AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Judith A. Yann for the degree of Educational Doctorate in Education presented on November 17, 1992.

Title: The Effect of Selected Educational Strategies

on the Success of Secondary At-Risk Students

Abstract Approved. _*Redacted for Privacy*_
David Phelps

The purpose of this study was to determine if certain identified educational strategies would have an effect on the success of at-risk students at the secondary level. Specifically, would school involvement and a mentor program have an effect on students' attendance, grade point average, and self-esteem.

An examination of related literature indicated no one factor or specific combination of factors clearly determined which student would be at-risk. The literature further indicated that most researchers agree on a general list of educational factors that can effect student success. The study group of ninth grade at-risk students was determined by the following criteria:

1) a grade point average of 2.0 or lower,

2) 15 days or more absences during their eighth grade year,

3) a California Aptitude Test score between 30 and 50 percentile in Math, and

4) a California Aptitude Test score between
   30 and 50 percentile in Reading.

This study's results determined that certain educational strategies did effect at-risk students' success. Analysis of the individual student results, showed improvement, in at least, one of the identified areas. In the area of attendance, four of the subjects showed marked improvement. Four subjects showed progress in grade point averages; six of the subjects showed a positive change towards school and concerning the subjects' attitudes towards home; five students made a positive transformation.

However, inspite of some individual improvement, there was no statistical improvement in the group in toto.

THE EFFECT OF SELECTED EDUCATIONAL

STRATEGIES ON THE SUCCESS OF

SECONDARY AT-RISK STUDENTS

by

Judith A. Yann

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APPROVAL:

Redacted for Privacy
_____
Professor Emeritus in Public Health in charge of major

Redacted for Privacy
_____
Director of the School of Education

Redacted for Privacy
_____
Dean of Graduate School

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Typed by <u>Judith Yann and Judy Sanders</u> for <u>Judith A. Yann</u>

TO MY MOTHER

WHOSE COURAGE

I'LL NEVER FORGET

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"At risk" is a term used in education for those students who are in danger of not completing their high school education with an adequate level of skills (Slavin, 1989). These students are not necessarily failing because of their level of intelligence, which may fall within the normal limits, but because of a variety of influences.

Research shows the family attitude toward school (dropping out has been a norm with parents and/or siblings), poverty, drugs, pregnancy, and low self-esteem (Balch, 1989) are all related to potentially producing an at-risk youngster, and schools and teachers become frustrated because these influences contributing to "at-risk" students are beyond educations' control.

Different researchers have identified dissimilar influences on at-risk students; therefore, it is difficult to identify at-risk students as a group. However, there are specific indicators that appear with regularity: 1) High absenteeism, 2) Low basic skills (reading, math, and comprehension), 3) Low self-esteem, and 4) The family (Kruger, 1990; Slavin, Karweit, and Madden, 1989).

ABSENTEEISM

When a student's absentee rate is higher than the norm, whether it be caused by illness, dislike of school, parental influences or other reasons, it can put a student behind the other classmates. According to Oregon's Department of Education, in its Conduct Standards Category published in July of 1992, non-attendance is the number one reason why students leave school. Though pull-out programs and grade retention have had short-term effects (Slavin, Karweit, and Madden, 1989), they do not alter nor reduce the long-term attendance rate. As students move into the middle grades and junior high, their school avoidance increases as their improvement and success rates decrease. A study by the Eugene, Oregon public schools, suggests that the absenteeism rate in the ninth grade is a strong predictor of dropping out (DePauw, 1987).

The majority of at-risk students who do drop out will do so between the second semester of the ninth grade and the end of the tenth grade year (Barber and McClellan, 1987). By this time, they are usually a grade or two behind their peers, lack credits, and have high absentee rates. Secondary schools are not the cause of dropouts; rather the dropout rate increases because the parental control tends to weaken during these grade levels. (Texas Council on Vocational-Education, 1988).

Lack of or Low Basic Skills

When students are one or two reading and/or math levels behind their classmates, the motivation to succeed lessens. Children who fail to learn to read by the end of the first grade will also fail in most others areas of the curriculum (Boehnlein, 1987). Those who cannot read at a functional level by the middle or upper grades are prime at-risk candidates (Hamby, 1989).

Low Self-Esteem

As students fail, their belief in themselves declines, putting them in jeopardy. A student's self-concept is a powerful predictor of school achievement (Mink and Kaplan, 1970). Many young people do not receive enough positive reinforcement from home or school and have a deep sense of lack of self-worth (Conrath, 1988).

Family

The Texas Council on Vocational Education (Conrath, 1988) found the majority of their at-risk students came from poor, low socioeconomic families and often from broken homes. In these homes, parents often possessed similar characteristics of low-skills, low self-confidence, high job absenteeism, or unemployment. The lack of family cohesion and the low socioeconomic status increase the at-risk level dramatically (DePauw, 1987).

In addition, there are other indicators associated with being at risk. These include peer influences, low level of

identification with schools, distrust of adults, limited thought of the future, and the inability to see the relationship between effort and achievement (Conrath, 1988).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore specific educational strategies including mentoring and study skills with secondary at-risk students to determine any changes in school success as indicated by absenteeism, grade point average, Coopersmith Inventory results, and involvement in school activities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study focused on whether, (1) school involvement (sports, drama, rally, clubs and student government) and (2) a mentor program, would have an effect on the ninth grade students attendance, grade point average, and self-esteem.

JUSTIFICATION

Since absenteeism, low self-esteem, lack of basic skills, and low socioeconomic status have been shown to be contributing factors to decreasing the level of students success (Wehlage, 1987), there is a need to discover strategies that will reverse this trend.

The Oregon Department of Education recently published the State High School Summary Report on Dropout Rates for 1990-91 (Oregon Department of Education, July 1992). This report showed Molalla Union High School with a 11.6% dropout rate, twice that of Clackamas County, in which Molalla is located (5.14%) and 5.2% higher than the state average. In the 1989-90 report, Molalla High School had a 10.2% dropout rate, 36% higher than the statewide average of 6.6% (Oregon Department of Education, July, 1992).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The number of participants was limited to those at-risk students included in the projected size of the class of 1995 in Molalla. At the time, it was estimated to be between 230 and 270.

2. The sample was taken from those students who were eighth graders in the Molalla High School District during the 1990-91 school year.

3. Molalla High School is located in Molalla, Oregon. Molalla is a small town at the north end of the Willamette Valley, approximately 30 miles south of Portland. It is a rural town of about 3,000 people. The economic base is primarily timber-related.

4. The ninth graders were housed in one facility, eliminating any classroom influence from older students during school hours.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

<u>Mentor</u>

For the purpose of the present study, mentor is defined as any caring person who develops an on-going one-on-one relationship with someone in need. Their role is to encourage, listen, give advice, advocate, act as a role model, and share information and experiences.

<u>Study Skills</u>

Methods that can make learning easier, improve work ethics, and introduce different means to obtain and retain information. The study skills practiced were test-taking, time-management and organization, listening skills, learning styles and decision-making procedures.

<u>Self-Concept</u>

Is defined as a student's attitude towards parents and school as measured by the Coopersmith Inventory.

<u>Goal-Setting</u>

Is the identifying of a specific skill or area that needs improvement. There are two types of goal setting: 1) Short-term goals which set a specific time limit on obtaining a goal, and 2) long term, which include short-term goals.

<u>At-Risk</u>

Is a term applied to a student who employs the following characteristics: 1) is behind their peers in math and reading, 2) has high absenteeism, 3) has limited or no

participation in school activities, and 4) and has an alienation from peers and teachers (Slavin, 1989).

Curriculum

A ninth grade curriculum presented to all students was used by the group under study. The study did not deviate from this format with respect to subject content. However, the one exception was that the group under study used one class period per week as personal study time.

Self-Esteem

Is defined as one's feeling towards oneself and the value one puts on those feelings (Meeks-Mitchell and Heit, 1987).

Personal Development Class

This class covered subjects from health, mental health, and study skills. In the area of mental health students were shown the relationship between self-esteem, positive attitudes, and success. In the study skills area, students were introduced to time management, organization, test-taking techniques, listening skills, and learning styles. In health, the areas studied were chemicals, safety, life cycle, nutrition, diseases, and the environment.

Absences

An absence as defined by Molalla High School, is any missed class. The three categories of absences were:
1) Excused - A note or phone call by the parent or guardian explaining the absence, 2) Unexcused - no note or phone call

from the parent or guardian was received, 3) School-related

absence - any absence caused by a school function such as

athletics or field trips.

Success

Is defined as a positive change in school attendance,

increased grade point average and an improved score on the

Coopersmith Inventory (1990).

California Achievement Tests (CAT)

These tests were given and scored by elementary schools

in the Molalla High School District. They are given from

grades one through eight and identified each student's

ability level in reading and math.

Coopersmith Inventory

This test was designed to measure attitudes toward the

social, academic, family, and personal areas of one's self

experience. Test-retest reliability (n=56) was .70.

School Involvement

A student who takes time outside of regular school

hours (8:15 a.m. to 2:55 p.m.) to participate in athletics,

clubs and/or other school sponsored activities is considered

to be school-involved.

Resource Program

Is designed for those students identified through

Chapter One (a specially designed federal program for

students with specific educational needs) (Leonard, 1992) as

needing instruction on an individual basis. This is

directed and regulated by the school district and the immediate building administrator and an identified staff member coordinates the classroom activities.

Mentor Program

A bi-weekly meeting between a staff member and one of the identified project students. During the length of the program, the student's self-worth and confidence was developed, encouraged and affirmed. The program also emphasized independent decision-making skills.

Bausch Learning Style Inventory

A twenty-four question evaluation used to identify the type of learning style of each student. The results determined if the student was a visual, auditory, or tactile learner. This information then was interpreted and the presentation of the curriculum adjusted to better meet the learning styles of the student. (See Appendix F)

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will review literature pertinent to the study. It will show support for the factors that greatly influence students at risk: 1) High absenteeism, 2) Low basic skills, 3) Low self-esteem, and 4) Low socioeconomic background. There is not one factor or combination of factors that clearly leads a student to be at-risk (McKinlay and Block, 1989). This chapter will also discuss the development and relevance of a mentor program.

In the report "Those Who Leave Early" prepared by Oregon's Department of Education (1987), it was noted that it was a must to identify those students who fall into the at-risk category in order to deliver an effective intervention before the student leaves school (Oregon Department of Education, 1992).

Though the Department of Education in the State of Oregon does not have specific guidelines for recognizing the at-risk student, it does suggest in a 1986 "At-Risk Youth Planning" document, common characteristics that many at-risk youth share. These include lack of academic success, poor self-concept, poor attendance, and dysfunctional families (Oregon Department of Education, 1986).

AT-RISK

At-risk is a relatively new term replacing or used in accordance with the term potential dropout. Many definitions exist. According to Slavin, Karweit, and Madden (1989), "The meaning of this term is never very precise and varies in practice." Slavin describes an at-risk student as: "Because of various factors, a student that will not graduate from high school." He goes on to identify some of those factors as poor attendance, low socioeconomic status, and poor self-esteem.

Mink (1970) states, "There is no single characteristic that will describe all dropouts or identify all potential dropouts." Included in his list of variables were below-average socioeconomic status of the family, early school failures, failure in at least one subject, retention, high absenteeism and low reading math skills.

DeBlois (1989) makes several points concerning the curriculum and the at-risk student. He notes there is much work done on why students leave school, but little that is being done on the structure of programs and the specific curriculum that is being used to aid at-risk students. Absenteeism, two years behind in math and reading skills, and low self-esteem are characteristics of at-risk students. He feels that for a curriculum to be effective, there must be teachers who will also mentor and counsel. The teacher should have control over who is accepted into the at-risk

program or alternative program that is being offered. The curriculum should have a component present that would develop skills, as well as, focus on norms of behavior such as attendance, punctuality, responsibility, and cooperation.

Research has identified a wide variety of factors that can affect a student's success in school, but the following four were identified consistently in many studies.

Absenteeism

A pattern of poor attendance is an early sign of problems (Hamby, 1989). Rood (1989) identified characteristics of non-attenders which included lack of school success, family background, and school involvement. He also noted that the home can generate a poor attitude towards attendance through lack of family stability, lack of parent concern, and change in or a consistently low socioeconomic status. In their study, The Texas Council on Vocational Education (1988) found high absenteeism as one of the two most obvious signs of a potential dropout.

In his profiles of at-risk youth, Conrath (1988) notes:

> They are avoiders. They avoid school because it is demanding and/or threatening or because it is confusing and unresponsive to their needs. They avoid contact and confrontation with other students and adults.

He believes students avoid going to school because they get behind and find it easier to miss school and avoid the

work involved and in comprehending assignments. Avoidance
seems to begin in the very early grades.

In the article "Potential High School Dropouts,"
(Oregon Department of Education, 1962), irregular attendance
and frequent tardies were listed as number three on a list
of nineteen characteristics of potential dropouts.

O'Conner (Depauw, 1987) notes in both the elementary
and middle school descriptors for identifying at-risk youth
that increased absence or frequently being absent was a
contributing factor.

Springfield, Oregon's School District's "Project
Excellence", identified "Failure to meet minimum state
attendance requirements" as a guideline to entering their
at-risk program (1985).

Low Self-Esteem

Many potential dropouts or at-risk students possess a
very low sense of self-esteem (DeBlois, 1989). Conrath
(1988) profiles these students as ". . .Low in
self-confidence, have a deeply held sense of personal
impotency, helplessness and lack of self-worth."
Springfield's Project Excellence (Springfield School
District, 1987) lists: "Perceives self as academically
low," begins to believe, "I'm dumb, and has a sense of
personal helplessness" which are indicators of being
at-risk. Another characteristic of the at-risk student then
could be described as a learned helplessness.

McKinlay and Bloch (1989) also found in his survey of career counselors that many of these site coordinators saw a definite poor image or low self-concept in their students.

Differences in self-esteem were found when respondents were asked if they were satisfied with themselves or had much to be proud of. The results showed dropouts were less self-satisfied than other students.

Cuban (1989) suggests in redesigning schools that classrooms become extended families where caring for one another is important. This sense of belonging becomes a means of increasing self-esteem.

In Greene and Uroff's (1989) discussion of Apollo High School of Southern California, an alternative school for at-risk students, one major aspect for increasing student success was the increase of self-esteem. The idea being self-esteem produces achievements which the staff provided for this through attention, acceptance, appreciation, and affection.

Canfield (1990) has developed ten steps that will strengthen self-esteem and will increase a student's success rate. Among the ten listed were; assume responsibility, set goals and objectives, focus on the positive, take action, and respond to feedback. In this same article, the author cited a California study where the freshmen class was divided into three groups: Group One - A self-esteem group

where students were treated positively, set goals, and were
given specific self-esteem activities; Group Two - a group
which received no special treatment but was monitored along
with Group One; and Group Three - which was not involved in
the study. At the end of the study, there was marked
improvement in Group One and a significant difference from
Group Two. This study did show there is a correlation
between self-concept and school success.

Mann (1989) noted that prevention programs should give
students a chance to succeed, build self-esteem, promote a
sense of responsibility, and recognize accomplishments of
students.

Low Socioeconomic Background

Schools have little, if any control over students'
socioeconomic situations. Balch (1989) notes that some
reasons for dropping out of school are beyond the school's
control. The example of a family that does not encourage
education or that has a background of dropping out as the
norm, is shown to be a difficult attitude to change.

Conrath (1988) identified single-parent homes as being
just as "fragile." In fragile homes, parents of at-risk
students may have similar characteristics, such as low
skills. Often then, the parents' response concerning their
child's success, is usually, "I don't care", hostility or
even abuse. McKinlay and Bloch (1989) in his questionnaire
with career counselors, found out of the 224 respondents in

his study, 37.5% identified poverty as being a major factor in at-risk youth.

Two of Patrick O'Connor's (DePauw, 1987) four characteristics of dropouts related to family economic status. The first was a lack of family cohesion allowing little direction or guidance, and the second, absence of financial resources increasing the chances of dropping out.

The National Center of Education Statistics (DePauw, 1987) suggests that students who drop out come from low-income, single parent families and that many have mothers who work outside the home and have low educational expectations for their children.

Hilmar Wager (DePauw, 1987) identifies four reasons students drop out of school. First, students must go to work to help the family. Second, students cannot compete materialistically with their peers. Third, parents lack educational goals for their children, and last, students quit because they find the curriculum irrelevant.

In Springfield, Oregon's, "Project Excellence" (1985), "Coming from a home where education has a low priority, a home with low economic background, and a home with poor parenting skills" were all indicators of students at-risk.

Gage (1990) cites poverty as "The most conspicuous overall factor" of what causes students to drop out. It increases the alienation from the norm, which in turn, increases the rate of dropouts.

The Texas Council of Vocational Education (1988) found the majority of dropouts questioned in their research were poor. Many of them came from broken homes, and had low socioeconomic family backgrounds.

Hahn (1987) in his article, "Reaching Out to American's Dropouts" states, those students in families with little income or getting financial aid also lack in emotional and material support. Hahn (1987) cites a Brandeis University study where 18% of all dropouts between 14 and 21 years of age lived in families that received financial support.

Wehlage, Rutter and Turnbaugh (1987) indicate students at-risk come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and usually single-parent families. Combine this with being a member of a minority group and the chances of dropping out are drastically increased.

BASIC SKILLS

In Wehlage, Rutter and Turnbaugh's (1987) article, "A Program Model for At-Risk High School Students," one of the areas emphasized was curriculum. Within this area was a goal to increase the interest of the student by placing an emphasis on basic skills, individualized instruction and immediate feedback.

Balch (1989) discussed ten strategies used to reduce the loss of students from school. The one relevant to this area was identifying eighth graders that were potential

dropouts, giving them strategies for survival and monitoring their progress, establishing a mentor program, and involving parents in all areas of the study.

Pogrow (1990) in his article, "Challenging At-Risk Students: Findings from the HOTS Program," reinforces the point that most at-risk students are of normal intelligence or above and that we must teach to the learning style of each student to support success in the classroom.

Burkle and Marshak (1980) in their program discuss the need for improving study skills for at-risk students and stated students who can identify how they learn can increase comprehension and retention of material.

Slavin, Karweit and Madden (1989) in their book, Effective Programs for Students At-Risk states:

> A substantial proportion of students fail to attain an adequate level of basic skills says nothing at all about the capacity of these children to learn.

Springfield, Oregon's, "Project Excellence" (1985) identified "beginning school with few or no readiness skills and lacks 'skills' not 'smarts' as indicators of at-risk students."

McKinlay (1989) identified lack of basic academic skills and behind in academic credits as major factors in being at-risk.

Conrath (1988) points out that these students are not necessarily low in "ability," but they lack skills. This may be from poor attendance, incorrect teaching strategies,

or other combinations. It is necessary to note that skills can be learned. He also feels these students want to learn, but feel rejected or need a possible alternative strategy to learning the material. They are impatient with routine (sitting for long periods of time, constant worksheets, little variety). With this and their low skills, they often become impatient and find it easier to quit. Because of the low basic skills, these students are more likely to talk about rather than write about what they have learned. They seem to be more "hands-on" learners than note-taking learners.

<u>Mentor Programs</u>

Mentoring is certainly not a new concept. The use of knowledgeable, experienced and proficient persons has been practiced throughout various cultures and societies (Redmond, 1990).

In organizing a mentor program, there are specific components that should be considered. Playko (1990), in her article, "What It Means to be Mentored," identified the following important factors: availability, open communication, time, and clarification of the expectations of the job as necessary characteristics in building a positive mentor relationship.

Redmond (1990) noted a good mentor program needs to be structured to allow as much interaction and communication between the mentor and student as possible to be effective.

Seldner (1992) identified nine steps that should be included in a successful mentorship program. They included: a planning committee, program objectives, identify factors that would determine eligible at-risk students, recruit at-risk students and faculty, conduct workshops on effective mentorship, match the student and mentor, monitor the program, and have an effective evaluation of the program. It is a certain necessity, to have a well thoughtout plan prior to implementation to stall off unforeseen difficulties that would impede the application of a much needed program.

Slavin, Karweit and Madden (1992) throughout their article, "Preventing Early School Failure: What Works?", refer to one-on-one interaction as a contributing factor to long term improvement in reading, improved test results and retention of material. As much as teachers want to contribute to their students success, a mentor program would supply the much needed adult workers to continue and enforce this type of program.

Redmond (1990) in her article, "Mentoring and Cultural Diversity in Academic Settings," notes mentorship programs demand additional time and commitment. If mentor programs plan to use teachers as their mentors, who are already overworked and overinvolved, it is necessary to begin with good organization and design. It is also necessary to equip teachers with techniques to deal with at-risk students.

Duke (1992) suggests a mentor model which includes a panel which identifies, selects and assigns students to specific staff. These staff are expected to monitor progress, revise unsuccessful areas of the program, such as long-term goals or improper class schedules, to become more effective for both the mentor and student, and communicate one-on-one with their assigned student.

Oregon's Department of Education representative John Lensen (1992), on mentor programs, suggested some basic objectives for a mentor program. It is necessary to inservice the mentors, clearly define the expectations of the program and that of the mentor. It is necessary to gather support from the community or professional groups (Kiwanians, Lions etc.) if the mentors are community members. The last suggestion Lensen made was the needs of the program, if properly identified, would guide the goals of the program. Again emphasizing the need for good planning prior to implementation.

Backes (1992) discusses the mentorship program at Sartell High School in Sartell, Minnesota, in which students work with community members on an independent project. Again, this program emphasizes the need for inservice of mentors, a selection process for mentees, a regular meeting with the program coordinator for feedback and progress update and an evaluation of the program.

Rincon Valley Union School District (Slavin, Karweit, and Madden, 1992) developed a student advocate program in which teachers were released from their classes three to four hours a week to meet with students on a one-on-one basis. The role of the teacher in this situation was, on the most part, to listen, giving that student the extra attention needed. This program also addresses the need to shift teacher responsibilities, to allow for full participation from the teacher.

Conklin (1992), Portland Public Schools, explained that this school district has three different mentor programs. One is for at-risk students, one for the talented and gifted, and a third for college potential students.

The program for at-risk students, Linking Lifetimes, which is a mentor program at the eighth grade level at Sellwood Middle School is considered to be very successful by the district. The program uses community volunteers and retired citizens as their mentors. The mentors meet with their mentees one hour in school and two hours out of school weekly. This program also recommends a mentor inservice, matching mentor and mentee, and stresses one-on-one interaction to make the mentor program valid and effective.

CONCLUSION

It must be realized that absenteeism, low self-esteem, economic background and basic skill levels are often

intertwined. Having poor self-esteem can lead to feeling incompetent and without reinforcement from home and/or school, they may avoid both the classroom and school.

There are many options for at-risk students and no easy answers to what is most effective. But to continue to use various strategies on various individuals or groups is a far better choice than to ignore their existence.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

SUBJECT SELECTION

A problem statement was developed. Would two identified educational strategies, school involvement and a mentor program, have an affect or change on students' attendance, grade point average and self-concept?

Using the problem statement as a basis, the subjects were selected by the following criteria:

1. A 2.00 grade point average or lower during the eighth grade year -- This grade point average was selected because it reflected poor school performance in school classes.

2. Fifteen (15) days or more absence during the eighth grade year -- This number of absences was chosen because Molalla High School has determined that after this number of missed days, the student is in jeopardy of failing.

3. A CAT score in math between 30 and 50 percentile -- This percentile range was chosen because students are still able to comprehend and master basic math skills.

4. CAT score in reading between 30 and 50 percentile -- A score lower than 30 would have put the subject into the Chapter One or Resource Program which would affect the research outcome.

DATA COLLECTION

Originally the intent was to give a questionnaire to each of the 254 eighth grade students in the Molalla Union High School District (N=254) prior to entering high school.

In the Spring of 1991, this researcher presented a proposal to the Superintendent of Molalla High School to survey all eighth grade students in order to select subjects for the research. He approved the proposal. The High School Superintendent then presented the proposal to the nine superintendents of the feeder grade schools.

The grade school superintendents would not allow this type of data collection because it was an invasion of student privacy. Upon further examination, it was determined that the students' cumulative record file could be reviewed for test data, once it was turned over to the high school. The high school received the last set of records in August of 1991. This researcher then spent the rest of August physically going through each of the 254 student files; reading grades, attendance records, and CAT scores, selecting the final subjects who matched the criteria for the research. Of the 254 student files reviewed, seventeen students met all three areas of criteria.

Because of class schedules, behavior problems, or moving from the district, six subjects were disqualified.

The final number of subjects was eleven; four females and
seven males (N=11).

The only male of the disqualified six had a conflict of
scheduling. His mother requested a specific elective, which
was only offered at the time of the identified Personal
Development class and this eliminated him from the study.
Of the remaining five, twin girls, who had completed the
eighth grade in Molalla and were scheduled to start high
school here, moved to Roseburg during the summer to live
with their father.

Three other identified girls started with the class in
September, but by the end of the first nine weeks, one had
run away to live on the streets of Portland; one, who was in
a foster home, returned to her biological mother in
Beaverton; and the third girl was removed from the class by
the administration because of severe behavior problems that
disrupted regular teaching. Later in the year, she was
expelled from school because of these severe behavior
problems.

As part of the project, a mentor program was developed,
using staff from Molalla High School. The mentor program
was designed to develop a positive relationship between a
staff member and each of the identified subjects.

Prior to teacher inservice, on August, 4, 1991, a memo
(See Appendix A) was sent to fourteen staff members asking
each of them if they would be willing to participate in a

Mentor Program with some selected students during the coming school year. After a follow-up phone call, all agreed to participate. The staff members filled out a Mentor Match Form during inservice (See Appendix B). To assist the mentors, this researcher met with them prior to the beginning of the school year to explain the program, outline their role and give them a timeline as to when the selection would be made and how often they would meet as a group.

Once the staff was paired with a student, the staff by itself, met every three weeks to up-date their progress.

At the end of the project, each mentor and mentee filled out an evaluation (See Appendices G & H). These suggestions aided in making decisions concerning the next year's mentor program.

In early September, schedules of the eleven subjects were changed, so that all identified subjects were in the same Personal Development class. No other ninth graders were included in this class. The class was the first period of the day and was taught by this researcher. The students were told that classes were too crowded and another Personal Development class had to be offered to balance the classload.

During the nine month period, attendance was recorded by the classroom teachers and tabulated and stored by the school Attendance Secretary. The school Attendance Secretary was asked and agreed to give the researcher,

print-outs of the attendance records of the eleven
identified subjects.

During the initial class meeting, students were
informed that the same curriculum as all other Personal
Development Classes would be used. The only change that
would occur, was that one day a week this Personal
Development class would have a study day. The day would be
used to finish work from other areas. The Math and English
teachers came in to give further explanation of their
specific class assignments and/or activities and to help
review for upcoming tests.

At the beginning of the school year, all ninth graders
were given the Barsch Learning Style Inventory (See
Appendix F) to identify each student's learning style. The
purpose was to aid students in comprehending class material
and to assist teachers in developing techniques of
presentation, so material would be better understood.

During the first two weeks of this class (still
mid-September), the Mentor Program was explained to the
student; how it was developed, why it was being considered
(that it was a new idea at Molalla High School) and the
possible outcomes of the program. Since this was a small
group, the one-on-one concept of mentor programs would be
easier to monitor and there would be direct input and
immediate feedback. Both the mentors and the mentees were
given questionnaires. The questions on the mentors form

included past experience with at-risk students, career background, hobbies/interests and why they would like to be involved in this program (See Appendix B).

The mentees questionnaire included their birthdate, class schedule, career and outside interests, long-term goals and their work experience (See Appendix C).

After matching basic interests, talking to each of the mentors and mentees and using information gathered in other conversations, each student was paired with a staff member.

During the same two weeks of school, the Coopersmith Inventory (1967) was given to each student. This inventory was used to identify the students' attitude of self towards home and school. This inventory asked fifty-eight questions: Fifty self-esteem items and eight items that constituted the lie scale, which measures a student's "Test Wiseness."

This test was given twice during the test period: In September to determine attitudes, and again in April to record changes. It was administered in the classroom by this researcher on a day when all students were in attendance. The Inventory was then scored and recorded, again by this researcher.

At the end September, the researcher contacted the Activities Secretary to tabulate how many of the eleven subjects were involved in school activities. It was noted

that in the fall of 1991, nine of the eleven subjects were participating in a school activity.

The first week in November was the end of the first grading period and students received a letter grade for each of their classes. This letter grade signified their progress in each of their classes at the end of the first nine weeks.

In early December, the researcher again contacted the Activities Secretary to tabulate how many of the eleven subjects were involved in school activities. It was noted that at the beginning of the winter sports season, three students were participating in a school activity.

January 24, 1992, ended the first semester. Students received report cards with grades that would be transcribed onto their permanent records.

January 27, 1992, students began a new semester. The third grading period ended April 3, 1992, and students again received grades, which signified their progress in each of their classes.

In mid-April, the Coopersmith Inventory was repeated to record any changes in the subjects' attitudes towards home or school. During this same time period, the mentors and mentees were given a questionnaire to evaluate the mentor program.

This Chapter discussed the procedures used to answer the research question in Chapter One. The research ended at this time.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

INTRODUCTION

Two-hundred-fifty-four ninth grade students' records were analyzed. Their eighth grade attendance, eighth grade point average, and their California Aptitude Test scores were examined. Those students whose absenteeism were fifteen days or more, whose grade point average was 2.0 or below, and whose reading and math scores were between the 30 percentile and 50 percentile were selected for the study.

Originally, there were seventeen subjects, but because of class schedules, behavior problems, or moving from the Molalla High School District six were disqualified, with the final number of students in the study totaling eleven. Four females and seven males (N=11).

As previously stated, this research was designed to see if school involvement, and a mentor program would have a positive effect on students' attendance, self-concept, and grade point average.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE ANALYSIS

Attendance

Daily attendance was taken on each student by the classroom teacher. This record was turned into the office each day, where it was stored on the computer for school and

state records. The absences were identified as excused (by parent or guardian), unexcused (no clearance), and school-related absences (field trips, sports, etc.) (See Appendix D).

The number of absences for each student was compared with those compiled with their eighth grade records (See Table 1.). An F Distribution Test was applied to the data in Table 1 because of its well-defined probability distribution. However, no significant difference was found between the eighth and ninth grade in the groups' absenteeism. This does not mean, however, that no change occurred. On the contrary, some students did change their individual attendance practices. Subjects one, four, six, nine and ten remained relatively the same, with little difference in the numbers of days missed. Subjects three, five and six increased their number of days absent, but the positive outcome came with subjects two, seven, eight and eleven, where there was a significant improvement. The group change, in total though, was not significant (See Table 1).

Self-Concept

The Coopersmith Inventory was used to identify how students feel about home, school, social, and general areas. This test was given twice in the nine-month period. The

September test identified initial feelings about home and school, and the April test identified any changes that occurred (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2 deals with students' attitudes toward school. An examination of this table illustrates there were no significant changes in the groups' attitude towards school. An F Test reinforced this at the .05 level. It should be noted, there were some individual changes. Subjects one, three, four, and eleven moved from a poor attitude to an above average attitude toward school. Subjects two, five, six, eight, and nine remained relatively the same; whereas, seven and ten showed a negative change in their attitude toward school.

Table 3 deals with students' attitudes toward home. There was not a significant group change in attitude towards home. Individually, subjects one, five, and ten maintained a similar average as they had in September. Subject four made the most significant improvement, moving from a negative attitude towards home in September to an above average attitude in April. Subjects two, six and eight showed a positive change in the eight month period and subjects three, seven, nine, and eleven showed a decline in their attitude towards home, though all three subjects' attitudes were still average or above.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF ABSENTEEISM BETWEEN THE EIGHTH
AND NINTH GRADES

STUDENT	EIGHTH GRADE	NINTH GRADE	DIFFERENCE	(DIFFERENCE)^2
1	15	14	-1	1
2	17	10	-7	49
3	15	23	8	64
4	22	20	-2	4
5	19	33	14	196
6	18	25	7	49
7	36	24	-12	144
8	16	0	-16	256
9	19	24	5	25
10	17	14	-3	9
11	28	10	-18	324
TOTALS	222.00	197.00	-25.00	1,119.00

1. *Mean Difference* $\bar{X} = \dfrac{25}{11} = 2.27$

2. $SD = \dfrac{\sqrt{1121 - \dfrac{25^2}{11}}}{10} = 10.3$

3. $S\bar{D} = \dfrac{SD}{\sqrt{N}} = \dfrac{10.3}{3.3} = 3.12$

4. $F = \dfrac{2.27}{3.12} = 2.73$

5. *Degree of Freedom* $= 10$

6. *No Significant Difference* $(p = .05)$

TABLE 2: COOPERSMITH INVENTORY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL

STUDENT	SEPTEMBER	APRIL	DIFFERENCE	$(DIFFERENCE)^2$
1	2	5	3	9
2	3	2	-1	1
3	3	6	3	9
4	3	6	3	9
5	2	1	-1	1
6	2	3	1	1
7	5	2	-3	9
8	4	3	-1	1
9	3	4	1	1
10	2	0	-2	4
11	3	6	3	9
TOTALS	32.00	38.00	6.00	54.00

1. *Mean Difference* $\bar{x} = \dfrac{6}{11} = .54$

2. $SD = \dfrac{\sqrt{54 - \dfrac{6^2}{11}}}{10} = 2.25$

3. $SD = 2.25\sqrt{11} = 6.8$

4. $F = \dfrac{.54}{.68} = .8$

5. *Degree of Freedom* = 10

6. *No Significant Difference* (p = .05)

TABLE 3: COOPERSMITH INVENTORY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD HOME

STUDENT	SEPTEMBER	APRIL	DIFFERENCE	(DIFFERENCE)^2
1	7	6	-1	1
2	3	5	2	4
3	7	4	-3	9
4	0	5	5	25
5	2	2	0	0
6	1	4	3	9
7	4	2	-2	4
8	2	6	4	16
9	6	4	-2	4
10	1	2	1	1
11	8	6	-2	4
TOTALS	41.00	46.00	5.00	75.00

1. *Mean Difference* $\bar{x} = \dfrac{5}{11} = .45$

2. $SD = \dfrac{\sqrt{77 - \dfrac{5^2}{11}}}{10} = 2.27$

3. $S\bar{D} = 2.77\sqrt{11} = 8.4$

4. $F = \dfrac{.45}{.84} = .535$

5. *Degree of Freedom* = 10

6. *No Significant Difference* (*p* = .05)

Grade Point Average

Grades are determined by the following formula; A=4 points, B=3 points, C=2 points, D=1 point and an F = 0. The points for each class are totaled and divided by the number of classes taken to give the average grade point.

The students receive nine-week and semester grades in the mail. Every three weeks, all students get progress reports updating how they are doing in each of their classes. These are taken home by the students, signed by the parent, and returned to the homeroom teacher, who keeps them on file. If, at any time, there is a dramatic change (i.e. a drop of two grade points), either the homeroom teacher, classroom teacher, counselor, or the researcher makes contact with the parent.

An F Distribution Test was applied to the data in Table 4, because of its well-defined probability distribution. However, no significant difference was found between the groups' eighth and the ninth grade-point averages. This does not mean, however, that no change occurred. On the contrary, some students did change their individual grade point average, but the group, as a whole, did not make a significant change.

Subjects two, five, six, seven, nine, and ten declined in academic success. Subjects one and four showed some minor improvement and subjects three, eight, and eleven improved their grades considerably.

TABLE 4: COMPARISON OF GRADE POINT AVERAGE BETWEEN
EIGHTH AND NINTH GRADE YEARS

STUDENT	EIGHTH GRADE	NINTH GRADE	DIFFERENCE	(DIFFERENCE)^2
1	1.44	1.85	-.14	.02
2	1.80	1.42	-.38	.14
3	2.00	3.14	1.14	1.30
4	1.33	1.42	.09	.008
5	2.00	1.85	-.15	.002
6	1.77	0.71	-1.06	1.12
7	1.90	0.71	-1.19	1.14
8	1.90	3.14	1.24	1.53
9	1.22	0.71	-.51	.26
10	1.20	0.71	-.49	.24
11	1.66	3.00	1.34	1.79
TOTALS	18.22	18.66	-0.11	5.55

1. *Mean Difference* $\bar{x} = \dfrac{.17}{11} = .015$

2. $SD = \dfrac{\sqrt{8.01 - \dfrac{0.15^2}{11}}}{10} = 28$

3. $S\bar{D} = .28\sqrt{11} = .084$

4. $F = \dfrac{.015}{.084} = .178$

5. *Degree of Freedom* = 10

6. *No Significant Difference* ($p = .05$)

STRATEGY ANALYSIS

<u>Parent Involvement</u>

Though it was not an identified strategy in this study, parent involvement would appear to be an intricate part of any student's success. Joyce Epstein identified one of the types of involvement needed to increase student success as that of parent involvement in learning activities at home. Parents should monitor classwork and coordinate time management and homework.

Each parent was contacted in October, January, and March to come to school for a one-on-one meeting with the instructor. This was communicated by individual letters, a district newsletter, and student contact. The purpose was to show the parents their child's progress and to ask them to help reinforce teaching strategies at home. Despite all efforts of communication, not one parent responded.

There may be many possibilities as to why this may have occurred. Possible reasons might include: distance, indifference, conflicting work hours, attitude, past experience dealing with schools and teachers, their own experience in high school, or notification was not received by the parent. For whatever reason, no response was received from any of the parents/guardians to any of the communications sent.

The only times any of the parents were at school, were on two separate occasions for their own student's staffing.

A student staffing included: the student, all the student's teachers, the administrator, and the school counselor. At these meetings, the student's progress or lack of progress was discussed and possible solutions and strategies were given to the student and parent that would help the student improve. These two parents attended these staff meetings by the specific request of the administration. If the student was involved in outside activities, then he/her was also notified of their possible exclusion from that activity if his/her grades did not improve. Both of the parents involved in these staff meetings said they did not know what more they could do for their child and now it was up to her/him.

As Table 3 shows, 45% of the students' positive attitude scores towards home decreased over the nine month period. This would reflect as the support at home diminished so did the students feelings towards doing well.

Mentor Program

In hopes to counteract the lack of support from parents and to give these students some extra attention, each student was paired with a staff member. This was done through a questionnaire given to both the student and staff member (See Appendices B & C). The student and staff member were paired after a comparison of interests and common background was made. The staffs' reasons for volunteering to work with a student were varied, but reflected their genuine interest in young people. Most hoped their interest and involvement

would help their student improve and the consensus was any extra effort on their part might make a difference in the young person's decision to leave or stay in school.

Based on conversations with the mentors, they expressed surprise at the results of working with these students. One teacher felt that the more she tried to help, the more the student took advantage of her. Another teacher felt if her student had shown problems, she would have been more effective. But, as it was, just being friendly and showing interest in the student was sufficient. It should be noted that the student being referred to was one who was more successful. Two other teachers found it difficult to develop any relationship with their specific students for two reasons: One was the student's poor attendance, and second, both teachers were coaches and found it difficult to spend time outside of the classroom with their mentees.

As a result of this project, Molalla High School is now in the process of establishing a mentor program that will include community members. It was quite evident that the extended involvement of staff, the demographics of the campuses, the absence of upperclassmen on the North Campus and the superintendent's interest in developing a stronger relationship between school district and community were strong factors in moving from staff mentors to off-campus mentors.

Communication by the researcher with the students revealed that they felt an invasion of their privacy and thus were reluctant to interact with the mentors outside of the classroom. This, again shows a lack of trust for adults, something which was evident in the classroom. Other students liked their mentors, while some were disappointed their mentors did not show more interest, though the students refused to instigate any interaction themselves.

As Tables 2 and 3 show, the students' attitudes toward school and their attendance had no significant change. Though, as noted before, there were some individual changes. This could imply that the mentor program alone was not enough to encourage students improvement in school or to attend on a regular basis.

This researcher feels possible reasons why the mentor program was not as successful as it could be, were the mentors should have been from the community rather than from school, more time should have been given for interaction between the mentor and mentee, and parent involvement with the mentor should have been an added factor.

School Involvement

A large number of students entering high school normally become involved in sports or other school activities. These eleven subjects were no different. During the first nine-week grading period, nine of the eleven subjects were involved in sports or related activities.

The end of the first nine week grading period coincided with the end of the first sports/activity season. School and State policy indicates that a student must be passing all his/her classes but one, to be eligible for participation (Pass=D) (See Appendix E).

As Table 5 shows, the number of participants in winter activities dropped to three and eventually to two by the end of the semester. Comparing this information with Table 4 concerning grade point average, it would indicate that these students, on the most part, are not motivated enough through activities to keep their grades at an acceptable level.

Personal conversations between the researcher and these students provided suspected evidence that they did not have the time and energy to keep up with both classwork and activities after school.

By Spring season, five students were participating in school activities. When these five students were asked why they were now involved in activities, they responded that their grades had improved, their parents had noticed the improvement, and the students felt that they could handle the school work and the extra time needed to be involved in an outside activity. Table 5 shows that students 1, 4, 6, and 11 were involved in spring activities.

TABLE 5: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES (1991-92)

STUDENT	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
1	Football	Wrestling	None
2	None	None	None
3	Football	None	None
4	Football	Basketball*	None
5	Football	None	Track
6	None	None	None
7	Volleyball	None	Softball
8	Volleyball	None	Softball
9	Drama	Drama	Drama
10	Football	None	None
11	Volleyball	None	Softball

* Started the sport but was dropped at semester
  because of grades.

Reviewing all the information concerning activities and student success, being involved in school activities was not enough to motivate the student to keep his/her grades at the required level for eligibility for school-sponsored activities, although there were two exceptions (See Table 5 for breakdown). Little significance was found between individual subjects, variables, and anticipated outcomes. There were, however, some individuals who did change. Therefore, a subjective look at these individuals appears warranted beginning with background information concerning the research subjects.

1. Of the eleven subjects involved in the research, six had parents who had been married before.

2. There was not a majority of students in one specific birth order of the family siblings.

3. Every one of the students felt the study day of one day a week was beneficial and they did not want to see it removed from the curriculum.

4. When tested for learning styles, using the Barsch Learning Style Inventory (See Appendix F), the majority of the students had visual and tactile learning styles.

As class activities, they wanted to go on

field trips, work together on assignments

and projects, and role play -- all

significant of their learning styles.

Subjects 8 and 11 increased their grade point average,

school involvement, score, and attendance (See Tables 1, 2,

and 3).

In describing these students, both were involved in, at

least, two school sports. Each subject was awarded an

individual award at the end of their sport season. One for

most improved and the other for most inspirational.

These two students came from two-parent families, in

which neither parent had been married before. One subject

was the oldest and the other was the middle child. When

questioned, as individuals, they both spoke often of their

parents and the influence they had on them.

Both subjects related well with their mentors and would

agree to being in a mentor program the next year.

Subjectively, this researcher saw growth in self-discipline

and self-concept in these two subjects from September to

June. Though research does not show specifics, it could be

inferred that school activities, mentor program

participation, and extra interest from club advisors,

teachers, and staff could have contributed to the increased

success of these two subjects.

Of the remaining nine subjects (the majority of which were male), their grade point average, attendance, and school involvement did not show marked improvement. In various class assignments, these subjects described themselves as troublemakers, odd, problem kid, crazy, party animal, and stupid. In another part of these same assignments, these students wanted or wished to be smart and popular and to have good grades.

On the whole, they did not get involved in many school activities, such as clubs, student council, homeroom competition, specific week activities (i.e. homecoming, spirit week, etc.) as well as sports or drama. The eleven subjects, as all incoming freshmen, were very involved in the first sports/activity season. As Table 5 shows, at the end of the first grading period, their involvement decreased. Nine of the eleven were participating in the fall, in the winter the number involved dropped to two by the end of the semester, and then, in the spring increased to five subjects being involved in sports or activities. Of those five, subject five showed no improvement in any of the other categories, subject seven showed a positive change in absences, decreasing the number of days gone by 12, subject eight showed improvement in grade point average, attitude toward home and number of days missed from school. Subject nine only showed improvement in attitude toward school and

subject eleven showed improvement in attitude toward school, grade point average and attendance.

From speaking to the nine subjects, one could surmise their family lives were not as stable as the two subjects who did better in their first year of high school. 66% of the nine subjects were either living in single-parent homes or with a biological parent and stepparent. On various occasions, these students would talk about how little they cared what their parents thought, because they knew the parents didn't care about them anyway.

One subject's father was in and out of jail and court because of child abuse charges. Another student was in and out of court over custody decisions, and a third subject divided his time between two parents, one in Oregon and the other in California.

None of these nine students found or realized the usefulness of a mentor. Some felt an invasion of privacy and would not interact with these adults. One felt she could use her mentor to get special privileges and became angry when her mentor did not allow such treatment. While some just did not want to build any kind of relationship with another adult. None wished to be in a mentor program next year.

This group of students had difficulty managing their time, getting work in on time, and seeing the importance of preparing for tests. The importance of doing well in school was not a high priority nor had these students developed a

strong sense of self-discipline. These are all indicators of at-risk students.

There are so many outside factors that influence these students, such as alcohol/drug abuse, pregnancy, low socioeconomic situations, and parent disinterest. These influences are beyond the control of education and in this project beyond the researchers control. The outcomes of some of the subjects would have been different had outside influence been limited.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MEMO ASKING FOR VOLUNTEER MENTORS

August 4, 1991

HELP WANTED   HELP WANTED   HELP WANTED

I am doing some research this school year and am in need of some good women and men!

I want to establish a mentor program for some freshmen students.

Your responsibilities, if you choose this assignment, would be:

1. To meet with the student on a regular basis (once a week),

2. To give positive feedback and encouragement to the student,

3. To do a pre- and post- questionnaire for me,

4. To meet once in the fall to meet the student and parent, and

5. To build a positive relationship between an adult and student.

I will follow-up with a phone call in a week to answer any questions you might have and to get your answer.

Thanks!

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO STAFF

NAME: _____

PREP PERIODS _____

Do you have any preferences about the student you would mentor?

Describe your career background:

Educational Background:

What are your outside activities/hobbies?

Why are you interested in being a Mentor?

Have you ever worked with at-risk students before? If you have, in what context?

Any additional comments you would like to make?

APPENDIX C: STUDENT FORM

Name: _____ Date: _____

Birthdate: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____

What classes are you taking in school?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Career Interests: Things you would like to do after you
leave school?

_____   _____

_____   _____

What do you want to do after completing high school?

_____

_____

What are your interests or hobbies? _____

_____

What jobs have you had? Are you working now? If so, where?

_____

_____

_____
Student Signature

APPENDIX D: STUDENT ATTENDANCE & GRADE SHEET

STUDENT:

Eighth Grade Attendance:

Eighth Grade:
****
Mentor:
****

<u>Ninth Grade</u>   <u>Attendance</u>   <u>Grades</u>
First nine weeks

    English
    Global Studies
    P.E.
    Personal Development
    Math
    Elective
    Elective

Second Nine Weeks

    English
    Global Studies
    P.E.
    Personal Development
    Math
    Elective
    Elective

Third nine weeks

    English
    Global Studies
    P.E.
    Personal Development
    Math
    Elective
    Elective

Fourth Nine Weeks

    English
    Global Studies
    P.E.
    Personal Development
    Math
    Elective
    Elective

APPENDIX E: PROGRESS REPORT

At nine weeks, _____ had

a _____.   What can I do to help this student pass your

class at semester? Please return ASAP.

Judy Yann

APPENDIX G: MENTOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

1.   How often did you meet with your mentee?

2.   Please share an activity that you did with your student
      that was beneficial.

3.   Did you see a change in your student from the beginning
      to the end of this program? Why do you think this
      might have happened?

4.   What were some of the frustrations of this experience?

5.   Would you continue as mentor in this type of program?
      Why?

APPENDIX H: MENTEE PROGRAM EVALUATION

1.   How often did you meet?   Where?

2.   How comfortable were you with your mentor/mentee?

      very   comfortable   some what   not at all

3.   Did you like this program?

      yes   no   Why?

4.   Please share an experience you had that you thought was
      beneficial.

5.   Would you be involved in this type of program again?