in the fall semester 1989 were posttested after the treatment using the School Attitude Measure. Subjects who entered the program in the spring semester were pre and posttested. Follow-up measures were taken of the first group after the spring semester in the home schools and again at the end of

the first marking period the following fall semester. The second group was also re-tested at the end of the first marking period the following fall semester. Data on student attendance and achievement were obtained through school records.

Findings revealed that both groups improved in attendance, attitude and achievement following the program treatment. The pre-program absentee rate decreased by 2.4 percent at the home schools at the end of the study. Results from the attitude measure indicated that students began to feel in greater control of their learning outcomes and to assess their actual school skills more objectively. They also began to feel that teachers and administrators cared about their academic success. Grade point averages increased each subsequent marking period. Finally, a greater proportion of program participants remained in school after returning to their home schools than of those who did not participate in the program treatment.

To Mom and Dad, Elma and Mark Shearin
my husband, Alonzo
and my sons, Alonzo and Steven

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A basic goal of education in America has been to give young people adequate skills that will enable them to function satisfactorily in some area of employment. This goal was to be met by children following either a comprehensive or a vocational curriculum through graduation from high school. However, in 1900, less than half of the nation's 10 percent attending public high schools graduated. By 1910, about 90 percent of all school-age children were not graduating. In 1940, 60 percent were not graduating. By the late seventies, 90 percent were attending school and 30 percent were not graduating. Between 1960 and 1975, more than one million students dropped out each year, making the dropout rate between 25 and 40 percent.¹ The United States Census Bureau reported that 43 percent of the nation's high school students dropped out of school in 1980. Since then about 25 percent of America's teenagers drop out of school each year. Only 76 percent of students entering the ninth grade in 1984 graduated from secondary schools in Virginia in 1988. In Newport News, of the students who enrolled in high school in 1984-85, 70 percent graduated in 1987-88.²

Statistics also show that in 1986, 4.3 million

youth, ages fourteen through twenty-four, were dropouts. Of this number, 421,000 or 26 percent of the labor force for this age group were unemployed.³ According to the Bureau of the Census's survey, 34 percent of dropouts are outside the labor force.⁴ In light of the high rate of school dropout and youth unemployment, American education is still falling short of its goal of providing young people with adequate skills for successful employment.

Dropping out of school has serious implications for society. Without high school diplomas, dropouts permanently lower their potential earning power. They are less likely to be selected for employment or they must settle for jobs offering minimal pay, thus reducing their contributions to society in the form of tax revenues. They are frequently found on welfare rolls, receiving sizeable portions of federal aid for families with dependent children (AFDC). Figures show that the United States' federal expenditure toward this cause was \$13,838,202 in 1983, and these figures have continued to rise.⁵ For 1988 Virginia's contribution to AFDC was \$13,986,351.74 with Newport News' share equaling \$833,688.20.⁶ Frustrations accruing from apparently hopeless circumstances have led dropouts to increased crime and, consequently, even more government involvement. Dropouts comprise about one half of the nation's inmates. To house a prisoner in a correctional institution costs taxpayers approximately \$15,000 a year.⁷ Being a high

school dropout is, perhaps, the most deleterious impediment to the future success of America's adolescents.

Basis for Study

The increasing number of children at risk of becoming high school dropouts is causing national alarm. The fall 1988 United States Conference of Mayors Report, A Status Report on Children in American Cities called for more commitment on the national level to deal with such problems as the high school dropout. Compensatory programs have been mandated, funded and implemented to aid the economically and educationally disadvantaged youth for more than two decades. Yet providing more effective programs to meet the needs of so many teenagers who are leaving school before graduation remains a challenge.

During the late sixties, studies of dropouts and of those not being promoted prompted John Goodlad to conclude that schools are becoming obsolete. He recommended that educators rethink and restructure schools. Careful consideration should be given to both human and natural resources as well as to the possibility of new learning sites, always "with educational potentialities in mind."⁸ Sharing Goodlad's opinion, Wisconsin Congressman William Steiger suggested that, rather than considering those 2.5 million who do drop out of high school each year as failures of our system, we see our educational system as failing

these young people. . . . He stated, "We have failed in not providing meaningful alternatives to college preparatory courses."⁹

The National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education in its report, The Reform of Secondary Education, in the early seventies, recommended

that recognition be given to a wide variety of available alternatives. . . . These options must speak directly to the broad diversity of learning styles, living modes, cultural aspiration, value systems, and growth patterns that characterize adolescents.¹⁰

At about the same time, there arose increased concern about low test scores, violence, crime and absenteeism. New tactics to fight these elements were attempted in the form of alternative schools. Various types of alternative schools were formed, the purposes of which could be grouped into four categories:

1. To provide continuing educational opportunities for students who drop out of or prove disruptive in the regular high school.
2. To serve students who, for a variety of reasons, find the regular high school inadequate to their needs and who are interested in exploring opportunities in alternative schools.
3. To function. . . as "experimental laboratories," and occasionally become pacesetters or lighthouse institutions within the existing school system.
4. To develop programs in keeping with the diverse needs of student clients and parental conceptions of the type of schooling preferred for their children.¹¹

In 1984, the Newport News Public School System introduced a program to meet the special needs of the

dropout and the potential dropout. Its stated goals were to provide an alternative school setting and educational program for high school students who fail to abide by the policies of the school system, to significantly reduce the truancy and dropout rates, enforce the compulsory school attendance law and return students to their home schools. An informal study of the program's student attendance patterns and an assessment of teacher attitudes through a teacher survey were completed in 1985. No formal study nor follow-up of the students was made once they returned to their home schools. However, a preliminary investigation of the dropout and retention rate of students who had returned to the home schools prompted the director of the program to restructure the program's objectives and strategies.

In the 1988-89 school year, new objectives and strategies were introduced. The restructured program was designed to deliver an educational program and appropriate support services for participants that would provide personalized attention in core courses, build self esteem, and provide an overall supportive school environment. Counseling and social activities were an integral part of this program. The program also sought to help the students assume responsibility for their actions. As a result of participating in this program, students would demonstrate behavior that would allow them to function appropriately back in their home schools. Because of administrative and

community interest regarding its effectiveness as evidenced by a community forum at a local high school and the appointment by the school superintendent of a special task force for the study of the at-risk child in the Newport News schools, a formal evaluation to determine the effects of this new program plan seemed necessary. Therefore, the researcher, as program director, undertook the project.

Implications for Study

Because this dropout prevention program sought to effect a positive change in student truancy and disruptive behavior by enhancing the student self concept and locus of control, the results of a study of the program may be useful in understanding certain factors related to students' motivation toward school. Such findings can encourage changes in the behavior of teachers, guidance counselors and building administrators, and elicit policy changes at all levels. This study has implications for administrators in the area of staff development for teachers and other school staff. Teachers can benefit from knowing the influence of self concept and locus of control on behavior and take these into account when dealing with students. To counsel more effectively, guidance counselors should know how clients perceive themselves and others.

An assessment of the dropout prevention program can lead to its becoming a more effective alternative in the

Newport News School System. If the results are found to be statistically significant, they can serve as guidelines to strengthen the present program and can help to frame the structures of effective dropout prevention programs in other school districts.

As urban policy makers consider alternative schools as a viable remedy for the dropout problem, they are interested in the effects of the methods employed. Data on the effects which this alternative program has had on participants could prove valuable as policy makers make decisions regarding allocations of resources to support dropout prevention initiatives.

Statement of Problem

The research problem is one of investigating the effects of an urban alternative high school dropout prevention and rehabilitation (P/R) program on the attendance, attitude toward school and grade point averages of potential dropouts who successfully completed the program and returned to their home schools. The fall program was begun before a measure of attitude toward school was obtained for the first group. Therefore, this group did not have the benefit of a pretest but did receive a posttest at the end of the fall semester. A second group, entering for the spring semester, received a pretest and was followed through the program. Both groups were posttested at the end

of their treatment sessions to see if their attendance, attitude and grade point averages had changed significantly in a favorable direction. Both groups were also monitored after they returned to their home schools to see what, if any, changes took place following various periods of time outside of the program.

Also of concern was the question of whether the effects of this program on the students' attitude, attendance and achievement would last over a summer if not reinforced immediately in another learning environment. So these variables were investigated after immediate reinforcement and after no immediate reinforcement. The study also looked at the dropout rate of students who were returned to their home schools from the alternative school before and after the current program was initiated to determine if a significant difference existed between the two groups.

Specific Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed.

1. Is there a significant difference between the proportion of students who continued enrollment in school after having received this program treatment and returned to their home schools and of those who exited the alternative school to return to home schools before this program treatment was initiated in the fall

semester of 1988-89?

2. Is there a significant difference between the percentage of absences for subjects before their enrollment in P/R, during their enrollment in the dropout prevention and rehabilitation program and after returning to their home schools?
3. Is there a significant difference between Group One's motivation toward schooling, performance based academic self concept, reference based academic self concept, sense of control over performance, and instructional mastery at the end of the program, after a semester back at the home schools and at the end of the first marking period the following fall semester?
4. Is there a significant difference between Group Two's motivation toward schooling, performance based academic self concept, reference based academic self concept, sense of control over performance, and instructional mastery before, immediately after a prescribed stay in the program and at the end of the first marking period the following fall semester?
5. Is there a significant difference between the grade point averages for subjects before entering the program, at the end of the program and after returning to their home schools?
6. Are there significant differences between the attitude, attendance and achievement of students in Group One,

who were placed back in the home schools immediately after the treatment, and the attitude, attendance and achievement of students in Group Two, who had an intervening summer before being placed back in home schools?

Definition of Terms

Terms relevant to this research are defined below. Self Concept. To be used synonymously with self esteem to mean self regard; an all inclusive label for an idea one has of one's self; "the individual's total perceptual appraisal of him or herself"¹² in terms of attitude toward school as measured by the five subscales of the School Attitude Measure, a self-report survey.

The subscales are defined as follows:

Motivation for Schooling - the student's reactions to past school experience upon his motivation in school.

Performance Based Academic Self Concept - the student's confidence in his academic abilities and his feelings about his school performance.

Reference Based Academic Self Concept - how the student thinks other people (teachers, family, friends) feel about the student's school performance and ability to succeed academically.

Student's Sense of Control Over Performance - the

student's feelings about being able to exercise control over situations that affect him at school and to take responsibility for the outcome of relevant school events like grades and promotion.

Student's Instructional Mastery - the student's perceptions of his actual school skills.

Locus of Control. a personal perception of the position in which lie the determinants of one's fate in relationship to one's self. A person may believe that his locus of control lies within himself, that he controls his own behavior, or he may believe that outside forces determine his actions.

Academic Achievement. Students' overall grade point averages as reported in school records.

Alternative School. A school that provides an educational program, differing from the traditional program offered in a comprehensive school environment, that is designed to meet the special needs of students characterized by persistently unauthorized absenteeism or disruptive behavior.

At-risk Students. Students whose unexcused absences from school exceed the number allowed by the Newport News school system and/or whose behavior has been defined as disruptive and detrimental to a positive school atmosphere and are, therefore, in danger of future academic failure or early withdrawal from school.

Percentage of absences. Summation of the number of days
absent divided by the number of possible days absent.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides the framework for conducting the research presented in this study. The following topics will be included in this literature review: dropouts and self concept, self concept and achievement, locus of control and motivation, and alternative programs for dropout prevention.

Dropouts and Self Concept

The need to curb the high school dropout rate has been recognized by a number of authors for many years. Timberlake advised that a person without a high school diploma or equivalency skills "will not be able to cope with the increasing competition for education and, consequently, will be alienated from the mainstream of American life."¹³ Timberlake further stated that completion of high school is essential for potential dropouts if they are to further their education or acquire economic security. Therefore, it is necessary to identify dropout characteristics, to understand existing interrelationships, and to apply resources and demographic factors that are considered supportive of potential dropouts and their acquiring a high school diploma.¹⁴

Researchers investigating dropouts have found various characteristics common among dropouts. When studying why students reject school, Strom found that students who do reject school generally have negative and unrealistic pictures of themselves. They frequently reject or feel rejected by their peers. Academically, these students have "difficulty with abstract reasoning, generalizing, analyzing and inferring relationships. . . and communicating effectively."¹⁵

The United States General Accounting Office reported that the top three reasons for students' dropping out of school are unsatisfactory academic performance, insufficient interest in school, and lack of ability to get along with teachers.¹⁶ Pallas' study of school dropouts in the United States showed poor grades, constant disregard for authority, and truancy as the foremost characteristics of dropouts. The study also showed that dropouts are bored with school and perceive themselves as not fitting into the school environment.¹⁷

Beck and Muia characterized potential dropouts as having problems with tardiness or irregular attendance and classwork. The student usually has difficulty in reading and may be reading two or more levels below grade level. Grade retention, nonparticipation in extracurricular activities, disruptive behavior and poor self image are also listed. Beck and Muia, therefore, recommended that

potential dropouts be identified early and that teachers help students overcome their academic handicaps, provide experiences that will ensure success, show approval and love, and increase students' self image.¹⁸

Williams compared black dropouts and black high school graduates in a urban public school setting. She investigated such variables as demographic/personal characteristics, academic origin variables, and feelings toward school and peers in school. Her findings revealed that the major distinguishing characteristics of the dropouts were feelings of isolation, rejection and disconnectedness.¹⁹

Taylor, as placement specialist for the Virginia Beach, Virginia's public schools' employment counseling and placement services, observed certain dominant characteristics among her clients. They "seem to just not care. They also feel no one else cares, including their teachers, families or friends."²⁰ Taylor recognized that students with low self esteem sometimes reconcile themselves to failure in school and turn to sources outside the school for acceptance and accomplishment.²¹

To change these negative feelings that students have about themselves and help to reduce the dropout rate, researchers have sought effective ways to improve students' self concept. Strom saw a need to develop a realistic curriculum for these potential dropouts and he recommended

vocational training and stressing skills in the content areas which help the students relate to their future roles in society.²² Another researcher, Scales interviewed recent dropouts and high school personnel and derived eighteen factors which were considered important to keeping potential dropouts in school. Among them were regular counseling, caring teachers and vocational programs on various ability levels. He concluded that teenagers need to be liked and respected and made to feel worthwhile by responsible adults who are important to them."²³ They need to be able to relate what they do in school to their future. Scales also concluded that these students need to have a feeling of belonging. This might be accomplished by associating with their peers in extracurricular activities.²⁴

Certain school activities, practices and emphases have been positively associated with improvement in school retention and reduction of high school dropouts. Among these are elements for the deliberate improvement of students' self concept. Walz identified some of these as follows:

- (1) promotion of daily school attendance;
- (2) encouragement of parental participation in school learning activities;
- (3) strong and consistent school leadership;
- (4) clearly stated and widely disseminated classroom and school goals;
- (5) help for each student to establish and pursue personally meaningful career goals;
- (6) interfacing school and community resources;
- (7) provision of a caring and mentoring environment for all students;
- (8) assistance for students to develop effective learning and study skills;
- (9) establishment of a school climate where achievement is respected and

rewarded; and (10) recognizing and acting upon the interrelatedness of student self-esteem and success in school performance.²⁵

When Thornburg investigated attitudinal determinants in holding potential dropouts in school, he found that students taking special courses designed to improve self image had the lowest dropout rate. He concluded that special academic courses with positive reinforcement techniques were effective in maintaining positive attitudes toward school.²⁶ He, therefore, suggested alternatives in terms of courses and teaching strategies.

To effect the most favorable change in a learning situation, teachers must first understand the behavior and perceptions of those with whom they work. Purkey urged educators to realize "that the ways in which a student views himself and his world are (1) products of how others see him; and (2) primary forces in his academic achievement."²⁷ Kyle suggested that when educators recognize that high or low self concept affects a child's behavior, then they can effect policy to provide appropriate climate and curriculum that "would promote positive self concepts and acceptable student behavior."²⁸

To promote self concept, one must understand self concept and how it works. Del Polito defined self concept as self regard, an all inclusive label for an idea one has of him or herself (physically, socially, and intellectually).²⁹ Rosenberg referred to the idea as self

image but defines it similarly as the positive or negative attitude one has toward one's self.³⁰ Coopersmith used the term self esteem and gives a similar definition: a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the person holds toward himself. Coopersmith further theorized that self esteem is determined by one's values, aspirations, success, and defenses. He contended that the way a person sees himself depends on what the person considers success and the value or importance he places on his ability to perform. All this is "measured against his goal and standards and filtered through his capacity to defend himself against presumed or actual occurrences of failure."³¹ This rite of passage presents a sizeable challenge to the adolescent.

Erikson theorized that a person develops in phases. Within each phase exists a specific "task or crisis." Before moving on to the next phase, the person must resolve each phase task positively or in a constructive manner.³² Erikson believed that adolescence is a phase in which one has to "resolve the task of identity versus identity confusion."³³ Erikson's idea of a positive identity consists of (1) a sense of knowing who one is, that is, having the ability to see him/herself as a separate and meaningful person with a sense of direction, (2) a group identity in which the adolescent forms a meaningful relationship with a peer group and subsequently obtains a

sense of belonging, and (3) recognition of "the specific meaning that life has for the adolescent."³⁴ Believing that identity confusion is the opposite of positive identity, Erikson described it thus:

You are not sure you are a man or a woman, that you will ever grow together and be attractive, that you will be able to master your drives, that you really know who you are, that you know what you want to be, that you know what you look like to others and that you will know how to make the right decision without, once and for all, committing yourself to the wrong friend, sexual partner, leader or career.³⁵

These young people, torn between the strange, new physical feelings and the prospect of what is expected of them in adulthood, are now "primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are and with the question of how to connect the roles."³⁶ Erikson defined the successful completion of this adolescent task as having the satisfaction that the way one sees one's self is the way others see him or her.³⁷

Many studies have identified subjects with problems of identity confusion. These subjects tend to share many of the same characteristics which are indicative of low self esteem reports Rosenberg. His theory, supported by Algozzine and Salvia, Jacobs, and Lumpkin,³⁸ was that people with low self concept show generally neurotic characteristics, are less successful in social interactions, and are inclined to have lower aspirations and expectations for success than persons with high self esteem. They

attributed these findings to the subjects' interactions with society, family and peers.³⁹ Robinson and Shaver found that happiness and life satisfaction are highly correlated and that persons with the highest self esteem have the highest satisfaction with life. Greater satisfaction is most apparent "among people who are better socially adjusted, who demonstrate more trust in people, who feel less alienated, and who suffer less from anxiety, worry and psychosomatic symptoms."⁴⁰

Rosenberg added that persons of low self esteem are prone to be inhibited, hypersensitive and vulnerable.⁴¹ They, therefore, cope with their inadequacies by using expressive defenses. Cohen suggested that persons with low self esteem more readily act out impulses, even if socially unacceptable. This acting out is in response to situations and events surrounding the individuals. From these actions, they receive further social rejection and, consequently, additional self esteem deterioration.⁴² The characteristics that have been identified in these studies of persons with low self esteem or poor self concept are the characteristics of the potential dropout.

Self Concept and Achievement

A number of studies support the theory that self concept has a positive relationship to the achievement of the student from elementary school through high school.

Bodwin studied the relationship between immature self concept and certain educational disabilities of students in grades three through six. He found that a positive, significant relationship exists between immature self concept and reading disability with a correlation of .62 on the sixth grade level. Likewise, a positive, significant relationship exists between immature self concept and arithmetic disability, with a correlation of .68 on the sixth grade level.⁴³

In his study of the relationship of self concept to achievement in reading, Lumpkin tested twenty-four overachieving and twenty-five underachieving fifth graders in the Monterey, California schools. They were matched on chronological age, mental age, sex and home background and measured by psychological instruments for self concept, teacher perceptions of each child and peer status. The study revealed that the overachievers showed superior performance in mathematics and to a lesser degree in reading, had significantly more positive self concepts, achieved higher levels of adjustment, and were viewed more positively by teachers and peers. To the contrary, the underachievers made significantly lower scores in academic achievement, maintained a negative perception of self and desired to be different from self as seen, expressed conflict feelings more often and were viewed by teachers as having high problem tendencies. So, Lumpkin concluded that

achievement stems from intrinsic motivations as well as from environmental responses from such sources as family, teacher and peers. Life experiences contribute to negative feelings about one's self and are, thereby, manifested through one's lack of achievement. Therefore, the concept of self which the person accepts influences his behavior qualitatively and may determine the degree of expression in academic work as well as in social relations.⁴⁴

Williams and Cole investigated experiences which were considered essential to effective academic adjustment and their relationships to the self concept of 80 sixth grade children. Among these variables were conception of school, social status at school, and reading and math achievement. The attitudes toward school of these sixty urban and twenty rural children were tested by their rating school experience as they perceived it and as they wished it to be in terms of thirty adjectives. The Tennessee Self Concept Scale, which is not a school concept measure, was also used for comparison. The findings revealed a significant negative correlation between the Tennessee Self Concept Scale scores and the school concept scores but a significant positive relationship between self concept scores and reading and math achievement scores.⁴⁵ These results imply that the way one feels about his physical, moral-ethical, social self is not related to the way one feels about self in a school environment. However, the

results also suggest that self concept and achievement are highly related.

Brookover, Paterson and Thomas noted the same positive relationship between self concept of ability and achievement in junior high school students.⁴⁶ When Brookover, Erickson and Joiner investigated self concept of ability and school achievement controlling IQ, they, too, discovered a slightly positive correlation between self concept and academic achievement in high school students.⁴⁷

Hunt and Hardt studied high school students who had participated in an Upward Bound program. They measured the students' self esteem and academic achievement at six points over a twenty-one month period after the program intervention with no randomly selected control group for comparison. They found significant positive increases in self esteem but not in grade point averages. Therefore, they could not present evidence that heightened self esteem contributes to improved grades.⁴⁸

Authors Gage and Robson studied achievement patterns of Native Americans, Hispanics and Anglo children in a public school system in Ignacio, Colorado. They were interested in determining if differences in achievement levels existed among the three groups and, if different, what attitudinal variables were associated with the differences. Findings in the study revealed that differences did exist and were associated with school

attendance, self concept and parent attitudes toward school.⁴⁹

Many other authors, including Feshbach and Feshbach, Whitmore, Rajabally, and Karnes and Whorton agreed that a correlation does exist between self concept and academic achievement.⁵⁰ However, there is no consensus as to which variable influences the other.

To determine if attitude determines performance, Lamy tested kindergarten children on their self perceptions and compared them with their reading achievement in the first grade.⁵¹ In a similar study, Wattenberg and Clifford tested kindergarten children for self concept and related the scores to the children's reading achievement in the second grade.⁵² Results in both studies were significantly successful in predicting reading achievement. The researchers in both studies, therefore, concluded that self concept may be a causal factor in determining achievement level in school.

Gibby and Gibby used 60 seventh grade white students who had never failed in school and who were assigned to two classes expressly for those who were academically superior. Each group was given a series of tests. However, just before taking the second test, each member of the experimental group received notice that he had failed the previous test. Comparison of the scores of the two groups showed that the experimental group had lower scores on both

a self concept scale and on the cognitive measure. Gibby and Gibby, therefore, concluded that the stress from the previous failure caused the experimental group to perform less effectively.⁵³

When Peterson, et. al, studied ninth and tenth grade geometry students considering the variables, students' sex, teacher and past academic success, they found that students' self concepts were influenced more by the teacher and their past academic success than by whether they were male or female.⁵⁴ Pickar and Tori, similarly, discovered that past academic failures prevented learning disabled students from developing a "sense of industry and competence." Their study used the three variables: Eriksonian psychosocial development stages, self concept, and delinquent behavior to contrast learning disabled and non-learning disabled adolescents.⁵⁵

Keith, et. al., however, studied 22,660 seniors in a longitudinal study, using the variables, race; family background; intellectual ability; self concept; locus of control; and achievement. They found that intellectual ability and locus of control had the strongest impact on achievement. General self concept seemed to impact meaningfully on the subjects' locus of control, but had no meaningful impact on achievement for this age group. They concluded that for the senior high school student, enhancement of locus of control, rather than improvement of

general self concept may be a more effective means for improving achievement.⁵⁶

Locus of Control and Motivation

Trends in high school counseling are moving toward improving self images and helping students to accept responsibility for their actions. The concept of investigating one's self to understand the control one can have over one's own behavior is referred to in Rotter's social learning theory as internal and external locus of control. Rotter theorized that persons who see outcomes as results of their own behavior, i.e., who believe that they can control what happens to them, possess motivation from within, and are, therefore, internal. Whereas, those who believe that their destinies are controlled by outside influences are external. The latter characteristic represents the less positive, less productive personality trait.⁵⁷

Hawley and Hawley defined locus of control as a basic need to be in charge of one's own life. They contended that when students feel that they have no control over the procedures or outcomes of their learning, their motivation towards the work will be low. Conversely, when teachers present schoolwork so that students feel in charge of discovering knowledge for themselves, internal motivation will be high. Hawley and Hawley concluded that "initiative

and responsibility develop gradually from this inner motivation when appropriate learning opportunities are provided."⁵⁸ These practices will make a reluctant child become an "internal." Nowicki and Duke described an "internal" as having a higher self concept, being more self-reliant, more receptive to learning and having higher grades in school.⁵⁹ Therefore, to develop more "internals,"

the teacher must convince the child that he or she can learn. The teacher must cause such children to question their evidence about their ability. The children must then reattribute their conclusions about success and failure to effort and not luck. . . . If a child does not develop appropriate learning abilities and /or attitudes, then the motivation to learn and achieve cannot become a natural part of that child's life.⁶⁰

To increase motivation and learning among low achieving students, Smey-Richman recommended encouraging students to become more involved in their own learning. She said that teachers can help students to feel that they are in charge of their learning outcomes by assigning learning tasks that students do willingly because they find the content interesting and the task enjoyable.⁶¹

Elementary teachers recognize that "children are happiest and perform best when there is a genuine interest in, and concern for, them as individuals--a valuing of their ideals and perspectives."⁶² They have been trained to recognize the importance of the affective domain in relationship to cognitive growth. However, perhaps, because of secondary teacher training programs and secondary

school structure, high school teachers do not treat affective learning as a crucial ingredient of education. Instead, they concentrate on the specialized areas in the academics. Therefore, Seldin, recommended a "more balanced affective/cognitive approach in high schools. . . to focus on such issues as self-concept, anxiety, independence, locus of control, and attitudes toward school and teachers."⁶³ He recommended alternatives in teaching strategies.

Alternative Programs and Dropout Prevention

As far back as pre-revolutionary America there existed many types of schooling. The Latin Grammar School, the traditional English common school and the academy were among the most popular. Parochial schools of various faiths abounded and private tutors were well represented among the wealthy.

During the colonial period, few of the American adults had had a formal education, and schools became secondary to the family, home, religion, community and work. Education is mentioned nowhere in the United States Constitution, nor could Thomas Jefferson, an advocate of mass education, persuade legislators to pass aid to public education for fear of displeasing parents.⁶⁴ Even as late as 1890, only about 17 percent of teenagers under eighteen attended public high schools. Instead, some worked in apprenticeships and on-the-job training leading toward full

time employment. Others attended private religious schools.

Though the first vocational school was established in 1881, alternative schools did not begin to get much publicity until the early seventies when the nation acknowledged that our education system needed some new ideas to meet students' diverse needs and abilities. Today many alternative programs around the country are being implemented to meet the needs of at-risk students. Several examples follow.

Roosevelt High School in Bronx, New York, conducts "The PM School" which operates from 3 to 5 P.M., three days a week, and serves approximately three hundred students. It provides the extended hours for students for whom regular hours are inconvenient because of outside obligations or for those who cannot or will no longer function in a regular school environment. Traditional classes and club and recreational activities are also provided.⁶⁵

Redwood, California's Sequoia Union High School District operates Peninsula Academies, a school within a school where at-risk students are enrolled in a "core academy" to take required academic courses, e.g., English, mathematics and science, and a laboratory course centered around a certain occupation. (Each school concentrates on a single occupational skill). The rest of the day the students take part in regular school activities.⁶⁶

The Bryan Extension Center of the Lincoln, Nebraska

Public School System, serves around three hundred at-risk junior-senior high school students in three separate sessions, each 2.5 hours long, from 8:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M., five days a week. Any of the junior or senior high home schools may refer students. Attendance is by choice and students choose to attend for many reasons from need to catch up because of excessive absences or need for remediation to need for flexible scheduling. Because of the flexible scheduling, students may combine this program with a program at their home school. Students must abide by strict attendance and conduct rules.⁶⁷

Self investigated characteristics of effective dropout prevention programs. He recommended such intervention strategies as individualized instruction, teaching basic academic skills and vocational education, improving teacher-student relationships, counseling, getting students involved in extracurricular activities and helping students develop a positive attitude toward school.⁶⁸

When characterizing schools with high dropout rates, Self said classes are generally too large, and large class size can be detrimental to effective student learning. Smaller class size and an attentive teacher who tailors his teaching to the children with whom he is working are important to a successful dropout program. The teaching and the learning should be relevant. Self recommends that educators need not subscribe to strict standardization of

teaching techniques in order to attain a standardization of achievement.⁶⁹

Duke and Perry investigated eighteen public alternative high schools established to rehabilitate students with disruptive behavior so that they could eventually return to a regular school environment. They sought to identify characteristics of a successful alternative school. In interviews with teachers and students, size of school, student treatment, teacher attitudes toward student behavior, teacher skills and psychological characteristics were named. Findings also showed that emphasis was being placed on the students' acquiring a sense of responsibility for their own behavior. They were taught optional techniques for handling classroom conflicts. Duke and Perry concluded that small school size, flexible scheduling, frequent informal interaction between teacher and student were conducive to the successful alternative school.⁷⁰

Grosnickle selected twenty-five students with records of excessive absences, detentions and suspensions and proposed a program aimed at reducing the truancy and behavior problems. The program contained three components: (1) a course that stressed how-to-study tips, importance of grades, reasons for staying in school, motivation and self esteem, dealing with peer pressure, guidance services and drug awareness education, and a developmental or corrective

reading program required of all freshmen; (2) a committee that reviewed student referrals from teachers, deans, counselors, and parents and recommended individual programs; and (3) an option for students to attend a special school with highly individualized programs. No external rewards were used for motivation and four simple rules had to be followed: (1) come every day, (2) make reasonable progress, (3) never interfere with the learning of others, and (4) use no tobacco or alcohol. The program effected a 90 percent attendance/retention rate. Nineteen of the twenty-five subjects graduated.⁷¹

Synthesis

The studies in this review of literature have revealed that there is no single agreed upon definition of self concept. Indeed, self concept is frequently interchanged with the terms self image and self esteem. The literature does imply a relationship between student attitudes and student success in school. Of interest, for the purposes of this study, are those certain aspects of self concept that have been found to be related to a student's staying in or dropping out of school. Among these factors are (1) the ability to master the content taught and to understand the relevancy of what is taught; (2) the ability to sense the care and respect of teachers and administrators; (3) the ability to accept responsibility for

one's own actions; and (4) the ability to achieve success in social and academic settings.

Evidence supports the theory that a definite positive relationship exists between self concept and academic achievement. However, not enough evidence could be found to declare explicitly that one factor precedes or influences the other. The conclusion is, then, that an interaction does exist between the two factors, for studies have successfully shown that students who are successful in school exhibit the highest self esteem, and those who experience constant failure seem to possess the lowest self esteem. So, too, students with low self esteem continue to fail, and students with high self esteem accept small failures as challenges. Therefore, the way a child perceives himself in various situations is an important factor in determining the extent of his success, and a child's success aids in determining the way he perceives himself. Some researchers believe that the earlier students are helped to improve their self images, the more impact will be felt on achievement. In the later years of school, the more students realize that they can control their immediate and long range destinies (referred to as locus of control), the higher will be their motivation, self images and achievement.

Studies show that dropouts and potential dropouts report lower self esteem than students who remain in school.

These persons do not function well in the regular, comprehensive environment. They may be characterized by poor attendance and excessive truancy, isolation and nonparticipation in extracurricular activities. They frequently display low academic achievement and are behind in credits required for graduation, having failed one or more courses per semester. Low reading level and difficulty with mathematics are usually evident. These students, therefore, require special academic courses with positive reinforcement techniques which will be effective in maintaining positive attitudes toward school. Remedial programs in reading and mathematics are also frequently recommended.

Results of this literature review suggest that an effective dropout prevention program should possess components that seek to address academic needs, especially in reading and mathematics, on an individual basis, and enhance self concept and locus of control. In order to accomplish this, the program in this study was designed with the following elements: (1) caring and responsive teachers and administrators, (2) clearcut school and classroom policy, (3) basic, relevant content, (4) innovative and personalized instruction, (5) parent and community involvement, and (6) incentives for effort and achievement.

This research studied the effects that an alternative school program with these characteristics has had on

students who have successfully completed the program and returned to their home schools.

Hypotheses

To assess the effects that Project P/R has on students who complete the program and return to their home schools, the following hypotheses were selected:

1. There is a significant difference between the proportion of students who continued enrollment in school after having received this program treatment and returned to their home schools and of those who exited the alternative school to return to home schools before this program was initiated in the fall semester of 1988-89.
2. There is a significant difference between the percentage of absences of subjects before their enrollment in P/R, during their enrollment in the dropout prevention and rehabilitation program and after returning to their home schools.
3. There is no significant difference in Group One's motivation toward school, performance based academic self concept, reference based academic self concept, sense of control over performance, and instructional mastery at the end of the program, after a semester back at the home schools and at the end of the first marking period the following fall semester as evidenced by the

scores on the School Attitude Measure.

4. There is a significant difference in Group Two's motivation toward schooling, performance based academic self concept, reference based academic self concept, sense of control over performance, and instructional mastery before, immediately after a prescribed stay in the program and at the end of the first marking period the following fall semester as evidenced by the scores on the School Attitude Measure.
5. There is a significant difference between the grade point averages of subjects before entering P/R, at the end of the dropout program and after returning to their home schools.
6. There are no significant differences between the attitude, attendance and achievement of students in Group One, who were placed back in the home schools immediately after the treatment, and the attitude, attendance and achievement of students in Group Two, who had an intervening summer before being placed back into their home schools.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will include discussion of setting, description of program, selection of subjects, design of study, instrumentation, data collection procedures and method of analysis of data.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of an urban alternative high school dropout prevention and rehabilitation program on the attendance, attitude and achievement of at-risk students. The researcher investigated the differences in daily attendance, self concept scores and grade point averages of subjects before, during and after participation in the program treatment to determine the extent to which Project Prevention and Rehabilitation (P/R) affected students' attendance, attitude toward school and academic achievement once they had returned to the regular home school program. The study also investigated program effects on students after immediate return to home schools and after a summer with no immediate reinforcement in another learning environment. The goal of the study was to provide information to serve as a foundation for future alternative program development and implementation.

Setting

The setting of this study is Newport News, Virginia. The city borders Hampton Roads, the waterway that connects the James River to the Chesapeake Bay and, ultimately, to the Atlantic Ocean. The Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company and Fort Eustis Military base are its largest employers. Newport News extends twenty-one miles long and approximately seven miles wide. Its population is approximately 160,000. Approximately 28,000 students attend the twenty-five elementary schools, seven middle schools, four high schools and one alternative school in the Newport News Public School System. This research study was conducted at the alternative school site known as Deer Park Magnet School.

Description of P/R Program

The Newport News Public Schools has initiated a program aimed at reducing problems of high school student truancy and disruptive behavior. This program was established at a central location away from the four home schools in the city where the students attended school from 2 P.M. to 5:15 P.M. daily. Students' admission to the project Prevention/ Rehabilitation (P/R) is by referral from the home school for truancy or disruptive behavior. The Newport News Public Schools High School Attendance Policy describes these consequences for high school students with

the above characteristics:

When a student accumulates more than five unexcused absences for a semester in two or more classes, that student will be assigned to the Project Prevention/Rehabilitation (P/R). Once enrolled, a student would have to remain in the program a minimum of two months and would be able to return to the regular home school program only at the end of a semester.

Expelled students and students on long term suspension shall be enrolled on a similar basis as truants and would be recommended to remain as long as the board deems feasible. It recommends that they stay in the program, at least, until the end of the next semester.⁷²

The student also had to demonstrate satisfactory conduct before being permitted to return to the home school. Release was based upon teacher ratings and program director's decision.

A staff of teachers was selected through recommendations, screening and personal interviews by the program director. The characteristics sought in prospective teachers were energy, enthusiasm, positive attitude, high expectations of students, innovative ideas, tact, and patience. Guidance counselors, secretaries and staff aides were also instructed in positive behavior.

The maximum student:teacher ratio assignment was 15:1. The curriculum included a required course in decision making. This course supplied group counseling and deals with helping the student to acknowledge and accept responsibility for his actions and to apply certain skills when dealing with future dilemmas. A drama elective was introduced to channel students' actions and emotions. The

objectives for the core courses, English, mathematics, geography, history and government, and the health elective remained the same as in home schools to make transition back to the home school as smooth as possible. A state funded computer language laboratory provided individual remedial and developmental instruction in reading, writing and grammar skills.

To give students more positive reinforcement, awards assemblies were convened at regular intervals where certificates of honor for citizenship, perfect attendance and honor roll were presented. Honorable mentions were also made to permit as many students as possible to be acknowledged for their success. The intent was that the majority of the students be recognized to control peer rejection. Community businesses were solicited to donate goods and services which are also used as awards. Guest speakers from the community, serving as positive role models, gave pep talks at these assemblies. Field trips such as bowling and a visit to the Virginia Nature Science Museum were part of the program plan. The above features were added to heighten students' self esteem.

The guidance counselor provided individual counseling on informal and emergency bases. Teachers released students from class for private counseling upon students' requests. The principal and the assistant principal, who was the program director for P/R, also gave

private counsel on a regular basis and upon student request. The program director was familiar with names and faces of all students in the program and personally greets students by name upon intake, in the halls between classes, and on their way to and from the school buses.

Though the program has no library, a small collection of books of special interest to teenagers was maintained by the program director. These books were loaned to students and their parents.

A behavior modification program, in the form of a point system, was also initiated so that the students could know exactly what was expected of them and could keep track of their own progress. Teachers in every class assigned students daily points in the areas of attendance, work/effort, and behavior. For attendance, students received one point when present and a zero when absent. The students could receive from 0-3 points in work/effort -- 3 = exemplary, 2 = desirable, 1 = fair, and 0 = unsatisfactory, signifying no work or effort. The student's behavior in class was also scored from 0-3 -- 3 = exemplary, 2 = desirable, 1 = fair, and 0 = unsatisfactory, signifying intolerable behavior. When a student's behavior was intolerable, the matter was immediately attended to by the teacher, guidance counselor or assistant principal. Students continued to receive grades for class assignments.

To return to the home school, the student had to

meet, at least, minimum standards in attendance, work/effort and behavior. Minimum standards meant that the student had to attend 85 percent of the required membership period, not to exceed five unexcused absences. In work/effort and behavior, the student had to obtain 65 percent of the total possible points in each class. Total possible points equaled highest number of points possible (3 X the number of required membership days). Failure to meet these minimum requirements could result in reassignment to P/R, suspension, or withdrawal from the program. Students received student handbooks deliniating the regulations of the program that they may, thereby, be aware of the program's expectations and the consequences of their actions.

Parents were continuously involved by being kept aware of their children's absences by phone calls and letters and by visits from an attendance officer. Parents were invited in for conferences with the director on an as-needed basis and were invited to all awards assemblies.

Selection of Subjects

The subjects for this study were selected from seventy-nine high school students in grades nine through twelve who were assigned to the Prevention/Rehabilitation (P/R) alternative program for treatment between September 6, 1988 and June 16, 1989 because of truancy or disruptive

behavior. Having completed the requirements of the program, these students earned the right to return to one of the four public high schools in the city, hereafter to be referred to as home schools. Complete data were available for thirty students who returned to their home schools for the spring 1989 semester. These students were named Group One. Complete data were available for twenty-one students who entered the program in the spring semester and returned to their home schools the following fall semester. These students became Group Two.

Design of Study

The Newport News Public School System introduced a program in 1984 to meet the special needs of the dropout and the potential dropout. However, a recent investigation of the dropout and retention rate of former program participants, who had been returned to their home schools, caused concern for the newly assigned program director. In 1988-89 Project Prevention/Rehabilitation (P/R) underwent a restructuring of objectives and strategies seeking more effective and efficient techniques to prepare students to return to their home schools and exhibit behaviors conducive to that environment. The program focused on improving students' attendance by providing clear and precise rules for attendance with stated incentives and consequences. Improvement of attendance was also attempted by heightening

students' success rate and their desire to succeed. Faculty and staff concentrated on strengthening the students' academic weaknesses by maintaining a low student/teacher ratio and providing personalized attention in the classroom. Strong emphasis was also placed on building self esteem. Teacher and guidance strategies emphasized being accountable and accepting responsibility for one's own actions. Finally teachers, administrators and support staff sought to convince the participants in the program that they cared. The desired results were that students would develop behavior that allow them to function appropriately back in their home schools.

The focus of this study was on the changes in attendance, attitude toward school and academic achievement of students who went through the Prevention/Rehabilitation program and returned to their home schools. The study examined the attendance patterns of program participants by looking at their percentage of absences before, during and after the program. Grade point averages were also collected before, during and after the program. Finally, an attitude survey was administered to two treatment groups, one, which participated in the program intervention in the fall 1988 semester and the other, which participated in the following spring 1989 semester. The second group took the attitude survey pretest, and the first group did not. Because the test to measure school attitude was introduced into the

program toward the end of the fall semester of the 1988-89 school year, pretest data was unobtainable for the subjects in Group One.

In addition, the study reported withdrawal data of the students who were sent back to their home schools after having received this program treatment and of those who exited the alternative school to return to their home schools prior to the initiation of this program treatment in the fall semester of 1988-89.

Instrumentation

Studies show that potential dropouts may be behind in reading and math skills, feel alienated from the teachers and the school culture, perceive themselves as failures and feel hopeless and helpless to do much to improve their lives. Therefore, in the interest of this research study, these issues were investigated to determine to what degree these characteristics influence the performance of the students at Project P/R. The formal instrument used in data collection was the School Attitude Measure, a component of the Comprehensive Assessment Program by American Testronics, a Scott-Foresman subsidiary. This instrument, currently used in the program, measures the students' self concepts and attitudes toward school.

The School Attitude Measure is a self-report survey designed to investigate the way students perceive themselves

in their school environment. This instrument is provided on three levels: for grades four through six, seven through eight, and nine through twelve, each of which is approximately thirty-five minutes long. Because this study was investigating high school students, level nine through twelve was used. To accommodate the wide range of abilities, the authors use everyday language at a seven to eighth grade level of reading difficulty. The one hundred item instrument uses a four-point Likert Scale format. The responses, moving in a direction from 1-4, are never agree, sometimes agree, usually agree, and always agree.

The School Attitude Measure provides data on five subscales:

Scale A: Motivation for schooling

This scale seeks the effect of the students' reactions to past school experience upon their motivation in school.

Scale B: Academic Self-Concept - Performance Based

This scale looks at the students' confidence in their academic abilities and their feelings about their school performance.

Scale C: Academic Self-Concept - Reference Based

This scale deals with how students think other people (teachers, family, friends) feel about the students' school performance and ability to succeed academically.

Scale D: Student's Sense of Control over Performance

This scale investigates students' feelings about being able to exercise control over situations that affect them at school and to take responsibility for the outcome of relevant school events like grades and promotion.

Scale E: Student's Instructional Mastery

This scale asks students to try to report the state of their actual school skills.⁷³

Validity

The measure is based on a set of comprehensive objectives identified after literature searches and interviews with school personnel. The number of attitude scales was reduced to five, and the number of test items to approximately 250 for the three levels of the test. Research by content specialists, minority groups and teachers validates that the items have been written to avoid sexist or minority bias. The standardization sample was composed of ten thousand high school students from four geographical regions in the nation.⁷⁴

The authors state that results of any specific subscale compares favorably with other measures which test for single aspects. Teacher and parent ratings also show a relationship to the results on the subscales. Studies connecting this test with observational data have also been conducted.⁷⁵

Reliability

The authors estimate the reliability for internal consistency for grades nine through twelve, based on Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), is .95 for the total test. For test-retest, taken four weeks apart, the estimate is in the .80's.⁷⁶ Reliability coefficients, as reported on each subscale, range from .78 to .88.⁷⁷ All reliabilities were computed on raw scores reported in a range from 1 to 4. For purposes of this study, results were reported on each of the subscales. That is, each student was analyzed using five different criteria.

Data Collection Procedures

The School Attitude Measure was administered as a posttest to students in their social studies classes by three pre-trained teachers at the end of fall semester of the 1988-89 school year. Of the students posttested at the end of the fall semester, fifty-four satisfied the requirements and returned to their home schools. The School Attitude Measure was administered to these students again in their home schools at the end of spring semester and at the end of the first marking period the following fall semester. Attendance data and grade point averages were collected from student records for the periods before, during and at the two periods after the treatment when they received the attitude survey.

All students entering P/R the following spring semester were pretested and posttested by the same social studies teachers. Of the students pretested and posttested in the spring semester, twenty five students successfully completed the program and returned to their home schools at the end of the semester. These subjects also received the attitude measure in their home schools at the end of the first marking period the following fall semester. Other data were collected from school records in the form of number of days absent and grade point averages. Attendance data and grade point averages for these students were collected for periods before, during and after their treatment.

The follow-up testing for all subjects took place in single forty-five minute sittings at each of the schools where the subjects were in attendance. The subjects at each site were tested in a group setting. Testing of those students who had returned to their home schools was done by the investigator. All testing was completed by November 1989. Collection of attendance data and academic grades was also completed by that time.

Method of Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine if significant differences in attendance, attitude and grade point average were demonstrated by the two subject groups.

Table 1 reports the statistical procedures identified for use. A repeated measures analysis of variance was used to analyze the attendance data for each group. A two-factor repeated measures analysis of variance was used to analyze the attitude data for each group. A repeated measures analysis of variance was used to analyze the grade-point average data for each group. A multivariate analysis of variance was used to compare the attendance, attitude scores and grade point averages of the two groups at the end of their programs and at the end of the first marking period in the fall semester of 1989. A two-way analysis of variance was used to compare the individual attitude subscales of the two groups at the end of their programs and at the end of the first marking period in the fall semester of 1989. The withdrawal rate of students who were returned to their home schools from the alternative school before this particular program was initiated was reported. Also the withdrawal rate of students who returned to their home schools following the current program intervention was determined. A chi-square analysis was performed on these data to determine if a significant difference existed between the two groups. The test for significance was set at the 0.05 level of probability. The data were reported in narrative and tabular form. The Statistical Analysis System⁷⁸ computer program was used to process the data for these analyses.

TABLE 1
METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Variables	Groups	Analysis	Measurement
Attendance	Group One Group Two	Repeated measures analysis of variance on each group	Percentage of absences
Attitude	Group One Group Two	Two factor repeated measures analysis of variance on each group	Student attitude measure
Grade-point average	Group One Group Two	Repeated measures analysis of variance on each group	4.0 grade scale carried to two decimal places
Attendance	Group One versus Group Two	Multivariate analysis of variance	Percentage of absences
Attitude	Group One versus Group Two	Multivariate analysis of variance	Student attitude measure
	Group One versus Group Two	Two-way analysis of variance	Attitude measure subscales
Grade-point average	Group One versus Group Two	Multivariate analysis of variance	4.0 grade scale carried to two decimal places
Withdrawal rate	Non-program participants versus Program participants	Chi-square analysis	Withdrawal data

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of an alternative program on potential dropouts. Project Prevention and Rehabilitation (P/R) serves high school students who have exhibited truant and disruptive behaviors in the Newport News area public schools. Special instruction and conditions to reduce these undesirable behaviors are provided in an alternative setting. The program was designed to prepare the students to return to their home schools and exhibit behaviors conducive to that environment and to succeed academically. The treatment included core courses, English, mathematics, geography, history and government. Drama and health were offered as electives. The program director introduced a required course in decision making designed to teach the student to evaluate situations, weigh options, accept responsibility for his own actions, and cope with decisions. This course concentrated on raising self esteem. Other self-image building activities, such as awards assemblies and community speakers, were included.

Student daily attendance and grade point averages were also collected, and subjects were administered a self-report survey, the School Attitude Measure. Repeated measures analysis of variance, two factor repeated measures analysis of variance, multivariate analysis of variance,

two-way analysis of variance and chi-square were the techniques used to analyze the data.

CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of an urban alternative high school dropout prevention and rehabilitation program on the attendance, attitude toward school, and grade point averages of at-risk students. The study was conducted within the Newport News, Virginia Public School System.

The subjects for the study were high school students in grades nine through twelve who were assigned to the program for treatment between September 6, 1988 and June 16, 1989 because of truancy or disruptive behavior. The instrument for measuring the students' attitude toward schooling was administered as a posttest to all students the end of fall semester of the 1988-89 school year. Of the students posttested at the end of the fall semester, fifty-four satisfied the requirements of the program and returned to their home schools. However, at the end of the first subsequent testing in the spring semester following the program, seven had been withdrawn from school. Table 2 reports the status of Group One program participants who were permitted to return to home schools in the following spring semester.

TABLE 2
STATUS OF GROUP ONE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS
PERMITTED TO RETURN TO HOME SCHOOLS

Number of participants	Status	Semester
30	Returned to home schools and remained enrolled through end of study	Spring 1989
7	Withdrew from school	Spring 1989
17	Withdrew from school	Fall 1989
Total 54	Permitted to return to home schools	Spring 1989

Table 3 reports the reasons for subject withdrawal during the spring semester. Three students withdrew because of fifteen or more days of unexcused absences. One student withdrew to enter another public school outside the state. One student transferred to a public school in another city or county within the state. One student was transferred to a state-operated institution within the state. One student withdrew for other reasons and did not enter another school. In the fall semester following the summer break, seventeen subjects were withdrawn from school.

Table 4 reports the reasons for subject withdrawal during the fall semester. Six students withdrew because of

TABLE 3
REASONS FOR GROUP ONE WITHDRAWALS
DURING SPRING SEMESTER

Number of withdrawals	Reasons for withdrawals
3	Fifteen or more days of unexcused absences
1	To enter another public school outside the state
1	Transferred to a public school in another city or county within the state
1	To a state-operated institution within the state
1	For other reasons and not entering another school
Total 7	

fifteen or more days of unexcused absences. Two students withdrew to enter another public school outside the state. Two students transferred to a public school in another city or county within the state. One student withdrew for other reasons and did not enter another school. Three students graduated. Therefore, complete data was available for thirty of the original subjects. This number comprised Group One.

In the replication of the program the following spring semester, all students entering P/R were pretested

TABLE 4
REASONS FOR GROUP ONE WITHDRAWALS
DURING FALL SEMESTER

Number of withdrawals	Reasons for withdrawals
6	Fifteen or more days of unexcused absences
2	To enter another public school outside the state
2	Transferred to a public school in another city or county within the state
4	For other reasons and not entering another school
3	Because of graduation
<hr/>	
Total 17	

and posttested using the same attitude measure. Twenty-five students successfully completed the program and returned to their home schools at the end of the spring semester. However, at the first marking period, nine weeks into the fall semester, four subjects had withdrawn from school. Table 5 reports the status of Group Two program participants who were permitted to return to home schools in the fall semester.

Table 6 reports the reasons for subject withdrawal during the fall semester. Two students withdrew because of

TABLE 5
STATUS OF GROUP TWO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS
PERMITTED TO RETURN TO HOME SCHOOLS

Number of participants	Status	Semester
21	Returned to home schools and remained enrolled through end of study	Fall 1989
4	Withdrew from school	Fall 1989
Total 25	Permitted to return to home schools	Fall 1989

fifteen or more days of unexcused absences. One student withdrew to enter another public school outside the state. One student graduated from summer school. Therefore, complete data were available for twenty one of the original subjects. This number became Group Two.

To investigate the hypotheses of this study, withdrawal information was gathered on students who attended the alternative school and returned to their home schools before this program was initiated. This information was compared with the withdrawal data on the subjects of this research. The data analysis compared the proportion of students who exited the alternative school the preceding school year before this program was in place and returned to their home schools with the proportion of those who

TABLE 6
REASONS FOR GROUP TWO WITHDRAWALS
DURING FALL SEMESTER

Number of withdrawals	Reasons for withdrawals
2	Fifteen or more days of unexcused absences
1	To enter another public school outside the state
1	Transferred to a public school in another city or county within the state
1	Because of graduation from summer school
Total 5	

participated in the program and then returned to their home schools. This comparison was made to ascertain if the retention and withdrawal rates of the students were affected by the program. Subjects' percentage of absences and grade point averages were also investigated. Finally, the subjects' attitudes toward school were measured by subscales of the School Attitude Measure, looking at their motivation toward school, performance based academic self concept, reference based academic self concept, sense of control over performance, and instructional mastery.

The attitude measures were taken of Group One at the end of the fall program, after placement back at the home

schools for the spring semester and at the end of the first marking period of the following fall semester. Measures were taken of Group Two at the beginning of the P/R program in the spring of 1989, at the end of the spring program and after placement back at the home schools at the end of the first marking period of the following fall semester.

Hypotheses and data analyses follow.

Withdrawal Rates

Question 1. Is there a significant difference between the proportion of students who continued enrollment in school after having received this program treatment and returned to their home schools and of those who exited the alternative school to return to home schools prior to the initiation of this program treatment in the fall semester of 1988-89?

Table 7 contains frequencies and percentages of at-risk high school students who exited the alternative school before this program was in place and were returned to their home schools compared with those students who participated in the program before returning to their home schools. Likewise, frequencies and percentages of those in each group who have subsequently withdrawn from school are presented.

Table 7 reveals that of the ninety-three non-program participants who were released to their home schools, forty-three or 46% have continued enrollment to date or to

graduation, and fifty or 54% have since withdrawn from the school system. Of the seventy-nine who participated in the program, fifty-five or 70% have continued enrollment to date or to graduation while twenty-four or 30% have withdrawn for reasons other than graduation.

TABLE 7
WITHDRAWAL RATES

Groups	Totals	Continued enrollment	%	Withdrew from school	%
Non-program participants (1987-1988)	93	43	46%	50	54%
Program participants (1988-1989)	79	55	70%	24	30%
Total	172	98		74	

Chi-square with 1 degree of freedom = 10.317.**

** $p \leq .01$.

Observation has shown that the program participants had a significantly lower dropout rate than did the non-program participants. The chi-square statistical procedure has obtained a value of 10.3 which showed that a statistically significant difference ($p \leq .001$) existed between the two groups, thereby, warranting acceptance of

research Hypothesis One:

There is a significant difference between the proportion of students who continued enrollment in school after having received this program and returned to their home schools and of those who exited the alternative school to return to home schools before this program was initiated.

Attendance

Question 2. Is there a significant difference between the percentage of absences for students in Group One or in Group Two before their enrollment in P/R, during their enrollment in the dropout prevention and rehabilitation program and the percentage of absences after returning to their home schools?

Table 8 reports the number of observations, mean scores and standard deviation for the results of Group One absence data. Table 9 reports the results of the repeated measures analysis of variance of the Group One absence data. A repeated measures analysis of variance showed a statistically significant difference existing across the attendance time periods. Fisher's post hoc test of least significant difference cited all possible time comparisons as being significant at the .05 level. However, the Scheffe F-test, a more conservative post hoc test, indicated a significant difference in the rate of absence only between

TABLE 8
 NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS, MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD
 DEVIATION OF GROUP ONE ABSENCE DATA

Period	Number of observations	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Before program	30	18	7.20
During program	30	9.36	4.18
After spring semester back in home school	30	19.40	11.64
Mid fall semester back in home school	30	15.63	10.75

the period before entering the program and the period during the program (a decline of nine points) and between the period during the program and the following spring semester when the students were placed back in their home schools (an increase of ten points). An explanation for these significant differences may be (1) reactions to the restrictive nature of the program and (2) the improved attendance during the program so that the subjects would be able to return to their home schools. The Fisher post hoc procedures also support the interpretation that mid-fall

attendance rates improved over those recorded prior to the program and those for the spring semester immediately following the program.

TABLE 9
REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE
OF GROUP ONE ABSENCE DATA

Source of variation	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Across time periods	3	1771.667	590.556	10.767*
Error (time)	87	4771.833	54.849	
Total	90	6543.5		

* $p \leq .05$.

Table 10 reports the number of observations, mean scores and standard deviation for the absence data of Group Two subjects. Table 11 reports results of the repeated measures analysis of variance of the Group Two absence data. The repeated measures analysis of variance indicated a statistically significant difference existing between the percentage of absences across the time periods. Fisher's post hoc test of least significant difference cited all

TABLE 10
 NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS, MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD
 DEVIATION OF GROUP TWO ABSENCE DATA

Period	Number of observations	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Before program	21	21.05	8.25
During program	21	8.62	3.70
Mid fall semester back in home school	21	16.91	6.30

possible time comparisons as being significant at the .05 level. The rates before the program declined twelve points during the program, and for the period between the end of the program and the end of the following semester back in their home schools, rates showed an increase of eight points. Again an explanation for these significant changes may be (1) the effect of the restrictive nature of the program and (2) the incentive on the part of the subjects to return to their home schools as a result of meeting attendance requirements. Fisher post hoc procedures again support the interpretation that mid-fall attendance rates improved over those recorded prior to the program and those for the spring semester immediately following the program.

TABLE 11
 REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE
 OF GROUP TWO ABSENCE DATA

Source of variation	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Across time periods	2	1682	841	9.03*
Error (time)	40	3712	92.8	
Total	42	5394		

* $p \leq .05$.

Restrictions on attendance changed the behavior of the subjects while in the program, and there appeared to be some residual effects on the attendance behavior on the subjects after they returned to their home schools in the fall semester. Essentially, Hypothesis One was supported. However, the rise in absenteeism was not anticipated in this hypothesis. Nevertheless, the rate of absenteeism was lower than prior the the start of the program. It is unlikely that this decline reflects seasonal variation because Group Two's absence data was taken for the previous fall semester.

Attitude

Question 3. Is there a significant difference

between Group One's motivation toward school, performance based academic self concept, reference based academic self concept, sense of control over performance, and instructional mastery at the end of the program, after a semester back at the home schools and at the end of the first marking period of the following fall semester?

The School Attitude Measure, a self-report survey, measures the students' perceptions of themselves in the above-mentioned areas. This survey was administered to Group One at the end of the program as a posttest. It was also administered to Group One on two additional occasions following the students' return to their home schools at the end of the spring semester and at the end of the first marking period in the following fall semester.

Table 12 shows the number of observations, mean scores, and standard deviations for the five subscales of the attitude measure for Group One at the end of the program, after a spring semester back in the home schools and after a nine-week marking period back in the home schools.

Table 13 shows the results of a two factor repeated measures analysis of variance on the scores of the five subscales of this survey. Results showed no significant difference over time; however, there was a significant difference across subscales. This latter comparison simply indicates that there was a difference across the average

performance across the subscales. This finding has no particular relevance to this study.

Though no significant change occurred over time, also of interest was the question, "Was there any interaction between time and subscales?" The F value of .17 for 8 degrees of freedom indicates a slight interaction between time and subscales. In conclusion, the results revealed no statistically significant difference across the subscales over time and no significant interaction between time and subscales for Group One.

Because no pretest was given, no comparison could be made of the subjects' attitudes before the program and after. However, these findings do suggest that attitudes remained constant since participation in the program causing the acceptance of Hypothesis Three:

There is no significant difference in Group One's motivation toward school, performance based academic self concept, reference based academic self concept, sense of control over performance, and instructional mastery at the end of the program, after placement back at the home schools for a semester and at the end of the first marking period of the following fall semester as evidenced by the scores on the School Attitude Measure.

Question 4. Is there a significant difference between Group Two's motivation toward schooling, performance

TABLE 12

NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS, MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD
DEVIATION OF GROUP ONE ATTITUDE DATA

Period	Number of observations	Subscales					
		1	2	3	4	5	
End of program	30	Mean	55.53	53.47	54.43	64.46	51.93
		SD	10.06	8.41	7.64	8.39	7.88
After spring semester back in home school	30	Means	56.3	52.6	54.9	65.3	52.33
		SD	11.28	6.06	7.50	7.97	8.13
Mid fall semester back in home school	30	Means	55.23	53.97	55.7	65.5	52.8
		SD	9.62	6.16	6.96	8.42	7.01
Total point change			1	1	2	2	1

TABLE 13
TWO WAY REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE
ON GROUP ONE SCORES ON THE FIVE SUBSCALES

Source	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Subscales	5	9216.12	1843.22	27.37***
Time	2	11.35	5.68	.08
Subscales X time	8	88.96	11.12	.17
Error	437	29431.83	67.35	

*** p < .001.

based academic self concept, reference based academic self concept, sense of control over performance, and instructional mastery before, immediately after a prescribed stay in the program and at the end of the first marking period of the following fall semester?

The School Attitude Measure, a self-report survey, measures the students' perceptions of themselves in the above-mentioned areas. Table 14 shows the number of observations, mean scores, and standard deviations for the five subscales of the attitude measure for Group Two before the spring program, at the end of the program and after a nine-week marking period back in the home schools the following fall semester.

TABLE 14
 NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS, MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD
 DEVIATION OF GROUP TWO ATTITUDE DATA

Period	Number of observations		Subscales				
			1	2	3	4	5
Before program	30	Means	53.33	48.32	47.86	59.67	47.19
		SD	9.49	4.54	4.56	6.52	5.98
End of program	30	Means	56.38	51.21	50.95	59.52	50
		SD	8.35	7.16	8.17	8.06	7.21
Mid fall semester back in home school	30	Means	56.43	52.47	53.91	67	52.57
		SD	9.68	8.29	9.31	8.50	8.50
Total point change			3	4	6	7	6

Table 15 presents a two-way repeated measures analysis of variance to evaluate the results of the scores of the five subscales of this survey and the changes on these subscales across time. The F value indicated a significant difference over time and across subscales. However, there was no significant interaction between subscales and time.

As indicated before, difference across subscales was not of interest in the data analysis. However, the changes across time indicate program effects in the expected direction. Also of interest was whether performance on some subscales changed over the course of the project, as might be expected from the project emphasis, while others remained the same on other subscales. It should be noted that failure to show significant interaction did not support this latter expectation. For further exploration of this result, each subscale was analyzed separately. Tables 16 through 20 report the results of the repeated measures analysis of variance on each of the five subscales. Table 16 reports the repeated measures analysis of variance of Group Two's motivation toward schooling. No statistically significant difference occurred between the answers which Group Two students gave on subscale one, motivation for schooling over the three time periods. These results indicate that students continued to feel the same about the importance they put on schooling.

TABLE 15

TWO WAY REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE
ON GROUP TWO SCORES ON THE FIVE SUBSCALES

Source	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Subscales	4	6587.28	1646.82	27.19***
Time	2	1434.71	717.36	11.84***
Subscales X time	8	328.146	41.02	.68
Error	300	26522.99	60.57	

*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 16

REPEATED MEASURES ANOVA OF GROUP TWO SCORES ON
SUBSCALE ONE: MOTIVATION FOR SCHOOLING

Source	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Across time periods	2	132.1	66.05	.781*
Within periods	60	5074.76	84.58	
Total	62	5206.86		

* Not significant.

Tables 17 through 20 report on the subscales of performance-based academic self-concept, reference-based academic self-concept, student's sense of control over performance, and student's perception of his/her instructional mastery.

Table 17 reports the repeated measures analysis of variance of Group Two's performance-based academic self-concept. Results of the repeated measures analysis of variance reported in Table 17 indicated no statistically significant difference ($p > .05$) between the answers of the three periods.

The subscale represented in Table 18 deals with how

TABLE 17

REPEATED MEASURES ANOVA OF GROUP TWO SCORES ON SUBSCALE TWO: ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT - PERFORMANCE BASED

Source	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Across time periods	2	226.89	113.449	2.418*
Within periods	60	2814.77	46.919	
Total	62	3041.65		

* Not significant.

students thought other people (teachers, family, friends) feel about the students' school performance and ability to succeed academically before the program, immediately after a prescribed stay in the program and during the fall semester following a summer vacation. Table 18 reports the results of the repeated measures analysis of variance of the Group Two's reference-based academic self concept data. A repeated measures analysis of variance of Table 18 indicated a statistically significant difference between the answers of the three periods.

TABLE 18

REPEATED MEASURES ANOVA OF GROUP TWO SCORES ON SUBSCALE THREE: ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT - REFERENCE BASED

Source	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Across time periods	2	384.1	192.05	3.306*
Within periods	60	3485.33	58.09	
Total	62	3869.43		

* $p < .05$.

The subscale represented in Table 19 investigates students' feelings about being able to exercise control over

situations that affect them at school and to take responsibility for the outcome of relevant school events like grades and promotion before the program, immediately after a prescribed stay in the program and during the fall semester following a summer vacation.

Table 19 reports the repeated measures analysis of Group Two's student's sense of control over performance data. A repeated measures analysis of variance in Table 19 indicated a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$) between the answers of the three periods.

TABLE 19
REPEATED MEASURES ANOVA OF GROUP TWO SCORES ON
SUBSCALE FOUR: STUDENTS' SENSE OF CONTROL
OVER PERFORMANCE

Source	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Across time periods	2	767.84	383.92	6.395**
Within periods	60	3601.91	60.03	
Total	62	4369.75		

** $p < .01$.

The subscale represented in Table 20 asks students

to try to report the state of their actual school skills before the program, immediately after a prescribed stay in the program and at the end of the first marking period of the following fall semester. Table 20 reports the repeated measures analysis of variance of Group Two's student's instructional mastery data.

TABLE 20

REPEATED MEASURES ANOVA OF GROUP TWO SCORES ON SUBSCALE FIVE: STUDENT'S INSTRUCTIONAL MASTERY

Source	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Across time periods	2	304.22	152.11	2.846*
Within periods	60	3206.38	53.44	
Total	62	3510.60		

* Not significant.

A repeated measures analysis of variance in Table 20 indicated no statistically significant difference ($p > .05$) between the answers over the three periods.

The above results indicate that over time, the subjects changed their opinions significantly concerning in

two areas: (1) how they think other people (teachers, family, friends) feel about what they do in school, believing more now that these significant others do care and (2) where their locus of control lies, feeling now they have control over the outcomes of their learnings and that they are now willing to take responsibility for their own behaviors. However, no significant change across the three time periods could be found in (1) motivation toward post-secondary schooling and perceptions of feelings significant others toward further schooling, (2) performance based self-concept, nor (3) students' perceptions of their mastery of their instructional skills. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis that Group Two would show no significant difference in attitude is accepted. It should be noted, little emphasis was placed on these areas during the study, whereas, strong self concept, locus of control and concern by significant others of students' current school success were stressed.

Grade Point Averages

Question 5. Is there a significant difference between the grade point averages for the subjects of Group One or of Group Two before entering the program, at the end of the program and after a period back in their home schools?

Table 21 reports number of observations, mean scores and standard deviation for the results of Group One grade

point average data. The grade point averages of subjects in Group One rose each subsequent marking period from 1.04 before the program to 1.6.

TABLE 21

NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS, MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF GROUP ONE GRADE POINT AVERAGE DATA

Period	Number of observations	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Before program	30	1.04	.47
During program	30	1.27	.51
After spring semester back in home school	30	1.33	.59
Mid fall semester back in home school	30	1.6	.83

Table 22 reports the results of the repeated measures analysis of variance of grade point average data for Group One. A repeated measures-analysis of variance test revealed a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$) existed across the grading periods. Fisher's post hoc test of least significant difference cited all possible time comparisons as being significant at the .05 level for Group One.

TABLE 22
 REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF GROUP ONE
 GRADE POINT AVERAGE DATA

Source of variation	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Across time periods	3	4.8	1.601	10.07***
Error (time)	87	13.83	.159	
Total	90	18.63		

*** $p < .001$.

Table 23 reports the number of observations, mean scores and standard deviation for the results of Group Two grade point average data. The grade point averages of subjects in Group Two rose each subsequent marking period from .98 to 1.53.

Table 24 reports results of a repeated measures analysis of variance of grade point average data for Group Two. The repeated measures analysis of variance test revealed that a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) existed across the grading periods. Fisher's post hoc test of least significant difference cited all possible time comparisons as being significant at the .05 level for Group One.

TABLE 23

NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS, MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD
DEVIATION OF GROUP TWO GRADE
POINT AVERAGE DATA

Period	Number of observations	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Before program	21	.98	.65
During program	21	1.22	.69
Mid fall semester back in home school	21	1.54	1.02

TABLE 24

REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF GROUP TWO
GRADE POINT AVERAGE DATA

Source of variation	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio
Across time periods	2	3.28	1.64	3.92*
Within periods	40	16.17	.42	
Total	42	19.45		

* $p < .05$.

Analysis of the comparison of the grade point average patterns in Group One over four periods of time indicated a probability level of $<.05$ and of Group Two over three periods also indicated a probability level of $<.05$ warranting the acceptance of Hypothesis Five:

There is a significant difference between the grade point averages of students in Group One and in Group Two before entering the program, at the end of the program and after a period back at their home schools.

Question 6. Are there significant differences between the attendance, attitude and achievement scores of students in Group One, who were placed back in their home schools immediately after the treatment, and the attendance, attitude and achievement scores of students in Group Two, who had an intervening summer before being placed back in their home schools?

To answer this question, the percentage of absences, attitude measure scores and grade point averages of Group One were compared with those of Group Two at the ends of their program and after the first marking period the following fall semester.

Tables 25 through 28 report the means and standard deviation for the three independent variables for both groups at the end of the program and at the end of the study after the first marking period in the following fall

semester. Table 25 reports data for percentage of absences.

TABLE 25

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION FOR PERCENTAGE OF ABSENCES
OF GROUP ONE AND GROUP TWO AT THE ENDS OF THE
DROPOUT PROGRAM AND AT THE
END OF THE STUDY

Source	End of program	End of study
Group One		
Means	9.36	15.63
Standard Deviation	4.18	10.75
Group Two		
Means	8.62	16.91
Standard Deviation	3.70	14.09

Table 26 reports data for grade point averages.

Table 27 reports the data for the attitude subscales. Table 28 shows the results of a multivariate analysis of variance on the comparison data on attendance, grade point average and attitude for Group One and Group Two.

According to the Wilks' Criterion test for the hypothesis of overall group effect, the scores of Group One and Group Two were comparable showing no statistically significant difference between the two groups in attendance, academic achievement nor attitude toward schooling except for the locus of control subscale.

TABLE 26
 MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION FOR GRADE POINT AVERAGES
 OF GROUP ONE AND GROUP TWO AT THE ENDS OF THE
 DROPOUT PROGRAM AND AT THE
 END OF THE STUDY

Source	End of program	End of study
<u>Group One</u>		
Means	1.3	1.6
Standard Deviation	.51	.83
<u>Group Two</u>		
Means	1.2	1.5
Standard Deviation	.69	1.02

There was a significant increase in locus of control from the end of the program to the following fall semester. Of interest is the fact that the program stressed strong self concept and locus of control. Though there were no significant differences in four of the five subscales, possible interaction was explored. To investigate interaction effects between time and subscales, a two-way ANOVA was used on each subscale.

Table 29 reports the results of the data analysis for the five attitude subscales. While none of the interactions were significant at the .05 level, increases on subscales three and four for Group Two compared to Group One were marginally significant.

TABLE 27
 MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION FOR ATTITUDE SUBSCALES
 OF GROUP ONE AND GROUP TWO AT THE ENDS OF THE
 DROPOUT PROGRAM AND AT THE
 END OF THE STUDY

Source	Subscales									
	One		Two		Three		Four		Five	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
<u>Group One</u>										
Means	56.53	55.23	53.47	53.97	54.43	55.7	64.46	65.5	51.93	52.8
Standard Deviation.	11.28	9.62	6.07	6.17	7.51	6.97	7.97	8.42	8.13	7.01
<u>Group Two</u>										
Means	56.38	56.43	51.21	52.47	50.95	53.91	59.52	67	50	52.57
Standard Deviation	8.35	9.69	7.17	8.30	8.17	9.31	8.06	8.51	7.22	8.51

TABLE 28

F VALUES AND PROBABILITY LEVELS FOR COMPARISON DATA
ON ATTENDANCE, GRADE POINT AVERAGES AND
ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOLING FOR
GROUPS ONE AND TWO

Measure	Attitude subscales	F ratio	Probability
Attendance		2.44	.0980 ^a
Grade point average		.01	.9854 ^a
Attitude toward school (five sub-scales)	1	.11	.8972 ^a
	2	.89	.4188 ^a
	3	1.32	.2769 ^a
	4	4.04	.024 [*]
	5	.57	.5666 ^a

Degrees of freedom = 2, 48.

^a Not significant.

* Scores on locus of control subscale rose significantly seven points between the periods in question.

However, probability levels of greater than .05 on four of the five subscales warrant acceptance of null Hypothesis

Six:

There are no significant differences between the attendance, attitude and achievement scores of students in Group One, who were placed back in their

home schools immediately after the treatment, and the attendance, attitude and achievement scores of students in Group Two, who had an intervening summer before being placed back in their home schools.

TABLE 29

F VALUES AND PROBABILITY LEVELS FOR COMPARISON
DATA ON ATTITUDE SUBSCALES FOR GROUPS
ONE AND FOR GROUP TWO

Measure	Attitude subscales	F ratio	Probability
Attitude toward school	1	1.03	.3137
	2	1.65	.2023
	3	3.80	.054
	4	3.75	.0556
	5	2.23	.1389

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of an urban alternative high school dropout prevention and rehabilitation program on the attendance, attitude toward school, and grade point averages of at-risk students. This chapter included presentation and analyses of data pertaining to the selected research and null hypotheses.

Analysis of data revealed the following findings.

(1) The proportion of students who remained in school prior to this program intervention was significantly lower than the proportion of program participants who continued enrollment. Of the original seventy-nine subjects who participated in the program and returned to their home schools, fifty-five continued enrollment to date or to graduation. (2) The percentage of absences for both Groups One and Two declined significantly during the period in the program. Immediately after the program, absences rose again significantly. However, they were still significantly lower than they were prior to entry into the program. (3) No significant differences occurred in Group One's scores on the school attitude measure given over three time periods after their experiencing the program treatment nor was there any significant interaction between time and subscales. (4) There was a significant change in overall attitude scores over time for Group Two, however. When the subscales were analyzed individually, statistically significant difference was found only in the scores on reference-based academic self-concept and students' sense of control over performance. The answers that Group Two gave regarding their motivation for schooling, their performance-based academic self-concept and their perceptions of their instructional mastery across the time periods of before, immediately after the program and in the fall did not change

significantly. No significant interaction occurred between time and subscales for Group Two. (5) A statistically significant difference did occur between the grades in each marking period for both groups. The grade point averages rose each subsequent period, increasing from .98 to 1.5 for Group One and from 1.0 to 1.6 for Group Two. (6) Upon comparison of Group One to Group Two at the end of the program and at the end of the study, no significant overall group effect was found in attendance, attitude nor achievement nor were there interaction effects. These results indicate no significant difference whether students returned to their home school environment immediately after the program or after a summer vacation as far as attendance or achievement was concerned. However, in the period after a summer vacation, the comparison groups' reference-based self-concept and locus of control increased showing an interaction between time and group membership in these two areas. Because the results were only significant at $p < .06$, they should be viewed with caution. Yet they do suggest some residual effects in those areas that might be worthy of future study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter includes a summary of the study, conclusions based on the findings and recommendations for further study.

Summary

Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of an urban alternative high school dropout prevention and rehabilitation program on the attendance, attitude toward school, and grade point averages of at-risk students.

Design

The study was conducted at four high schools and an alternative school site, housing Project Prevention/Rehabilitation, within the Newport News, Virginia Public School System. Project Prevention/Rehabilitation (P/R) serves high school students who have exhibited truant and disruptive behaviors in the Newport News public high schools. Special instruction and conditions to reduce these undesirable behaviors are provided in an alternative setting. The program was designed to prepare the students

to return to their home schools and exhibit behaviors conducive to that environment.

The program focused on improving students' attendance by providing clear and precise rules for attendance with stated incentives and consequences. Attendance improvement was also attempted by heightening their success rate and their desire to succeed. Faculty and staff concentrated on strengthening the students' academic weaknesses by maintaining a low student/teacher ratio and academic groupings in math and English so that each student could progress at a pace that would not create nonproductive stress. Strong emphasis was also placed on building self esteem, subscribing to the theory that a relationship exists between academic achievement and self esteem. Teacher and guidance strategies emphasized being accountable and accepting responsibility for one's own actions.

The treatment included a required course in decision making, which provided group counseling and dealt with the application of certain skills when handling hypothetical and real dilemmas. A drama elective was introduced to channel students' actions and emotions. A health elective and the core courses, English, mathematics, geography, history and government were also part of the curriculum. A computer laboratory provided individual remedial and developmental instruction in reading, writing and grammar skills. The treatment also included self-image building extracurricular

activities, such as awards assemblies and motivational speakers.

The subjects were seventy-nine (79) high school students in grades nine through twelve who successfully completed the program at the alternative school and were returned to their home schools. Complete data were available for fifty-one (51) of the original subjects. These subjects were divided into two independent treatment groups: Group One (N=30) who participated in the program in the fall semester of 1988 and returned to their home schools the spring semester of 1989, and Group Two (N=21) who participated in the program in the spring semester and returned to their homes schools in the fall semester of 1989.

Student daily attendance and grade point averages were collected, and subjects were administered a self-report survey, the School Attitude Measure. Repeated measures analysis of variance, two-factor repeated measures analysis of variance, multivariate analysis of variance and chi-square were the statistical techniques used to analyze the data. F ratios computed on these scores were used to accept or reject the hypotheses of the study. The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) computer program was used to process the data for these analyses. The test for significance was set at the .05 level of probability.

Results

The results of this study as they pertained to the selected hypotheses were as follows:

Hypothesis One discussed the retention and withdrawal rates of non-program participants and program participants. Findings showed that the proportion of program students who remained in school was significantly greater than the proportion of non-program participants that continued enrollment.

Hypotheses Two discussed the differences in the percentage of absences over several periods of time. Findings show that Group one's absences decreased a significant nine points during the program period only to rise a percentage point beyond the pretest score in the period immediately after the program. After the last measurement back in their home schools the following fall semester, Group One's percentage of absences was 2.4 percentage points lower than their pre-program rate. Similarly, Group Two's absence rate decreased twelve points during the program but increased by eight points back in their home schools the following fall semester, four points below their absence rate before entering the prevention and rehabilitation program in the spring semester of 1989. These significant changes may be attributed to (1) the effect of the restrictive nature of the program versus the more lenient environment back in the home schools and (2)

the students' desire to return to their home schools.

Hypothesis Three examined Group One's attitudes toward school expressed on five subscales. Findings revealed that no statistically significant differences occurred in Group One's opinions across the five subscales over the three periods of time, all occurring after participation in the prevention and rehabilitation program. Nor was there interaction between time and subscales. The findings imply that the students' attitudes remained constant since participating in the program and if there were changes in attitude made because of the program, the effect was retained after returning to the home schools.

Hypothesis Four examined Group Two's attitudes toward school expressed on these five subscales. This group was pretested at the beginning of the program. Analysis indicated significant changes across subscales and over time. When the subscales were analyzed individually, no statistically significant difference was found between the answers that Group Two gave regarding their motivation for schooling either before, immediately after the program or in the fall. There was also no statistically significant difference between the answers students gave regarding the confidence they had in their academic abilities and feelings about their school performance. Nor was there any indication that their abilities to evaluate their actual school skills or to accept advice and criticism had changed

since participating in the program treatment. However, answers did change significantly on the subscales related to reference-based academic self-concept and students' sense of control over performance. The findings indicate that the students began to think differently about (1) how they think other people (teachers, family, friends) feel about what they do in school, believing more now that these significant others do care and (2) where their locus of control lies, feeling now they have control over the outcomes of their learnings and that they are now willing to take responsibility for their own behaviors.

Hypothesis Five discussed the grade point averages of Groups One and Two. Findings revealed a statistically significant difference between the grades in each marking period for both Group One and Group Two. The grade point averages rose each subsequent period from 1.04 to 1.6 for Group One. and from .98 to 1.54 for Group Two.

Hypothesis Six compared Group One's end of the program scores and the last scores of attendance, grade point averages, and attitude toward school with Group Two's end of the program scores and the last scores of attendance, grade point averages, and attitude toward school. Findings revealed that the groups were comparable with no statistically significant differences between the overall group effects of the two groups. Interesting to note, however, analysis did indicate a significant increase in

locus of control for each group. The scores were then analyzed for interaction effects. While none of the interactions were significant at the .05 level, increases on subscales three and four by Group Two over the increases made by Group One were found to be marginally significant. Because these concepts were the main areas of focus in the program, the increase for Group Two compared to Group One may be viewed as an indication that greater realization of program goals may occur as the program matures. It also suggests that effects of programs like this may not always be readily apparent. Since these results are only marginally significant, this interpretation should be viewed with caution.

Conclusions

Data obtained during this study support the theory that the program intervention used at the alternative school during the 1988-89 school year benefitted two successive participant groups of at-risk high school students. Findings revealed that more students remained in school after participating in the program treatment at the alternative school than did those who did not participate in this treatment at the alternative school.

The percentage of absences for both groups rose significantly back in their home schools. Several explanations could account for the dramatic rise. Back in their home schools, these students did not receive the

individual attention received in the program because of the small student/teacher ratio. They did not receive praise for their good attendance nor the same amount of personal interest when they were absent. In the program, care was taken that each student realize some success in each class every day. Outside of the program, back in a larger environment once again, they were left more to their own initiative. Yet the percentage of absences for both groups ultimately declined to a point lower than their pre-program rate indicating, perhaps, some internalization of locus of control, which had been emphasized in the program.

In addition, grade point averages increased each subsequent marking period for both groups. The subjects were achieving success and receiving recognition for their achievements and concern for their shortcomings. They began to feel better about themselves, boosting their self esteem. Good grades made them feel successful, so they continued to make good grades. Theory that there is a relationship between self concept and achievement supports this interpretation of the data.

When attitude change is considered, the significant increase of scores on subscales three and four, reference based self-concept and locus of control, cannot go unnoticed. Results indicate that the students felt that others are concerned about their school success. They also realized that their own actions did determine what happened to them

and they saw that because they took control of their actions during the program, they were able to return to their home schools. That the scores continued to rise shows retention of the idea of internal locus of control.

Attitudes of Group Two remained virtually unchanged in two areas. Students in Group Two did not change their attitudes on how they felt their past experience motivated them in school nor toward the amount of confidence they had in their academic abilities. Yet a significant change occurred in the way they think others feel about their ability to succeed in school. These students also felt significantly different about their ability to control certain situations that involve them in school. Their locus of control has become more internal. They indicated that they are more willing to take responsibility for the outcome of relevant school events like discipline, grades and promotion.

Next a comparison of the end of the program scores and the last scores of the two groups on attendance, attitude and achievement showed no statistically significant difference. Therefore, the program may be said to have achieved comparable effects after one replication, suggesting that comparable results would be likely after other replications.

Finally, with one graduation period within the course of this study, four participants in this dropout

prevention and rehabilitation program remained in school through graduation. Both groups improved in attendance, attitude and achievement following the program treatment presented at the alternative school during the 1989-90 school year. These accomplishments served to fulfill the goal of the prevention and rehabilitation program which was to keep at-risk students from dropping out of school by focusing on improving student attendance, helping students to achieve success in academics and teaching them to accept responsibility for their actions.

These results have made it apparent that some students' poor attendance patterns can be altered; attitudes toward school and academic achievement patterns can also be changed by manipulating certain external forces within the school environment which act upon the students. The P/R program has provided concentrated faculty and administration concern, parent and community involvement and opportunities for individual successes to effect the positive changes seen in these subjects. The data collected in this research study have provided evidence that indicates that the Project Prevention/Rehabilitation (P/R) program treatment studied at the Newport News alternative school during the 1988-89 school year had a significantly positive effect on the attendance, attitude and achievement of the at-risk high school students enrolled therein.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Program Implementation

The findings in this study have provided evidence that the Newport News Public Schools dropout prevention and rehabilitation program is recognizing some success and is providing a valuable service to the school system and to the city. Of particular interest are the program's strengths so that they can be capitalized upon and its weaknesses so that they can be improved upon. It is for this reason that the following recommendations are being presented.

1. It is recommended that the school day for P/R students be extended to a full day and be divided into blocks of time to allow the student many options for learning. A greater variety of courses should be offered to allow students to receive sufficient credits to graduate from the alternative site, which for many represented a more comfortable site than did the larger home school site. Few of the students in the program were academically inclined; therefore, it is recommended that vocational training be included in the curriculum to prepare them for work.

2. The decision making course made a positive impression on the participants. Therefore, it is recommended that decision making continue to be a required course and that the offering be extended to a full semester.

3. Based on the investigator's observations, positive recognition was an effective means of changing

negative behavior. Therefore, it is recommended that the program continue to provide extensive personal recognition awards, promote individual and school projects to raise community awareness of the program and establish community and business partners in education to allow students to associate with important people in the community. The purpose is to raise students' self esteem.

4. Many students who did not remain in the program had problems that teachers were not prepared to address. Consequently, the program was not an adequate deterrent to their dropping out. Therefore, an on site impact team is recommended to provide instant counseling and individual help with personal concerns.

Recommendations for Further Study

At least fifty-one high risk potential dropouts were returned to their home schools after participating in the prevention and rehabilitation program during the 1988-89 school year. Several were graduated. For these few, the program was a success. However, more students were retained in P/R than were released. A large number dropped out. Therefore, in view of the results of this investigation, these recommendations are offered for future research in the effort to broaden the knowledge of the effects of specific interventions on the at-risk student and to improve and implement program strategies that will begin to save a

majority of the potential dropout masses.

1. This study should be replicated in an alternative high school setting using age, grade, ethnic origin or gender as independent variables. The purpose is to determine the variables upon which such a program has the greatest and least impact for program restructuring purposes.

2. A longitudinal study should be conducted to determine the long term effects of specific program intervention on the truant and negative behaviors of at-risk students. The purpose is to determine if the positive effects of the program are maintained.

3. The effects of specific program intervention upon at-risk middle school students should be investigated. The purpose is to determine if similar positive effects are realized on that target population at that especially critical age.

4. The effect of the program on students' individual responses on the attitude measure should be investigated. The purpose is to determine areas in which the program intervention has the greatest and least impact for program restructuring purposes.

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