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The Practices Employed by Keifer Community Center in Order to Be Successful with At-Risk Students

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**THE PRACTICES EMPLOYED BY KEIFER COMMUNITY CENTER
IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS**

Submitted to the
Faculty of Urbana University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master in Education
Division of Graduate Study

by
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Approved:

Advisor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "J. H. Turner", is written over the "Advisor" label.

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CHAPTER I **INTRODUCTION**

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Keifer Community Center implements alternative programs for at-risk students. It is essential to provide a program to allow these students to succeed, before they fall prey to gangs, drugs, and crime.

This study will examine Keifer Community Center, with a focus on the physical setting of the school, staff services, and curriculum. The report will assess the practices Keifer Community Center implements in order to be successful with at-risk students.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Community Centers provide an active learning environment for at-risk students who have been expelled from school, are on probation from the courts, or are in danger of dropping out of school altogether. The mission of Keifer Community Center is to “rekindle motivation and hope in students; to inspire students to improve their academic skills and modify their social skills” (Keifer Alternative Center, 1996). Once students have accomplished these goals they can become productive citizens of the community.

QUESTIONS TO BE INVESTIGATED

Research Question

What practices is Keifer Community Center employing in order to be successful with at-risk students?

SUBQUESTIONS

Physical Setting

1. What population does Keifer serve?
2. What is the best class size for Keifer students to excel?

Staff Services

3. What support staff/social services in the school aid in the success of the program?
4. Does staff at Keifer need special training for working with at-risk students?
5. Does the idea of decentralized decision-making aid in the success of the alternative program?

Curriculum

6. What is the purpose of staying open extended hours and is it beneficial to the success of Keifer Community Center?
7. What programs are offered year-round at Keifer and how does this lead to their success with at-risk students?
8. Does Keifer Community Center use personal learning plans and does it lead to the success of the students?
9. Does Keifer Community Center use a prescribed curriculum for alternative programs?
10. Statistically, does the alternative program have positive results on attendance and academic success of students?

DEFINITIONS

Alternative Schools-Schools or programs aimed at students who are unsuccessful in the traditional school/classroom setting.

Support Staff- Could include, but not limited to, social workers, psychologists, nurses, police, and counselors.

At-Risk Students- A child who is repeatedly absent from school, dropping out of school, or facing expulsion for inappropriate behavior (fighting, gangs, weapons). Many of these students are on probation from the courts, facing criminal charges, are drug or alcohol abusers, are teenage parents, and are emotionally abused.

Community Learning Center- Comprehensive school design aimed at dramatically increasing the achievement of all learners through active learning, a personal learning plan for each student, integrated social services, and decentralized decision making.

Individualized Educational Plan- (IEP) Each student has his/her own individualized educational plan, outlining their goals, experiences to reach the goals, and progress towards the goals. The plan is usually designed by staff, students, and parents.

Decentralized Decision-Making- One person or organization is not making all the decisions regarding the school and programs. Due to a partnership with outside agencies and other schools in the community, decisions are collaborative.

SUMMARY PROCEDURES

The methodology of this research will be in the format of a library search and survey. The procedure will involve doing a survey of Keifer Community Center's staff and an extensive study of the literature regarding alternative programs, at-risk students, and community centers. The data will then be compared to Keifer's plan and the findings will be evaluated.

CHAPTER II RELATED RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

Physical Setting

Alternative schools provide at-risk students with what could be one last opportunity to academically succeed and graduate from high school. The alternative school deviates from the regularities of a typical school, therefore are able to facilitate reform. Alternative schools have been designed to aid those children who, in the past, have not been served by a regular school program. They help these students by implementing creative curriculum and programming within the school structure.

In a study conducted in 1989, three factors of success were identified in alternative schools. According to the study the first factor was that the schools have a community within themselves, by serving students by using different community agencies. Secondly, learning must be engaging, and lastly alternative schools must provide the structure to allow the first two components to exist and sustain (Raywid, 1994). Other factors identified by Gold and Mann were that materials and tasks be appropriate to the student's current skill level and it appeals to their interests as much as possible. Students should be able to master each skill at their own pace, similar to the ideas of Montessori (Gold and Mann, 1984). It is believed students who go to an alternative school need remediation in academic, social, and or emotional behaviors. Students that are successful at an alternative school could return to their home school and or, become productive citizens in the community.

Alternative schools benefit those students who have exhibited behavioral problems ranging from fighting, gang activity, running away, and violent conduct. Many also deal with those who are pregnant or parenting, are drug and alcohol abusers, and are on probation or face criminal charges. Others that are placed at alternative schools are those that have reached graduation year, but lack enough credits to graduate and many of these students are in danger of dropping out of school. A study by Glaser and Horne found that chronically disruptive students are also at risk for early pregnancy, delinquency, and early death (Aeby, Manning, Thyer, Carpenter-Aeby, 1999).

Alternative schools special programs and flexibility allow these students to receive a high school diploma, possibly gives career options to some, and a chance to change the course of their lives for the better (Christensen, 1998; Paglin and Fager, 1997).

Paglin and Fager support a less formal relationship between students and teachers, creating a caring family atmosphere, which fosters a good program. A committed staff, who counsels, mentors and tutors students, as well as sets clear rules that are enforced fairly and consistently also leads to this feeling of closeness (Paglin and Fager, 1997). A national survey found that alternative schools identify teacher-student relationships as the greatest difference between traditional schools and themselves. The feeling of membership and a family-type atmosphere is what allows students to succeed at alternative schools (Raywid, 1994). Schools such as Woodward Day School in Worcester, Massachusetts feels the student-teacher relationship and the acceptance of certain atypical behavior helps improve the students' self-esteem, which in turn leads to success. Group High School and Ethnic High School in Berkeley, California also emphasize a casual relationship between the students and teachers, believing it lessons

students' fears and made the teachers seem more approachable when it came to helping with schoolwork or discussing social problems (Gold and Mann, 1984). Many alternative schools find these elements allow for a stable and predictable learning environment (Christensen, 1998).

Those at alternative schools believe a lower ratio of students to staff is another key of success to their plan. Black Canyon Alternative School in Idaho, has found the program to be most successful with an average of 15 to 18 students per instructor. However, other alternative schools, such as EAGLE High School in Montana, Project Creating Dropout Alternatives, CDA, in Idaho, and Project for Alternative Learning, PAL, in Montana average between 6 and 12 students per instructor. This small class size allows teachers to not only instruct students so they have an opportunity to graduate from high school, but also allows them time and the familiarity to counsel students and have continual parental contact (Paglin and Fager, 1997).

Staff and Services

Research indicates it is important to hire staff who are committed to working with at-risk students. Training in several certification areas, behavior management, and counseling is useful when working at an alternative school. Educators must perform the fundamental roles of teacher, academic advisor, and mentor to be successful when teaching at-risk students (Paglin and Fager, 1997; Designs for Learning, 2000). Staff development should always be available to teachers in order to professionally better themselves. Additionally, it is important all teachers are observed several times a year by a school administrator to ensure appropriate and effective lessons.

Mat-Su Alternative School (MSAS) in Arkansas has a staff that embraces those jobs such as teacher, facilitator, and mentor. The custodial staff spends time with students allowing them to acquire maintenance skills and at EAGLE High School in Montana staff plays volleyball and shares gymnasium time, in order to create a family atmosphere. Students feel this adult interaction at school is important in helping them change their behavior and reach their goals (Paglin and Fager, 1997).

Alternative schools have decentralized decision-making. Administrators, teachers, and other professionals make decisions about curriculum and accountability of students. Decisions are based on data and trial and error in the schools. The program also involves input from parents. They are able to participate in their child's education through conferences, sharing skills they themselves possess, and by reinforcing learning and rules at home. In a study comparing parent involvement with non-parental involvement, intensive family involvement was an added component to a school's program. It was believed this involvement would greatly improve students' academic and psychological functioning. Parental involvement and support could also help increase attendance and reduce the dropout rate (Aeby et. al. 1999). Many times parents are not involved in their child's academic life, however some schools offer programs to assist those who are involved, but may not feel competent to help due to lack of education or knowledge in that particular subject (Designs for Learning, 2000).

Students should be viewed as a valuable resource, giving as much input as possible into the daily running of the school. At CDA in Idaho they take this idea a step further. There are no closed doors at the alternative school. Students and faculty are together through the entire day, sharing a lunchroom and even restrooms. Staff at CDA

are referred to by their first names, and all have a vote in how their school is run.

Students that have been at the school for two or more years are able to be on the hiring committee along with staff. The principal does not decide whom to hire; wanting the students and staff to feel empowered.

Tonasket Alternative School in Washington allows students to help structure the alternative program and maintain the school building. At the beginning of the year, students create their own rules and code of conduct, allowing them a sense of ownership. They, as well as staff, clean and build furniture for the school, and landscape the outside (Paglin and Fager, 1997).

Partnerships with community agencies are essential for the community center to exist. This partnership may be with government agencies, public and private agencies; hospitals, police departments, and counseling organizations, as well as early childhood programs and workshops. These support agencies allow children and parents to benefit from the facility and the extensive programs available. Developing a comprehensive system includes balancing the needs and goals of these different agencies as well as maintaining effective communication. Many times this balance is not created, causing a breakdown in the system. However, when it is effectively implemented the alternative school program and the students greatly benefit. Community Learning Centers are usually open past the regular school day. Most of these centers stay open year-round and extended hours to serve students, their families, and others in the vicinity (Designs for Learning, 2000). Mat-Su Alternative School in Arkansas operates year-round and is open

from 7:00am to 9:30pm. They are able to accommodate work schedules of students and community members (Paglin and Fager, 1997).

Curriculum

Curriculum is based on achieving standards and outcomes through various learning experiences. It is essential for schools to implement programs that will allow students to gain positive results. These programs need to be structured so the student has frequent success, something many have not experienced in school. Alternative schools need an integrated curriculum, incorporating core classes with experiential and vocational learning. Additionally, curriculum needs to include academic, behavioral, and social contexts in order to deal with the entire scope of the student's problem (Gregg, 1998)

Since alternative schools accept students who are at-risk and likely academically failed at their home school it is important that they have an individualized educational plan (IEP). IEP's are created by the staff at the alternative school, the student, and parents. They determine goals for the student's learning outcomes. Assessment of achievement lies in daily student work, teacher evaluations, and conferencing (Designs for Learning, 2000).

The goal of many alternative schools is simply to return students as soon as possible back to their home school, however the best curriculum should meet not only their academic needs, but their social and behavioral needs as well. Many times alternative schools are found to use non-interactive seatwork, instead of hands-on activities due to the type of discipline problems the students exhibit (Gregg, 1998). However, Community Learning

Centers should have a curriculum that is hands-on and integrated with each discipline and community resource.

Many of the schools have a family-like atmosphere that allows student's to have input into their curriculum and job site. At Avail in Arkansas, students are required to use computer technology at least an hour and a half a day. This time is usually spent taking required courses through computer software. This allows students to better prepare for jobs in the community. Students have IEP's at Avail, and schedules evolve around the students' need for a diploma.

Alternative schools, such as MSAS, CDA, EAGLE, and Alpha High School in Oregon have a curriculum that is schoolwork based. Students at MSAS need to meet requirements of the school, the district, and work fifteen hours a week at a job or for those who are not of age, do community service. At CDA, students can earn academic credits if they work or volunteer 150 hours in the community. Staff contacts employers once a month to check the student's progress. Students need to be exhibiting a positive attitude, punctuality, and have good attendance in order to gain credits. Some students at EAGLE accrue academic credits toward graduation through independent study, since they are working full time.

Alpha incorporates two thirteen-week projects in conjunction with the employers. These projects are arranged by the student, two teachers, and the employer and must reflect both work and school learning. They are then presented in one or more classes for a grade. Alpha has 260 business partners to promote school to work opportunities.

Students must clock in and out of school and wear appropriate clothing to school and their job. When they arrive at their job, they call the school and leave a voice mail that records the time. Disciplinary action is taken if the student has more than five absences in a nine-week period (Paglin and Fager, 1997).

In order to graduate, students at all alternative schools must meet the same state standards as other Ohio high school students. Substitutions may be made, such as taking a parenting class instead of a social science class or earning credit for a language arts class if they participate in community theater, but otherwise all standards are the same as the home school. Student's progress is tracked through documentation, student-teacher conferences, teacher-student-parent conferences, as well as quarterly report cards. This tracking system is similar to other high school settings (Aeby et. al. 1999).

CHAPTER III **PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY**

Keifer Community Center has been nationally recognized for its outstanding programs dealing with at-risk adolescence. Their success is based on the following principles: A clear and concise vision for staff regarding the purpose of Keifer's programs, and all staff are children advocates and should daily maintain a close teacher-student relationship with the students. Staff and administrators meet daily to discuss student progress and share successes and failures. An admissions team involving administrators, staff, parents, and students helps screen those entering Keifer. Additionally staff is expected to address academic progress at the student's learning level, allowing them to learn at their own rate. A code of conduct is in place, which incorporates many rewards, based on student behavior and a discipline team speaks to any student infraction. It is the above mentioned principles that create a nurturing atmosphere that allows children the chance to correct their behavior and earn enough academic credits to graduate (Keifer Alternative Center, Program Assessment).

It is essential to provide a different setting than that of a traditional school. The following features are discussed frequently in the review of literature and are incorporated in Keifer's plan. A clear mission statement is important for school and community focus (Paglin and Fager, 1997). Keifer adopted the following statement in 1997. "Keifer Community Center asserts that the learner is central to its mission. That mission is to prepare students who will participate as responsible consumers, workers, voters, and leaders in a free and democratic society; respect relationships, diversity and

authority; and demonstrate pride in themselves, their accomplishments, and their heritage." This statement is based on Keifer's belief that the Community Center is concerned with the whole person: body, mind, and spirit (Keifer Alternative Center, 1996).

As most other alternative schools that deal with at-risk students, Keifer Community Center is the last viable option for those students seeking diplomas. Students who attend Keifer have not been successful in a traditional school setting due to disruptive behavior, gang activity, pregnancy, drug or alcohol abuse, or are in danger of dropping out of school. Keifer's unique programs and principles allow these students an opportunity for success, possible graduation, and teaches them society's expectations in hope they will become productive citizens.

When students enter Keifer Community Center they must sign a contract accepting responsibility for their behavior and agreeing to abide by school rules. Most of the school rules are the same as others in the district, except many of the consequences are more severe. Students can be suspended, referred to a cooperative agency, or even removed from Keifer altogether. They have an opportunity to re-enter at a later date, but must sign another contract agreeing to terms of the school. A parent signature is also required on the contract.

Keifer Community Center encourages small class sizes in order to maintain the close teacher-student relationship that is laid out in their fundamental principles. As of 1998, Keifer was averaging 15 students per classroom, which allows more one-on-one

instruction. However, due to the many pullout programs this class number could decrease on any given day.

Keifer has a complete Community Based Program, incorporating a partnership with the school and community organizations. The support staff provided at Keifer Community Center includes a drug and alcohol abuse therapist, a full time health clinic operated by Mercy Medical Center, and a nurse practitioner and nurse tech. A part-time staff including a police officer, a mental health therapist, as well as a probation officer also supports Keifer. The collaboration is supported by funds and personnel provided by the Springfield Police Department, the Eastern Miami Valley Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services, Mercy Medical Center Ohio Juvenile Court, and the Clark County/Springfield City Schools. This partnership allows for some notable successes in student attendance, academic achievement, decreased suspensions and expulsions, and increased parent/guardian participation (Annual Progress Report, 1998). According to a report in 1998 of the two hundred fifty five students registered at Keifer Community Center, 839 people visited Keifer/Mercy Clinic, the Community Oriented Police helped 90 students, and 80 students were served by Mental Health Services. Improving proficiency scores were 81 percent of the students and 27 percent improved their attendance once entering Keifer. The Community Based Programming has had a positive effect on the success of the entire program.

Special training is not required of teachers who work at Keifer Community Center. However, like any other teacher they must pursue higher education, either by

completing the school's computer technology. Individualized and small group training is provided in order to maximize the benefits of the technology (Keifer Technology Report, 1997).

Keifer Community Center emphasis de-centralized decision making by administrators, staff, students, and parents. This is accomplished through a feeling of membership to the school. Daily morning staff meetings held from 7:45 to 8:15 encourage staff to support one another and share ideas with each other regarding goals, lessons, and student progress. After the staff meeting, George Degenhart, principal at Keifer Community Center meets with students and staff in the school's gym for a group meeting. Everyone gathers to hear announcements and discuss any issues important "for the good of Keifer Community Center". Students and staff then wish each other a good morning and Mr.Degenhart shakes every person's hand in the circle. This morning ritual allows everyone present to feel a sense of belonging, a sense of family closeness, which is present in the alternative school setting (Christensen, 1998). According to a student at Keifer Community Center, teachers at Keifer are willing to help out. "I got behind, got in trouble. Here they helped me make up my mind as to what I wanted. They helped me realize that I needed to graduate, wanted more than a GED" (Community Approach, 1997). It is this positive reinforcement that allows for student success.

Keifer Community Center involves not only staff and students, but also their families. Parents/guardians are involved from the initial admissions interview through the student's stay at Keifer (Christensen, 1998). The school includes them in the learning

process in order to foster the belief that educating their child is easier when those in the home give support (Springfield News-Sun, 1998).

Keifer Community Center is open extended hours to accommodate after school needs of students and their families. The school day begins at 7:45 for staff and 8:15 for students. Academic instruction is from 8:15 a.m. until 2:58 p.m., however most teachers are available for after-school tutoring. Kiefer-Mercy Health Center is open from 8:15 until 5:00p.m. in order to assist students and their families.

Students at Keifer Community Center must follow the same state mandated curriculum and testing as other high schools in the area. Most of the classes offered at Keifer are the same or similar to those at other high schools. However, in addition to the core classes, they offer other programs that allow at-risk students to succeed.

The Graduation, Reality, and Dual-Role Skills or GRADS program is an intervention program for pregnant teens and parenting teens. It promotes personal growth, economic awareness, and social responsibility. Other programs such as Occupational Work Adjustment (OWA), Occupational Work Experience (OWE), and Jobs for Ohio Graduates (JOGS), all are designed to give students the opportunity to work while they are getting their education. All of these classes include seminars or classes teaching work skills, as well as providing significant experience in the workplace. The JOGS program takes this a step further, helping to find employment for the student after graduation. A follow-up interview is conducted one year after the placement to see how the student was doing at the place of employment. Keifer Community Center also offers a General Education Degree Program (GED) which allows students to take classes

to prepare for the test. This program encourages employers to hire these students before they take the GED since businesses may be partially reimbursed for wages paid to students. All of these programs allow at-risk students to be successful at school and work. Keifer also offers a work study program for students sixteen and seventeen years of age to work during school hours and take classes around their work schedule. This flexible schedule allows students to gain life skills and learn about career opportunities while they are getting the credits they need to graduate from high school (Christensen, 1998).

Keifer Community Center offers a summer program giving students additional opportunity for at-risk students to earn high school credit. This year, the program will be extension of the regular school year (Extended School Year, 2001).

An extensive discipline plan is in place at Keifer Community Center emphasizing positive rewards. The plan encourages appropriate behavior, requires student's to be responsible for his or her own actions, and provides real-life skills students will need. This discipline plan allows students to earn "Keifer Dollars" for positive behavior, good grades, being on time to class and bringing all materials needed. Students can earn up to \$180 for these behaviors and grades. However, a student may be referred to a discipline team, composed of staff and students, if they have any major infraction. The discipline team may deduct money from the student's earnings for behaviors that include tardiness, insubordination, truancy, obscene language, use of tobacco, or vandalism. At the end of each week the student's total income is tallied to determine what reward if any they may receive. Rewards range from having a free activity period, snacks in class, field trips, or

students may leave class, with permission, a given number of times per week. This positive discipline plan allows students to determine the outcome of their actions (Keifer Community Center, Discipline Plan).

Keifer Community Center utilizes Individualized Educational plans since students need to work at their own level and pace. No one form of teaching is better than another. A combination of learning styles needs to be incorporated into daily lessons. Teachers at Keifer feel instructional units need to be relevant, use appropriate and various learning styles, and should have a realistic goal for students to reach. They try to incorporate active, experiential learning, such as role playing, cooperative learning, discovery learning, and field trips. Not all learning techniques work all of the time, so teachers try to incorporate these different strategies into lesson plans to motivate the students (Christensen, 1998).

CHAPTER IV
SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Keifer Community Center is an alternative program for at-risk students. The purpose of this study was to examine the physical setting, staff, and curriculum of the school. A survey was conducted to assess how staff at Keifer Community Center felt about these areas of Keifer's program. Many of the practices discussed do exist at Keifer, but the survey found if it were the belief of the teacher's that the practices and programs were successful or should be re-examined. Of the 30 surveys given to teachers and support staff, 80 percent of them were returned.

Question one was designed to assess if the staff at Keifer Community Center felt the school successfully deals with at-risk students. Results indicate that ninety-two percent of staff believes Keifer successfully serves these students. Question two was intended to ascertain if staff felt that special training was necessary to work at Keifer and at-risk students. It revealed 84 percent feel special training should be required of the teachers who work with at-risk students. Of those surveyed 17 percent do not think this training is necessary to be successful teaching at Keifer Community Center.

Question number three was intended to determine if staff believed Keifer Community Center encouraged de-centralized decision making by staff, students, and parents. A majority, 88 percent, believes they are included in decision making at the school, but eight percent feel their voice is not heard. Students are considered to be a large part of the decision-making process by 80 percent, and 66 percent deem parents as an important factor in the process. However, 13 percent and 17 percent, respectively, feel

students and parents are not part of the de-centralized decision making. Of those surveys returned four percent chose to leave number three unanswered.

Question four was meant to establish if individualized educational plans or IEP's, lead to the success of the students at Keifer Community Center. A majority of those surveyed, 92 percent deem individualized educational plans as important to the success of at-risk students. Question nine was created to find if those at Keifer believe the support staff and organizations are beneficial to the success of the school. According to 88 percent of those surveys support staff is advantageous, but four percent did not believe that is an important component to the success of the students.

Question ten was intended to learn what class size promotes the most success, ten, fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five. The survey revealed that everyone who responded to the survey felt the appropriate class size for at-risk students is between ten to fifteen students which allows at-risk students to excel.

Keifer Community Center is open extended hours for a variety of reasons. Question five was meant to find out which, if any of the following reasons were valid for staying-open extended hours. The respondents did not indicate if they believed it to be beneficial to the success of Keifer Community Center. Two respondents, eight percent, chose not to answer questions five through ten, yet 79 percent of those answering believed community workshops and night school were valid reasons for keeping the school open. However, 12 percent feel workshops or night school were not a sufficient reason to keep the school open. Health care through Keifer/Mercy Clinic was considered a satisfactory reason for extended hours according to 88 percent of those surveyed.

Question six through eight was formed to find out if Keifer Community Center had a positive affect on student's attendance, academic, and personal success. A majority of those surveyed believe Keifer has positive results on student attendance and academic success. The survey found that 84 percent agree students attend classes at Keifer more regularly than previously at their home school and 88 percent hold the student's grades have improved due to the special programming at Keifer. Although two others omitted question eight, 79 percent perceive Keifer as having a positive affect on the student's personal success such as anger control and drug and alcohol cessation.

SURVEY RESULTS

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Question 1	42%	50%	4.00%	0%
Question 2	17%	67%	13%	4.00%
Question 3	50%	38%	4.00%	4.00%
	17%	63%	13%	0%
	13%	63%	0%	17%
Question 4	25%	67%	8.00%	0%
Question 5	54%	25%	8.00%	4.00%
	75%	13%	0%	4.00%
	58%	21%	8.00%	4.00%
Question 6	50%	34%	8.00%	0%
Question 7	42%	42%	8.00%	0%
Question 8	25%	54%	4.00%	0%
Question 9	71%	17%	0%	4.00%
Question 10	83%	8.00%	0%	0%

CHAPTER V SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

After assessing the survey the data indicated that most teachers feel the programs and curriculum at Keifer Community Center successfully serve at-risk students. A majority of teachers consider Keifer to have a positive affect on student attendance, and academic success, as well as student's behavioral goals. The smaller classes lend to more one-on-one tutoring and easier classroom management.

Keifer encourages de-centralized decision making among staff and students are seen as having a voice in decisions. Both groups feel or are believed to have a voice in the operation and programming in the school. However, parents are seen as having less of a role in decision making. Even though most agree parents are encouraged to participate in decisions, many others perceive parents as not being welcome to take part in the student's school career. This could be due to the lack of interest by many parents to be involved in the school.

Most of the surveys returned indicated that most teachers believe special training should be required of the staff at Keifer Community Center. However, a small group believe special training should not be required of those who work at Keifer holding that staff needs to be committed to working with at-risk students, and this is training enough.

Individualized education plans were thought to be helpful when dealing with at-risk students. Since IEPs lay out a student's learning and/or behavioral goals teachers feel they lead to their success. Many of these students have some type of learning disability, making IEP's essential.

Keifer Community Center is open extended hours in order to accommodate students and the communities needs. A majority of those survey indicated community

workshops, health care, and night school were all valid reasons for extended hours. Only a few felt these were not worthwhile purposes. Just as most of those surveyed feel the support staff is beneficial to the success of Keifer, only a few disagreed.

After reviewing the survey I believe most staff at Keifer Community Center feel the practices and programs allow students to succeed. Each component within itself may not lead to success, yet putting them together creates a positive learning environment for at-risk students to excel.

APPENDIX

A

Dear Keifer Staff,

I am finishing my Master's Degree at Urbana University. My final research paper will evaluate the programs, curriculum, and staff services at Keifer Community Center. Part of the Capstone, or research paper, is to survey the staff to assess how well they believe the program to be working.

Please fill out the survey and return it to the envelope, marked, "SURVEY" in the main office. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Heather Turner
Hayward Middle School

**APPENDIX
B**

SURVEY OF KEIFER COMMUNITY CENTER STAFF

Please circle the number that best supports your opinion.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4

1. Does Keifer Community Center successfully serve at-risk students?

1 2 3 4

2. Should special training be required of the teachers at Keifer Community Center?

1 2 3 4

3. Does Keifer Community Center encourage de-centralized decision making by

a) Staff	1	2	3	4
b) Students	1	2	3	4
c) Parents	1	2	3	4

4. Does the use of individualized educational plans lead to the success of students?

1 2 3 4

5. Keifer is open extended hours for a variety of purposes. Are the following, valid reasons for staying open extended time?

a) Community

Workshops	1	2	3	4
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b) Health Care	1	2	3	4
----------------	---	---	---	---

c) Night

School	1	2	3	4
--------	---	---	---	---

6. Has Keifer Community Center had positive results on student's attendance?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

7. Has Keifer Community Center had positive results on student's academic success?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

8. Has Keifer Community Center had positive results on student's personal success? (anger control, drug/alcohol cessation ect.)

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

9. Is the support staff/organizations beneficial to the success of Keifer Community Center?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

10. Which class size promotes the most success?

a) 10	b) 15	c) 20	d) 25
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