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An Extended Year Program for At-Risk Middle School Children

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AN EXTENDED YEAR PROGRAM
FOR AT-RISK MIDDLE SCHOOL
CHILDREN

Karen Patrice Flanigan

Summer 1995

MASTERS THESIS

Submitted to the graduate faculty at

Grand Valley State University

in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Education

Abstract

At the beginning of this century only 6% of the American population even received a high school diploma. Now that diploma is so necessary that our society can no longer support or afford any undereducated citizens. Every year there is less and less room for them in the work force.

The states and school districts are reacting to this by trying to identify these at-risk children and to pose interventions to keep them in school. This is one account of an extended year program that was implemented for at-risk middle school children. The research focuses on the characteristics of these children, the type of school day interventions that are best suited to answer at least some of their needs, and the organization and implementation of an extended year program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	Introduction and Proposal	1
	Problem statement.....	2
	Importance and rationale.....	2
	Background study.....	5
	Statement of purpose.....	7
CHAPTER TWO	Literature Review.....	10
	What is adolescence?.....	14
	Negative adolescent characteristics.....	18
	Ways to identify at-risk children.....	22
	At-risk curriculum.....	24
	Mentoring.....	27
	Other ideas.....	29
	Assessment.....	38
	Conclusions.....	41
CHAPTER THREE	The Project.....	44
	Initial Organization.....	46
	Selection of Students.....	48
	Curriculum.....	52

Assessment.....	55
Summary.....	58
Recommendations.....	61
REFERENCES.....	63
APPENDIXES.....	66
Appendix A Criteria for Section 31a Programs for At-Risk Pupils.....	67
Appendix B Extended Year Program.....	71
Appendix C Section 31a Program for At-Risk Pupils.....	73
Appendix D Attitude Survey.....	75
Appendix E Summer Survey.....	76
Appendix F A Look At How Schools Respond To At-Risk Students.....	77
Appendix G Summer School Criteria Sheets For Teams.....	81
Appendix H Student Information Form.....	82
Appendix I Parent Letter.....	83
Appendix J Parent Letter.....	84
Appendix K Daily Schedule.....	85
Appendix L Parent Survey.....	86
Appendix M Writing Assessment Rubric.....	87
Appendix N Holistic Writing Descriptions.....	88

CHAPTER ONE

Proposal

Problem Statement

I have the responsibility for creating, coordinating, and teaching a brand new extended year program for as many as sixty identified at-risk middle school children in the Grand Haven Area Public Schools. There has not been a summer program in Grand Haven expressly for middle school age children since at least 1970. This is financed by the State of Michigan, and is a sign of the times that this is a needed service for our children, especially since it has the support of our legislators.

Importance and Rationale of the Study

Published articles in various local newspapers have recently established high school dropout rates in western Michigan to be as high as ten percent. These children are not really a surprise to teachers and administrators because they have actually been casually identified many years earlier. We say these children are at risk, and they are often so labeled in elementary school. They are at-risk for not being successful in school and, consequently, very early on they are perceived as potential dropouts. Apparently there are a number of reasons for this lack of success, and educators today are scrambling to understand and to identify these reasons.

Classroom teachers can spot these children because of a general low

performance level and a general negative attitude towards school. However, there are currently so few universal guidelines, standards, or criteria to clearly establish who is truly at-risk. Special education students, for example, have rigorous standards to meet in order to receive support services. There are virtually no instruments to identify at-risk children, and programs to give them support are nonexistent in many schools. These are the kids that everyone refers to as “falling through the cracks”.

Two very current textbooks, Teaching Children to Read and Language Arts Content and Teaching Strategies, both mention at-risk children. Neither text, however, offers a definition or criteria that such kids should meet. In order to develop an extended year program, I have to be able to select and justify the selection of the at-risk children who will attend. The Michigan State Board of Education has determined criteria for at-risk students. The criteria was approved July 13, 1994, and is commonly known as Section 31a (see Appendix A). According to this document, eligible students include children whose scores on their most recent MEAP reading, mathematics, or science test were less than a category 2 in reading and less than 50% of the objectives in math or science. In addition, children must meet at least two of the following criteria:

1. A victim of child abuse or neglect
2. Below grade in English language and communication skills
3. Pregnant teenager or teenage parent
4. Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch

5. Atypical behavior or attendance patterns

6. Family history of school failure, incarceration, or substance abuse

Using this criteria in the selection of children for the extended year program has not been entirely useful for me. Sometimes children who meet these standards are not considered to be at-risk by the classroom teacher. Therefore, I would add the criterion of a referral by the child's most recent teacher or teacher team. The team concept is often used in middle school and it is a very effective way to evaluate children by using three or four professionals. A consensus can be reached on the eligibility of a particular child for an at-risk program by the team members. This way there is always more than one opinion on the status of a child. Part of this project will include the form I devise for the seventh and eighth grade teams to evaluate and, consequently, recommend their students for this summer program.

Once I select the children to be included in this extended year school, I have to next consider the curriculum. There are teaching strategies in many texts for at-risk children. What I have not yet been able to find, however, is information on building a curriculum just for these particular kids. Since the funding is from Section 31a which was only passed by the Michigan Legislature a year ago, I do not anticipate finding a nicely laid out curriculum which I can use in this program. Rather, I expect to create my own on a trial and error type basis using whatever research I can find to aid me in my decisions. I believe that this curriculum should obviously include academics, but that it should also address affective behaviors. It should be an outcome goal to remove these children from an at-risk category, if,

indeed, this is even possible. This study will explore the curriculum I design and, hopefully, help to determine new ways and strategies to teach at-risk children.

One of the important goals of any school district should be to claim a zero dropout rate. By using universal criteria to identify potentially unsuccessful children and universal standards in developing programs for them, perhaps, in years to come there will be no such thing as a high school dropout. I would hope that my work this summer would be one very small step to help my district realize this goal, and one very small step towards more successful public education.

Background Study

Because the Grand Haven Area Public School District has never before initiated a program for at-risk pupils in grades seven and eight, much research must go into this project to ensure it will benefit the selected children. There has been much talk the past several years about the at-risk children who seem to be popping up more and more frequently in regular education classrooms. Teachers often say and hear such comments as, “Well, I can’t expect to get Amy’s homework on time because she’s at-risk,” or “Kris has such an attendance problem, but she’s at-risk so what can we do?” Many team meetings that take place in my school center around at-risk children, and most core (English, math, science, and social studies) teams set aside one day per week to discuss only these students. Strategies and ideas are implemented and reimplemented until most

teachers simply throw up their hands at the end of the school year without seeing a whole lot of change or progress. Both teachers and students are frustrated and burned out long before June rolls around.

We all seem to have a general idea of what type of child we are talking about when we use the at-risk label. When a principal mentioned that as many as one third of a particular class could be at-risk, I understood exactly what he meant and what children he was referring to. My personal experience with eighth graders this year had me mentioning at-risk children in conferences and team meetings. Other teachers understood what I meant. So, while there is a mind set as to what constitutes such a child, there does not seem to be definite definitive criteria. Since we throw the at-risk expression around an awful lot, we all had better be talking about the same thing. One part of this study is to develop characteristics of at-risk children. If one-third of a school population could potentially fall under this label, I want to clearly understand it.

Even the experts seem to be having trouble with the at-risk label. Two seminars that I attended early in 1995 with Judy Wood and Sigurd Zielke addressed the needs of these children. Neither speaker, however, offered concrete definitions of what at-risk means. Dr. Wood included special education students in her seminar. I would challenge this for an extended year program because the special education kids already receive support and services. My evolving definition of at-risk would be children without any prior diagnosis or services provided by the school district. I am looking to create guidelines for the at-risk

label that are appropriate for my middle school.

Because there is no history of prior programs in my particular school district, it is essential to carefully and skillfully create and execute a relevant curriculum. The job description from the Human Resources Department of the Grand Haven school district for the extended year program states "...the content areas to be covered are language arts, math, science. Considering the reading scores in this district, the plan will focus around the area of language arts" (see Appendixes B and C). This is the only guideline to creating the curriculum. Since I have the position of head teacher, there is much work for me to do, and I will explain and try to justify my decisions for this curriculum.

Finally, it is essential to assess this extended year program. It must be determined what outcomes and objectives the children should meet. It must be decided if we will concentrate the assessment only on academic achievements, or if affective (whole child) achievements should be taken into consideration also. None of this is determined at the present time, and the justification for the assessment procedures will evolve with this paper.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to develop criteria to identify at-risk middle school children, and to then place these children in an extended year program with a curriculum designed to enhance whatever skills they have.

More specifically this study will provide a definition of at-risk middle school children in order that these students can be readily identified . However, the most difficult part of my study will be to develop a curriculum for these young teenagers. To start, I would like to use some modified ideas from special education research. For example, I believe an Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.) for at-risk children can be devised. The problem then becomes a question: How do you incorporate sixty Individual Education Plans into one curriculum, and is it even possible? The common link will be language arts skills, but taught on various levels for each child. Next, individualized math and science programs have to be developed and then implemented and managed. One possible way to do this is to use the established MEAP objectives for each discipline. I want other teachers to be able to easily establish an extended year program for at-risk children following my research and the ideas I experiment with this summer.

Finally there is a need to assess the increased cognitive skills I expect the children to have. Pre-and post-tests for the core disciplines need to be designed. I am an advocate, also, for authentic assessment, interdisciplinary units, and mastery learning. I have found through experience that all people perform better when they submit work for assessment that has a high level of personal interest for them, and when there are choices involved. Authentic assessment allows for this. Mastery learning permits reteaching and retesting, and this is effective for many learners. Interdisciplinary units permit children to see one concept adapted to many formats. It is real world teaching. I hope to incorporate these ideas into the program, but

time could be a factor this summer. It may not be feasible to accomplish all these things this year.

I will include evaluations of this program by the students. I will administer an attitude survey on the first day and another attitude survey and a formal evaluation on the last day of class (see Appendixes D and E).

This is a new program. Many things can only be addressed as they surface this summer. I cannot yet anticipate any successes or failures, but I will elaborate on both. The mistakes I make will be as important as any successes, especially to other teachers who may wish to work in extended year programs with at-risk children. By documenting my decisions, I hope to be able to save other teachers valuable time in organizing and establishing similar projects.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Surviving adolescence is no small matter. It's a hard age to be and teach.

The worst things that ever happened to anybody happen every day. But some of the best things can happen, too, and they are more likely to happen when junior high teachers understand the nature of junior high kids and teach them in ways that help students grow.

-Nancie Atwell (1987)

from In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents.

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) notes the following definition of at-risk in the thesaurus section of this computer program. "Year term introduced, 1990. Individuals or groups identified as possibly having or potentially developing a problem (physical, mental, educational, etc.) requiring further evaluation and/or intervention." A further suggestion from this program is to reference "high risk students" again, in the ERIC thesaurus. The definition is as follows: "Year introduced, 1980. Students with normal intelligence whose academic background or prior performance may cause them to be perceived as candidates for future academic failure or early withdrawal. Prior to March '80, this concept was occasionally indexed under educationally disadvantaged."

Whatever term is used, high risk, or at-risk, the prognosis is the same: These children need interventions to help them from becoming our future high school dropouts. The statistics are bleak according to H. Craig Heller who participated in

the Carnegie Conference on Adolescent Health and who is published in Teachers College Record. Nationally, one out of every seven children will drop out of school, and, of course, there is a declining demand in the job market for the poorly educated and the unskilled. Consequently, a dropout is seven-and-a-half times more likely to be on welfare and two times more likely to be unemployed. This particular dropout will earn \$300,000 less than a high school graduate, and will pay \$80,000 less in taxes. It costs our nation three hundred billion in lost productivity for one year's class of dropouts. Add to this the fact that these citizens will be chronically underemployed and unemployed, they will most likely have no health insurance. So, the cost to the United States starts to approach one trillion dollars (Heller, 1993, p. 645). One trillion is such an incomprehensible amount to most people that a clarification may be in order. If a trillion one dollar bills were lined up next to each other with the ends touching, the distance covered would be 200 trips to the moon and back.

The dismal outlook for dropouts is also researched in The Bell Curve, the controversial documentation of the social structure of American life. Interestingly enough, in 1900 only six percent of the population of our country received a high school diploma. It wasn't until the beginning of World War II that even half of our youth graduated from a four year secondary program (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994, p. 146). The authors maintain through the entire book that the equation of low cognitive ability and low socioeconomic status practically guarantees a high school dropout. This, in turn, leads to everything from poor parenting, welfare

dependency, poverty, crime, and all the other social ills in our society. While Herrnstein and Murray 's book may be extreme, they certainly have enough charts, graphs, and footnotes to document what they have written.

As adults and as professional and educational leaders, it seems impossible for us to relegate our children to such a future. Indeed, it even seems morally wrong. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis has been widely quoted as saying, "If you fail in raising your children, then nothing else you ever do really matters." Even for someone who has little interest in children, the crass statistics on the loss of productivity for our nation should still hit home. We simply cannot afford dropouts.

L.D. Darrell writing that "At-risk Students Need Our Commitment" in the National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin says that in national surveys, students themselves give three reasons for dropping out of school. The first is low grades, the second is a lack of interest in school, and last is the inability to get along with their teachers (Darrell, 1989, pp. 81-82). According to De Blois in the National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin when he was discussing "Keeping At-risk Students in School", additional research shows that dropouts share other characteristics which include being two years behind their peers in reading and math, having a low sense of self-esteem, and having been held back for one or more years by the time they are in seventh grade (DeBlois, 1989, p. 6). These do not seem to be insurmountable problems for our school districts and for our society to address.

Fred Hechinger, in his article “Schools for Teenagers: A Historic Dilemma” published in the Teachers College Record, reported that in the 1980's, the Eli Lilly Endowment, in Indianapolis, Indiana, researched and wrote that “...the number of students who fail in school seems to grow almost uncontrollably from fourth through eighth or ninth grades. As a result, these students fall further behind in almost every essential activity until they either drop out or struggle in remedial programs throughout their high school grades.” (Hechinger, 1993, pp. 530-531). This acclaimed study points a long and strong finger at the junior high and middle schools of America.

What IS Adolescence?

Berkeley, California, around 1900, was the site of the first junior high school. Decades later the junior high idea still remains largely undefined. Most of these schools are modeled after either an elementary school concept or a senior high school concept also according to Hechinger from the previously stated article (1993, p. 532). Anyone who works with adolescents knows that using an elementary school approach just will not work. These young teens want to be grown up more than almost anything in the world. Centuries ago Aristotle wrote as quoted by E. Nightingale and L. Wolverson in “Adolescent Rolelessness in Modern Society” and published in Teachers College Record:

The young are in character prone to desire and ready to carry any desire

they may have formed into action. Of bodily desires it is the sexual to which they are most disposed to give way, and in regard to sexual desire they exercise no self-restraint. They are changeful, too, and fickle in their desires, which are as transitory as they are vehement; for their wishes are keen without being permanent, like a sick man's fits of hunger and thirst. (Nightingale & Wolverson, 1993, p. 472).

Primary schools have never in the history of the world been responsive to what Aristotle has described, and to the way many people would describe young teenagers today.

On the other hand, a look at our high schools shows what Deborah Meier has described in the following excerpt:

The typical high school is a setting in which the adults and the students are not members of the same community. Instead they exist in two unconnected communities inhabiting the same building. We have abandoned them in adolescence in which there are no adults to have an influence on them. Then we decry the fact that they create a peer culture that does not have the values we as adults want them to have (Heller, 1993, p. 656).

A secondary school without role models to guide the "changeable" adolescents simply will not work either. It is only in modern times that children have not had adult role models.

A knowledge of history and sociology shows that the whole idea of

adolescence is a fairly new one with the twentieth century. Until the early 1900's, children went to work at a very young age. In many cases they worked alongside their parents on farms practically from the time they were able to walk. In sadder cases, in urban areas, children were abused in sweat shops. Regardless of the situation, however, children were put in the company of adults, and most never had a chance for more than a rudimentary education. Improved health and nutrition and improved social consciousness along with new laws that stopped much abuse of children all helped to create the idea of adolescence. More and more secondary schools were established to accommodate this new category of people. Much of the research on adolescence is recent and ongoing. The last bastion of the human body-the brain-is finally being studied. Some scientists are beginning to carefully look into the mental development of the young teenager, and there are some facts that are emerging.

Except for the first three years of infancy, early adolescence is the time of the most dramatic human development. In a forum on middle schools, June 26th and 27th, 1995, at the Grand Haven Junior High School the presenter, Elliot Merenbloom, documented the social and emotional development of adolescents. He said that young teens must have peer approval and group membership. They have a need to develop their self-concept and sex role identification. Adolescents have to learn how to deal with turbulent emotions and multi-cultural and multi-racial issues (Merenbloom, 1995).

Our schools generally force the alienation of our children from adults and

from each other. In a typical junior high, most children are bused in and begin their school day immediately. Except for frantic passing periods there are almost no chances for social contacts with adults or peers. Lunch is often another frenetic twenty or thirty minutes where some time must be spent actually eating. Then, it's another round of academics and time to reboard the bus. Add to this scenario a boring irrelevant textbook, and a teacher who might be bored or unhappy in a junior high school setting and who has to run his/her classroom like an army boot camp. Finally, the child returns home to an empty house or a home with problems and you can hardly blame the kids for just wanting OUT. Not all adults could tolerate days like this, so who could dare to fault our children?

If, by chance, the junior high is overcrowded, there will probably be almost no chance for after school activities. Only the very best athletes will be selected for teams, or because of space, perhaps only a dozen kids can work on a newspaper or yearbook. In a medium to large school, the vast majority of children are left out and important avenues to group membership and chances for relationships with adults are closed.

If the three most valid reasons for dropping out of school are poor grades, lack of interest in school, and inability to get along with their teachers (Darrell, 1989, pp. 81-82), it is easy to see how many of our schools actually force these conditions on our children. Looking at it from this point of view, it would seem that most of our children are at-risk simply because they attend school. This is scary thinking.

Continuing, though, there are still other characteristics that dropouts share. This includes pregnancy, the mother or the father is not in the home, the father dropped out of school, or is generally negative about education, the child is below grade level in reading or math by two years or more, the child had been held back at least once by the time he/she is in seventh grade, and the child exhibits a low sense of self-esteem (Darrell, 1989, pp. 81-82 and DeBlois, 1989, p. 6).

Since at-risk children are potential dropouts by definition, this information has to be applied to these students while they are still in school. Before that can be done, however, we have to actually identify who is really at-risk. But even before this, we have to understand the years between ten and fourteen.

In the mid 1980's, society was forced to focus on this age group. The high number of teen pregnancies, random acts of violence, and higher and higher suicide statistics made everyone sit up and take notice. Professionals had to reexamine the way the junior high population was being taught and the way they functioned in school (Hechinger, 1993, p.533).

Negative Adolescent Characteristics

There are three primary negative characteristics of these adolescent years: alienation, intense peer pressure, and unprotected exposure to risks. An adolescent's life can focus on any one of these, on all of these, or on any combination of these three negative elements.

One thing that was found according to Richard Price in his article “Webs of Influence: School and Community Programs” and published in Teachers College Record was the “fragmentation” and the total lack of support the adolescent received from the world, their family, and from their community (Price, 1993, p. 517). This could be one reason peers become so important, and, yet, research shows that adolescents need to have strong wholesome relationships with adults. Also, the adolescent does not want to be alienated from his/her family. The peer relationship is important for transitory things such as what designer jeans to buy, but that’s not how and when values are transmitted. The peer group has little to do with enduring values claims R.Takanishi in his work “Schools for Teenagers: A Historic Dilemma” published by Teachers College Record (1993, p. 461).

Yet, because of the need of peer approval, there seems to be a downgrading of studying and less risk taking in school. This can have such a spiral effect that failures from this change of attitude can tremendously erode self-confidence (Hechinger, 1993, p. 531). Take a close look at a young teen. He/she will be rollerblading upside down and off cliffs, but that same young person might very possibly never raise a hand in class to answer a question. There is physical, but not intellectual risk taking. The reason is peer pressure.

It’s hard to believe but less than seven percent of an adolescent’s waking hours are spent with adults. This isolation, which did not exist before this century has created this subculture of young teens, and they generally have no meaningful place in our society(Nightingale & Wolverton, 1993, p.476). In Third World

countries, young teens are most likely working with adults right beside them. So they, at least, have some sort of role model, and an idea of their place in the world. If it could be possible to poll all the American adults to find out what year or years they absolutely hated in school, it would not be a surprise to most of us that these middle school years would probably top the list. Most likely this is because of this sense of isolation and alienation, and, also a sense of not contributing to society. At least in high school there is the lure of the “real world”, but in middle school this is still too abstract.

Adolescence is also a period of exposure to risks. Before these years, parents could easily protect their children from outside influences. Now in these middle years it is much more difficult. The dangers include exposure to alcohol, drugs, and nicotine. Children face temptations and must make value choices every day they show up for school. There are temptations to be part of a gang and temptations for premature and unprotected sexual activity. There is also the exposure to and the possible involvement in violent behavior. All of the uncertainties that a teenager must face in dealing with these risks can cause depression, or, even worse, suicide (Hechinger, 1993, p.533).

Alienation, intense peer pressure, and exposure to risks are the true negative sides of the adolescent years. All of the reasons for dropping out of school can be slotted under one of these categories. For example, a young thirteen-year-old girl may even choose to become pregnant because she feels such a sense of alienation. The thought of a baby connects her permanently to another human being. The

inability to get along with teachers could be an undesired result of either a sense of alienation or intense peer pressure. The alienation from adults could be simply the manner in which many of our schools are structured. A low sense of self-esteem could come from peer pressure or, possibly, from not knowing how to deal with exposure to so many different risks. Most of the reasons attributed to dropping out of school can be categorized within these three negative characteristics of the adolescent years.

While all adolescents are exposed to alienation, to intense peer pressure, and to risks before ascertaining a value system, not all children qualify for the at-risk category. Joy Dryfoos, in her acclaimed book Adolescents At-Risk, gives a broad definition of at-risk kids. She says that they are, “young people who are at-risk of not maturing into responsible adults” (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 4). With further elaboration she investigates four areas of concern: delinquency, substance abuse, early childbearing, and school failure. She believes these are the specific reasons children become at-risk and eventually drop out of school (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 5). This certainly correlates with other research, and, again, these reasons that Dryfoos has spelled out can all fall somewhere within the negative characteristics of alienation, exposure to risks, and intense peer pressure.

So what does it take to mature into a responsible adult? According to Dryfoos (p.25) psychologists list the following:

1. The search for self-definition
2. The search for a personal set of values

3. The necessary competencies for adult roles such as problem solving and decision making
4. The acquisition of skills for social interaction with parents, peers, and others
5. Emotional dependence from parents
6. The ability to negotiate between the pressure to achieve and the acceptance of peers
7. Experimentation with a wide variety of behaviors, attitudes, and activities

Adolescence is where children learn to become adults, and some become responsible people ready to take their place in society and some do not. It is absolutely essential to identify the “do nots”.

Ways To Identify At-risk Children

In his work, “Rating Scale Identifies At-risk Students”, John Hoover, Jr. has devised a rating scale to identify at-risk students. He has named it HARP (Hoover Assessment of Risk Potential), and the form lists thirty social, scholastic, and personal attributes of at-risk children. It expands and clarifies what the research is showing, and it appears to be a scientific tool to identify these children.

The obvious factors include failing grades and physical and sexual abuse. The less obvious factors are attendance at many schools, foster care, experiences

as a runaway, and use of professional counseling (Hoover, 1989, p. 110).

Hoover continues this article with an explanation of how to use this assessment and there is an actual form included on pages 111 and 112. Math and reading level scores, the number of grades failed, participation in extra-curricular activities, single parent in the home, substance abuse, and one or both parents not graduated from high school are all important indicators of at-risk behavior on his rating scale (p.111-112).

The State of Michigan, as spelled out in State Resolution 31a in 1994, (see Appendix A) considers the following criteria an indicator of at-risk behavior:

1. Pupils whose score on their most recent MEAP reading, mathematics, or science test was: less than a category 2 in reading; less than 50% of the objectives in mathematics or science
2. Pupils who meet at least two of the following criteria
 - *victim of child abuse or neglect
 - *below grade level in English language or communication skills
 - *pregnant teenager or teenage parent
 - *eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
 - *atypical behavior or attendance problems
 - *family history of school failure, incarceration or substance abuse

Professionals have determined the criteria for at-risk children. Some at-risk students may meet all of the criteria and others may only have a few of these factors in their private lives that may contribute to potential problems. Using

Hoover's scale is beneficial because it is a black and white resource. So many points make a child highly at-risk and then teachers can make a strong case for interventions. Children with lower points can still be monitored for possible future interventions, or it can just be a way to "keep an eye on them". The HARP makes identification less subjective and educators and school boards generally like this type of resource tool. "Lucas scored in the highest percentile on the at-risk scale," just sounds better than, "I think Lucas is an at-risk kid". A master teacher's professional judgment, though, is rarely off base with an at-risk child.

At-risk Curriculum

Once these high-risk children are identified, it is imperative to develop the most beneficial curriculum and/or program to prevent them from dropping out of school. It also means finding and training teachers to help these young teens. James Bryant Conant, a former president of Harvard University and an ardent school reformer wrote:

Because of the transitional nature of these grades (middle school) teachers with an unusual combination of qualifications are needed. Satisfactory instruction in grades seven and eight requires mature teachers who have both an understanding of children, a major characteristic of elementary school teachers, and considerable knowledge in at least one subject-matter field, a major characteristic of high school teachers (Hechinger, 1993, pp. 528-

529).

Conant went on to try and persuade school boards to realize that junior high cannot be a training ground for high school teachers. It is now possible in Michigan to be granted a middle school endorsement; an advanced study of the early adolescent and appropriate curriculum. This is a positive reflection that times are changing for the junior highs and the middle schools. Conant was one of the early proponents for this reform.

There are, however, many critics of the middle school curriculum. One of these, H. Craig Heller states:

...assembly line organization of middle grades balkanizes knowledge and destroys the interconnectedness that young people are trying to find. They are asking for relevance of information, one body to another, and to themselves. Organization of curriculum along strict disciplinary lines sets some students up for failure (Heller, 1993, p. 647).

Henry Levin believes that high-risk students are not inherently at-risk.

Rather, it is the structure of the school that does not accommodate their needs:

...at-risk learners are those who probably will not succeed in school because they lack the type of experiences in their community, family, and home that the school expects for success. This is according to Joseph Sanacore who wrote in the Journal of Reading, "To Treat At-risk Learners As We Treat All Learners"(1994, p. 238).

The curriculum is all wrong for these learners, but there have been only a

very few studies that have examined curricular approaches for at-risk students. There are studies that focus on counseling and therapy, but not much on what should actually be taught. What is known though, is that remedial approaches or “traditional admonishments” such as, “Get yourself organized and you will succeed,” or, “Hard work is the answer to success,” just do not work. The successful curriculum has to focus on the student’s strengths and interests according to Baum, Renzulli, and Hebert in their work “Reversing Underachievement: Stories of Success” as published in Educational Leadership (1994, p. 51).

Many teachers are finding it difficult to share ideas and to open their classroom doors to other teachers. The days are vanishing when a teacher could walk into his/her room, close the door, and nobody ever knew what was going on in that classroom. This, too, must have contributed to the sense of alienation and isolation that are negative experiences for our young people. This changing philosophy, if administrators can get their staff to buy into it, is beneficial for all children. This philosophical shift away from the structured junior high might even prevent some children from becoming at-risk in the first place.

Since we have discovered that a sense of alienation, intense peer pressure, and exposure to dangerous risks are the negatives of the adolescent experience, the curriculum must address each area. It stands to reason that by trying to change these negatives to positive experiences, our children-both at-risk and successful-should have even greater support in school. Whatever is beneficial for an at-risk

child will also be good for the rest of the school population.

Teachers need to be careful with textbooks. Many of the books are not relevant to what the adolescent is experiencing. Even many newer texts, that are simply gorgeous and well illustrated are nothing more than mini versions of a high school textbook. Sometimes, they can be four or five hundred pages of vocabulary lists and not much else (Heller, 1993, p. 647). Certainly, the books we use and the materials we bring to the classroom can create a sense of alienation if they are not meaningful.

Mentoring

Another way to attack alienation or isolation is through a mentoring program. Gordan M. Ambach says, “The schools must provide a special relationship with at least one caring adult.” It is the responsibility of this adult to be a coach and confidant and to get the right information to the student when it is needed (Heller, 1993, p. 653).

Richard Price supports this by describing mentoring, “The mentor role is one that can convey all three aspects of the supportive relationship: material aid, a sense of affirmation, and positive affect and emotional support” (Price, 1993, p. 510). Deborah Meier speaks of her school where, “Youngsters stay with the same small cluster of teachers for at least two years. Each child has a principal adviser who knows him or her and his or her family well” (Heller, 1993, p. 656).

Larry Putbrese's "Advisory Programs at the Middle School Level" as published in the National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin lists a number of reasons that advisory programs work:

1. They improve teacher/student relationships on a personal level
2. They give students a feeling of more control
3. They promote an atmosphere of equality
4. They provide opportunities for group work
5. They maximize the altruistic nature of early adolescence
6. They improve the sharing of feelings between students
7. They make teachers more attentive to students' behavior
8. They reduce the incidence of smoking, and/or alcohol abuse (Putbrese, 1989, p.112).

"Teachers who are most effective in reversing the underachievement pattern take time to get to know the student before initiating an investment" (Baum et al., 1994, p. 52).

Finally, according to Carolyn Bunting in her article "At-risk Early Adolescents", teachers are so important to at-risk kids that they must be trained how to develop strong interpersonal skills with these students. Teachers must have professional competence, as well as patience, open-mindedness, honesty, and respect for young people (Bunting, 1994, p. 140).

The research is conclusive that at-risk children must have a mentor relationship with an adult while they are in school. Certainly, this is a step to

reducing the sense of isolation that adolescents have, and a mentor would be beneficial for all middle school children, not just at-risk students.

Other Ideas

There are other concerns about the middle school curriculum. Fred M. Hechinger believes that these schools should have programs set up for nonviolent conflict resolution, instruction in human biology, and that school related health centers had better be available to these teenagers. By incorporating these three items into a middle school, Hechinger believes the following will be addressed:

1. The risks to which children are exposed
2. The temptations children face
3. The fateful choices children must make in shaping their values and behavior
4. The dangers of alcohol, other substance abuse, nicotine, premature, irresponsible and unprotected sexual activity, poor nutrition, and involvement in violent behavior (Hechinger, 1993, pp. 533-536).

Gordon Cawelti wrote in an article titled, "High School Restructuring; What are the Critical Elements?" that was published in the National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin a list of seven critical restructuring elements for secondary schools:

1. Performance standards

2. Authentic assessment
3. Interdisciplinary curriculum
4. School-based shared decision making
5. Block scheduling
6. Community outreach
7. Instructional technology

These seven ideas, if incorporated into a curriculum, should make schools more responsive to students, and this is what parents and politicians (as well as teachers) really want (Cawelti, 1995, p. 5). Cawelti also writes of a Ralston, Nebraska, high school which has performance-based standards for graduation that also features an I.E.P. for each student.

Robert DeBlois believes, “The major component of the curriculum should be interdisciplinary team projects and the main academic focus should be communication skills.” He makes further claims that teachers need to be working in teams. It is also imperative that students must be given alternative ways for success and that kids must have a chance to demonstrate their multiple intelligences (DeBlois, 1989, pp. 9-10).

“Putting together or relating of things either conceptually or organizationally,” is the definition of interdisciplinary team projects and curriculum integration. Both phrases mean the same thing. The idea dates back to the time of Plato (the more things change, the more they stay the same), and it’s a way to help a student realize that almost all knowledge is interrelated. It eliminates

subject boundaries, helps teachers with the mass of requirements that must be taught, and it helps a child make sense of what he/she is learning according to Martin-Kniep, Feige and Soodak in their work, “Curriculum Integration: An Expanded View of an Abused Idea” and published in the Journal of Curriculum and Supervision (1995, pp. 228-230).

A unit on Africa, for example, can be taught as an interdisciplinary team project. A language arts teacher can focus on African literature, a social studies person can discuss the geography of the continent, a math teacher can work with distance or square miles, and a science teacher can introduce the subject of AIDS. It all comes together very naturally, and each teacher reinforces what the other teachers are doing.

There are problems for the teachers, however. Time is a great factor because it can take hours to plan such a curriculum. At least one of the teachers needs to have experience with curriculum development, and if there is a lack of administrative support, it can be difficult to put such a program together (Martin-Kniep et al., 1995, p. 248).

Another thought on an interdisciplinary presentation is that if a student can excel in one class, such as a study of African literature, he/she may be motivated to work harder in the science area as they study AIDS, or any other subject area for that matter. Individual teachers on their own can never accomplish as much as team teaching can (Heller, 1993, p. 647).

Curriculum integration (interdisciplinary team presentation) is probably the

best program for teaching in the middle school. There isn't research that disputes the team advantages for children. This approach has to help alleviate some alienation for the students just because so many adults have to become involved, and, consequently, there are more people working together for the greater good. A couple of ideas from additional authors can help to refine curriculum integration.

In 1983 Howard Gardner wrote Frames of Mind and proposed the theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner believes that mathematical and linguistic ability-the only two intelligences we test kids for- are only part of the entire picture. The other five intelligences include spatial, musical, body-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal.

In a later book, Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice, Gardner discusses students "at-risk for school failure". He and his colleagues designed a project aptly called practical intelligence for school (PIFS), and it was just for middle school children. There are three components of training for the pupils:

1. A child had to know his/her intellectual learning profile, learning styles and strategies
2. The child had to know the structure and learning of academic tasks
3. The child had to understand the school as a complex social structure

(Gardner, 1993, p.123)

Then, Gardner put these three components together with his theory of multiple intelligences (MI), and something he called "infusion curriculum", which is really the idea of curriculum integration. He then recommended that children be allowed

to choose a project. Under this model, children can study a topic, and demonstrate their understanding of their work all in conjunction with their personal knowledge of their multiple intelligences (p. 127).

“Children do not leave their multiple intelligences behind once they reach puberty. If anything, the intelligences are more intense especially bodily-kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligences,” states Thomas Armstrong (1994). This author in “Multiple Intelligences: Seven Ways to Approach Curriculum” and published by Educational Leadership recommends some guidelines to aid teachers in planning for multiple intelligences in a classroom:

1. Linguistic: how can I use the written or spoken word?
2. Mathematical: how can I bring in numbers, calculations
logic, classification, or critical thinking?
3. Spatial: how can I use visual aids, color, art, metaphor, or
visual organizers?
4. Musical: how can I bring in music or environmental sounds
or set key points in rhythm or melody?
5. Intrapersonal: how can I evoke personal feelings or memories or give
students choices?
6. Body-kinesthetic: how can I involve the whole body or hands-on
experiences?
7. Interpersonal: how can I engage students in peer or cross-age sharing,
cooperative learning, or large group simulation? (Armstrong, 1994, p.

27).

Also tying in with Gardner's idea of "choosing a project" are Joan M. Savoie and Andrew S. Hughes with their work "Problem Based Learning As Classroom Solution" and published in Educational Leadership. These authors propose, "Give students a problem that really connects them with the world and empower them to generate solutions." All of the subject matter is then organized around the problem They list six steps for their model:

1. Begin with a problem
2. Ensure that the problem connects with the real world
3. Organize the subject matter around the problem
4. Give students the major responsibility for shaping and directing their own learning
5. Use small teams as the context for most learning
6. Require students to demonstrate what they have learned through a product of performance (Savoie & Hughes, 1994, p. 54)

Some other ways to make the curriculum even better include *The Total Talent Portfolio* and standards for authentic instruction. *The Total Talent Portfolio* is documentation of each student's strengths. Related to an I.E.P., it lists interests, best areas of academic performance, learning preferences, and preferred ways of expression (Baum et al., 1994, p. 51). Knowing this information about each student should help teachers in the planning of interdisciplinary units. Teachers then have the luxury of knowing and teaching to the strengths of their students.

F.M. Newmann and G.G. Wehlage believe that students have to act like “practicing professionals”. They recommend five standards for authentic instruction:

1. Is the emphasis on higher-order thinking?
2. Is the stress upon in-depth knowledge?
3. Is the subject matter closely related to questions of the human condition?
4. Is the inquiry focused and coherent?
5. Are teachers and students committed to mutual respect, strong effort, and good performance? (Newman & Wehlage, 1993, p. 8)

Ideas like cooperative learning, the theory of multiple intelligences, organizing subject matter around a problem, or even *The Total Talent Portfolio* in conjunction with an interdisciplinary approach (curriculum integration) is THE way to teach middle school children today. The most important thing is to use an interdisciplinary approach and enhance it with some of these other teaching tools.

To fine tune these creative ideas, Joseph Sancore writes, “Treat At-risk Learners As We Treat All Students” in the Journal of Reading, that “...a heterogeneous environment is especially effective for at-risk students since it provides them with positive peer role models, enriches them with varied social contacts, and rewards them with beneficial academic experiences.” He also believes that a heterogeneous environment permits kids to think at “different levels of understanding” and that there will be greater classroom opportunities for “equal access to learning” among all children (Sancore, 1994, pp. 240-242).

The United States Department of Education has issued a summary, published in 1990, of the ways schools respond to at-risk students (see Appendix F). The article states, "In the area of tracking, efforts to reform remain rare. This is despite research evidence that tracking does not necessarily work and despite reform pressures that call for its modification." The suggestion is that homogeneous grouping be postponed as late as possible in a student's career and then, only track in basic subject areas.

The research does show that at-risk kids need to be in a heterogeneous classroom rather than tracked in possible isolation from their peers. So, what do you do when kids do fail? The following describes one school program that assists kids who need help.

In this vast area of curriculum development the research shows, too, that traditional summer school programs are limited in their success. It is a chance for an at-risk student to make up credit, but unless these programs are flexible and carefully designed to meet the needs of the students, they cannot offer their greatest potential (Cale, 1992, p. 106). Cale continues by highlighting a Warrensburg, Missouri, summer school program in the National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin called "Flexible Summer School".

In this program, core teachers contracted with students who were selected for the summer session. The staff initially chose kids who had averages within ten percentage points of a passing grade, and then, they only looked at the failing grades of the classes within the core curriculum. A conference was held and the

student, a teacher, and a parent together decided the amount of work to be done and the level of proficiency to be reached. The work was independent and was determined by reviewing exactly what the student had failed. There was no rehashing of anything that had been mastered so a child's time was not wasted.

The flexibility was one of the strengths of the program and one of the best ideas. The building was open four hours a day for six weeks with the school library used as the workplace. Four teachers representing the four core classes, were in the library to act as resources. The students had to complete the assigned tasks that they had contracted for and they had to log thirty hours of attendance over the six week period. This program gave these teenagers a second chance to stay in school and another chance to graduate with their class (Cale, 1992, pp. 107-109).

The curriculum has to be modified for at-risk students. Research is showing that listening skills of these high-risk children are usually greater than their reading skills. When presenting a lesson, a teacher can give more nonverbal clues (vocal inflections, or pauses, or changes of facial expressions). A teacher can use tape recordings, and have the children follow along with the textbook. Other things that help are advance organizers, highlighting, glossing in margins, and dividing assignments into smaller units. Study guides are critical pieces of information according to Knight and Wadsworth in their article "Accommodating the At-risk Student in the Middle School Classroom" and published by the Middle School Journal (1994, p. 26).

Assessment

There has to be some method of assessment for an extended year program and the curriculum that is developed for it. The work of the students and the effectiveness of the program has to somehow be monitored and evaluated. There is not one method of grading that will serve all purposes, and grading is always somewhat subjective.

Thomas Guskey writes in Educational Leadership his article about “Making the Grade: What Benefits Students?” “The cut-off between grade categories is always arbitrary and difficult to justify. If scores for a grade of ‘B’ range from 80 to 89, students at both ends receive the same grade, even though their scores differ by nine points. But the student with a score of 79—a one point difference—receives a ‘C’” (Guskey, 1994, p. 15). Since grading is so subjective, if a teacher happens to have a bias for a student, then more problems can result. A child with discipline problems who is on the borderline of failing probably will, if he/she has met up with a teacher who happens to have a bias. Guskey believes that low grades generally do not make a child work harder, but, rather, they usually cause him/her to withdraw from learning. He writes, “Rather than attempting to punish students with a low mark, teachers can better motivate students by regarding their work as incomplete and requiring additional effort. In addition, Guskey does not believe in using the curve for assessment. “Grading on the curve pits students against one another in a competition for the few rewards (high grades) distributed by the

teacher. Under these conditions, students readily see that helping others will threaten their own chances of success. Learning becomes a game of winners and losers” (Guskey, 1994, p. 16).

The International Reading Association (IRA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) have jointly published standards for assessment in the November 1994 issue of *The Journal of Reading*. According to these professional organizations, the goals should be:

1. To improve teaching and learning and it should be done in the best interest of the student
2. To allow for critical inquiry into curriculum and instruction
3. To be fair and equitable
4. To first consider the validity of the assessment and its consequences
5. To recognize the intellectual and social complexity of reading and writing and the important roles that school, home, and society have in a student’s development
6. To recognize that the teacher is the most important agent in student assessment
7. To involve multiple perspectives and sources of data
8. To realize that parents must be active, essential participants in the assessment
9. To realize that everyone involved in the children’s schooling must have a voice in all stages of the assessment (p. 242)

Before 1850 grading simply did not exist. Students orally demonstrated what they had learned. By the end of the nineteenth century, teachers were writing down skills that their students had mastered in order to move them along to the next level. Shortly after, high schools started using percentages and this was immediately challenged, as it still is today. In the 1930's, teachers started to grade on the "curve" and it seemed fair at the time because researchers had recently determined that I.Q. followed a curve. It was also in this time period that some schools started to use a pass-fail or mastery option. In 1958, a man by the name of Ellis Page did much research on assessment and he showed that grades can have a positive effect on student learning, but only when the grades are accompanied by positive comments from the teacher (Guskey, 1994, p. 8).

Guskey also states, "The key question is what information provides the most accurate depiction of students' learning at this time? In nearly all cases the answer is 'the most current information'. If students demonstrated that past assessment information doesn't accurately reflect their learning, new information must take its place" (Guskey, 1994, p. 18).

The newest innovation is portfolio assessment. The use of individual portfolios for children is supposed to be more equitable, to focus more clearly on student outcomes, and to provide parents and the community with tangible results of a child's achievement according to Herman and Winters in "Portfolio Research: A Slim Collection" published in Educational Leadership (1994, p. 48). However, there is almost no research to support this. The authors claim that in researching

information for portfolio assessment over a period of ten years, they could find only seven articles that report technical data or actually used scientific methods for research on the validity and reliability of portfolios (Herman & Winters, 1994, p. 49). This is a problem because portfolios sound like a great idea but without enough research, no one can be certain if they really are a powerful alternative to traditional assessments.

Conclusions

There are almost 1300 educational articles on at-risk children. By narrowing this information to include only middle school children, the literature became manageable. There is conclusive data on at-risk middle school children. First of all, at-risk children are here to stay, and our schools must be able to identify them and offer programs especially for them. There is at least one assessment tool (HARP) to identify at-risk children, and states, such as Michigan, are beginning to offer guidelines to help teachers and administrators recognize these children.

Secondly, there are things that really do help these children. An advisory or mentoring program is recommended by almost every one as a means to help teens feel less isolated and alienated (a major reason for school failure) and as a way to get important information to these children. This does not even necessarily have to be academic information, but it could be life skills or life management

information. The research shows conclusively that an interdisciplinary team approach is the best way to organize a curriculum. Once this is implemented, other useful and important ideas can also be made part of the curriculum. This includes things like cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and teaching to multiple intelligences. These aids to teaching are the icing on the cake.

Finally, the concept of grading or assessment has never reached a professional consensus. It is subjective and subject to bias. It is arbitrary and sometimes inaccurate, and, yet, it is a requirement from parents and the community. Portfolios are the newest alternative, but there is almost no research to support their reliability and validity.

Because the at-risk label is fairly new in our vocabulary, it seemed important to me to find current literature sources. I did not read anything written before 1987. As school districts and professionals start to focus on these children, the best research and ideas should be the most current.

Joy Dryfoos' book Adolescents At-Risk became my text for all the fundamental ideas I wanted to explore. "At the Crossroads: Voices from the Carnegie Institute on Adolescent Health" by H. Craig Heller offered a wealth of research from a variety of sources. Elliot Merenbloom, an authority on middle school structure, spoke in Grand Haven on June 26th and 27th, 1995, and from him I had an excellent review of the psychology of adolescents. These three sources enabled me to focus and explore the ideas that I learned were crucial to instituting an extended year program.

The remaining sources expanded on these three primary authors and speakers. For example, J. Hoover, who actually devised a rating scale for at-risk children, Howard Gardner and his theory of multiple intelligences, and J. Cale with his documentation of a very unusual summer school greatly added to my personal knowledge. Every listed source in this literature review was beneficial to me. I felt very prepared as I next began to organize an at-risk program for the summer of 1995.

CHAPTER THREE

The Project

The Department of Education in the state of Michigan and many school districts recognize the increasing numbers of school-age children who fall into a category of being at-risk for not successfully completing their education. At-risk children have the cognitive ability to complete school, but there are other problems that interfere. Consequently, many at-risk children simply drop out of school once they reach sixteen years of age. There are many tragedies here but, ultimately, the bottom line is that our American society can no longer support these undereducated citizens.

Because of a grant from the state of Michigan, the Grand Haven Area Public Schools was able to initiate an extended year program during the summer of 1995 for at-risk children. Part III of this paper is going to record the organization and the implementation of this program. It is somewhat a story of reality vs. ideology: what we could actually do as opposed to what we really wanted to do this summer as we learned more about the research on at-risk students. No doubt about it, a lot of what has transpired was strictly trial and error. Fortunately, much of it seems to be working.

Time became a critical issue. I did not even see the posting for the summer school positions until it was almost too late to respond, but I did and, happily, shortly after, I was notified that I would be hired as the head teacher. It became my responsibility to make the extended year program at the junior high school actually happen.

I moved to Grand Haven five years ago, and I have been employed in the

district for four of those five years. I knew that a summer school program had not existed in that time frame, but I figured there must have been one at some point in time. However, as it turns out, there had never been summer classes for the junior high children. I was at square one.

Because this program was funded by a special grant made available from the Legislature of the State of Michigan, the organization fell under the leadership of the director of curriculum; not the building principal. In this time frame one director resigned, and we were waiting for his replacement to be hired. We were able to do some organizational things because of the assistance of our principal, but many decisions just could not be made.

Initial Organization

The first meeting I attended with the new director was March 30, 1995, and we were all at square one (see Appendix C). The immediate hurdle was to determine how to select the students for the program. The other head teachers at this meeting were working with elementary children. I was the only person representing the junior high, and it became immediately obvious that the selection of the junior high students would have to be different from what the elementary teachers proposed.

The junior high where I am employed has a population of almost 1500 children. If the percentages held up, then almost 500 students could be categorized

at-risk. My immediate thought was that it would be impossible to select and teach five hundred adolescents with three teachers and three teaching assistants. My second thought was that we would never get any junior high school age children to attend summer school. These kids hated school anyway, so why in the world would they ever agree to more of the same and during the summer when they could be on the beach? I was not optimistic about the junior high program.

Time was ticking away. It was after spring break-almost the middle of April-when the rest of the summer staff was hired. My building principal allocated other at-risk funds, made available to Michigan school districts because of the new tax structure in this state, to this program and we were able to have a fourth teacher. There were a total, then, of seven employees. With even more thanks to my building principal, we were told that we could use the air-conditioned portable classrooms for the summer. Things were looking better. We had the staff and we had air. However, the biggest concern was still looming: we had no children.

With about eight weeks left to go in the 1994-1995 school year and knowing that the staff was starting to feel the exhaustion of a long school year, I did not want to put the burden of identifying the at-risk children on their shoulders. Yet, there was just no alternative. Because of the large population, no one person could know the status of each child.

Two decisions were made. With the consent of my principal, I decided to exclude the ninth grade and all the identified special education students from this program. The ninth graders had another resource open to them beyond what we

were trying to organize, and the special education children received support all year. We wanted to find the students who were “falling through the cracks”. So, we essentially eliminated one-third of the population, and the program became available to children just completing seventh or eighth grades.

Because of the foresight of our principal, the junior high is moving to a middle school concept. In two years, there will be two middle schools and the overcrowding will be eliminated. In the meantime, we are doing a number of things that reflect a middle school philosophy. One of these is the idea of teaming, and the seventh and eighth grades currently function in teams. Each team is composed of five teachers representing the core classes of language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science and either a physical education teacher in seventh grade or a life management teacher in eighth grade.

Selection of Students

I was allowed to address the teams at a faculty meeting. My purpose was to explain about the extended year program and to solicit their help in selecting the children. Initially, we wanted to identify forty children. There were two forms for the faculty to study (see Appendixes G and H). It was decided to use the first form (see Appendix G) because it required less effort from the teams. It was very important to me to keep this as simple as possible. I had to have the assistance from the staff, and I felt I had no right to make anything more complicated than it

had to be. This particular faculty meeting was close to the end of April, and my goal was to have the students identified by the first week in May.

Each team was given about twenty-five forms and I asked them to use one of their team meeting times to fill out what they could on the children they felt were at-risk and might benefit from a summer program. This form is primarily the criteria from the Michigan Department of Education (see Appendix A).

If they thought they had an at-risk child but had no knowledge if that child fit the criteria, I asked them to just put the child's name on the top and a brief comment on the bottom of the form. There was one additional criteria we added and that is the very last one: shows evidence of a good school/home relationship. I felt very strongly that for this first year, and to get the program off the ground, we had to have parental support. The teams knew which parents are supportive of their child's education and which are not. If there was no support, this did not exclude a child, but, rather, it let us know that we would probably have to work harder to make contact to get and keep that child in school. The teams had less than two weeks to get this information back to me, and they were so professional in meeting this deadline that everything came back early.

Next, the other three summer teachers and myself had meetings to go over the forms. We had computer run-offs of all the MEAP scores for the children and information as to the eligibility of the free or reduced-price lunch. We filled in any and all additional information on the forms that we could. We ended up ranking the children as to who appeared most needy of summer services. If we had

questions or concerns, we went right back to the teams to find the answer. We were also very careful to keep the teams informed and updated as our master list was developing. That way, too, the teams could do very careful last minute observations of the children they recommended and give us even more information. The teams added additional criteria to the sheets: if they had a child who was consistently failing this last year, or who attempted very little work, or if there were problems at home, that name went on the list, regardless of MEAP scores. There were some children who were added just because their teachers felt they could use some maintenance of newly acquired skills.

We ended up with an original list of 124 children. It was now May 9, 1995, and our next step was to inform the parents. The first thing we did was a mailing to the parents and/or guardians of all these selected children (see Appendix I). I know I felt much better when the mailing list went out. We still didn't know what was going to happen, or even if any children would show up, but, at least, we had a pretty good idea of who our at-risk children actually were. They had never been identified like this, and the staff-certainly including myself- was truly interested.

The mailing was the first bit of publicity we did for the extended year program, and I had phone calls morning, noon, and night. I did not anticipate this. The summer staff and I had decided our next step would be to divide up the mailing list and call the parents of every child. We wanted a verbal agreement from the parents if their child would attend. It also gave us a chance to explain the program and to answer any questions. Essentially what happened was that there

was such an enormous interest we had to close the enrollment to the first seventy children whose parents enrolled them over the phone. We quickly established a waiting list, but the original seventy did not change much at all. As word got out that there was going to be an extended year program, parents continued to call. It was difficult to turn anyone away. But we were not prepared at all for the interest that was generated this year. It is still a regret for me that we could not take every child who wanted to attend.

This part of the organization-the selection of the students- was a phenomenal amount of work, but it assured us of an accurate final enrollment. We even had our teaching assistants make another phone call to each of the seventy parents and/or guardians just to be certain they remained committed. So, now we had the staff, we had the air conditioning, and we finally had the children. One more letter went home from the office of the director of curriculum to all the parents of both elementary and junior high students (see Appendix J). This was a memo to remind them of the specifics of the district program. We included in this memo home an invitation to an open house for the junior high parents and children which was to be held on the night before the program started. We had an exceptional turnout-almost 50 people- and it was another opportunity for parents to meet us, to ask questions, and to voice concerns. We spent several hours with the families this particular night and it was very valuable. I believe it helped to set the casual and informal mood we wanted and to reassure the children that they would survive this program.

Curriculum

The ideal would have been an interdisciplinary unit focusing on a project, but, it became a physical impossibility. I had so many other end-of-the-year responsibilities that I could not organize any curriculum integration at the junior high for this year. Plus, the other summer staff had long used up their monetary allotment for planning time just on the selection process. It would not have been fair to ask them for additional unpaid time. As the research showed, especially from Martin-Knight et al. and from Newman and Wehlage, curriculum integration (interdisciplinary units) does take time. This objective was not met this summer.

Instead, we divided the time we had with the students into a fairly structured schedule (see Appendix K). With four teachers, we could each take a class and we decided to teach math, science, writing, and reading. Our director of curriculum wanted a focus on language arts, and that's why there's a class of reading and a separate class of writing. Also, the Michigan proficiency examinations are starting to be structured as essay tests. We decided to concentrate on a writing class figuring that this would help in all areas of the curriculum.

We decided we would each teach to the main MEAP objectives in each of the four mentioned disciplines. This is certainly a satisfactory way to structure the curriculum because these children are in danger of not passing these mandated exams, but it is still not the best way for at-risk children. Because I had worked on the new writing proficiency examination with the Michigan Department

of Education and had the most knowledge of these requirements, I taught the writing class. The other teachers taught to their field of expertise. I felt that this division of the curriculum was good. Each teacher, then, became responsible for their own presentation of their particular subject matter. We were all very careful to use the MEAP objectives in each field, as this became the focus of our curriculum.

Once the curriculum was structured in this manner, I never felt it was my responsibility or my concern to supervise the other teachers. They are professionals and extremely capable people. What they now did in their classrooms was their decision, and I can only now speak to the way I organized my time with the children.

In my class, as well as in the other classes, each child was given four pretests on the first two days of school. The particular writing pretest I used was given to me in a graduate class at Grand Valley State University by Dr. Don Pottorff. I have found this to be an excellent tool for all writers. It is diagnostic and it gave me immediate information on the strengths and weaknesses of my students. Every single child had trouble with paragraphing, and most had difficulty with run-on sentences and the use of figurative language and sensory images. This became my focus, along with the proficiency requirements, for what I was going to teach.

Paragraphing is a matter of organization so I knew I could address this in writing as well as discussing organization skills in other parts of their lives. Really,

this was perfect, and I was not at all surprised, once I thought about it, that these children had trouble with this skill. It was a very natural focus with at-risk children, and interestingly enough, many parents at our open house asked us to help their children “get organized”.

Run-ons are also a matter of organization and it blended so perfectly with paragraphing. To increase figurative language, I decided to work on similes and alliteration. One of the best teaching tips I ever received from another teacher was to tape a wrestling match on television and use this to teach similes and alliteration. In a good wrestling match, most of what you hear is something like this, “Brutus the Bull is as fast as a speeding bullet”. This is excellent for at-risk children.

I also gave each student a copy of the writing proficiency rubrics developed by the Michigan Department of Education (see Appendixes M and N). Using past writing samples, I showed them what constituted a “1”, a “2”, a “3”, and a “4”. Anonymously using their pretests which I put on overhead transparencies, I had them assess each other’s work using these rubrics. This way they had an even greater feel for the differences between each number assessment. Since it now looks like they will need a 2.5 holistic score to pass the writing proficiency, I went into depth with this part of my curriculum.

The literature review especially Putbrese’s article, “Advisory Programs at the Middle Level”, supported what I had long suspected: at-risk kids need a lot of adult support. So, I was careful to work on some affective behaviors. I was careful

to memorize names as fast as possible, and then I began each class with some sort of trivia we could discuss as a daily ice-breaker.

Once the kids were talking, I gave them a daily tip on how to either “psych-out” their present and future teachers, or a tip on how to adapt to the school environment. When the students felt comfortable with me, they started asking about specific incidents and how to handle each one. I felt this was a very important part of my instruction. We discussed everything from our “no hats in the school” rule to what to do if you feel a teacher has humiliated you in front of a class of your peers. I tried to keep in mind the three main problems these adolescents face: alienation, intense peer pressure, and exposure to risks and to work these into our discussions.

I only had a total of eight hours and fifteen minutes to work with these children. There was no time to teach anymore than what I have outlined. My advice to any teacher in an extended year program is to focus on only a few objectives and to keep it simple.

Assessment

Each child filled out an attitude survey that I was given in another graduate class by Dr. Antonio Herrera of Grand Valley State University. It is an excellent survey, and for some reason the children are very comfortable in responding to it. This survey was administered during the first two days of the summer program.

What I found to be significant are the following things. Many of the children had problems at home with either one or both of their parents. This is not unusual for adolescents but it does support the research that children do not want to be alienated from their families because our children indicated they felt badly about the problems. Secondly, a majority of these adolescents just had lots of problems with teachers. Last, there was much concern about “put-downs” and unkindness from their peers.

During the last day of class I am going to return these attitude surveys, have the students look at what they have written, and allow them to use the back of the form to change or modify their responses. I doubt if there has been enough time this summer to perfect an attitude change, but I will then collect these forms and keep them.

The new director of curriculum and instruction mailed home surveys about the summer program for the parents to fill out (see Appendix L). We have currently received twenty-one and every single parent stated that they want their children to participate again next summer. To date, this is one of our greatest measures of success.

All seven employees of this summer session have agreed to institute a mentoring program for these children during the 1995-1996 school year. We are going to divide up the list so that we are each responsible for eight to ten children. We will encourage each child to check in with us every morning, we will set aside additional time during the day when they can easily reach us, and we will make

phone calls home to stay in constant communication. My goal is to monitor them very carefully and to always be available to get them whatever information they may need. I will encourage them to become involved in extracurricular activities and provide tutoring when they need it. I want to eliminate feelings of alienation.

On the last day of class I will administer the same writing test with a different prompt for the posttest. It will be easy to see if my objectives of proper paragraphing, the elimination of run-on sentences, and the use of similes and alliteration have been met. This will be very concrete as opposed to measuring changes in affective behaviors.

I am keeping a portfolio for each student of all my objectives and the writing they did in class. This will become part of their permanent record. There will also be a form added to their permanent record indicating whether or not they have successfully completed summer school along with the objectives taught by the other teachers and the other work that was produced in the other classes.

The goal is to document that each child attended the extended year program with no more than two absences and four tardies, and to document what objectives were taught and whether or not the child met these objectives.

The last thing I am going to do is administer another survey to the students just on the extended year program (see Appendix E). I will distribute these to my building principal, other faculty members, and the director of curriculum. The true assessment of this program will come during the 1995-1996 school year when we are able to look at future grades and to further observe and work with these

children in a mentoring capacity. The final, final assessment will occur in four to five years when they are scheduled to graduate.

Summary

I did organize and teach in an extended year program for middle school at-risk children during the summer of 1995. For me, it was some of the most interesting and truly fun teaching I have ever done.

One of my goals was to develop a definition of at-risk adolescents, but Joy Dryfoos in Adolescents At-Risk really says it best, "They are young people who are at-risk of not maturing into responsible adults." After all the reading of the literature, I believe this is the most sensible and workable definition.

At the beginning of this paper, I didn't feel that the criteria for at-risk children specified by the Michigan Department of Education was satisfactory. However, I had to use this because the funding for this program was based on these descriptors. As I worked with their criteria, and as I read and studied the research, I realized that these descriptors were really quite accurate and it did assist us in identifying our at-risk children. The one that we added- shows evidence of a good home/school relationship- was beneficial. One of the characteristics of at-risk children is a parental lack of support and interest in education. Adding this information let us know not to give up on one or two contact attempts.

It was also critical that the individual seventh and eighth grade teams assisted us in identifying our at-risk children. In the time frame we had, we could have never done it without the input from the teams. Besides, they know their children best, and it was a valid assessment because there was a consensus from five people as to whether or not a child would qualify.

There are two main limitations to my ideas as I outlined them in Chapter I. First, I am disappointed that I had no time to help develop an interdisciplinary unit for the summer. That would be my focus for next year. All the research states that this is the way to teach at-risk children. I can visualize a unit on survival skills incorporating the four core classes that were taught this year. The assessment would be a two day camping trip where the students would have to keep journals, perform science experiments, and use real life mathematical problem solving skills. Camping forces group involvement and it would be a wonderful way to work on feelings of alienation and peer pressure. This will be my proposal for an at-risk program for the summer of 1996.

Secondly, there is no one to oversee the development of an I.E.P. for our at-risk students. My thoughts on this were too idealistic, but this is what we can do. Each team can be given the criteria forms that we used last spring to select the students. As information becomes available (MEAP scores, problems with attendance, or problems at home, for example), these forms can be filled out and the teachers can start to seek interventions and/or make recommendations for our next extended year program.

My research indicated to me the necessity of a mentoring program. I want to find time to stay in touch with these children. One article I read stated the need for these kids to just have an adult get them information. It doesn't necessarily mean academic information, either. I agree with this and I feel it is important. One of my future goals is to read more literature about a mentoring or an advisory program and to implement this during the next school year.

The program began with seventy at-risk students. Seven dropped out in the first two weeks mostly because of family vacations that would force the children to miss too much time. I am delighted with the final count for this year. Our original goal was to identify forty children and we were able to expand and include twenty-three additional kids.

Some interesting things have happened. During the last two weeks of the regular school year, seven or eight children either approached me themselves or left me notes requesting to come to summer school. I was shocked that these young adolescents would take this responsibility. During the actual program, the students started to bring their friends. I think we were all surprised at this. We discussed whether or not we should allow this. Finally the decision was reached to simply say nothing and see what happened. So, our enrollment is increasing on a daily basis, even though these "new" kids will not be documented.

What I am learning is that children do not want to fail. I believe every teacher should have this emblazoned in their grade books. I feel an even greater responsibility to our at-risk children to get them involved with school and to help

them mature into responsible adults.

Recommendations

For anybody thinking about the organization of an extended year program, I would make the following recommendations. First of all, for a brand new program, another month of preparation time is necessary. With another three to four weeks, I could have organized an interdisciplinary project and that would have been most beneficial. The time frame we used, five weeks, three days per week (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday) for actual instruction, and three hours a day was excellent. The teachers were not too exhausted after finishing a long school year and families were still able to get away for long weekend vacations.

The time I spent on the tips I devised to “psych-out” teachers was enormously successful. Many of these at-risk children simply do not know how to function in a school environment or how to correctly respond to stressful situations. It was the most successful and fun when the kids felt comfortable enough with me to ask about prior experiences and situations. Something along this line should be a part of the curriculum.

Our program offered breakfast and lunch to the children. We turned this time into a major social event each day. We sat with the kids and made a real effort to continue to encourage them. Even if food is not served, there should at least be a break when all the kids can be together. This is very important to

adolescents.

Finally, keep the program short and simple. At-risk children make a major commitment to attend a summer program, and they have enough chaos in their lives without being bogged down by a complicated curriculum. My final, final words of advice are: absolutely no homework, be certain to hire teachers who really enjoy these children, and always remember that this is not a regular school year session. Everyone should be free to test their wings: the children and the teachers. Try something different and don't be afraid to do it. You must remember that these children were not successful in a regular classroom so you have nothing to lose by restructuring your methods. This is why next year I am going to organize the program around a camping experience. Good luck and be confident in your own professional judgment.

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APPENDIXES

Criteria for Section 31a Programs for At-Risk Pupils

Approved by State Board of Education
July 13, 1994

I. Legislative Criteria

General Criteria

In accordance with Section 31a, the funds shall be used only to provide instructional programs and direct noninstructional services for at-risk pupils, except that a district or academy that operates a school breakfast program shall use up to \$10 per pupil counted for Section 31a allocation purposes to operate that program. Section 31a funds may not be used for administrative costs or to supplant funds already being used for at-risk pupils, with the following exceptions:

1. Section 31a funds may be used to supplant funds received in 1993-94 under former Section 27 or former Section 31 used for at-risk pupils; and
2. A percentage of Section 31a funds, determined by dividing the number of pupils in the district who meet the income eligibility criteria for free lunch by the district's membership, may be used to replace sources of revenue dedicated to at-risk pupils in 1993-94.

In schools above the district poverty average, Section 31a funds may be used to reduce class size in grades K-6. In certain legislatively-designated districts, the funds must be used to reduce class size in grades K-3.

Recipients Eligible for Funds

Eligible recipients for Section 31a funding are districts with a 1994-95 combined state and local revenue per membership pupil of less than \$6,500 and public school academies. The allocation formula provides 11.5 percent of a district's per membership foundation allowance or academy's per membership pupil allocation for each pupil in the district or academy who meets the income eligibility criteria for free lunch. Funds are allocated based on the October 31, 1994, free lunch count, as adjusted by December 31, 1994. Until the October 31, 1994, counts are available, estimated allocations are made based on the final adjusted counts for October 31, 1993.

Eligible Pupils

Pupil eligibility for Section 31a programs shall be determined as follows:

1. Pupils who have not received the results of any Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) reading, mathematics or science test shall

be eligible if the district has evidence that they meet at least two of the following criteria:

- a. is a victim of child abuse or neglect;
- b. is below grade level in English language and communication skills;
- c. is a pregnant teenager or teenage parent;
- d. is eligible for a federal free or reduced-price lunch subsidy;
- e. has atypical behavior or attendance patterns;
- f. has a family history of school failure, incarceration, or substance abuse.

2.a) Pupils who have received the results of at least one MEAP reading, mathematics or science test shall be eligible if they received less than category 2 on their most recent MEAP reading test, less than 50% of the objectives on their most recent MEAP mathematics test, or less than 50% of the objectives on their most recent MEAP science test.

Instructional Programs

Except for districts having the characteristics described in Section 31a(9), instructional programs funded by Section 31a shall meet the following criteria:

1. In schools not exceeding the district's poverty average based on free lunch count and in academies, Section 31a programs shall provide instruction to eligible pupils. This instruction may be conducted before or after regular school hours or by adding extra days to the school year, and may use a tutorial method, with paraprofessionals working under the supervision of a certificated teacher. If a tutorial method is used, the ratio of pupils to paraprofessionals shall be between 10:1 and 15:1. Other program designs may also be used; however, districts and academies must avoid removing pupils from core curriculum or other regular classroom courses, in accordance with Sec. 1149 of Public Act 335.
2. In schools exceeding the district's poverty average based on free lunch count, Section 31a funds may be used to reduce the ratio of pupils to teachers in grades K-6, or any combination of those grades, so that classroom teachers can assure at-risk pupils a realistic opportunity to achieve the district's core curriculum outcomes in accordance with Section 1278(6) of Public Act 335.

In accordance with Section 31a(9) of the legislation, a district located in a county with a population of more than 350,000 and less than 480,000 and having more than 10,000 pupils in membership must use Section 31a funds as a pilot project for a period of three fiscal years to reduce class size in grades K-3 to an average of not

more than 17 pupils per class, with not more than 19 pupils in any particular class, in each school in which pupils who meet the income eligibility criteria for free lunch constitute at least:

- a. 59% of the total number of pupils in 1994-95;
- b. 50% of the total number of pupils in 1995-96; and
- c. 25% of the total number of pupils in 1996-97.

Direct Noninstructional Services

Section 31a funds may also be used to provide direct noninstructional services to eligible pupils. Allowable services include, but are not limited to, medical or counseling services.

Breakfast Program

Districts and academies that operate a school breakfast program must use an amount of up to \$10.00 per free lunch pupil counted for Section 31a allocation purposes as needed to operate the breakfast program.

Allowable Costs

Section 31a funds may be used to pay the following types of costs, as submitted in the district's or academy's Section 31a application and approved by the Department:

1. Salaries and benefits for instructional staff;
2. Salaries and benefits for staff providing direct noninstructional services;
3. Purchased services, supplies and materials for instructional and direct noninstructional services;
4. Operation, maintenance, and pupil transportation costs for programs provided outside of the regular school day or year;
5. Costs for school breakfast programs; and
6. Capital outlay necessary for the provision of instructional and direct noninstructional services.

Section 31a funds may not be used to pay administrative costs, including indirect costs.

Expenditure Reporting

Districts and academies receiving Section 31a funds must submit an annual expenditure report to the Department to document that the funds have been spent only for purposes allowed under Section 31a and in compliance with the program requirements. The expenditure report must specify the amount of Section 31a funds received and expended, the amount of funds expended in 1993-94 for at-risk pupils, the amount of Section 31a funds expended on migrant pupils, and the percentage of Section 31a funds expended on migrant pupils.

Relationship to Chapter 1 Supplement/Not Supplant and Comparability Requirements

In accordance with Section 1018(b) and (c) of Chapter 1 of the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988 (P.L. 100-297), districts must comply with federal supplement/not supplant and comparability requirements in allocating Section 31a funds to Chapter 1 and non-Chapter 1 schools. Services funded with Section 31a funds must be distributed to schools based on their numbers of Section 31a eligible pupils, without regard to availability of Chapter 1 funded services in some schools and not in other schools.

II. State Board of Education Criteria

Eligible Pupils

Pupils who received less than category 2 on their most recent MEAP reading test, less than 50% of the objectives on their most recent MEAP mathematics test, or less than 50% of the objectives on their most recent MEAP science test shall be entitled to special assistance through Section 31a or other sources, in accordance with Sections 1149, 1278(6) and (9), and 1279(4) of Public Act 335 of 1993, and must be served unless the district ~~or academy~~ has more current achievement data indicating that the pupil is no longer at risk.

Program Design

Section 1149 of Public Act 335 states that, with regard to programs of special assistance, "a school district shall avoid removing a pupil described in this section from his or her core curriculum or other regular classroom courses in order to provide the programs." In designing their Section 31a programs, schools districts are not prohibited from providing special assistance outside of the regular classroom during the school day. However, districts are required to examine all possible options for providing special assistance and are encouraged to utilize other options, such as assistance in the regular classroom, extended school day and extended school year programs. If a district determines that the best option is to provide special assistance outside of the regular classroom during the school day, it must ensure that pupils are not removed from core curriculum or other essential instruction.

A program description will be included as part of each district's Section 31a application. The program description will indicate the pupil selection criteria, the instructional and direct noninstructional services to be provided, and the district's plan to evaluate the impact of the services on pupil achievement.

**EXTENDED YEAR PROGRAM
Section 31a
Summer 1995**

Program Dates:

(All dates occur on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday):

June 20, 21, 22

June 27, 28, 29

July 11, 12, 13

July 18, 19, 20

July 25, 26, 27

Program Times:

Daily from 8:45 - 12:00 for students

Daily from 8:30 - 12:30 for staff

Program Sites:

Robinson School

Central School

Ferry School

Lake Hills School

Grand Haven Junior High School

Program Staffing:

The concept for the staffing of the program is to choose "Teacher Leaders" from the list of teacher applicants. The teacher leaders will choose the other teachers and assistants to complete the remainder of their staff. The staff at each site will include the lead teacher plus two more teachers. Each site will have 3 teacher assistants as well. The leaders thus far:

Kristin Long	Robinson School
Kelly Smart	Ferry School
Molly Garbison	Central School
Jan Timmer	Lake Hills
Karen Flannigan	Junior High

The initial meeting for the Teacher Leaders is scheduled for Thursday, March 30 at 4:00 p.m./ ESC/ Instructional Services Office.

In addition to choosing staff, teacher leader responsibilities include planning program.

Program Transportation:

Transportation for students is to be planned.

Rick Kent will work with George Piers to set bussing when the enrollment is determined. This will be a specialized transportation system in which the students will be delivered door - to - school.

Food Service Component:

Original plans cited a plan that food service would provide breakfast and lunch for students.

Barb Goff to be contacted to provide a nutritious breakfast and snack daily for program participants.

Program Content:

As the monies for this program are from a, the content areas to be covered are Language Arts, Math, Science. Considering the reading scores in the district, the plan will focus around the area of language arts.

Program Planning:

The team of teacher leaders should be given time for planning prior to the beginning of the program. Planning hours will be that the lead teachers are given 10 hours of planning time at the rate of \$100 per hour. Additionally, the lead teachers and other teachers will be given 10 hours of planning prior to program implementation.

Student Criteria:

- Less than category 2 on MEAP reading test: grades 4,7,10
- Less than 50% of objectives on MEAP math: grades 4,7,10
- Less than 50% of objectives on MEAP science: grades 5,8,11

Two or more of the following criteria:

- victim of child abuse or neglect
- pregnant teenager or teenage parent
- atypical behavior or attendance patterns
- eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
- below grade level in English language and communication skills
- family history of school failure, incarceration, or substance abuse

SECTION 31a PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK PUPILS

Eligible Recipients

- Local school districts with a 1994-95 combined state and local revenue per membership pupil of less than \$6,500
- Public school academies

Allocation Formula

- October 31, 1994 final adjusted free lunch count x 11.5% of foundation allowance; estimated payments based on October 31, 1993 final adjusted free lunch count until 1994 data are available

Eligible Pupils

- Pupils whose score on their most recent MEAP reading, mathematics or science test was:
 - less than category 2 in reading
 - less than 50% of the objectives in mathematics or science
- Pupils who meet at least 2 of the following criteria:
 - victim of child abuse or neglect
 - below grade level in English language and communications skills
 - pregnant teenager or teenage parent
 - eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
 - atypical behavior or attendance patterns
 - family history of school failure, incarceration or substance abuse

NOTE: Pupils who meet the eligibility criteria based on MEAP scores have been defined by the State Board of Education as being entitled to special assistance in accordance with Section 1149 of P.A. 335. These pupils **MUST BE SERVED** through Section 31a or other sources unless more current achievement data indicate that the pupil is no longer at risk.

Program Services

- Instructional programs and direct noninstructional services, such as medical or counseling services; may be before or after school, add extra days to school year, use tutorial method with paraprofessionals under supervision of certificated teacher (ratio of pupils to paraprofessionals between 10:1 and 15:1)
- Reduction of class size in grades K-6, or any combination of those grades, in schools in which the percentage of pupils eligible for free lunch exceeds the district average

NOTE: If Section 31a funds are used to reduce class size, the program description must include an explanation of how the instructional program will be designed to assure a realistic opportunity for eligible pupils to achieve the district's core curriculum outcomes in accordance with Section 1278(6) of P.A. 335.

**Supplement/
Not Supplant**

- Section 31a funds may be used to supplant:
 - Section 27 and 31 funds used in 1993-94 for at-risk pupils
 - A percentage of other funds used in 1993-94 for at-risk pupils equal to the district's percentage of pupils eligible for free lunch
- The remainder of a district's Section 31 allocation must be used for new programs or services.

**Breakfast
Program**

- Districts operating a school breakfast program must use an amount of Section 31a funds, not to exceed \$10 per pupil eligible for free lunch, necessary to operate the breakfast program.

**Allowable
Costs**

- Costs that may be paid with Section 31a funds are limited to the following:
 1. Salaries and benefits for instructional staff;
 2. Salaries and benefits to staff providing direct noninstructional services;
 3. Purchased services, supplies and materials for instructional and direct noninstructional services;
 4. Operation, maintenance, and pupil transportation costs for programs provided outside of the regular school day or year;
 5. Costs for school breakfast programs; and
 6. Capital outlay necessary for the provision of instructional and direct noninstructional services, such as computers and other instructional equipment.
- Proposed costs must be submitted as part of the Section 31a application and approved by the Department of Education.

APPENDIX D

ATTITUDE SURVEY (one example)

Please answer the following:

1. I feel pressure when...
2. One thing that happened to me during the last school year...
3. My best friend...
4. My favorite classroom...
5. My favorite subject...
6. I don't understand the school rule about...
7. The hardest thing for me at home...
8. This summer I want to learn...
9. I feel hurt when...
10. The most important thing to me...

Appendix E

1995 SUMMER SURVEY

Please answer each statement by circling the number that best explains your feelings. Please feel free to add other comments on the back of this sheet.

1). The material that we taught is important to what you need to know.

1. Agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Disagree

2). The classes were interesting.

1. Agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Disagree

3). The teachers and the teaching assistants are fair.

1. Agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Disagree

4). I feel I can go to at least one of the summer school teachers or teaching assistants if I have a problem during the next school year.

1. Agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Disagree

5). I felt comfortable in the summer school program.

1. Agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Disagree

6). I feel I can be successful in school this next year.

1. Agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Disagree

7). I feel peer pressure was a problem in summer school.

1. Agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Disagree

8). The summer school rules were fair.

1. Agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Disagree

APPENDIX F

The following is provided by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Please feel welcome to distribute.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT
INFORMATION SERVICES

August 1990

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A LOOK AT HOW SCHOOLS RESPOND TO AT-RISK STUDENTS

It takes more than good teaching to improve the achievement of at-risk students. It takes the willingness of policymakers and school leaders to change the way their schools do business--to restructure them, if necessary--to ensure that they really will help at-risk students. Many school districts, for example, continue to support retention policies, even though research shows that holding students back does not necessarily help them become better learners.

That is one of the points made by James M. McPartland and Robert E. Slavin of Johns Hopkins University in a commissioned paper titled **INCREASING ACHIEVEMENT OF AT-RISK STUDENTS AT EACH GRADE LEVEL**. Commissioned by the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), the paper examines the ways elementary, middle, and high schools respond to at-risk students.

HOW DO SCHOOLS RESPOND TO LOW ACHIEVERS?

The authors found that schools at all levels generally deal with low achievers in three ways: retention, tracking, and special education. Unfortunately, each of these responses may actually inhibit, rather than improve, achievement.

According to McPartland and Slavin, as many as 60 percent of low-achieving students in some urban schools have been retained at least once by grade 10. Evidence indicates, however, that being held back greatly increases the probability that a student will drop out of school.

As for tracking--an almost-universal practice in American schools--research suggests that it produces unequal educational opportunities by distributing resources unevenly among students.

Special education programs usually do offer greater resources to at-risk students. At the same time, increasing at-risk student enrollment in special education can reduce resources available to those who remain in regular classes. There are two reasons for this. The first is the high cost of individual assessment. The second is that increasing the amount of local funds for special education programs may reduce the amount available for other education purposes.

EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS DO EXIST

Educators can identify probable dropouts as early as third grade by looking at retention and reading achievement. It is imperative, then, that schools help these children become successful students from the beginning. Effective elementary school programs for at-risk children generally focus on prevention, classroom change, and remediation.

Prevention programs usually begin in preschool, kindergarten, or first grade. However, they should be conducted at all three levels to be successful. For example, while preschool offers at-risk students a good academic start, it alone will not eliminate their risk of failure. The same is true of kindergarten programs. Preschool and kindergarten programs are meant to start students off with good language skills and promote school readiness.

First-grade prevention programs focus on reading or math skills. Several effective instruction programs are built on the idea that success in first grade--particularly in reading--is essential for later school success. These programs apply intensive resources to make certain every child succeeds in beginning reading.

The best way to prevent children from needing remedial help is to change the classroom to provide the best instruction from the start. Effective classroom programs include continuous progress models and cooperative learning.

With continuous-progress models, students proceed at their own pace through a sequence of well-defined instructional objectives. They are taught in small groups of children who have similar skill levels, but who often come from different grades or homerooms. With cooperative learning, students work in small teams to master material originally presented by the teacher. Student achievement increases when the teams are rewarded on the basis of individual learning.

Remedial programs, coupled with regular classroom instruction, are used most often with students who fall behind in basic skills. Those that work include computer-assisted instruction and tutoring. Research on computer-assisted instruction is varied but the most consistently effective models are 10-minute drill-and-practice programs that supplement regular class time. Tutoring is most effective when older students or volunteers are used.

HELPING MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

A review of programs to help at-risk students in middle and high schools found them to be disparate and mixed. It found programs proposed but not implemented, as well as programs implemented but incompletely evaluated. Existing programs fall into three categories: remedial reading; dropout prevention; and tracking and curriculum.

Because older students often cannot read above the third- or fourth-grade level, many remedial reading programs use children's stories from elementary grade basals, along with the same drill and practice exercises that didn't work in earlier grades. Those who teach reading to at-risk

students in middle and high schools need information about effective teaching practices along with better quality content that will spark the interest of older students.

Dropout prevention programs exist in almost all large school districts in one form or another, but many have not been evaluated. A review of the programs found that most try to address four needs: student success in school; positive student/adult relationships; relevance of school; and help with outside interferences.

In the area of tracking, efforts to reform remain rare. This is despite research evidence that tracking does not necessarily work and despite reform pressures that call for its modification.

The programs being tried illustrate that it is possible to address diverse needs in innovative and effective alternative ways. Alternatives include postponing homogeneous grouping until as late in the grade span as possible; limiting tracking in the later grades to basic academic subjects where differences in student preparation are clear detriments to whole-class instruction; improving placement criteria and resource allocations whenever tracking is employed; and experimenting with ways to offer tracked students more incentives to take challenging courses.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR POLICYMAKERS?

To bring about change that will enable at-risk children to succeed in school, leaders must be willing to organize schools differently. They must ensure that at-risk students receive the best help possible. This may mean changing certain retention practices or replacing some less effective remediation programs. In summary, the authors' findings make the following points:

1. If it is true that every child can learn to read the first time he or she is taught, then schools must provide ample reading opportunities. This may mean shifting resources toward preschool or kindergarten programs that help prevent future reading problems and toward intervention programs such as intensive first-grade tutoring.
2. Schools should experiment with alternative designs when existing compensatory programs do not improve achievement of at-risk youth. This is especially true in the areas of tracking, remedial reading and math programs for older students.
3. Education agencies at all levels should encourage and support rigorous evaluation of effective alternative programs to help at-risk children. The continued lack of evaluation will result in the continued absence of programs to help low-achieving students.
4. State and local education agencies must be serious about restructuring schools that serve larger numbers of at-risk children. They must think beyond pilot projects, beyond single programs, and build instead a comprehensive plan to ensure that students succeed at each step of their schooling.

To obtain a copy of the report **INCREASING ACHIEVEMENT OF AT-RISK STUDENTS AT EACH GRADE LEVEL**, write to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402-9325. Include a check or money order made payable to the Superintendent of Documents for \$2.00. Ask for stock number 065-000-00416-0.

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This Executive Summary is presented to inform the debate on this issue and does not necessarily represent the position of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.
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NAME: _____ SUMMER SCHOOL CRITERIA TEAM: _____ 81.

	YES	NO
Less than category 2 on MEAP Reading test-grades 4-7-10		
Less than 50% of objectives on MEAP Math-grades 4-7-10		
Less than 50% of objectives on MEAP Science-grades 4-7-10		
Victim of child abuse or neglect		
Atypical behavior of attendance patterns		
Eligible for free or reduced price lunch		
Below level in English Language and Communication skills		
Family history of school failure, incarceration, or substance abuse		
Shows evidence of a good School/Home relationship		

Comments:

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAM
STUDENT INFORMATION

82.

APPENDIX H

STUDENT NAME: _____ SCHOOL: _____

GRADE (94-95): _____ TEACHER: _____

KINDERGARTEN (CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT - SPRING 1995 SCORE): _____

READING LEVEL: _____

What criteria was used to determine this? _____

COMPREHENSION SKILLS AND STRATEGIES: _____

WORD ATTACK SKILLS AND STRATEGIES: _____

MEAP SCORES - STORY: _____ INFORMATION: _____

OVERALL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN READING: _____

WHAT AREA WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THIS STUDENT RECEIVE ADDITIONAL HELP?

- BEHAVIOR: ☐ This student requires a lot of my time.
☐ This student requires a moderate amount of my time.
☐ This student requires very little of my time.

Additional Comments: _____

ADDITIONAL GENERAL COMMENTS: _____



May 9, 1995

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are writing to inform you that _____ has been recommended by his/her team teachers for participation in the **Grand Haven Junior High Summer School Program.**

This is the first summer in many years that Grand Haven has been able to offer an extended year program, and though we are excited, there are still many tasks ahead of us before all the details are finalized. However, we wanted to contact you as soon as possible so that you might consider our program while making summer plans with your child.

The summer school session will begin on **June 20 and run through July 27.** Students will attend classes at the **Junior High** on **Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays** from **8:45 a.m. to noon.** Areas of study will be Language Arts, math, and science. Transportation will be provided, as will breakfast each morning. There will be no classes held the week of July 4th.

A member of the summer school staff will be contacting you to inquire about your interest in your child's participation with our program this summer and to answer any other items of information you might like to know. If you have **questions** before that time please **contact Karen Flanigan** at the junior high. That number is **847-4770.**

You'll be hearing from us!

Sincerely,

GHJH Summer School Staff

Karen Flanigan

Extended Year Program
June 1995

84.

APPENDIX J

Dear Parent(s) of a Summer School Student,

It won't be long until our summer program begins! We are anxiously looking forward to meeting and working with your student. This letter is intended to review details that have already been written to you and to give you some transportation information as well.

Transportation:

If we have not spoken to you, we assume that your child is to be picked up and delivered at his or her home address. If this is different, you need to let us know *immediately*. As bussing is specialized in many of the cases, please call the bus garage at 847-4540 if your child is ill so that the bus will not stop at your home. Your child should be at the bus pick-up point at 8:00 a.m. on the first day as the bus routes have not definitely been determined. The pick-up time will change as the bus run develops and falls into place during the first week. The bus pick-up point is as follows:

Attendance:

As we have explained, this is a very special program that is expensive to run. Therefore, we want your student to take full advantage of the opportunities that await him or her. We have a good teacher / student ratio for our program; no one will be able to take advantage of the spot which is reserved for your child *except* your child! Please make every effort to have your child *attend every day of the program* as we have denied students admittance into the program who have told us they will not be able to attend the entire program because of a variety of reasons.

Times and Dates:

Just as a reminder -- your child will be attending the program on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of each program week from 8:45 - 12:00. Program dates are as follows:

June 20, 21, 22
June 27, 28, 29
July 11, 12, 13
July 18, 19, 20
July 25, 26, 27

Breakfast / Snack:

Each student in the program will receive breakfast each program morning. Additionally, each child will receive a snack during the course of the morning.

Once again, we look forward to providing your student with an experience which is meaningful. We are glad that you are joining us in this partnership!

Sincerely,

The Extended Year Staff

m21director\pat.kot

APPENDIX K

SCHEDULE

8:45 to 9:05	BREAKFAST
9:10 to 9:45	1ST HOUR
9:50 to 10:25	2ND HOUR
10:30 to 11:05	3RD HOUR
11:10 to 11:45	4TH HOUR
11:45 to 12:00	LUNCH BREAK

Evaluation for Extended Year Program
Grand Haven Area Public Schools
Summer 1995
Parent Survey

Please indicate your thoughts about the following issues concerning our first year of a summer school program. *Your* input is crucial! If we have a program next summer, we want to make certain to change what needs to be changed, and keep doing the things that work! Please comment on the following....

In which building was your child's program located? _____

Would your child have participated in the program if there had been no transportation?

Should there be any changes regarding food? _____

What is your opinion regarding the time schedule? Did you like having a week off of school before beginning the program, did you like having the week of the 4th of July off, did you like having the sessions scheduled on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday?

What did your child like best about the program? _____

Were there things you would like to see changed about the program? _____

If offered again, would you want your child to participate? Why, or why not?

Please return this in the enclosed postage paid envelope as soon as possible so that we can share the results of these parent surveys with the summer staff.

We care about YOUR opinion!

WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC GRADES 8-12		T E A C H E R	S T U D E N T	
IDEAS AND CONTENT				
4	The paper is engaging, original, clear, and focused. Ideas and content are richly developed with details and examples.			
3	The paper is reasonably clear, focused, and well-supported. Ideas and content are adequately developed through details and examples.			
2	The paper has some focus and support. Ideas and content may be developed with limited details and examples.			
1	The paper has little focus and development. Ideas and content are supported by few, if any details and examples.			
ORGANIZATION				
4	Organization and form enhance the central ideas of theme. Ideas are presented coherently to move the reader through the text.			
3	Organization and form are appropriate, and ideas are generally presented coherently.			
2	The writing may be somewhat disorganized, or too obviously structured.			
1	There is little discernable shape or direction.			
STYLE				
4	The voice of the writer is compelling and conveys the writer's meaning through effective sentence structure and precise word choices.			
3	The voice of the writer contributes to the writer's meaning through appropriate and varied sentence structure and word choices.			
2	The voice of the writer is generally absent. Basic structure and limited vocabulary convey a simple message.			
1	The writer's tone is flat. Awkward sentence structure and inadequate vocabulary interfere with understanding.			
CONVENTIONS OF WRITING				
4	Skillful use of writing conventions contributes to the polished effect of the writing.			
3	Surface features don't interfere with understanding or distract from meaning.			
2	Surface features may reduce understanding and interfere with meaning.			
1	Limited control of surface features make the paper difficult to read.			

APPENDIX N

Holistic Scorepoint Descriptions Grade 8

(These are designed to be used in conjunction with illustrative base papers and other range-finder papers and are intended to describe characteristics of most papers at a particular scorepoint. The aim is to determine best fit; a paper at any given scorepoint may not include all characteristics.)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 4 | Mature | Writing is clear, focused, and interesting. The organization helps move the reader through the text in an orderly manner. The voice of the writer comes through in the rich and precise word choice and varied sentence structure. Errors in standard writing conventions do not interfere with understanding. |
| 3 | Capable | Writing is clear and focused but may not be interesting. Organization is apparent but may be too-obviously structured or have extraneous detail. While some of the writer's voice may come through, the word choice is ordinary, and sentence structure may be mechanical. There may be distracting surface feature errors, but they don't interfere with understanding. |
| 2 | Developing | Writing may include basic detail without much development. There may be an attempt at organization although ideas may lack a sense of wholeness. Vocabulary may be limited or inappropriate to the task; sentence structure may be simple. Surface feature errors may make understanding difficult. |
| 1 | Emerging | Writing may lack a central idea or purpose. Organization may be arbitrary. Vocabulary is limited; sentences may be choppy, incomplete, or rambling. Numerous surface feature errors may severely interfere with understanding. |
| | | |
| 6 | Not ratable because completely off task | |
| 7 | Not ratable because completely illegible | |
| 8 | Not ratable because written in a language other than English | |
| 9 | Not ratable because completely blank | |

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

ED 695 DATA FORM

NAME: Karen Patrice Flanigan

MAJOR: (Choose only 1)

☐ Ed Tech
☐ Elem Ed
☐ Elem LD

☐ Ed Leadership
☐ G/T Ed
☐ Sec LD
☒ Read/Lang Arts

☐ Sec/Adult
☐ Early Child
☐ SpEd PPI

TITLE: AN EXTENDED YEAR PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN

PAPER TYPE: (Choose only 1)

SEM/YR COMPLETED: Summer 1995

☐ Project
☒ Thesis

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL

Using the ERIC thesaurus, choose as many descriptors (5 - 7 minimum) to describe the contents of your paper.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. At-risk | 6. Assessment |
| 2. High-risk | 7. Dryfoos, J. |
| 3. Middle school | 8. Remedial programs |
| 4. Interdisciplinary curriculum | 9. |
| 5. High school dropout | 10. |

ABSTRACT: Two to three sentences that describe the contents of your paper.

This work discusses the organization and implementation of an
extended year program for at-risk middle school children. The actual
research focuses on characteristics of at-risk children and interventions
that are proving to be beneficial for keeping these students in school.

** Note: This page must be included as the last page in your master's paper.

rev 5/94