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ARK: AT RISK KIDS
A PREVENTATIVE DISCIPLINE PROGRAM FOR ADOLESCENT STUDENTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Educational Administration

By
Tad Jonathan Smith
September 1996

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Approved by:



David Stine, First Reader

11/8/96

Date



Irvin Howard, Second Reader

ABSTRACT

According to the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development many middle grade students are "at risk" of dropping out of school; they should have access to educational programs which emphasize personal commitments to academic achievement. For too many young adolescents the future looks bleak: their prospects seem to be those of unemployment, poverty, and disintegrating families and communities. Also, a large number of these students will engage in violence and use of abusive drugs. This project is designed to address those students who are "at risk," and promote their success at Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School.

This project will address the needs of the "at risk" students in a pro-active way by developing and implementing a preventive and positive intervention program. The program will be called ARK (At Risk Kids) and will be evaluated on how effectively at risk students are reconnected to Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School in four areas: attendance, positive citizenship, academic success, and school participation.

Effective middle school programs should provide a student centered philosophy that meets the needs of early adolescence. These schools also provide a transitional stage in preparing students for the move into high school. For at risk students this is the last chance to re-establish positive connectiveness to school.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

CONCEPT OF THE AT-RISK STUDENT

Adolescence is a period of great risks and opportunities. The configuration of individual and social changes is unique in the life span. Adolescence can be a pathway to a productive adult life or to a vastly diminished existence. Its onset is a crucially formative phase of development. Puberty is a profound biological upheaval, and it coincides approximately with drastic changes in the social environment, especially the transition from elementary to junior high school or middle school. So it is a stressful time. (Hechinger, 1992).

These early adolescent years, ten to fifteen, are open to the formation of behavior patterns in education that have lifelong significance. The dangerous patterns are only now beginning to get the public attention they deserve: becoming alienated from school and dropping out; starting to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, and use other drugs; starting to drive cars and motorcycles in high-risk ways; risking pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

The term "at-risk" has entered the educational vernacular with a vengeance. It seems that every time it is invoked, it refers to a different subcategory of students.

Reducing the risks to adolescents' well-being obviously calls for the need for adults/advisors to model positive and supportive measures to help promote student transition. Yet, adolescents as a group tend either to ignore their needs for these services or to have limited access to them. This project is written for the classroom teacher and administrator at Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School in the Rim of the World Unified School District and it will concentrate on those studen

The definition used in this project for the at-risk students is

someone who is unlikely to graduate on schedule with both the skills and self-esteem necessary to exercise meaningful options in the areas of: work, leisure, culture, civic affairs and inter/intra personal relationships. (Sagor, 1993). Students who fit that definition are the students who are presenting the most pressing instructional and behavioral problems for today's teachers.

Needless to say, there are problems other than skills and self-esteem that make us fear for the future that faces certain children. Many children come to school and are perceived as at-risk because they are burdened with a host of extreme hardships. Among these are the terrible consequences of poverty, abuse, physical handicaps, and personal or family chemical dependency.

Every student needs successful experiences. Students identified as "at-risk" rarely experience either success or affirmation. Most are compelled to conform to instructional situations which have a built-in failure quotient. Success is dependent upon the very qualities which students most lack. For those who are literate, who have the ability to succeed but don't, we should recognize the compelling research which identifies low motivation as one of the primary causes for dropping out of school. Instructional practices should be varied and responsive to the needs of students for success and challenge. (Conrath, 1986).

Our at-risk students develop their academic self-esteem through their experiences in our classrooms. In conventional classrooms many students learn the material and learn to have confidence in themselves as learners, while other students get left behind. For the at risk student schooling becomes a never ending confrontation with their shortcomings. Once failure becomes a habit, the student has two options: drop out to avoid the pain and/or internalize low expectations for him/herself. This need not be the case.

"When teachers adopt the belief that all students want to learn

and can learn and commit themselves to focusing on the four variables identified by master learning researchers, namely, motivation, prerequisite skills, quality instruction, and adequate time, remarkable things can happen." (Rice, 1987).

When students with a slow learning rate spend time in a mastery learning environment, their learning rate increases. (Sagor, 1993). When students are given the opportunity to feel confident and competent by learning difficult material in school, they not only like themselves better, but they also become better learners, thus, less at-risk.

An educators goal is to enable students to have feelings of competence, belonging, usefulness, and potency in every school experience.

School organization and structure can have a negative experience on the at-risk student and promote a negative "hidden curriculum." Systematic problems may appear when students are removed from the classroom and entered into remedial programs. (Conrath, 1986).

Enacted during President Lyndon Johnson's administration as part of the war on poverty, Title 1 was supposed to help equalize educational opportunity. Since 1965 it has funneled billions of federal dollars into locally developed educational programs targeted at disadvantaged youth. Yet, according to many researchers, this compensatory education program hasn't worked for most of the children it was intended to serve.

The remedial student (by definition a child who is already behind academically or socially from his/her peers.) is often removed from a class that is proceeding at a normal pace only to be educated in a special class that moves at half that pace. When one adds to this difference in homework expectations, and differences in the time and intensity spent on task (which are far from comparable in mainstream and remedial classes), one sees that assignment to remediation often means the remedial student can not help but end up farther behind those peers

left in the mainstream. (Golanty-Koel, 1986).

The need for commitment to narrow the gap between the at-risk learner and the successful student is apparent. It appears the best strategy to overcome this problem and to decrease the likelihood of dropping out is to concentrate intensively on basic skill achievement: reading, language, and math in the middle school grades.

One of the key features of success for the at-risk student is parent involvement and the close working relationship between school and family. It is important to bring teachers, parents, and students together as partners in the education process. This group should address the things that I feel are most critical to school success: school atmosphere, the academic program, and staff development. Once schools forge partnerships between the home and school, dramatic academic progress will be produced.

ADVISOR-ADVISEE PROGRAMS

Historically, in American elementary and middle schools each child was known by, a single adult, their teacher, who felt a special interest in the child's development. (Eichorn, 1966). These classroom teachers frequently became the equivalent of surrogate parents. However, as our schools become more departmentalized and compartmentalized, the responsibility for each child has become more and more distributed. As a result, many students are developing the feeling that nobody cares, notices, or takes any interest in them.

As a result of this trend, Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School has created a program which attempts to instill feelings of belonging in students even when those students are attending an extremely large school. This program features the development of an advisor-advisee or guide program. The organizing principle behind this initiative is to provide every student with at least one caring adult at school who has a sincere interest in them, both as a person and as a student.

The first issue to address in the advisor program is the assignment of students. The approach of having the teachers make informed assignments was a good approach for Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate because of the small community where there is a lot of familiarity. Such informed professional placement has shown itself to be a successful approach to student classroom assignments. In making these placements due consideration should be given to the student's learning style, the teacher's strengths, and the fit of personalities. On the down side, this is a time consuming process and it doesn't allow the student the opportunity to exercise any power in choosing their special friend.

Allowing students to choose their own advisor is not only time efficient, but it places the student in the driver's seat. It can, however, exacerbate or bring to the surface faculty resentment, jealousy, and division. According to Sagor, a school was surveyed and an advisory program was introduced that granted the students the right to choose their own advisor. The students were given three days to sign up with the teacher of their choice and they instituted a ground rule that no teacher was obligated to take on a load of more than twenty-five. As it turned out, many teachers were softhearted and allowed oversubscription in their groups. One very popular teacher/coach who allowed 45 students to sign up for his group. Another teacher was approached by only three students from their student body of 750. When such disparities arise, they create "teachable moments" for the faculty. But it is worth keeping in mind that the culture of some schools simply could not tolerate the surfacing of such a contrast in student preferences. (Sagor, 1993).

Another issue of importance of the advisory group is the frequency of meetings. Some schools provide a short period of approximately ten minutes daily for advisement. Others provide significantly more time

(thirty minutes or more) twice weekly, while a third approach is to provide a full class period or its equivalent once per week. Again, each of these approaches has its advantages and disadvantages. Whichever approach is utilized, advisors have found it useful to structure opportunities for both one-on-one as well as group guidance.

In the reviews of Advisor-Advisee Programs, there seems to be no limit to the creativity of faculties in designing programs or in structuring time. Clearly, the most common approach is the daily "homeroom" period. It is the easiest to schedule and fits nicely into the flow of the typical school day. Furthermore, it fosters daily contact between student and advisor.

Another popular option is the use of a block of time that can serve different purposes on different days. For example, the half hour between 10:00 and 10:30 might be devoted to guide groups on Tuesdays and Thursdays, yet be devoted to assemblies on Fridays and club meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays.

At McClure North High School in Florissant, Missouri, the faculty fashioned a particularly creative program. Using a rotational schedule, each teacher was released from regular instructional duties once per week for two periods.

This resulted in each class being canceled only once every five weeks, not much of a sacrifice of instructional time. With this schedule advisors had an option. They could always schedule individual appointments with the students they needed to see due to an emergent personal need, such as a recent flare-up in class, an unexplained absence, or necessary planning for post-high school education.

In those instances the advisor simply sent a guidance summons, and the student met his guide in the advisement center. When the guide teacher felt that small group guidance was called for, i.e., talking to five students who were all planning for apprenticeships or working with

a particular dropout prone group, the advisor could call in just those students. On the rare occasions when it was deemed necessary for the entire student body to receive guidance (semester scheduling, etc.) the school simply scheduled a guidance period for the entire student body.

Some programs have attempted to create the feeling of family by having mixed age advisory groups. Others have felt that peer guidance would be enhanced by keeping the groups homogeneous by grade level.

While some schools shift groups annually, it has generally been found that continuity in the advisee relationship is preferable. Therefore, even when the groups are homogeneous, the group should stay together with their guide teacher until graduation or promotion to the next level. Advisory within itself is not a program, but a continuation of the advisor attitude that permeates a feeling of positiveness, belonging and support for the at-risk student. This attitude can go much farther than the advisor role. It is demonstrated by other staff and students, thus a positive school culture is promoted.

A fifth issue comes up as part of the compromise that schools face and that is of structured or unstructured meetings. Providing schoolwide structured advising lessons gives the reluctant teacher a crutch. However, those teachers who find they take naturally to the advising role, may feel constrained by prepackaged lessons. A compromise is to expect each group to develop its own unique project, while expecting every group to address certain common issues.

Another issue is a way to get around many of the dilemmas mentioned earlier. Should a school use total faculty involvement or volunteers? When a school constructs a program using volunteers the average case load becomes higher, but so is the enthusiasm. One way around this dilemma is to offer advising as an option in lieu of other non-teaching duties (lunchroom and parking lot duty, etc.). Then the faculty members who are more comfortable with other types of student

supervision can opt out of advisement but still carry their fair share of the workload.

The historic separation of special and remedial education from the general education program presents many problems for the at-risk student. As mentioned earlier these programs often convey a stigma, and by serving these students in separate settings, these programs tend to move at a slower pace and involve lower level cognitive objectives. On the other hand, one thing that has made special education and remedial education so popular is that they force the power structure to recognize that additional resources are needed to provide appropriate services for special needs students. Some schools call this model "integration."

These approaches are breaking down the barriers between special and regular education and have great potential. However, as with anything else, they present their own dilemmas. The basic objectives of integration and combining special and regular programs are:

- To keep the classroom teacher as the primary manager of instruction,
- To keep the student with his/her peers,
- To engage the student with regular curriculum and its higher level objectives,
- To keep the remedial student from falling further behind.

There are some predictable problems, however, that should be expected when implementing push-in programs for the at risk student. For example, most federal and many state programs have regulations that require that specialists work only with "identified" students. Enforcing these regulations as written can further contribute to student stigma.

The common feature of all these programs is the effort to keep these students with their peers, to maintain high standards, and to push additional resources into the regular classroom along with the students.

The benefits to the students can be enormous, and when "integrating" is done properly it makes teaching far more satisfying for the regular teacher. That satisfaction comes from being able to succeed with a wide range of students and knowing you have the necessary support to meet that extra challenge.

It is, however, important to insert a word of caution here. While it is exciting to see the emphasis on at-risk programs, we need to be conscious of the fact that these programs could be a Trojan horse for the conservative forces who would like to reduce spending and support for special needs kids. If educators are not diligent in making sure that current levels of support are maintained while our old special pull-out programs are dismantled, they might wake up one day to find that the regular classroom teacher has inherited larger loads, more problematic kids, and less help.

The following can be a helpful reminder of the impact that the treatment of students often has on their self-esteem and behavior:

(Sagor, 1983).

- If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
- If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
- If a child lives with abuse, he learns to hurt others.
- If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.
- If a child lives with fairness, he learns to be just.
- If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
- If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
- If a child lives with love, he learns to find love in the world.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

GLOSSARY

- At-Risk:** Shall refer to those pupils who may be susceptible to frequent absenteeism, truancy, or tardiness, academic underachievement, psychological or social maladjustment, or who have the potential to dropout from school for, among other factors, pregnancy, marriage, financial needs, intense dislike of school, classes, or teachers, lack of basic skills, disciplinary or behavioral problems, substance abuse, low self-esteem, emotional problems, or feelings of alienation. (California State Department of Education, 1990).
- Security:** Shall refer to a feeling of strong assuredness wherein the student feels comfortable and safe and knows there are people he or she can rely on. (Connecting Students and schools, 1990).
- Self hood:** Shall refer to a feeling of strong self-knowledge wherein a student possesses an accurate and realistic sense of self in terms of attributes and physical characteristics. (Connecting Students and schools, 1990).
- Mission:** Shall refer to a feeling of influence and responsibility over the circumstances of one's own life, augmented by a sense of purpose and self that is self-motivated. (Connecting Students and schools, 1990).

HISTORY

History is not kind to idlers. The time is long past when America's destiny was assured simply by an abundance of natural resources and inexhaustible human enthusiasm. America lives among determined, well-educated, and strongly motivated competitors. They compete with them for international standing and markets, not only with products but also with the ideas of our laboratories and neighborhood workshops. America's position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer. Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the "information age" we are entering. (A Nation at Risk, 1984).

The main concern, however, goes well beyond matters such as industry and commerce. It also includes the intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths of our people which knit together the very fabric of our society. People who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in national life.

A high level of shared education is essential to a free society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom. For our society to function, people must be able to reach some common understandings on complex issues, often on short notice and on the basis of conflicting or incomplete evidence. Education helps form these common understandings, a point Thomas Jefferson made long ago in his famous dictum:

"I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves;

and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion."

Part of what is at risk is the promise first made on this continent: all, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself. (Golanty-Koel, 1986)

The educational indicators of the risk before us have been amply documented in testimony received by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. (A Nation At Risk, 1984). For example:

- Some 23 million American adults are functionally illiterate by the simplest tests of everyday reading, writing, and comprehension.
- About 13 percent of all 17 year-olds in the United States can be considered functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40 percent.
- Average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests is not lower than 39 years ago when Sputnik was launched.
- Over half the population of gifted students do not match their tested ability with comparable achievement in school.
- The College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT) demonstrate a virtually unbroken decline from 1963 to 1980. Average verbal scores fell over 50 points and average mathematics scores dropped nearly 40

points.

- College Board achievement tests also reveal consistent declines in recent years in such subjects as Physics and English.

- Average tested achievement of students graduating from college is also lower.

- The Department of the Navy reported to the commission that one-quarter of its recent recruits cannot read at the ninth grade level, the minimum needed simply to understand written safety instructions.

Without remedial work they cannot even begin, much less complete, the sophisticated training essential in much of the modern military.

It is important, of course, to recognize that the average citizen today is better educated and more knowledgeable than the average citizen of a generation ago- more literate, and exposed to more mathematics, literature, and science. The positive impact of this fact on the well-being of our country and the lives of our people cannot be overstated. Nevertheless, the average graduate of our school and colleges today is not as well-educated as the average graduate 25 or 35 years ago, when a much smaller proportion of our population completed high school and college.

Students forfeit their chance for life at its fullest when they withhold their best effort in learning. When students give only the minimum to learning, they receive only the minimum in return. It is the student's work that determines how much and how well they learn. When students work to their full capacity, they can hope to attain the knowledge and skills that will enable them to create their future and control their destiny.

STUDENTS AT-RISK

The term at-risk identifies those students who are likely to:

- underachieve
- act out

- drop out
- or engage in self-destructive behavior.

Research confirms that a large and increasing proportion of students are at-risk. During the 1985-86 school year, over 100,000 California students described that remaining in dead end, uninspiring classrooms was intolerable and left public education. (Caught in the Middle, 1987). Unfortunately, by age 15, substantial numbers of American youth are at risk of reaching adulthood unable to meet adequately the requirements of the workplace, the commitments of relationships in families and with friends, and the responsibilities of participation in a democratic society. These youth are among the estimated 7 million young people- one in four adolescents - who are extremely vulnerable to multiple high-risk behaviors and school failure.

In reality, almost every child is at-risk sometime during their school years. Gifted and talented high school students have the highest drop-out rate of any student sub-group. (Turning Points, 1987). Most at-risk students have not established a bond with school and therefore experience alienation rather than affiliation, barriers rather than bonding, and conflict rather than connection. Improving school climate and building student self-esteem can change students at-risk of failure into students at-risk of success.

The climate of the school is one set of forces that influences a student's self-esteem. It is the student's self-esteem which is one of the most powerful determinants of whether or not a student ends up at risk.

The building blocks of self-esteem are skills. They include security, self hood, affiliation and mission. The more skillful a person, the more likely that he or she will be able to cope in life situations. (Connecting Students and Schools, 1990).

Education and the school experience greatly influence a student's

psychological and social well-being, character and productive potential as an adult. Each year almost a million students leave school primarily to escape failure. National statistics highlight the high price society has to pay for the dropout problem. For example, only two years after leaving school, dropouts are:

- More than three times as likely as graduates to be unemployed.
- More than four times as likely to have been in trouble with the law.
- If female, more than nine times as likely as graduates to be on welfare.
- If female, married or not, six times as likely as graduates to have given birth.

Early identification of any difficulty that interferes with the learning process can result in effective steps to enhance a student's self-esteem and school performance.

Caution must be exercised, however, to ensure that low expectations and negative self-fulfilling prophecies are not fostered by early identification. Numerous studies attest to the important relationship between teacher expectations and student self-esteem and academic achievement. Teachers need to receive training in the variety of learning styles and types of intelligence evidenced by students.

Successful programs in dealing with this issue are designed to develop specific attitudes, understanding, and skills that enhance self-esteem, including self-understanding, communication skills, social skills, decision-making and goal setting skills. The various approaches taken fall into four categories: (Connecting Students and schools, 1990).

- **The cognitive approach** helps students evaluate the negative attitudes and emotions they hold that may be barriers to their personal

progress. The basic premise is that negative emotions stem not from events themselves but from a system of internal beliefs and ideas about those events.

- **The behavioral approach** focuses on changing the behavior students exhibit. When students with a lack of self-esteem learn to use behavior that commands respect, those children feel better about themselves, and others relate to them differently.

- **The experiential approach** plans and conducts specific experiences for children that allow them to have positive feelings and receive affirmations from others. This is perhaps the most common approach, and elements of this technique can be found in most programs.

- **The environmental approach** structures the learning environment so that students develop specific skills and experience attitudes that contribute to self-esteem. Given conditions that foster security, self acceptance, belongingness or connectiveness, purpose, and efficiency, children begin to function more effectively and capitalize on their own inner sources for self-esteem.

One of the salient features of these approaches is the caring relationship and the advocacy that adults deliver on behalf of at-risk youth.

For millions of young boys and girls, the ages between ten and fifteen are a time of hope and promise. But many unfortunate children are at great risk from the moment of birth, or even before; still others become particularly vulnerable during the early teenage years when economic deprivation and the normal development changes of adolescence coincide with the requirements of new intellectual tasks and the often inhospitable structure of junior high or middle school.

For too many youngsters, the future looks bleak: their prospects seem to be those of unemployment, poverty, and disintegrating families and communities. A significant number drop out of school, engage in

violence or other criminal acts, become pregnant, suffer mental disorders, abuse drugs and/or alcohol, attempt suicide, are disabled by injuries, or die. (Hechinger, 1992).

In addition to the developmental changes they undergo, today's young adolescents are bombarded by messages on television, in the movies, and in magazines that glorify casual, unprotected sexual intercourse as glamorous, portray alcohol and cigarettes as symbols of maturity, and hold out the accumulation of consumer goods as the measure of success and status. The implication is that self-indulgence is a virtue and that crime pays. (Hechinger, 1992).

Being young and facing the future is difficult in a world of great economic uncertainties. For those young people who fail to complete high school, there are few jobs. Most of the role models around them are negative: fathers without work and mothers without husbands struggling against tremendous odds to feed and shelter their families. The young face the ever-present threat of violence and the emotional and economic lures of using and selling drugs. (Hechinger, 1992).

Many young people believe, because of the conditions surrounding them, that equality of opportunity does not exist; so they give up. This creates a vicious circle: talents are squandered, teenagers are ill prepared, employment is denied, at-risk behavior is reinforced.

These young people growing up in this type of environment are desolate and often hostile and desperately need adults/advisors to whom they can turn to with trust for guidance and support.

Today, the failure of adolescents to grow into physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy adults will ultimately turn a substantial number of them into men and women who are without humane values and without a sense of what is right or wrong. Rich or poor, young people are in danger of turning to illicit drugs and to alcohol in an attempt to escape from the self-doubt and anxiety that haunts them

when their future seems so uncertain and perhaps even threatening. (Hechinger, 1992).

The challenge in responding to these threats and to the needs of young adolescents is to remove the barriers that block the way to successful development and constructive behavior. It is the responsibility of adults/advisors to address the problems facing youths, for whom this stage of life represents the last best chance to enter adulthood whole in mind, body, and spirit.

Adolescence can be a time of self-doubt, of loneliness, of fear of failure, of ambivalent relationships with peers and adults. These feelings can even raise the awesome question of whether or not life is worth living. (Hechinger, 1992). All adolescents are at a crossroads: these crucial years offer an opportunity to transform a period of high risk into one of high hopes. Given a chance, these young people can develop lives of satisfaction and pride. But under present conditions, millions of them are not given that chance. They must be helped before it is too late.

The ultimate goal of at-risk programs is to connect adolescents with their futures by presenting them with constructive links to adulthood through guidance by caring adults who know that to neglect them is to put all of our futures at risk.

CHAPTER THREE
THE ARK PROGRAM

PURPOSE

Located in the San Bernardino Mountains, Rim of the World Unified School District covers 109 square miles and encompasses 15 mountain communities. There are five elementary schools, one intermediate, one high school and one continuation high school serving 5,921 students, of which 80% are bused. The district employs 15 administrators, 274 certificated and 237 classified support personnel.

There is a need for an at risk student program at Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School to provide help for the student that is having difficulty in school. This is an awkward time for the adolescent. Early adolescence represents the most critical period in education of students. These students are experiencing intense physical, social, psychological and intellectual changes. (Caught in the Middle, 1987). Although at risk, most of the identifiable potential dropouts are still in school during the middle grades.

This program was created to increase the relevance of school to alienated students. One-to-one contact with successful adults can help adolescents see the importance of school learning. By meeting with an advisor on regularly scheduled times, students have opportunities to interact with teachers and fellow students about school and personal concerns.

This program was not meant to replace but rather to supplement the counselor's role. Such programs permit guidance staff to work with individuals and groups of students in order to deal with problems at the on-set. This program was aimed at reducing feelings of alienation and anonymity at Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School.

The objective of this program was to create a structural

prevention program at Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School to identify and work with high at risk students in an effort to reconnect them positively to the school community. See Appendix A. Middle schools are the last best chance to reconnect at risk kids. It is the intent of this program to bring about connectiveness in a positive way in relation to:

1. Attendance
2. Citizenship
3. Academics
4. Participation in school activities (i.e. leadership, sports, etc.)

Students that are at-risk are those with behavior problems, low achievement, retention in grade, poor attendance, low socioeconomic status and attendance at schools with large number of poor students. (Slavin, 1989). All students should have successful experiences while in school. The students identified as at risk rarely experience either success or affirmation. For those students who are literate, who have the ability to succeed but don't, experts recognize the compelling research which identifies massive boredom as one of the primary causes for dropping out of school.

Instructional practices should be varied and responsive to the needs of students for success and challenge. For example, lecture can be used with hands-on activities when teaching a new concept. This lesson could be followed up by a small group activity along with guided inquiry to reach a final finished product. A teacher must keep in mind that students learn differently, thus, area of visual, auditorial and kinestically modes should be used with each other. Also, at risk students are typically deficient in basic skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic. (Caught in the Middle, 1987).

One of the most frequently used methods of dealing with at risk

kids is to fail them. Many urban school districts now retain about 20 percent of students in each of the elementary grades, and in many such districts the majority of students have been retained at least once by the end of elementary school. (Goffredson, 1988). Success for all students should be adopted by transformed middle schools as an attainable goal. (Turning Points, 1989).

It is the belief that teamwork and cooperation will lend itself to bonding, thus the culture of a school will result in the school climate. Training and advocating the Mary Putnam Henck staff to work with the at-risk students was done on a volunteered stipend assignment. The teachers/advisors were asked to meet on a consistent basis with the students identified as at-risk in order to first become familiar with them. The role of the advisor is simply to identify the most crucial needs of the student and work towards that goal. The advisor and student have to work together on building from success, and working on realistic goals.

Establishing a special rapport with the ARK student is a must. One must be an advisor, coach, friend, and advocate. The advisor must be persistent in his/her modeling. The positiveness that the advisor portrays to the at risk student can bring about change within the student's characteristics. It is everybody's responsibility within the school to maintain a cohesive, positive and supportive environment to all members of the school. If these characteristics are practiced, a positive school culture will be initiated and widely communicated.

The advisor will need to have an array of strategies to employ when he/she is working with the ARK student. Some of the following strategies may prove to be successful and positive. An individual motivation system that is personal can be used. For example, the ARK student can discuss something that he/she doesn't like, and the advisor has to be able to provide alternative benefits for cooperation.

IDENTIFICATION

Students involved in the ARK program were identified first by staff referrals, a high amount of discipline reports, and attendance records. See Appendix D & E.

Some school indicators of the at-risk kids in my program were:

- Chronic tardiness/absences
- Misbehavior-discipline problems
- Academic failure- low achievement
- Retention, and
- Non-involvement in school activities

Approximately one hundred students were selected and then asked to complete a survey and attend a meeting with their parents to discuss the program and its objectives. See Appendix B. All students involved in the ARK program at Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate were required to have some kind of parent/guardian involvement. Some of the parents of the students involved refused to become involved, however, an attempt was made. See Appendix F & I.

DESIGN

Eleven staff members volunteered for the advisor positions: six teachers, two counselors and three administrators. Since lunch was the chosen time to meet with the students by most of the advisors, the students in the program were placed with the advisors who had the same lunch period. Although each advisor would later meet with their students at their own convenience, it was agreed to meet the students as a group at lunch once a week.

For each advisor, in the beginning, there was 100% attendance. However, as the school year progressed, on the average attendance to the meetings became 5-6 regulars and random drop in's throughout the year.

It was the belief that students who had the opportunity to participate in this program would benefit from one-to-one interactions

as well as obtaining an understanding that there was at least one person "out there" who was an understanding advocate.

Timely incentives were used to motivate students. These incentives were based on on-going progress in positive connection to school and included ice cream sundaes, candy bars, super kid tickets, pizza lunches, and end of the year field trip to the beach. See Appendix G. Quarterly progress sheets were used to tally points and feedback from advisors to encourage continued growth. See Appendix C & H.

Points were given at first for attending meetings, good citizenship, good attendance at school, keeping up grades and not getting any referrals. A beach trip was planned for the end of the year for all those students whose point totals reached 100. This however, became more of a problem than an incentive. Students started resenting other students who came to the meetings or started to do well in school.

In one group there were thirteen students, ten boys and three girls, ranging in age from 12 to 14 years. The advisor met with the students once a week at lunch as agreed from the beginning, but then a lot of the students stopped coming. At the end of the first semester the advisor felt it was time to go out and find them while still continuing the lunch meetings for the students who attended.

There were several issues that came up in this group that were of some concern to the advisor. Students talked about their families a little, but the students would never open up and give specific information about their life styles. The students didn't trust one another not to tell their peers. This is what prompted the advisor to start meeting with the students individually.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

EVALUATION

Most of the students in this advisor's ARK group were in his classes. The other students were either found at nutrition break or as they passed this advisor in-between classes. He was finally able to get more information out of these students and was able to monitor their progress on a weekly basis. By the end of the year, nine students had raised either their attendance or their grades and all thirteen had raised their citizenship marks. Only one girl was expelled for drugs.

Another teacher met with his group every lunch period, however, out of the thirteen student he had only two students who were still in the program at the end of the year. The teacher also said that the students really never opened up to him and discussed their problems. The group did not improve in academics, behavior, or in attendance. The suggestions for the ARK program next year are to have clear distinct incentives for weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly goals.

Other teachers found that meeting with students at lunch was very positive. They also suggested that meeting after school would also benefit the students as well. Although most teachers liked meeting at lunch because it did not interfere with class, some preferred to meet with their ARK students privately. The number of students also dropped with most of the teachers due to moving, graduating mid-year to high school, or no support at home for the program. The teachers also suggested to have less emphasis on their reminder binders and school related items and more interest in home life and activities after school.

The results of the ARK students in the program were more positive with the majority of the teachers. Most of the advisors had students

improve their behavior and school attendance, although the academics only improved with the students who were not necessarily hard core problems. All of the students' participation in school activities improved.

CONCLUSION

The ARK program at Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School is aimed at developing strong school ties for students as well as parents. The basic goal is to promote the belief that all children can learn through encouragement and positive reinforcement. Another goal is to prevent school difficulties at the earliest possible level. Identifying with the parents should also provide parent outreach that provides guidance on improving student self-esteem and motivation, helping them with school work, emphasizing the importance of going to school and having positive attitudes toward it.

One of the problems in the ARK program is that teachers serving the role of the advisor were not adequately prepared for the non-academic aspects of education. This program, I believe, requires extensive and well-developed staff development for those involved.

Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School has reinstated a program called SSR, Silent Sustained Reading, which will be in effect next year. Each teacher will meet with students for fourteen minutes during sixth period. This interaction will allow all teachers to become involved in general advising at the class room level and to recommend students with special problems to guidance personnel, the ARK program and/or parents for follow up. Hopefully, all teachers will be able to make connections with their students and more students will benefit.

It is the Task Force Recommendation (Caught in the Middle, 1989):

1. Local school boards should mandate at least one extended time block daily in two or more of the core curriculum subjects during the middle grades to ensure that:

- a. Every middle grade student is known personally and well by one or more teachers.
- b. Individual monitoring of student progress takes place systematically so that teachers and counselors can quickly identify learning difficulties and take corrective measures.
- c. Cooperative learning strategies are implemented as a means of building strong positive peer group relationships and reinforcing essential educational values and goals.

2. Superintendents should give leadership in helping principals devise means for reducing the pressure of large complex schools which leave many students with a sense of anonymity and isolation. Particular attention should be given to organizational and scheduling concepts which are student-centered and which maximize opportunities for strong personal bonds among smaller numbers of students and teachers throughout the full span of the middle grade years.

3. Local school boards should authorize and fund peer, cross-age, and/or adult tutorial and mentor programs in the middle grades as a proven response to the needs of many at-risk students.

4. The State Department of Education and local district curriculum departments should assist teachers in devising instructional strategies that allow students with basic skill deficiencies to engage in learning experiences which develop higher-order thinking skills; these strategies should correspond with core curriculum goals and should enable students to learn in regular classrooms; and learning experiences should be consistent with the maturity and interest levels of young adolescents.

5. Principals should give leadership in creating cultural support systems for students- particularly those with limited-English-

proficiency - whose self identity is threatened through the loss and implicit devaluing of their native language; teachers and counselors should understand the psychological trauma involved in the transition from one language to another and the bearing which this phenomenon has on the negative attitudes and values of some categories of at-risk students.

6. Teachers, counselors, and principals should continuously model behavior which affirms their commitment to the basic mission of those who work in the middle grades: to enjoy young adolescents and to create conditions for academic success and educational commitment for every student. (Caught in the Middle, 1989).

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APPENDIX A

OVERVIEW OF AT RISK KIDS PROGRAM (ARK)

AREA OF CONCERN:

Adolescence is a very difficult period of time in human development. Adolescence is also a time where many students are identified as at-risk: At risk of academic failure (ie. dropping out of school, low economic productivity-unemployment, candidate for welfare or prison system, isolation, cycle of poverty, despair, etc.).

At risk kids display many common CHARACTERISTICS including:

- *Low Self Esteem
- *Non Involvement-Avoiders
- *Distrust of adults, systems, institutions
- *No concept of future
- *Discouraged
- *Fragile home structure - modeling
- *Adequate peer relationship - overly important
- *Impatience, bored, disruptive
- *Practical learning reference - oral
- *Disconnected - see no relationship to effort and achievement

COMMON SCHOOL INDICATORS

- *Chronic absences - tardies
- *Misbehavior - discipline problems
- *Academic low achievement - failure
- *Retention
- *Low skill proficiency
- *Non involvement - Non connected

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Effective middle schools programs provide a student center philosophy that is aware of needs of adolescence. Also, these schools provide a transitional program preparing students for the move to high school. For at-risk students this is the last best chance to re-establish positive connection to school in areas of attendance, citizenship, academics, and participation/involvement.

Further, middle schools should be pro-active and provide a program that includes prevention-intervention strategies to recapture these at-risk students.

OBJECTIVE

The MPH ARK program is designed to provide preventive and intervention to identify and work with high at-risk students in efforts to connect them positively to the school community.

PROCEDURES

The ARK program begins with identification of at-risk students. This list is prioritized with high at-risk students being assigned a personal advisor who works throughout the year with the students.

Students are then given an orientation to the program by their advisors and an administrator. Each student is asked to commit to working in the program and establishing personal goals of improvement. Students then are given a variety of activities to help them demonstrate ways to reconnect to school in positive ways. Advisors meet regularly with ARK students monitoring their progress and encouraging positive connection to school and include ice cream sundaes, candy bars, super kid tickets, pizza lunches, and end of the year field trip. Quarterly progress sheets will be used to tally points and feedback from advisors to encourage continued growth.

The minimum requirement will include a 2.0 GPA for a field trip.

An annual evaluation will be utilized to modify the program.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT INFORMATION SURVEY

Student Name _____ Birthday _____

Home Street Address _____

Home Phone _____

PARENTS:

Mother/Step-Mother's Name _____

Work Phone: _____

Father/Step-Father's Name _____

Work Phone: _____

FAMILY INFORMATION:

Who does the student live with? Please list everyone living in the home.

Student Information:

1. Put a (+) next to the things you do well, a (-) next to the things you need to work on, and an (x) next to the things you are OK at.

_____sports

_____music

_____dancing

_____outdoor activities: camping, hiking, etc.

_____being on time

_____reading

_____tests

_____note taking

_____memorization

_____getting things done on time

- motivating myself
- working with a group
- staying on task
- sitting still
- not disturbing others
- cooking
- listening to others
- leading others
- encouraging others
- making new friends
- well organized
- working alone

2. How do you think you learn the best? Check the ones that apply to you the best.

- hearing about it
- doing it myself
- hands on
- seeing it
- silently
- with noise

3. What do you like to go in your leisure time?

4. What was your favorite thing that happened to you last year at school?

5. What was your least favorite thing that happened last year at school?

APPENDIX C

M.P.H. ARK Program

Student's Name _____

Team by Lunch 3 4 5 Quarter 1 2 3 4

Individuals and teams earn points for positive performance in attendance, citizenship, academics, and areas that connect students to school. Also, some areas have penalty points for negative behavior and performance. Each team has a faculty sponsor/advisor: Team 3 - Tad Smith; Team 4 - Leslie Norton; Team 5 - Al Lara.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Total
Each day of attendance at school + 1 Point											
No Discipline Reports for the week + 5 Points											
Attend Tutorial <u>one</u> (1) day <u>each</u> week + 5 Points											
Additional day at Tutorial <u>each</u> week + 5 Points											
Check <u>weekly</u> w/ Advisor/ Regular use of Rem. Binder + 5 Points											
Meet <u>weekly</u> with the Advisor + 5 Points											
No Referrals for three (3) weeks + 10 Points											
No truancy for the quarter + 10 Points											
Each truancy - 5 Points											
Miss <u>no more than eight</u> days in the quarter + 10 Points											
Attendance at school event or activity + 5 Points <u>each</u>											
Member of a club + 5 Points											
Participation in a sport/ Intramural Team + 5 Points											
School/Community Service Project + 5 Points											
Receive <u>any</u> student recognition award + 5 Points											
No suspension for the quarter + 10 Points											
Good report from a bus driver or noon duty aide + 5 Points											
Honor Roll (3.0 G.P.A.) w/ no "U"s in citizenship + 25 Points											
Signed Progress Report by parents + 5 Points for <u>each</u> class											
Total for this side											

APPENDIX D

Referral for At Risk Kids Program (ARK)

Student Name _____ Grade 7 8

AREA(S) OF CONCERN		BRIEFLY EXPLAIN;
ATTENDANCE	_____	
ACADEMIC FAILURE	_____	
LOW ACHIEVEMENT	_____	
RETENTION	_____	
NON INVOLVEMENT	_____	
MISBEHAVIOR\DISCIPLINE	_____	
LOW SELF EXTEEM	_____	
PEER PROBLEMS	_____	
OTHER	_____	

APPENDIX E

47942

MARY P BRUCE INTERMEDIATE SCHL

STUDENT ATTENDANCE RECORD

2/21/96

9/05/95 TERM 2/20/96

STUDENT: 7213

GRADE: 7

MONTH	DATE	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	DATE	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	DATE	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	DATE	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
1							09/04	---	---	---	---	---	09/11	---	---	---	---	---	09/18	SOS	---	---	---	---
2	09/25	---	---	---	---	---	10/02	---	---	---	---	---	10/09	---	---	SOS	SOS	---	10/16	SOS	---	SDD	---	---
3	10/23	---	---	---	---	---	10/30	---	---	---	---	---	11/06	---	---	---	HOL	---	11/13	---	---	---	SDD	---
4	11/20	---	SOS	---	HOL	HOL	11/27	---	---	---	---	---	12/04	---	---	---	---	---	12/11	---	---	---	---	---
5	12/18	HOL	HOL	HOL	HOL	HOL	12/25	HOL	HOL	HOL	HOL	HOL	01/01	HOL	---	---	---	---	01/08	---	---	---	---	---
6	01/15	HOL	---	---	---	---	01/22	UNX	---	---	---	---	01/29	---	---	---	---	---	02/05	---	---	---	---	---
7	02/12	UNV	---	---	SDD	HOL	02/19	HOL	---	---	---	---												

DAYS ENROLLED: 104 DAYS PRESENT: 94.0 EXCUSED ABSENCES: 0.0 UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: 7.0 STAFF DEVELOPMENT: 3

TOTALS FOR EACH REASON CODE:

UNV	CIS	DET	ILL	LE	MIN	IS	OTR	PRR	HOB	SOS	TDT	UNX	ACT	EXC	COY
1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

APPENDIX F

MARY PUTNAM HENCK INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

P.O. BOX 430 • LAKE ARROWHEAD, CA 92352

909/336-0360

Fax 909/336-3448



LAURALEA HOPPER
Assistant Principal

JOHN BROOKS
Principal

JIM COX
Assistant Principal

September 18, 1995

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Your student has been nominated to join a special club at Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School.

The club is designed to help your student be successful at MPH. An adult advisor will meet with your student on a weekly basis to monitor and encourage good attendance, good citizenship, academic effort, and involvement in school activities. As your student shows growth and progresses in these key areas, rewards such as ice cream, pizza and movie parties will be held. Students in this club may also be included in the Principal's Beach Party at the end of the year if they have satisfactory citizenship and a 2.0 grade point average.

We look forward to meeting with your student. We appreciate your help at home by monitoring and encouraging your student to be successful. Please call us at 336-0360 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

John Brooks, Principal

Lauralea Hopper, Assistant Principal

JH/jo

APPENDIX G

CONSTITUTION & BY LAWS OF

ARK CLUB AT MPH SCHOOL

ADVISOR _____

PREAMBLE:

The purpose of this club is to provide its student members with support and motivation to have a positive connection to school. The staff advisor will help students in the area of attendance, citizenship, academic performance, and positive participation in school.

ARTICLE I

The name of this student support club will be _____.

ARTICLE II

The requirements for membership in this club will be nomination by site administrator, counselor, or staff.

ARTICLE III

The officers of this club will be President, Vice President, and Secretary. Officers will be elected by club members and serve a term of one semester.

ARTICLE IV

Student members will meet weekly with advisor at lunch with the Student Handbook. The advisor may call special meetings by putting notice in the school bulletin.

Quarterly incentive meetings will be held for students who have 2.0 GPA, good attendance, good citizenship, meet weekly with advisor, and participate in school activities and events.

Quarterly incentives will include:

- 1st Quarter - Ice cream party
- 2nd Quarter - Pizza party
- 3rd Quarter - Movie party
- 4th Quarter - Ice cream party/Nomination for Beach Trip

ARTICLE V

This constitution may be amended by a majority vote of club members with advisors and site administrators approval.

ARTICLE VI

This constitution becomes effective with ASB approval for the 1995-96 school year.

Signature ASB President _____

APPENDIX H

- Grade Check

Student's Name

Date

Period	Class	Teacher	Grade, to Date
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

cc. Mary Patricia Heack Intermediate School Administrative Staff
Dr. John Fitzpatrick, Superintendent, Rim of the World Unified School District
Mr. Tom Seash, Child Welfare and Attendance Officer, Rim of the World Unified School District

APPENDIX I

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____ Phone: _____

1. In what ways do you see your son/daughter struggling?
2. What are your expectations for your son/daughter this year?
3. What does your son/daughter do well?
4. What is your son/daughter most interested in?
5. What techniques have you tried that work well with your son/daughter? (talking, discipline, etc.)
6. What techniques have you tried that do not work well?
7. What hobbies, experiences, professions, travels, or cultures might you be willing to share with our instructional program?