Approximately one quarter of America's students leave school prior to graduation. Teaching practices need to be examined if schools are to effectively deal with the student population at highest risk of dropping out. The purpose of this study was to investigate the attending behaviors high school teachers directed to students at high risk of dropping out, and to students not so identified.

A survey of the literature provided an overview of related studies which addressed the number of students who drop out, their reasons for doing so, and alternative programs for those who have left school. Not found in abundance were studies linking teachers' classroom behaviors with effective at risk strategies.
Data regarding teachers' verbal and nonverbal attending behaviors were gathered in twenty classrooms. The resulting totals for all at risk and control groups were nearly equal. However, the types of attending behaviors directed to the two groups were qualitatively different. At risk students were praised one third as often but were criticized seven times as often as their control group counterparts. Additionally, at risk students' attention getting behaviors were ignored seven times as often, and they were physically approached half as often as control group students.

Anecdotal data revealed contrasting classroom atmospheres. Some classes were greeted at the door and were praised by their teachers. Other teachers chastised classes, spoke negatively about them, or showed little or no interaction with students in them.
Teacher Attending Behaviors
Directed To At Risk
High School Students

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**
- Introduction 1
- Rationale and Justification 3
- Hypotheses 9
- Delimitations of the Study 10
- Limitations of the Study 11
- Definition of Terms 12

## CHAPTER II

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**
- Introduction 13
- Children Who Leave School 13
- Who Drops Out 16
- Personal Power / Locus of Control 22
- Summary 33

## CHAPTER III

**METHODS AND PROCEDURES**
- Research Site 36
- Permission to Conduct Research 37
- At Risk Students 37
- At Risk Group Selection 39
- Teachers Chosen for Observation 40
- Locating At Risk Students 40
- Control Group 41
- Verbal Attending Behaviors 41
- Nonverbal Attending Behaviors 42
- Data Collection 43
- Anecdotal Notes 43
- Assembling Data 44
- Reliability of the Data Gathering Procedure 45
- Summary 46
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

I  Categories of Teacher Attending Behaviors Charted
   (and the code letters used to record them)  49

II Sample Classroom Observation Chart  50

III Teacher Behaviors Directed to Entire Classes/
   General Classroom Atmosphere  68

IV Verbal Attending Behaviors Directed to At-Risk and
   Control Students by Individual Teachers  70

V Nonverbal Attending Behaviors Directed to At Risk
   and Control Students by Individual Teachers  71
CHAPTER I

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attending behaviors teachers exhibit in the high school classroom. More specifically, the researcher sought to observe the attending behaviors teachers directed to students identified as being at risk (of not completing their schooling through graduation), and to contrast those behaviors with the behaviors directed to students not so identified. Furthermore the collection of anecdotal notes was planned to delineate trends in teacher and student behaviors which, although not necessarily anticipated by the researcher, might provide further insight or data on teacher-student interaction.

Of paramount concern to the researcher was the effect that teachers have on retaining students in school, and the identification of those teacher behaviors which are most effective in helping to mitigate student dropout.
Introduction

Careful examination of available information regarding school dropouts led the researcher to two conclusions:

1. The available data are as incongruent as the sources from which they are gathered.

2. Without exception, the data from every source outline losses in both human and economic terms, thereby compelling the educational community to design and implement more effective strategies for retaining students in school through graduation.

The ability of school systems to hold their students must be seen as crucial to their mission; moreover, individual classroom teachers form the foundation for efficacious change within each of these systems. Building on this basic premise, this study centered on the classroom teacher as the most important element for increasing the retention of students in school through graduation. In addition to the gathering of empirical data on attending behaviors directed to at risk students, anecdotal notes were gathered, and researcher perceptions regarding classroom interaction were recorded. These data provided a basis for outlining the implications this study holds for educators, and helped suggest possible strategies for implementing positive changes aimed at increasing school holding power.
Rationale and Justification

Every child who leaves school without graduating represents a considerable economic, political, and human loss to our country. According to a 1986 Carnegie Corporation study, students who dropped out of school before graduation were unemployed at a rate of thirty-six percent, compared to a rate of twenty-one percent for high school graduates, and were destined to earn a third less than those who did graduate (1986). Within two years of leaving school, more than half of those who did so reported that they now felt that dropping out of school was not a good decision (Carnegie Corporation 1986 & The Institute for Educational Leadership 1986).

Since the purpose of our schools is the facilitation and development of student's intellectual abilities, the failure of even one student to graduate indicates a breakdown in our educational system. According to The New York State School Boards Association, this failure should be cause for alarm not limited to the educational issue, but to its adverse effects on the social and economic foundations of our society as well. In 1985, a spokesman for this association wrote: "The world will advance only as far as the competencies of our youth can carry it, and society will bear the burden of those who have been left behind" (P. 10). It is this system then that must be malleable enough to accommodate the
individual, and insure his or her success. Educational programs must be organized around the individual circumstances which give the students reason to drop out. Robert Glaser called for adapting education to these individual differences by saying:

"Commitment to the realization of individual potential, equality of opportunity and social justice demands that the process of education consider individual differences along all the various dimensions in which they are manifested -- differences in needs, interests, abilities, talents, and styles of living and learning" (1977, p.1).

Attention to the individual student has not always been a philosophical hallmark of secondary education in the United States. America's long-standing commitment to democracy in education has attenuated adaptation to the individual by focusing concern on standards, averages, requirements, and objectives (Powell 1985). In the view of many, an exemplary high school is one whose students score higher than the national mean on the SAT exam. When standardized scores are relatively low, they must be raised; when they are high, they must be raised to a still higher level. This logic was addressed by Carl Rogers when he stated, "There is no place for the individual person in the educational system, only for the intellect" (1977, p. 71).

The continual raising of academic expectations brings with it a concomitant increase in the number of
students who experience frustration and failure, and eventually leave the school system (McDill, Natriello & Pallas, 1986). Failure to achieve academic success has other debilitating effects on those school children who do not immediately leave school. The negative effects may include a heightened sense of isolation and an increased perception that they are most certainly "unspecial" (Powell, 1985).

Students who fail to achieve at a specific standard, conform to rules, give the required responses or are simply "unreasonable", provide our educational system with its most severe test. Systems which profess equity, but use standardized scores as evidence of quality, may in reality be offering neither to their students. It is the success of the individual student, not group averages that delineates which schools are able to strike a successful balance between quality and equity.

Failure to achieve academic success is not the only driving force behind the feelings of aloneness and isolation that many children experience in high school. The mere size of some schools poses a threat to some children, and the impersonal nature of large schools forces many students into the position of dealing only with a small circle of friends, or of avoiding school altogether (Balsam, 1985).

The sense of personal unimportance held by some
high school students would be troubling if it were held by a limited group considered to be at risk. However, the idea that perhaps a majority of students feel unspecial (Powell, 1985), offers our educational community cause for alarm.

Because school size alone often contributes heavily to students' feelings that they are powerless and unimportant (Husen, 1985), the question of how to avoid the depersonalizing characteristics of large institutions, while retaining their advantages in facilities and varied learning experiences, is not easily answered. The parallel question of how to prevent feelings of alienation, anonymity, and impotence within the students attending these schools is equally perplexing. The mere size of a school may not augur ill for the environment of a high school. Quite often it is the climate of a school, and its management style that either empowers students, or heightens their sense of frustration. The need for schools to convey hope and positive attitudes to students was expressed by Theodore Ruby when he wrote:

"We must remember that education is not the process of imposing one's will upon another, but the process of nurturing within the student the desire to know, and providing the tools to attain the knowledge" (1983, p. 10).

The managerial style of imposing power from above is
not new to most schools. Indeed, John Dewey wrote in 1938 of school systems which imposed control on students, and justified this by claiming that the gap between what students knew and what they needed to learn was simply too great, making the information so foreign to them that it had to be imposed upon them by teachers. Dewey spoke against this approach stating:

"The only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence, that is to say freedom of observation and of judgment exercised in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worthwhile" (p. 61).

To Dewey the idea that education should consist merely of handing down of known information assumed that the future would be much like the past, thus precluding the discovery of new information and ideas.

Feelings of isolation, aloneness, and of being unimportant are too often the harbingers of a student's exit from school before graduation. Paradoxically, aloneness can be regarded as an attribute when it is used to describe a young person as a unique and independent person (Schults & Helichert, 1983). Rather than slipping into a standardized existence, these individuals maintain a specialness and essence which sets them apart from others. It follows then, that students should be helped to recognize that aloneness is not in itself a liability, and collectivism is not necessarily an asset. It is the power to establish an equilibrium between the two that
appears to be essential to each student.

All too frequently, students tire of social and academic failure and may not perceive school as essential to a successful future. This shift in perception may cause the student to see teachers, administrators, and the school to be obstacles in the path to success, rather than facilitators for achievement. At this point then, although the decision of the student to drop out of school seems inappropriate to school officials, it is in fact very appropriate for what the student perceives (Ruby 1983). The student is dealing with the system in the most pragmatic way that he or she can. The system has failed the student.

How do we identify the precursors to students leaving school before graduation? How do we find ways to effectively deal with the underlying causes of dropping out, while avoiding ineffective strategies which address only symptoms? What can be done in the individual classroom to help students view teachers not as obstacles in their paths, but as supporters of ideas, sources of information, and guides to the future? These questions, when explored for this research then become:

1. What behaviors do teachers exhibit toward at risk student? and...

2. What changes are needed to more effectively accommodate these students?
Hypotheses

Although a descriptive research design was used in the formulation of this study, the researcher believed that the exploration of one specific hypothesis would provide insight into pedagogy as it affects at risk students. This hypothesis can be stated as follows:

There is no significant quantitative difference in attending behaviors directed by teachers to students identified as being at risk, and those directed to students not so identified.

The delineation of this hypothesis brought a more important question for this research into clearer focus. That question was:

Are there qualitative differences in the manner which teachers attend to at risk students, when contrasted with those directed to students not so identified?

This question was far more complex than the null hypothesis, and the researcher viewed it as possibly providing a multitude of implications for educators. The exploration of these qualitative differences would in turn suggest questions for individual teachers to ask of themselves, or point out directions for further research.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was subject to the following delimiting
factors:

1. The sample population was 40 at risk students, and 40 control-group students.
2. The research sample was 20 teachers.
3. The research was conducted with teachers and students at one large high school (Sunset High School, Beaverton, Oregon).
4. The researcher gathered virtually all of the data, with the exception of that collected for the purpose of checking inter-rater reliability.
5. Verbal attending behaviors charted were the following:
   a. Accepts the students' feelings.
   b. Praises or encourages the student.
   c. Accepts the students ideas.
   d. Asks the student questions.
   e. Answers questions from the student.
   f. Gives the student directions or commands.
   g. Criticizes the student or justifies authority.
6. Non-verbal attending behaviors charted were the following:
   a. Eye contact.
   b. Body movement/kinesics.
   c. Facial gestures.
   d. Approaching.
   e. Touching.
f. Ignoring the student's attention-getting behavior.

Limitations of the Study

The following should be considered limitations in replicating this study for use in other settings:

1. The student and teacher samples used in this study were drawn from a high school which is predominantly white, and relatively affluent. This high school enjoys strong support from parents who are well educated.

2. The six indicators for the identification of at risk students did not include indicators which might be highly correlated with students at risk from some other geographic areas. For example, pregnancy and drug/alcohol use might be highly correlated factors in some areas.

3. The student population studied included only grades 10-12.

4. Because some of the classes studied were to be "tracked", the students randomly selected for inclusion in the control group may very well have been at risk themselves, thus skewing control group results.
Definition of Terms

At Risk: For the purposes of this study, the term "at risk" students denotes those students who are deemed to be at highest risk of not completing their high school education through graduation.

Verbal Attending Behaviors: A verbal communication exhibited by a teacher which acknowledges an individual student.

Nonverbal Attending Behavior: An observable but unspoken communication exhibited by a teacher which acknowledges an individual student.

Holding Power: The ability of a high school to hold its students in school through graduation.

Early Leavers: Those students who leave, but do not transfer from, a high school before graduation.
CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

A search of ERIC Databases and Dissertation Abstracts revealed hundreds of related entries which addressed the numbers of students who drop out of school, their reasons for dropping out, and alternative programs for those who have already left school. Not found in abundance were studies linking pedagogy with effective at risk intervention strategies. More specifically, useful research information outlining teacher reinforcement techniques for aiding at risk students, while needed, was not in plentiful supply.

Children Who Leave School

Data available outlining numbers of students who have dropped out of schools both nationwide and state-by-state show a wide disparity, and are often less than reliable. These data have often been gathered in a cursory manner, and many lack the empirical data base necessary to be credible. Although information gathering on school dropouts has begun to improve, many educators continue to view these statistics with some skepticism (Mann, 1985).
Among the sources of generally credible information on dropouts was a Carnegie Corporation Report (1986) which pooled information from three major sources of national data on school dropouts: the Census Bureau, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the High School and Beyond study carried out by NCES. After considering the varied collection methods, and synthesizing the results, a dropout rate of 24% appeared to be fairly realistic. While this percentage is high, it does not begin to outline the human and economic losses represented by the 40%, 50%, and even 60% dropout rates reported by many inner-city school districts (Minuchin & Shapiro, 1983, The Institute For Educational Leadership, 1986, and Green & Baker, 1986).

Oregon students do not appear to have been any easier to monitor than their counterparts in other states. Until 1989, Oregon school districts kept records about dropouts or non-graduates without guidance or mandate from the Oregon Department of Education. This lack of congruity resulted in reported dropout figures so disparate that they prove to be of very little use.

An Oregon Department of Education report to the legislature (Martin, 1984) showed an attrition rate of 29.5% in 1980, which gradually improved to 26.6% by 1984. More recently, A Study of Oregon’s Early Leavers (Olsen, 1987) placed the graduation rate in Oregon at 75.3% for
the class of 1985, but did not clearly define the status of the other 24.7%

Dropout percentages have little meaning to educators until they are converted into numbers of individual children who leave school before graduating. The Carnegie Corporation (1986) placed the number of dropouts each year at a minimum of 700,000. This figure reflects the pervasiveness of American schools' failure to meet the educational needs of an inordinately large segment of the school population. Add to that figure 300,000 perpetual truants (Carnegie Corporation, 1986), and the picture of teenagers enjoying their halcyon days in high school, fades for at least a million American students each year. Instead, unemployment and underemployment are the realities of life for those young people who leave school prior to graduation.

The economic consequences of dropping out of school are not confined to the child who leaves prematurely. While the costs are difficult to estimate, Levin (1972) projected the losses of state and federal revenues from 25-34 year-olds who did not graduate to be $71 billion per year. This figure only begins to suggest the magnitude of the monetary loss to society and the economic rewards possible through effective intervention.

Dropping out is not the result of a spur-of-the-moment decision on the part of the student (O'Conner,
1985 and Schreiber, 1979). Dropping out is the end result of a lengthy, considered process. Although a preponderance of children who leave school do so at ages 16 and 17 (Schreiber, 1980, and Mathews, 1987) psychologically and emotionally, the school-leaving process begins long before. Often the behavior of children as young as nine portends their leaving school at a later date (Schreiber, 1979). Many students feel that they do not fit into the school environment at an early age. This isolation often intensifies, until someone either helps the student feel accepted and worthwhile; or no one intervenes, and the student leaves the system.

Who Drops Out

If an accurate profile of the at risk child could be drawn, it would greatly simplify the planning of intervention strategies for limiting dropouts. Unfortunately, students who leave school are often as disparate as they are numerous, and therefore one set of descriptors does not accurately encompass each of them. Some agreement has been reached however, on some of the characteristics which are shared by many dropouts (Schreiber, 1979, Hewitt & Johnson, 1979, Durken, 1981, and Adkins, 1984). Among these are: poor academic performance, low parental education, dislike of school, low participation in extra-curricular activities, low family socio-economic level,
poor self concept, and a broken home (physical and emotional).

One trait that is often attributed to dropouts, but not borne out by empirical data is the concept that those students who drop out are considerably less intelligent than those students who stay in school. Sewell, Palmo, and Mann (1981), and Green and Baker (1986) point out that most students who leave school before graduation have the ability to do passing or even superior work. The ability to do passing work does not however, allow every student to compete on an equitable basis. The lack of parental support, the absence of a quiet place to study, and even the lack of time to study at home puts some students at a decided disadvantage to complete work outside of the classroom.

Children at greatest risk of dropping out of school exhibit learning styles which contrast with those of low risk students. Gadwa and Griggs (1985) point to an extensive 1975 study by Dunn, Dunn and Price in stating that high risk students tend to have learning styles in which the student:

1. Learns best in groups.
2. Needs to move around frequently, and is unable to sit still for long periods.
3. Is very teacher motivated.
5. Prefers evening work over morning work.
6. Is easily bored by daily routine and highly structured learning environments.

Studies by Hewitt and Johnson (1979) and Massey and Crosby (1982) found that a high percentage of dropouts have low levels of self esteem, and often lack a sense of identity. Many view themselves as "born losers". When the characteristics of young people who have negative self-concepts are in turn examined (Silvernail, 1981) they reveal that these children:
   1. Seldom show initiative
   2. Rely on others for direction
   3. Seldom enter new activities
   4. Seldom show spontaneity
   5. Withdraw or become aggressive when frustrated

While these lists of learning styles and characteristics are not surprising to most educators, they do point out a very positive sign as they can all be addressed by positive action in the classroom. Additionally, they also offer an explanation of the individual student's behavior to the teacher seeking help in positively guiding him/her.

The dropout problem has a complex etiology, and students who leave school without graduating offer a multitude of explanations for their leaving. In the Study of Oregon's Early Leavers (Olsen, 1987), boredom
with schooling was cited by 22.9% of the respondents, 10.8% simply disliked school, 10.8% were tired of "hassles" with administrators, and 12.4% laid at least partial blame on disputes with teachers. Students interviewed for a study of early-leavers conducted in the Edmunds, Washington School District (Green & Baker, 1986) cited similar reasons for early leaving. The reasons most often stated were:

1. Teacher alienation or uncaring teachers;
2. lack of attendance;
3. problems at home;
4. school being boring; and personal problems.

In a three-year study conducted at Aloha High School in Beaverton, Oregon (Mathews, 1987), students who had been granted a release from compulsory education were questioned about their reason(s) for leaving. Their responses, followed by the percentage naming that factor (more than one factor could be named), were as follows:

1. Dislike of school (32%)
2. Failing grades (42%)
3. Administrators and teachers (27%)
4. General attitude toward school (25%)
5. Lack of motivation (23%)
6. Boredom (16%)
7. Lack of credits (41%)
8. Feeling of being out of place (14%)
9. Lack of encouragement to stay in school (13%)

Because many of the factors cited in the previous three studies reflect agenda that can be addressed directly in the schools, they offer educators room for optimism, and a challenge for improvement in educational methodology. Indeed, two of the questions in the Aloha study provide insight into needs that need to be met by today's schools. Only 39% of the young people questioned answered in the affirmative when asked if there was a staff member who knew them well, cared about their welfare, and tried to help them succeed. When asked if such a caring staff member might have helped keep them in school, only 6% answered in the negative.

Wehlage and Rutter's investigation of dropouts' perception of schools (Cited in Green & Baker, 1986) found that while socioeconomic status and school performance are important factors in determining who drops out of school, their analysis was that these factors were of less importance than the student's feelings about their teachers' interest in them, and the fairness and effectiveness of discipline within the school. Green and Baker further stated "The point here is that alienation from teachers and the school is a common characteristic among students who drop out" (1986, p. 15).

The move from elementary school to secondary school is a traumatic one for many children. McMillan (cited in
North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1985) reported that most children view this move as one from a warm, secure environment to one that is considerably less warm, and more complicated. When this change is coupled with a continuing increase in graduation requirements and a general emphasis on competition rather than collaboration, a student's estrangement with school may be amplified. Following the elementary grades, much of what schools do is based on competition between students rather than collaboration among them (Fine, 1985). The implication is that the most competitive children will win in competitive situations, and that this process will lead to continual improvement (Weller, 1977). Many children however, simply cannot compete well or find that the competition is simply not equitable because of their circumstances.

The mere size of many urban middle schools and high schools and their attendant impersonal nature, places students at risk of being forgotten, ignored, or lost. The importance of altering this impersonal nature of many schools was addressed by McDill (1985), in a report on the impact of reform recommendations on dropouts. He stated:

"Individualized learning approaches with course content and mode and pace of presentation tailored to the individual student's aptitude and interests (to the extent possible), are of major importance in order to prevent the sense
of academic failure and low self esteem..." (1985, p. 29).

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education report *A Blueprint for Success: Operation Rescue* (1986), presented an outline personalizing America's schools. This outline stated that school personnel should: establish a human connection with students, know students as people, help students navigate the system, assist each student in establishing a positive relationship with an adult, develop trusting relationships with students rather than controlling relationships, understand and accept the uniqueness of each student's culture, accept high school students as adults, and be accessible to students.

Programs aimed at the identification of at risk students and aiding students who have dropped out of school have proliferated greatly in recent years. However, Mann (as cited in Green and Baker, 1986) points out that very little has been learned about techniques that are helpful in dropout prevention, because so little has been done to evaluate specific interventions, in terms of effects. Later, Green and Baker (1986) referred to a similar paucity of documentation on effective at risk strategies revealed by their literature search.

**Personal Power / Locus of Control**

The analogous terms personal power and locus of
control have been at the center of a moderate amount of research concerning at risk children. One hypothesis put forward was that children will be more highly motivated to learn when they perceive that their personal success or failure is a direct product of their own effort, or lack of effort, rather than being the result of forces over which they have little or no control, such as luck, ability, or other people. Nowicki and Strickland (1973) found that school achievement correlated more highly with measures of locus of control than it did with measures of intelligence. Reid and Croucher (1980) found similar results with students who felt a sense of control over their present situations, and their futures. Gerry Conrath (1986) referred to at risk students as "externalizers" who view successful students as "having all the luck, being physically more attractive, getting most of the adult attention....they do not see a relationship between effort and achievement" (p. 22).

When at risk children perceive the chasm between themselves and "successful" students as too wide, they often adopt one of two contrasting coping styles: employment of attention-seeking behaviors, or withdrawal altogether from communicating with others. Peretti (1980) pointed out that many children whose home lives exacerbate either already tenuous school situations frequently attempted to gain school acceptance and positive
social relationships through a variety of attention-seeking behaviors. He asserted that in the school, these children may view teachers as parental substitutes and continue to behave toward them in overtly negative ways. These negative classroom behaviors and their accompanying emotional manifestations need to be understood and dealt with effectively and positively by classroom teachers.

The quiet child offers educators quite another type of pedagogical problem; they are all too easily ignored or forgotten. Thomas Conner (1987) reported that the student who withdraws verbally compounds his difficulty with school, as "oral communication clearly affects the development of basic skills and students' success or failure in school" (p. 524). Quiet children are often overlooked, misunderstood, labeled as "different", and are less likely to be included in the mainstream of school activity. These quiet students need to be made to feel safe, to be acknowledged, and to become a part of classroom activities.

Both the communicatively withdrawn child, and the child who acts out attention-getting behaviors need to have a sense of personal power; to be acknowledged and to have control over their destinies. To this end, John Dewey (1938) wrote of a teacher's relinquishing of personal power of absolute control in order to encourage the exercise of freedom of intelligence, observation, and
judgment in each student.

Control, and the exercise of it within schools, is one of the central issues that continues to face education. Today's schools rely on conformity, behavioral objectives, standards, norms, quantitative measurements, comparisons, and social expectations to evaluate students, and to promote them to higher levels (Mann, 1985) (Conrath, 1986). The difficulty often faced by many at risk children, is that while they are each unique individuals and do not lack intelligence, they have never learned to compete. They do not fit into their school's paradigm of excellence. They are too anomalous for their particular school system to recognize and deal with as individuals.

Several authors address the issue of individualization in education in their writings, including Craig Nauman (1985) who stated:

"If students are to become bonded to society, the extended teacher role is of particular importance. The extended role includes treating the student as an individual, and creating activities which are based on the abilities and interests of the student" (pp. 3).

Robert Amenta (1982), Director of Horizon High School in Bakersfield, California, wrote that the major difference at Horizon is,

"Students frequently remark to visitors, 'they treat us like people here', and parents often remark "I wish I could
have attended a school that cared as much about students as you people do" (pp. 205).

Richard Weller (1977) cogently reinforced the call for acknowledgment of the individual at risk student in education by stating:

"Rather than controlling for individual differences, as in a mechanical treatment, the very aim of education becomes a celebration of these differences" (pp. 21).

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1986) position paper outlined recommendations for collaborative programs aimed at dropout prevention. Among the components were the following:

1. Personalize education.
2. Identify what motivates each student (job, sport, music, computers), and use it.
3. Develop alternative instructional strategies to enable students to succeed and stay in school, when other strategies cease to work.
4. Provide noncomparative instruction; encourage cooperative group learning.
5. Provide individualized instruction and multiple instructional groupings, varying in size, in one room.

Edward McDill (1985, pp. 24) reiterated the view that "an individualized curriculum and instructional approach are crucial" to disengaged students in order to
"prevent the sense of academic failure and low self-esteem". The lack of an individualized instructional program may add significantly to students' feelings of fear, insecurity, frustration, humiliation, and ultimately lack of self worth. Schultz and Helichert (1983) chided pedagogues for their harmful effects on students by saying "In short, they still seem to be engaged in a dehumanizing process perpetuated, in some cases, by the bridling or neglect of their emotional or spiritual needs as a consistent part of their schooling process" (pp. 14).

Potential dropouts report that they believe that a major negative change away from individualized instruction came with their move from elementary school to secondary school. Their perception was that this was a shift from a warm and secure environment, to a less warm and more complicated environment (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1985). Surprisingly, at risk students continue to struggle to find their "place in the sun", and most of them view education as the most important key to getting there (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1985).

Much of the holding power of schools has been found to rest on the students' perceptions about teachers' interest in the individual student, and the fairness of school discipline (Welhage & Rutter, 1986). In
successful programs for at risk youth, teachers extend their roles and create bonds with their students (Nauman, 1985). Teachers alone are able to counteract the large size, bureaucracy, and fragmentation which schools often present to the individual student. The interaction between teachers and students provides the individual attention and the motivation for the student to pursue personal goals (Husen, 1985). When an individual teacher invests in an individual student, the stereotypical model of an adult transmitting knowledge to a less knowledgeable is found to be lacking; the model of a worthwhile client receiving humane attention is closer to reality.

Annus (1986), Carnegie Corporation (1986), Conrath (1986) and Mann (1986) provided evidence that educators with a commitment to humane treatment of each student as a respected individual, can positively impact current dropout figures. There is even optimism both nationally (National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1986) and in Oregon (Yagi, 1986) that those students who have repeatedly failed and become hostile can be turned around. If teachers have high expectations for all students, are professionally accountable for their success, and advocate for students, progress is possible (Carnegie Corporation, 1986). To this end, the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1986)
endorsed the idea of teachers advocating for students by calling for:

1. Developing a trusting relationship, not a controlling relationship.
2. Accepting the uniqueness of each student's culture.
3. Developing a human connection with each student.
4. Helping at risk students negotiate the system.
5. Making each student feel wanted, and helping them care for someone else.
6. Making each student feel needed.
7. Making school a warm, safe, positive experience for students.
8. Listening to students.
9. Seeing problems as challenges.
10. Seeing that all students succeed.
11. Questioning whether the student needs redirecting, or the system needs redirecting.

Although the relationship between students and teachers is widely recognized as critical to the holding power of schools, Minuchin & Shapiro (1983) found that research on students' specific relationships with teachers and other school personnel has been relatively neglected. These two authors further stated that:

"Given the increasing emphasis on developmental theory on the power of
experiences beyond the early years, it is no longer reasonable to ignore the impact of significant figures outside the family. The schools offer an untapped potential for studying the child's relationship to non-parental authorities at different developmental stages" (pp. 238)

Notwithstanding the paucity of research concerning teachers' relationships with students, some telling patterns have emerged. According to Berliner and Gage (1979), teacher responsiveness to students through the use of praise is "...the easiest to use and the most natural of the motivational devices available to a teacher" (pp. 423). Notably, Berman (1972) found that low-ability students require three times as much feedback as those with a high level of ability. The use of praise when working with high risk students was also encouraged by Wittrock (1986), who suggested that these students do not see that their efforts contribute to their success, and that teacher praise increases achievement by demonstrating to students that their efforts have produced positive results. Reinforcing Wittrock's studies, Rosenshine (1971), reported data that indicated that strong criticism of students correlated negatively with achievement. Walberg (1986) summarized a number of research studies which centered on positive teacher practices, and concluded that, of the students studied, there was a 70.6% positive correlation with achievement and the negation of criticism. Subsequently, Brophy and
Good (1986) clarified this information by postulating that

"Perhaps criticism is more frequent among poor classroom managers who are often frustrated by student disruptions, for example, or among poor instructors who are often frustrated by student failure" (pp. 331).

With the widespread emphasis on excellence in schools, and the attendant higher standards, there is little argument that economically, socially, and academically disadvantaged students require more attention and individualized help than ever before. Concomitantly, teachers are being asked to fill more varied roles, and take on more responsibilities than their predecessors. In the absence of an infusion of significantly increased funds to hire more staff to work with the increasingly diverse student population, schools must rely on the development of a more symbiotic relationship between staff and students. This is not a new idea, indeed the dialectical method employed by Socrates to elicit ideas from his students relied on just such a collaborative style. Students were asked evocative questions which required them to consider not only the answer that they chose, but the alternatives as well. This questioning strategy forced students into actively participating in the learning process through direct interaction with the instructor.
Examination of teacher-student interaction is central to the improvement of the teaching/learning process. The impact teacher behaviors have on student's learning needs to be more fully understood if pedagogy is to be enhanced.

A noted pioneer in the examination of teacher behaviors, Ned Flanders (1970) conducted research using the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC), and concluded that in the average classroom teacher talk occupied too much of each hour (approximately 70%), leaving too little time for student talk and interaction. Flanders research included studies which focused on the amount of time during which teachers' exhibited indirect teaching behaviors such as asking questions, praising, accepting and clarifying students' ideas or feelings and more "direct" techniques such as lecturing, giving directions, criticizing, and justifying authority (Flanders, 1965). He went on to urge teachers to be more "indirect" by doing more questioning, and less lecturing. Further, he advocated the use of praise, and the accepting and using of the ideas and feelings of students. In the classroom manual The Role of the Teacher in the Classroom (Amidon & Flanders, 1967), Flanders declared:

"The results of this research seem to indicate that higher standards can be achieved not by telling students what to do in some sort of 'get tough' policy,
but by asking questions and then using student ideas, perceptions and reactions to build toward greater self-direction, student responsibility, and understanding” (pp. 83).

Flanders' model for analysis of classroom interaction, although not specifically aimed at students at risk, may in adapted form, hold potential for gains in their behalf. The research undertaken for this study is modeled to some degree after Flanders' studies, but examines directing of teacher behaviors to students at risk.

Summary

Although much research has been conducted concerning the number of students who leave school prior to graduation, and the social and economic costs of dropouts to this country, little data is available linking teachers' classroom behaviors with at risk intervention.

Oregon schools lose approximately one-quarter of their students, which is fairly congruent with national figures on school dropouts. Although the process of dropping out often begins early in the schooling process, most students actually leave school at the age of 16 or 17.

Contrary to what some believe, those students who drop out are not considerably less intelligent than those students who go on to graduate. They are however, less
likely to have a strong support base, often have a low self concept, and have difficulty achieving success in school. At risk children rely on others more heavily for direction and are therefore more teacher motivated than their peers. Therefore teachers may have strong influence in motivating these students and preventing them from leaving.

The mere size of many schools magnifies the necessity of teachers making an extra effort to know each student individually, to help him be successful, and to strive to make schools less impersonal. Teachers alone are able to counteract the large size, bureaucracy, and fragmentation which schools often present to the individual student.

Although the volume of research linking pedagogy to schools' holding power, Ned Flanders (1965) studies of teachers' behaviors led him to recommend more "indirect" instructional methods such as questioning and praising in lieu of more "direct" ones including lecturing, giving directions, and criticizing. Later, Berliner and Gage (1979), Berman (1972), and Wittrock (1986), encouraged teachers to use praise as a motivational device when dealing with students at risk. No research study contrasting teacher behaviors directed to at risk students and to those students not so identified was found through a search of existing studies.
The essence of teaching is a dialectic in which both parties serve as teacher and student at different times. When the student is talking, the teacher is learning more about the student, and hopefully using that information in making decisions about where to go next. The question of how often at risk students are allowed to or indeed, expected to assume this active role in classrooms merits further study.
CHAPTER III
Methods and Procedures

A descriptive research design was utilized in this study which centered on teacher attending behaviors exhibited in classrooms within one high school. It was the intent of the researcher to study the behaviors directed by teachers to students and to describe the qualitative differences in those behaviors directed to at risk students, and to students not so identified.

The procedure used in conducting this study consisted of the identification of twenty pairs of at risk students (40 total), and the collection of data concerning teacher attending behaviors directed to them and a like number (40) of randomly selected students not identified as being at risk of not graduating from high school. Classes selected as observation sites were those which had a pair of students identified as being at risk, in attendance. The researcher gathered data during two fifty-five minute observations in each classroom selected. A total of forty classroom observations were completed.

Research Site

The site chosen for study was Sunset High School, which was Oregon's largest secondary school, with a student population of over 1,800. Sunset, a three-year
high school, is one of three operated by Beaverton School District #48.

Permission to Conduct Research

Permission to conduct this research was formally requested through the Director of Secondary Education for Beaverton Schools. That permission was granted in February of 1989. A meeting then was held between the researcher and the research site principal; he fully supported the proposal. Data collection was scheduled to take place during March, April, and May of 1989.

At Risk Students

The initial dilemma facing the researcher was the identification of students to be considered at risk for the purpose of this study. The myriad articles and research documents concerning at risk youth provided a comprehensive set of indicators most commonly cited in current related literature from which a working list of indicators was generated. This list was then submitted to a delphi committee composed of ten educators, each of whom works directly with large numbers of children who are at high risk of not completing their schooling through graduation. This committee included: two high school teachers, one high school principal, one high school vice-principal, one former middle-school vice...
principal who is now a university instructor, one high school attendance supervisor, one high school counseling department chairman, one high school substance-abuse counselor, and one alternative school principal.

The list of at risk indicators generated by the researcher was submitted to each of the committee members with instructions to select the twelve which they felt were most useful for the identification of at risk students. Additionally, each member was asked to list any factor(s) which the researcher might have failed to include. Prior to submission of the list to the delphi committee, it had been decided that selection of any at risk indicator by 80% of the committee members would demonstrate sufficient support of that indicator to warrant its inclusion on the list to be submitted to high school counselors for their use in selecting students to be observed. Of the original list of twenty-seven at risk indicators generated by the researcher, six were cited as being very important by at least 80% of the delphi committee, and were thus selected for use. Only two additional indicators were added by committee members, and after re-polling the committee, neither was endorsed by a sufficient number of members to warrant inclusion on the final list of at risk indicators. The final list of at risk indicators chosen by the delphi committee thus included the following:
1. Low academic skills (rather than abilities),
2. Poor attendance pattern,
3. Difficult (fragile) home situation,
4. Low self-esteem/self-worth,
5. Involvement with drugs and/or alcohol,

Teachers may be effective in partially mediating each of the factors chosen by the delphi committee. However, this study was limited to the investigation of the effect of teachers behaviors on students' feelings of self-esteem and self-worth.

At Risk Group Selection

Guided by the list of six at risk indicators selected for use in this study, the high school counseling staff generated a roster of students, each of whom fit the specific criteria. The list generated by the high school counselors included more than one-hundred students who were felt to be appropriate for the at risk group in this study. The deciding factor which governed which students were actually studied was the ability of the researcher to pair them with another at risk group member for observation in a particular class. The researcher chose to observe teacher interaction with two at risk students in each class, allowing the researcher to be less intrusive. Moreover, this facilitated the
completion of data gathering within this facilitated the completion of data gathering within one quarter at the research site. Additionally, by recording teacher attending behaviors as they were directed to more than one at risk student, the researcher was able to monitor whether or not an individual teacher treated both at risk students in a similar manner or based interactions on an individual approach.

**Teachers Chosen for Observation**

Every teacher at the research site was contacted prior to data collection, and each was asked for permission to conduct anonymous research within his/her classroom. Teachers who did not feel comfortable with this research were asked to communicate to the researcher that they did not wish to be included in the study. Their classrooms were then taken off of the list of data collection sites. The staff was very open to observation, and generally welcomed the presence of the researcher in their classrooms. One teacher chose not to participate.

**Locating At Risk Students**

The researcher initially located each at risk student chosen for study by using a photograph supplied by the school counseling department. Their location in
the classroom was then charted graphically on a data collection sheet, and they were assigned a 1 through 40 code number.

**Control Group**

Once the locations of the at risk students were established, the researcher chose a control group counterpart for each by random number selection. No attempt was made to match the sex of the control group student with that of the corresponding at risk student. The seating location of each of these was then also charted, and they were assigned a 101 through 140 code number.

The identity of the at risk and control group students was kept confidential, as were the names of the teachers observed and the subjects they taught. Teachers from every department within the school, with the exception of foreign languages, were observed for this study.

**Verbal Attending Behaviors**

Edmund Amidon and Ned Flanders (1967) provided categories for interaction analysis which proved to be a useful outline for charting teachers' verbal attending behaviors. These categories, and the codes assigned to each for charting in this study, are as follows:
1. Accepts the student's feelings (AF).
2. Praises or encourages the student (P).
3. Accepts the student's ideas (AI).
4. Asks the student questions (Q).
5. Answers question from student (AQ).
6. Gives the student directions or commands (D).
7. Criticizes the student or justifies authority (C).
8. Carries on non-academic conversation with the student (CV).

**Nonverbal Attending Behaviors**

Nonverbal teacher attending behaviors charted in this study were a melange of categories assembled from the writings of Beebe and Masterson (1982), Brammer (1988), and Kell and Corts (1980). Those chosen for use were the following:

1. Eye contact (direct) (E).
2. Body movements/kinesics (gestures or posture which confirm recognition of the student) (B).
3. Facial gestures (which communicate instruction or emotion to the student) (F).
4. Approaching (entering the student's personal space) (PS).
5. Touching (usually a pat on the hand, shoulder or back, laying a hand on the shoulder, arm or
back, or gripping the arm or shoulder of the student) (T).

6. Ignoring student's attention getting behavior (IG).

Data Collection

The researcher entered each classroom before the students arrived, and if possible positioned himself at the side of the room, with a clear view of both teacher and students. As the at risk students entered the room and were recognized by the researcher, their seating locations and that of the teacher were noted on the data-collection diagram. Next, the researcher selected the control group students by using a random numbers chart, and noted their positions on the data collection chart as well.

Each verbal and nonverbal attending behavior perceived by the researcher to be directed by the teacher to either of the at risk or control students was recorded beginning the moment the students entered the room. This was done by recording the code for each of these next to the position of each student involved on the data collection sheet.

Anecdotal Notes

In addition to the gathering of data concerning the
attending behaviors exhibited by the teachers observed, the researcher recorded anecdotal notes regarding the behavior of the teachers and students involved. Anecdotal notes describing the classroom atmosphere during observation times were also kept. These notes included descriptions of teacher and student tardiness and absence, teacher and student outbursts, students being called out of the room or simply leaving class, and general disruptions such as fire alarms or pep assemblies. The rationale for the gathering such anecdotal information was that all pertinent teacher and student behaviors might not be anticipated by the researcher. This information might however, offer insights about these teachers, their relationship to at risk and control group students, and the school atmosphere within which each must operate.

Assembling Data

The researcher assembled all of the charts after the last of the classroom observations was concluded. A frequency chart of each teacher attending behavior for at risk and control group students was then compiled, and contrasts between the two groups were noted. Anecdotal notes from each classroom observation were combined, and their implications were studied. Questions concerning differences in, and connections between attending
behaviors were noted, and anecdotal data were examined and outlined.

Reliability of the Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher conducted all classroom observations, and assembled the data for this study. A second researcher participated in four fifty-five minute classroom visitations with the primary researcher, and used the established procedure to gather data simultaneously with the primary researcher. During the first two classroom visitations, both researchers compared information about the data being gathered as they took note of it. This communication allowed the secondary researcher to ask questions, become more comfortable with the data-collection process, and strengthen his understanding of the data to be gathered. Following these initial visitations, two more observations were made to two new remaining classrooms, and the two researchers gathered data independently. The data collected by both observers during these last two classroom observations were then compared, and their degree of congruency was determined. Finally, the data collected by both researchers, were plotted on a computer matrix, and the result was visually checked to determine the level of correlation.
Summary

Do classroom teachers equitably acknowledge and interact with students identified as being at risk, and with those students who are not so identified? The goal of this study was to gather information regarding this question within one high school in Oregon. The attending behaviors of twenty high school teachers were charted as they were directed to eighty students, half of whom had been previously identified as being at risk of not graduating.

Additionally, anecdotal information regarding school climate was gathered by the researcher. It was hoped that this additional information might identify areas of teacher and student behavior not anticipated, and help explain the context within which specific behaviors took place.

Finally, data gathered concerning teachers' verbal and nonverbal attending behaviors was combined and converted into frequency distributions. The results were then analyzed, and aligned with the information gathered from anecdotal notes.
CHAPTER IV
Presentation of Data

Research Site

Beaverton is a suburb adjacent to Portland, Oregon, and most residents in the district either commute, or are employed by one of the high-tech and electronics companies which flourish in the area. The Sunset attendance area is for the most part affluent, and the school and district enjoys consistently strong community and parental support. The school district has a history of financial stability. Although Sunset High School does have a moderate number of minority students in attendance, its student population is predominantly white, and would not be considered to be culturally diverse.

The choice of this particular site for research proved to be a fortuitous one, as the faculty and administration were highly cooperative with the researcher, and they were affable and non-defensive. Members of the counseling department gave assistance at every juncture, and provided the answers to innumerable necessary questions, such as time schedule and room locations. The students and teachers did not appear to be greatly affected by the presence of the researcher in their classrooms.
Teachers and Students Involved in the Study

The teachers involved in this study were members of all school departments with the exception of Foreign Languages. Of the twenty teachers observed nine were female, and eleven were male.

The forty at risk students who were observed included 23 males and 17 females. The control group was comprised of 20 males and 20 females.

A Sample of Data Gathering

Using categories outlined in figure number one, teacher attending behaviors directed to these students were observed, coded and recorded adjacent to the circle that represented that particular student. Anecdotal information was recorded on the bottom eight lines of the page.

A graphic display of information collected during one of the forty classroom observations completed for this study is included in figure number two. The four numbered circles indicate student locations within the room, and their physical relationship to the teacher. Students in the at risk group were number coded 1 through 40. Control group students were coded 101 through 140.
Figure I

Categories of Teacher Attending Behaviors Charted
(and the code letters used to record them)

AF...Accepts feelings (of the student)
P...Praises or encourages student
AI...Accepts or uses ideas of the student
Q...Asks question of the student
AQ...Answers student's question
D...Gives directions or commands
C...Criticizes student or justifies authority
CV...Carries on conversation with the student
    (not related to the class subject)
IG...Ignores student's attention-getting behavior
E...Eye contact
B...Kinesics (body movement)
F...Facial communication
PS...Approaching (personal space)
T...Touching
Teacher criticized class for low marks on yesterday's quiz. There are 3 female and 18 males in attendance.

Students #27 and 127 did not bring homework. Student #127 was tardy. Student #28 was called out of class at 10:35 by note from Administration. This class does not appear to be tracked. #127 appears to be an at risk student also.
An Analysis of the Sample Data

The following analysis of the sample data from the previous page is included to explain the coding system used, and to offer a brief synthesis for the data gathered.

There were numerous attending behaviors directed by the teacher during this observation. The class was not balanced with regard to sexuality, as there were 18 boys present, but only 3 girls. The class did not appear to be academically tracked. This teacher praised individuals 3 times, and criticized individual students 13 times. At risk students were criticized 8 times, and control students were criticized 5 times. This teacher criticized the entire class once. At risk students were asked fewer questions (2), than the control students (7), but in turn asked more questions (4-2). The at risk students were given directions or commands four times, while control students were given directions or commands once. This teacher entered the personal space of control group students three times, and that of at risk students once.

These data also indicate that the information contained in this particular instance may be somewhat skewed, as one of the at risk students was called out of class with 15 minutes remaining.
Factors Affecting Classroom Observation

The classroom data collection for this research was carried out with relative ease. Nonetheless, a number of events affected the process, and in doing so offered additional data profiling these students and their teachers. Among these events were the following:

* On seven occasions one or both of the students identified as at risk were absent, forcing the researcher to return for an extra visitation.

* On three occasions, one of the students used in the control group was absent, forcing the researcher to return for an extra visit. On each of the subsequent return visits, a control group student was again absent, bringing the researcher back for a fourth visit.

* On two occasions the classroom teacher was absent, and the researcher had to postpone data collection.

* On three occasions, the researcher found that identification of a particular at risk student was difficult. This forced the researcher to ascertain that student's identity by listening to roll-taking, thereby making a third visitation necessary to assure a full-length data gathering session. It should be noted that the at risk students were not obvious in classrooms. Similar to their classmates, their identification was possible only by photograph
or listening to verbal roll call.

In no case did the researcher find it necessary to visit any individual classroom more than four times in order to find the teacher, at risk students, and control group students together to complete two full-length data collection sessions. A total of fifty-eight classroom observations were made by the primary researcher, of which forty were ultimately useful for this study. The remaining eighteen visits were those previously mentioned which resulted in incomplete data gathering.

The researcher found that many of the nonverbal teacher behaviors were very difficult to detect, or impossible to confirm as having been directed to one specific student. Therefore, unless the nonverbal behavior was dramatic, obvious, and clearly directed at one student, the researcher did not record that behavior. The result was that the totals for the following categories were somewhat lower than others:

* Eye contact
* Body movement
* Facial movement

Other categories of teacher attending behaviors for which low recorded totals were noted were not difficult to observe: they were in fact, rare occurrences. These included the following:

* Accepts feelings of the student.
Carried on non-academic conversation with the student.

Touched the student.

Reliability of the Data Gathering Process

Data collection concerning nonverbal attending behaviors directed to a specific individual proved to be the most difficult to confirm. In some instances, nonverbal teacher behaviors were directed at a student so individually that others in the room including the researcher, failed to detect them. At other times it was difficult to detect exactly to whom nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact, were directed. The documentation of teachers' ignoring attention-getting behaviors proved to be equally problematic. A teacher might not have ignored a behavior; he or she might not have been aware that it took place.

The reliability of the data gathering process was confirmed when a second researcher accompanied the primary researcher and gathered parallel data during four classroom observations. Due to the covert nature of many of the teacher behaviors studied, congruity of data gathering by the primary and secondary researchers required two class-long practice sessions. By the third observation session however, the data collected by both researchers showed a high level of agreement. The data
from sessions three and four resulted in a congruency of 87.5% on the behaviors charted. Anecdotal notes were not recorded by the second researcher, and therefore, no comparisons of these were made.

**Totals**

The following charts display the totals of tallies for those teacher attending behaviors directed to students identified as being at risk, and to students in the control group. Each category listed is followed by an example of the language used by the teacher, or of a behavior noted by the researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Risk</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Verbal Teacher Attending Behaviors**

**Accepts Student's Feelings**

Example: "I understand that this material is confusing to you Chris. That can be frustrating. So, how about working with a partner for a day or so?"

Amidon and Flanders (1967), found the acceptance of student's positive or negative feelings to be a rare
occurrence. This teacher behavior was not often found in this study either. However, as seldom as it was observed, those occurrence were noted nearly twice as often when directed to control students than to at risk students.

Accepts Student's Ideas

Example: "Right Jake. Alder and Douglas Fir might very well have a symbiotic relationship."

In this category the figures are nearly even. At risk children offered ideas, and had them accepted nearly as often as did control group students.

Praises Students

Example: "Excellent choice Sandy!"

This teacher behavior was noted in relatively small numbers. Control group students however, were praised three times as often as were at risk students.
At risk students were asked questions slightly more often than were control group students.

Students in the control group had 40% more questions answered when compared to at risk students.

At risk students were given directions or commands 44% more often than were control group students.

Example: This category included criticism which took the form of rhetorical questions such as "Lindsay, what on earth were you thinking?"
At risk students were criticized 625% more often than their control group counterparts.

**Carries on Conversation with Student**
(unrelated to the subject being studied)

This behavior, directed equally to students in both groups, was not often observed in this study.

**Nonverbal Teacher Attending Behaviors**

**Ignores Student's Attention Getting Behavior**

Example: The teacher went right on with a demonstration after a student said "How about showing us how to make a bomb. You know how don't you?"

At risk students were seven times as likely to have attention getting behaviors ignored than were their control group counterparts in this study.
Eye Contact

Example: The teacher makes direct eye contact with one student while making a point directed specifically to him.

While it proved to be extremely difficult to document, direct eye contact was observed more often between teacher and control student than between teacher and at risk student.

Body Movement

Example: The teacher threw up her hands when a student responded with the correct answer to a question.

This teacher behavior was seldom observed during this study.

Facial Expression

Example: The teacher frowned deeply and looked toward the heavens, when asked by one girl "What chapter is that in?"
This teacher behavior was not as uncommon as the figures indicate. However, the researcher found it difficult to be sure to whom the facial expression was directed. Often, it appeared that this communication was for the benefit of the whole group.

**Personal Space**

Example: The teacher approached a female student who was working on a math problem. She knelt next to her and offered assistance.

This was by far the most commonly observed nonverbal teacher behavior in this study. Teachers entered the personal space of control group students approximately twice as often as at risk students.

**Touching**

Example: The teacher put his hand on the shoulder of a young man leading a group discussion. As he left the group, this teacher gave the same boy a pat on the head.
Touching was relatively easy to discern, but was not commonly noted by the researcher.

Table I  
Teacher Attending Behaviors Directed to Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At Risk</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the Data

The focus of this study was the investigation of attending behaviors exhibited by high school teachers in their classrooms. Moreover, these behaviors were examined in order to contrast those directed to at risk students, and to those students not so identified.

Initial examination of the raw data collected revealed that at risk students as a group, were the recipients of nearly as many teacher attending behaviors (291), as were their control group counterparts (306), who were not identified as being at risk. The proximity
of these totals however, proved not to be a precursor to equity when each teacher attending behavior was examined discretely. A qualitative dichotomy between the data on those behaviors directed to at risk and control group students became apparent. Some of these differences were as follows:

* At risk students were praised only one-third as often as were students in the control group (5-15).
* At risk students had questions answered only 71% as often as did control group students (60-85).
* At risk students were given directions or commands 44% more often than were control group students (39-27).
* At risk students were criticized more than seven times as often as were control group students (29-4).
* Teachers ignored seven times more attention-getting behaviors exhibited by at risk students than by control group students (21-3).
* Teachers established direct eye contact (obvious enough for the researcher to identify clearly), only 40% as often with at risk students as they did with control group students (2-5).
* At risk students were only half as likely to have the teacher enter their personal space as were control group students (35-69).
In addition to those differences in data for at risk and control students within specific categories, differences in data between categories was revealing. These intracategory contrasts were evident:

* At risk students were criticized nearly six times as often as they were praised (29-5).
* Control group students were praised nearly four times as often as they were criticized (15-4).
* Collectively, students were criticized nearly twice as often as they were praised (33-19).

**Anecdotal Data**

A summary of anecdotally gathered information concerning students, teachers and classroom atmosphere observed in the course of this study:

**Incidents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At Risk</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student was tardy to class.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student did not bring homework</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student left class early (reason unknown)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When the anecdotal notes gathered during the course of this study were analyzed, they too highlighted the classroom differences for at risk and control group students. Among those differences were the following:

* Control group students were tardy only 66% as often as were at risk students (6-9).

* At risk students left, or were called out of 10% of their classes. In contrast, control group students left or were called out of only 2.5% of their classes.
While students in both the at risk and control groups were judged by the researcher to have been either extremely discourteous or disruptive, only at risk students (2), were asked by the teacher to leave the room.

Teacher Behaviors Directed to Entire Class
(40 classroom visits)

The bulk of the data gathered in this study concerned teacher behaviors directed to individuals. Anecdotal notes concerning teacher behaviors directed to an entire class however, was revealing. The following graphs outline the data:

Teacher Dramatically Praised Whole Class

3 (40 TOTAL)

Teacher Dramatically Chastised Whole Class

8 (3 REPEATS) (40 TOTAL)

Teacher Greeted Students at the Door Prior to Class

5 (2 REPEATS) (40 TOTAL)
Teacher Appeared to be Very Bored During Class

Teacher Told the Researcher "This class is terrible," "This class is my worst ever," "They're beyond help," etc.

Classroom in which very little teacher-student interaction was apparent. When less than eight teacher attending behaviors were charted as being directed to the two at risk students and the two control students combined, the room was charted as having little student-teacher interaction.

General Classroom Atmosphere (20 classrooms studied)

The following graphs describe conditions that were noted anecdotally by the researcher, which could effect teacher behavior and student achievement.

Class Appeared to be Tracked (Low)
Class had Five or Less of One Sex or the Other

67 (20 TOTAL)

Seating

When the researcher analyzed all of the seating charts, he concluded that there were no noticeable differences in where at risk and control group students were located in their classrooms. The at risk students did not often sit near each other, nor did the control group students. Neither group tended to sit especially near the teacher, or distance themselves from the teacher.

When the anecdotal data on teacher behaviors directed to entire classes was charted in combination with that concerning classroom atmosphere, a partial picture of individual classroom teachers emerged. This figure is as follows:
### Teacher Behaviors Directed to Entire Classes/General Classroom Atmosphere

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher #</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Appeared to be Tracked</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Greeted Students at Door</td>
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<td>Teacher Praised Class</td>
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<td>Teacher Chastised Class</td>
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<td>Teacher said &quot;This class is terrible&quot;, etc.</td>
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<td>Teacher Appeared to be Bored</td>
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<td>Very Little Teacher-Student Interaction Took Place</td>
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</table>

* Indicates number of occurrences

* Teachers are grouped to show behavior similarities and are therefore not listed sequentially.
This data graphically contrasts classrooms within the same school. Among these differences are the following:

* 25% of teachers greeted their students at the door, praised their entire class, or did both.

* 50% of the classroom teachers dramatically chastised their class, told the researcher something analogous to "this class is terrible," looked bored, or failed to interact with students to any substantive degree.

* In no case did a teacher who greeted students at the door or praised an entire class, also appear bored, chastise an entire class, or talk negatively about the class to the researcher.

* No teacher who chastised an entire class, made negative comments about a class or appeared bored, also greeted students at the door or praised an entire class.

* Teachers of classes which appeared to be tracked were evenly distributed in terms of the behaviors they directed to classes.

The researcher returned to the data concerning both verbal and nonverbal attending behaviors directed by individual teachers. These behaviors were then tabulated for each of the 20 teachers in the study, and were displayed in the figures on the following two pages.
FIGURE IV

Verbal Attending Behaviors Directed to At-Risk and Control Students by Individual Teachers

(At Risk are Shaded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attending Behavior</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>19</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepts Student's Feelings</td>
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<td>Accepts Student's Ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Praises Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks Student Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Answers Student's Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gives Directions or Commands</td>
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<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criticizes Student</td>
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<td>Carries on Conversation With Student</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Nonverbal Attending Behaviors Directed to At Risk and Control Students by Individual Teachers
(At Risk are Shaded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attending Behavior</th>
<th>Teacher Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ignores Student's Attention</td>
<td>2  8  18  9  17 19  5  14  7  15  6  1  12  11  16  10  13  3  4  20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Contact</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Body Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facial Expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Space</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Touching</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
When these figures were studied together, the most striking element was the comparative lack of attending behaviors exhibited by those ten teachers (in the middle of the figure) who:

* Had dramatically chastised their classes.
* Told the researcher something similar to "This class is terrible."
* Appeared to be bored.
* Appeared to interact very little with their students.

These ten teachers directed 170 verbal and 40 nonverbal attending behaviors to their students. In contrast, the five teachers who praised their classes or greeted them at the door directed 180 verbal and 88 nonverbal attending behaviors to their students. In other words, these five teachers directed more behaviors (268) to their students than did the ten teachers grouped in the middle of the figure. Additionally, the data show that these teachers:

* Seldom accepted students' ideas
* Answered far fewer student questions
* Gave directions or commands more frequently
* Criticized more often
* Ignored student's attention getting behaviors more often
* Rarely entered students personal space
* Almost never physically touched students.
Summary

This research initially sought to explore the differences in attending behaviors which teachers direct to at risk students, and to those not so identified. The data developed by this study however also revealed trends in teacher behaviors directed to entire classes, which are as revealing as those concerning at risk and control students.

Highlighting the data on at risk students were the findings that in this study, these students were praised less often, but criticized more than seven times more often as their control group counterparts. Additionally, these at risk students had attention getting behaviors ignored seven times as often, and were approached only half as often as were their control group classmates. Differences between behaviors directed to at risk and control students were not in such sharp contrast in some categories, but were nevertheless present. While students in both groups were asked nearly the same number of questions by teachers, the at risk students had 41% fewer questions answered.

The anecdotal data gathered in this study, and its connection with the data on teacher behavior directed to individual students was revealing. A dichotomy emerged, with half of the teachers observed either chastising their classes, making derogatory remarks about their
classes, looking bored in their classes, or failing to interact with their classes. Other teachers praised their entire classes, greeted them at the door, or did both. Those teachers who praised or greeted their classes also directed more attending behaviors to their students.
CHAPTER V
Conclusions

Within large high schools, feelings of personal importance and belonging do not come readily to each student. If students feel alone, isolated, and unrecognized, the holding power of these schools will be greatly diminished. It may be, however, that school climate rather than school size is most central to the ability of a school system to hold its students through graduation. The nature of this climate is greatly determined by the teachers and the behaviors that they direct to students.

This study examined teacher's classroom behaviors at one large high school in an attempt to determine if these behaviors conveyed a message of personal caring and positive expectations of each student. The data that this study provided appears to cast some measure of doubt on the consistent provision of such a message.

The teacher attending behavior data and anecdotal data gathered from this study was more revealing when it was juxtaposed with those data outlined in a previous study (Mathews, 1987) conducted at a comparable high school within the same school district three years earlier. When high school students who had already
dropped out were asked in that study if there was a staff member who knew them well, cared about their welfare, and tried to help them succeed, only 39% answered in the affirmative. When those who had answered no to that question were asked if such a caring staff member might have helped to keep them in school, only 6% replied that it would not. Additionally, only 45% of those students indicated that they had been given as much help and attention as their classmates. When these responses from students who had already dropped out are viewed in tandem with this study of teacher behaviors directed to at risk students, a possible link between these two factors emerges. Related questions for educators now appear to be:

* Are some student's perceptions that they are unimportant, isolated in the classroom, and relatively ignored by their teachers congruent with what is actually happening within a wide spectrum of high school classrooms?

* Are these feelings being reinforced by teacher behaviors?

**Implications**

The data from twenty classrooms in this study offer a mixed answer to these questions. While teachers directed nearly as many attending behaviors to at risk
students as they did to control group students, these behaviors were qualitatively dissimilar. At risk students had their feelings accepted less often, were approached by the teacher only half as often, and were rarely praised. At the same time, these students were given directions or commands more often than control students, and were criticized more than seven times as often.

**Praise and Criticism**

The data from this study indicate a contrast in the levels of criticism and praise directed to at risk students, and students not so identified. At risk students were rarely commended for their efforts or accomplishments. However they were criticized for their classroom behaviors and academic failures nearly six times as often as they were praised. The data from this study suggest that the following questions concerning teachers' use of praise and criticism are appropriate for further inquiry:

* Does the data from this study indicating a disparity in the levels of praise and criticism directed to at risk and students at risk, consistent with data that might be collected in high schools which differ in size, location, economic base and ethnic makeup?
* What specific student behaviors are most often criticized? Praised?
* Are teachers aware of the levels of praise and criticism which they direct to their students?
* Are students aware of the levels of praise and criticism that are directed at them and their peers?

Attention-Getting Behavior

At risk students in this study had attention-getting behaviors ignored by their teachers seven times more often than did their control group counterparts. Perhaps the behaviors were a means by which these students combated personal feelings of aloneness and isolation. Questions which arose from these data concerning teachers' responses to students' attention-getting behaviors include:

* Are all students' attention-getting behaviors generally ignored by teachers in high school classrooms?
* Are attention-getting behaviors generally ignored at the elementary school level?
* What motivates students to use attention-getting behaviors?
* Should these behaviors be ignored?

Personal Space

Probably the most dramatic differences in the data gathered from this research were those between the number
of times teachers entered the personal space of at risk and control group students. Control students were approached an average of nearly once per class meeting, at risk students were approached less than once every two class meetings. Most students in these classrooms were certainly not often approached, it appeared that if those in the at risk group felt alone and isolated, the data indicated they were justified in feeling so. The following questions then seem appropriate for further study:

* Is physical avoidance of at risk students common in other high schools? Middle schools? Elementary schools?

* Is the sense of personal unspecialness held by at risk students reinforced by teachers' approaching behaviors?

* Are students who physically isolate themselves in the classroom the same students who are most commonly avoided by teachers?

Anecdotal Data

The anecdotal data gathered within these twenty classrooms delineated a dichotomy which may exist within many schools. One group of teachers may greet their students enthusiastically, praise their successes, work with them one-on-one, direct personal attention to every child every day, and be accessible to students
continually. In contrast, other students may encounter teachers who chastise them often, praise them rarely, interact with them infrequently, or simply appear to be bored with teaching. This situation outlined by both teacher attending data and anecdotal data in this study raised the following questions:

* Do teachers of high achieving and moderately achieving students direct the same levels of attending behaviors to their students that teachers in this study directed to their at risk students?

* Do students who are at highest risk and need a more personalized education, placed into classrooms with teachers whose teaching styles guarantee high levels of teacher-student interaction? Could they be?

* Are teachers aware of their own classroom behaviors? Of other teachers' classroom behaviors?

* Would teachers benefit from knowing data concerning their own attending behaviors, and the mood which they project in the classroom?

* Can peer coaching increase the quantity and quality of attending behaviors which teachers direct to their students?

Close

Conducting educational research at this high school was a singular event. Its staff members were each
unique, as were each of the students that they taught. Indeed, every school has just such a unique staff and student body.

It was the uniqueness of each student, staff member and school that was the essence of this research. Was this singularity of each student recognized and acknowledged? Was the uniqueness of each student and teacher addressed in order to adapt pedagogy to individual needs? Did this lack of uniformity go unrecognized or even diminish the attention paid to that individual student and limit the educational opportunities offered?

Further studies should be conducted at high schools in other locations, centering on teacher attending behaviors and their effect on the educational success of at risk children. These further studies would provide additional data which could be used to develop a clearer understanding of the extent to which teachers are acknowledging their student's individual needs and are encouraging learning through the judicious use of verbal and nonverbal attending behaviors.

Recommendations

Research conducted at the outset of this study yielded a number of factors often used to identify those students who are most at risk of not completing their
education through high school. These are the students
who have an acute need for attention, help and encourage-
ment from teachers. When students have a difficult home
life and little parental support, it is not surprising
that they look to teachers for encouragement. Likewise,
it is not uncommon for those students whose friends have
dropped out, to feel isolated, to avoid school, and to
become the subject of school disciplinary action. These
academic skills are often lower than other students' and
their self esteem is low. The data from this study sug-
gest that for these students, attention, encouragement
and sense of connectedness with adults was not always
available.

The results of this study suggest several steps
which schools can take which could strengthen their
ability to hold students through graduation. These are
the following:

* Train teachers to be more aware of the students
  identified as being acutely at risk.

* Establish a set of indicators to be used in the
  identification of those students who are most
  acutely at risk.

* Allow teachers, through peer coaching, to become
  aware of their own attending behaviors.

* Expect all staff members to be judicious in their
  use of criticism, and use criticism only in planned
balance with praise.
* Encourage all teachers to use praise as a motivator.
* Encourage teachers to work to utilize those behaviors which acknowledge the individual student.

A Personal Viewpoint

My first interest in doing research on at risk students and teachers' behaviors directed to them evolved slowly from a sense of personal guilt. With disquieting regularity I was given a form stating that a specific student had been released from compulsory education. Seldom were these students among my "favorites". To the contrary, all too often I found that I barely knew them. I frequently had to consult my roll book to confirm that I was associating the name on the drop form with the correct face in my class. I did not know my own students. Did any adult in the school know them?

Personal interviews conducted during three summers (Mathews, 1987) with students released from compulsory education substantiated from the students' viewpoint what I had felt as a teacher: A majority of these students felt that they were not well known by any adult in the high school that they had dropped out of. They were anonymous. They were not individually important in a school of 1,600 students. A lack of parallel responses from a control group of students in this earlier study
made data from this study difficult to interpret. Perhaps students who had not left school would have expressed the same levels of personal isolation.

I did find that the feelings of being unknown and unspecial expressed by at risk students in this early less formal research were consistent with the data later outlined by my study of teachers' classroom behaviors. Here teachers did not direct attending behaviors equitably to all students. At risk students were criticized and given directions more often than control students. They were ignored more consistently, approached by teachers only half as often as their counterparts, and were only rarely praised. At risk students do appear to have been treated as if they were less special and less important than their peers.

Perhaps the most revealing data to come from this study of teachers' classroom behaviors does not directly describe how teachers treated at risk students in contrast to control students. Rather, it was the charting of specific teachers behaviors and anecdotal data concerning classroom atmosphere which revealed that some teachers appear to make little effort to build a positive atmosphere within their individual classrooms. In these classrooms students' feelings of self worth is seldom strengthened. In some classrooms indifference or general negativism may await all students. While
students who are self-confident and have a strong sense of personal locus of control find their time in these classrooms to be unrewarding and tedious, at risk students who need extra support and encouragement may very well find these classrooms to be a strong indication that they are unrecognized or unwanted within the school community.

I now believe that each teacher needs to put a higher priority on building a caring classroom atmosphere that assures recognition for each student each day. While this is by no means an easy assignment, I feel that though self appraisal and peer support that every teacher can make progress toward this goal. School administrators also need to recognize that a positive classroom and school wide atmosphere is imperative for increasing school holding power. They must assume a strong leadership role in encouraging and even requiring a concerted move to just such a positive school atmosphere.

Continued research on teachers' attending behaviors needs to be undertaken and broader data gathered. However, it is the self-search that each teacher and administrator conducts of their personal attitudes and behaviors that will change classroom atmosphere, encourage each student to succeed, and increase the holding power of schools.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


