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**Falling Behind:
Characteristics of
Students in Federally
Funded Dropout
Prevention Programs**

*Part Two: Restructuring
Projects*

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*Philip Gleason
Mark Dynarski*

A Research Report from the School Dropout
Demonstration Assistance Program Evaluation

Submitted to:

U.S. Department of Education
Planning and Evaluation Service
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Room 3141, FOB6
Washington, DC 20202-4246

Submitted by:

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
P.O. Box 2393
Princeton, NJ 08543-2393
Telephone: (609) 799-3535
Facsimile: (609) 799-0005

Project Officer:
Audrey Pendleton

Project Director:
Alan Hershey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Schools are complex settings where attitudes, values, and characteristics of students, parents, and teachers come together to shape the environment for learning and student growth. Understanding this complex mix can help efforts to improve schools. This report presents information about students, parents, and teachers in schools that are part of the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). SDDAP consists of 85 local dropout prevention projects funded for three to four years beginning in 1991 and 1992. Among these projects, 25 were selected during the 1991-1992 school year to participate in an in-depth evaluation being conducted for ED by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR). Eighteen of the in-depth study projects were "targeted" projects providing services to a defined population of students who had dropped out or appeared likely to drop out. The remaining seven were "restructuring" projects, promoting schoolwide reform to reduce dropping out and to improve other school outcomes. This second volume of the two-volume report focuses on five restructuring projects. The first volume describes the characteristics of students in the targeted projects included in the impact analysis.

An important purpose of this volume is to describe students attending schools that are part of restructuring projects, focusing on the nature and extent of problems that students bring to and experience within their schools. The ultimate aim of this description is to assess whether SDDAP restructuring efforts successfully reach at-risk students. Another purpose is to describe the educational environment in restructuring schools, from the point of view of students, parents, and staff.

The restructuring efforts were designed to alter the school environment in clusters of schools, which include a high school and its feeder elementary and middle schools. There is substantial variation in the restructuring efforts implemented in the five sites, however. Three of the projects included a significant staff development component. Two utilized "family groupings" of students, with block scheduling and specific administrators and counselors assigned to each family group. Two projects emphasized efforts to smooth student transitions between the middle and high school levels. Finally, four of the five projects provided additional support services to address the needs of specific types of students.

There is also some diversity in the student populations at the five restructuring sites. This diversity comes across most strikingly in the racial/ethnic distribution of the student body, which ranges from 90 percent black in one site to 85 percent Hispanic in another. The sites are also diverse in terms of their students' family backgrounds, performance in school, and perceptions of the school environment. In terms of a measure of student risk of school failure, students in Grand Rapids and Phoenix are the least likely to be at risk, while those in Dallas and Philadelphia are most likely. Student characteristics presented in this executive summary are measured across all sites, but appendixes to the full report provide details on individual sites.

The data used in this report come from three different sources: (1) students, (2) parents, and (3) staff. The student sample consists of 4,194 students who entered the 7th and 10th grades during

the 1992-1993 (cohort 1) and 1993-1994 (cohort 2) school years. For each student in the sample, MPR attempted to collect baseline questionnaire data and records data. The baseline questionnaire was administered during the late fall and winter of the year students were in the 7th or 10th grade. The response rate on the student baseline questionnaire was 81 percent, and records data are complete for 96 percent of the student sample. A parent questionnaire was sent to the homes of all cohort 1 students who completed baseline questionnaires in spring 1993. The response rate on the parent questionnaire was 57 percent. The staff questionnaire was administered in spring 1993 to all restructuring school staff who taught at least one course during the 1992-1993 school year. The response rate on the staff questionnaire was 85 percent.

To assess how students in SDDAP restructuring projects compare with students nationally, we also examined data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS). The NELS data set is a nationally representative sample of 25,000 students who were in eighth grade in 1988 and who have been interviewed at two-year intervals since then. We use the NELS 8th-grade sample as a benchmark for students in restructuring middle schools and the NELS 10th-grade sample as a benchmark for students in restructuring high schools.

SDDAP restructuring schools are not representative of all schools in the United States or even of all urban or high-poverty schools. They are a specially selected group of schools located in large urban areas that enroll a large number of poor and minority students and have a significant dropout problem. Our examination of these schools provides insights into problems faced by many schools across the country, however.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

Background Characteristics

- ***Racially/Ethnically Diverse.*** Among all students in restructuring middle schools, 42 percent are black and 37 percent are Hispanic. More than a third of restructuring middle school students first learned to speak a language other than English.
- ***Disadvantaged Families.*** Between 40 and 50 percent of restructuring school students live in families that do not have two parents present, and a third of students have at least one parent who is a high school dropout. These percentages are much higher than the national averages.
- ***High Self-Esteem.*** Restructuring school students' measured self-esteem is as high as or higher than the self-esteem of 8th and 10th graders nationally, on average. Nearly all restructuring school students report that they feel good about themselves and feel they have much to be proud of.
- ***External Locus of Control.*** Restructuring school students do not feel that they are in control of their own destiny. They are more likely than the national average to feel that external events control their destiny, or that "chance and luck are very important in life."

- **High Aspirations.** Restructuring school students have very high educational aspirations. Nearly all say they want to graduate from high school, and just under three-fourths say they want to get a college degree. On the other hand, only 64 percent say they are “very sure” that they will graduate from high school.

School Performance and Activities

- **Behind Grade Level.** Just under a quarter of restructuring school students have been retained in grade at least once, and nearly a third are behind their expected grade level. Restructuring school students are about twice as likely as students nationally to be behind grade level.
- **Frequently Absent.** In restructuring high schools, nearly a third of students are absent more than 20 days a year. Attendance is better in restructuring middle schools, with only 17 percent absent more than 20 days a year.
- **Average Grades and Low Test Scores.** If grades are used as a measure of performance, restructuring school students do about as well as students nationally. For example, 37 percent of restructuring middle school students report receiving A’s, or A’s and B’s, compared with 39 percent of students nationally. On nationally formed standardized tests, however, this finding suggests that restructuring school students perform poorly, with the majority scoring in the bottom third.
- **Little Involvement in School Activities.** Students in restructuring middle schools are much less likely than students nationally to participate in extracurricular activities. For example, fewer than 40 percent of restructuring middle school students participate in school sports, compared with more than 60 percent of students nationally. On the other hand, restructuring school students are more likely than students nationally to spend their time watching television.

Analysis of Educational Risk

One way to summarize the characteristics of SDDAP restructuring school students is to estimate the number who are at risk of school failure. Our approach is to choose a set of “risk indicators” and to define a student to be at risk if he or she has some of these indicators. We used two definitions of educational risk. The first was developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and includes six indicators that reflect students’ socioeconomic characteristics. The second uses three NCES risk indicators augmented by indicators representing students’ past successes and failures in school, as well as variables reflecting the degree to which students feel a sense of “school membership.”

The NCES defined students to be at risk if they had at least two of the following six risk indicators: (1) living in a single-parent family, (2) family income below \$15,000, (3) being home alone for more than three hours a day, (4) one or both parents without a high school diploma, (5) a

sibling who has dropped out of school, and (6) limited English proficiency. According to this definition, 36 percent of restructuring middle school students and 31 percent of restructuring high school students are at risk, compared with 20 percent of 8th graders and 16 percent of 10th graders nationally.

Our expanded definition of risk considered students to be at risk if they had at least two of the following eight indicators: (1) living in a single-parent family, (2) being from a family receiving public assistance, (3) limited English proficiency, (4) being behind expected grade level, (5) low grades, (6) disciplinary problems in school, (7) children of their own, and (8) an “external” locus of control. Under this definition of risk, 62 percent of restructuring middle school students and 57 percent of restructuring high school students are at risk, compared with 37 percent of 8th graders and 31 percent of 10th graders nationally.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Restructuring is designed to produce better school outcomes by changing the environment of schools. We examine three aspects of the restructuring school environment at the time restructuring efforts were just getting under way: (1) the social and academic environment, (2) the disciplinary environment, and (3) the role of parents in the educational process. We look at each aspect from the perspective of students, parents, and staff.

Social and Academic Environment

We describe the social environment of a school mainly in terms of the relationships between students and teachers—for example, whether they get along, whether teachers give students support and respect, and whether teachers (and other staff members) “care” about students. We describe the academic environment in terms of the degree to which the setting is conducive to learning. We measure this using student and teacher perspectives on whether students work hard, get extra help from teachers, and feel that their classes are interesting and make them think.

- ***Students: Teachers Provide Support and Respect.*** Nearly all SDDAP students report that teachers pay attention to them and are willing to give them extra help. They also feel that people at the school care about them.
- ***Students: Mixed Feelings About How Hard They Work.*** The majority of SDDAP students report that “most students at [their] school wanted to learn as much as they could.” However, 30 to 40 percent disagree with this statement. In addition, students in focus groups were quick to point out a lack of motivation on the part of their fellow students.
- ***Parents: Positive Feelings About School Climate.*** Parents view the academic environment of restructuring schools more favorably than their children do. Four out

of five believe that their child works hard in school, and a similar percentage feel that the school is teaching their child "a lot."

- **Staff: Students Are Unmotivated.** Restructuring school teachers strongly believe that students do not want to learn. Only 20 percent report that students place a high priority on learning. Perhaps as a result, four out of five teachers say that teacher morale is low.

One potential explanation for the difference in students' and staff members' feelings about their schools' social and academic environment is that students may focus on the social part of the environment while teachers focus on the academic part. Students may care more about the support and respect they get from teachers than about the degree of academic rigor in their classrooms. Furthermore, they may have high opinions about their schools' academic environment because their grades are high and they have no external point of reference. Most teachers, on the other hand, do have an external point of reference (previous teaching experience) and are disappointed because they feel they are not effective in motivating their students to learn.

Disciplinary Environment

We describe the disciplinary environment in terms of the degree to which restructuring schools maintain order among students. We examine whether students, parents, and teachers feel that there are serious behavior problems among students, problems that may interfere with the educational process. We also examine whether individual students--the respondents to the baseline survey--have behaved in ways that have led their school to take disciplinary action.

- **Students: Poor Behavior by Other Students Disrupts Learning.** More than 60 percent of restructuring school students feel that disruptions by other students get in the way of learning at their school, and more than a third report that they do not feel safe at school. These students are much more likely than students nationally to report that specific behavioral problems, such as drug use or vandalism, are moderate or severe at their school. They are also more likely than students nationally to report getting into trouble at school themselves.
- **Staff: Behavioral Problems Are Relatively Common.** A large proportion of restructuring school teachers report serious disciplinary problems at their schools. For example, a quarter report that students bring weapons to school, and about half report that vandalism is a moderate or serious problem. Teachers are less likely than students to report some types of behavioral problems, but this difference probably arises because of differences in the way these questions were asked of the two groups.

The Role of Parents

Parents may be directly involved in their children's educational experiences at home, where they can encourage their children to complete their homework or talk to them about what is happening at school. Parents' involvement may also come through school visits or conversations with teachers or counselors.

- ***Students: Parents Are Involved.*** The parents of restructuring school students are as involved in their schooling as the parents of students nationally, according to many student-based measures. For example, 57 percent of restructuring middle school students report that their parents attended a school meeting during the previous year, compared with 56 percent of eighth graders nationally. Similarly, 68 percent report that their parents spoke with their teachers or counselors, compared with 67 percent nationally.
- ***Parents: We Work to Help the School.*** Nearly all parents of restructuring school students report that they had some contact with their child's school. Typically, this contact was about schoolwork, behavior, or attendance. In addition, two-thirds of parents agreed that "parents work together to help the school."
- ***Staff: Parents Don't Hurt, but They Don't Help Either.*** Restructuring school teachers send mixed signals regarding their feelings about parent involvement in their school. They report having an average of four contacts per year with the parents of just under half of their students. About half of the teachers report that their relationship with parents is cooperative. On the other hand, fewer than half say that they receive support from parents for the work they do.

The picture that emerges from these findings suggests that how one views a high-poverty school depends strongly on perspective. Students believe their school cares about them but other students are disruptive and do not want to learn. Teachers also believe some students are disruptive but also believe most students do not want to learn. Parents believe schools are good places for their children and that they are working to support schools. Teachers do not believe parents support them, however.

Efforts to build support for improving schools have to address the dissonance in these findings. Teachers might feel more effective if students were more motivated to learn. Students, however, believe they are motivated to learn but other students are not. Teachers may want more support from parents, but parents already believe they are supporting teachers and the school. Based on these findings, it seems clear that the first step to build support for improving schools is for students, parents, and teachers to communicate their perceptions to each other to see the school from each other's eyes. Changes can then emerge from a common understanding of issues facing the school and ways to address them.

I. THE RESTRUCTURING INITIATIVES

Schools are complex settings where attitudes, values, and characteristics of students, parents, and teachers come together to shape the environment for learning and student growth. Understanding this complex mix can help efforts to improve schools.

This report presents information about students, parents, and teachers in schools that are part of the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). SDDAP consists of 85 local dropout prevention projects funded for three to four years beginning in 1991 and 1992. Among these projects, 25 were selected during the 1991-1992 school year to participate in an in-depth evaluation being conducted for ED by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR). Eighteen of the in-depth study projects were “targeted” projects providing services to a defined population of students who had dropped out or appeared likely to drop out. The remaining seven were “restructuring” projects, promoting schoolwide reform to reduce dropping out and to improve other school outcomes. A major component of the in-depth evaluation is an analysis of project impacts on students. The impact analysis focuses on 15 targeted and 5 restructuring projects (3 targeted projects and 2 restructuring projects were included in the evaluation’s implementation analysis but not in the impact analysis). This second volume of the two-volume report focuses on the five restructuring projects. The first volume describes the characteristics of students in the targeted projects included in the impact analysis.

A critical question for any government program is the degree to which its services reach those most in need of them. To answer this question, our analysis explores the degree to which SDDAP participants show evidence of academic failure or the potential for academic failure. In other words, we address the question of whether restructuring efforts were undertaken in schools with large

proportions of at-risk students. The analysis also describes the educational environment of restructuring schools. We examine this environment from the perspectives of students, parents, and teachers. Most of the report depicts SDDAP restructuring efforts collectively, although we describe a few key differences in student characteristics across the five projects later in this chapter.

To provide a benchmark for interpreting data on SDDAP students, we also analyze characteristics of students who were part of the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS). By design, the SDDAP questionnaires overlapped with items in NELS questionnaires.¹ The overlap allows us to examine the extent to which SDDAP participants are similar to a nationally representative sample of students along a variety of dimensions.

A. OVERVIEW OF SDDAP AND THE EVALUATION

The number of programs designed to help at-risk students complete high school underscore the fact that educators at the federal, state, and local levels believe that encouraging students to complete high school is an important goal. A 1986 nationwide survey by the U.S. General Accounting Office identified more than 1,000 programs serving dropouts or youths at risk of dropping out (U.S. General Accounting Office 1987). Concern about the dropout problem increased during the 1980s, however, as data indicated that the dropout rate continued to be highest among minority populations and that dropouts' low educational attainment and workforce readiness were jeopardizing American producers' efforts to compete in world markets (National Center for Education Statistics 1992).

To bolster the federal role in dropout prevention, Congress created the SDDAP in 1988, under Title VI of the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of

¹The overlap was not exact for some items. Appendix C of the first volume of this report (Gleason and Dynarski 1994) summarizes differences in SDDAP and NELS questionnaire items.

1988 (P.L. 100-297). The program consisted of discretionary grants from ED to local education agencies (LEAs) and community organizations to establish and demonstrate:

- Effective programs to identify potential dropouts and to prevent them from dropping out
- Effective programs to identify and encourage dropouts to reenter school and to complete their education
- Effective early intervention programs designed to identify at-risk students
- Model systems to collect and report information on students who dropped out and on their reasons for doing so

Under the 1988 SDDAP, ED awarded grants to 89 local dropout programs for two-year periods. Legislation passed in 1991 extended the program for a third year.

Subsequent events heightened interest in the dropout problem. In November 1989, the National Governors' Association and the President met to establish six national performance goals for education. The second goal stated that "By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent." Consistent with this goal, Congress passed legislation in 1991 creating a new SDDAP program extending through 1995, stating that "Congress has been committed to achieving this goal [of a 90 percent completion rate] for a number of years. The School Dropout Demonstration Program is one of its most important tools for achieving this goal" (U.S. House of Representatives 1991).

For the SDDAP authorized by the 1991 legislation, ED specified that programs applying for funds were to replicate or expand successful programs operated by host organizations. The programs were also to operate in schools or areas with very high numbers or percentages of dropouts. Eighty percent of funds were reserved for LEAs, community organizations, or education partnerships that applied for funds either as *targeted* programs, which were to provide specified services to a defined

population of eligible youths within a school or community organization, or as *restructuring* programs, which were to undertake systemic changes to improve the overall learning environment of schools attended by large numbers of disadvantaged students. The remaining 20 percent of funds were available to fund *field-initiated* innovative programs. Funds were allocated to categories defined by whether programs were operated by LEAs, community organizations, or educational partnerships, and by the size of the LEAs.²

ED required targeted and restructuring programs to include specific components to promote improved student outcomes:

- **Targeted Programs.** Targeted programs were expected to include (1) curricular approaches emphasizing accelerated and context-rich learning; (2) culturally sensitive outreach to help parents create a more supportive home learning environment; (3) systematic monitoring of attendance; (4) counseling, social support, and career awareness services; and (5) increased linkages among schools, the business community, and other community agencies.
- **Restructuring Programs.** Restructuring programs were expected to include (1) administrator and teacher autonomy to determine curriculum and instructional strategies, including accelerated learning and alternatives to standard retention practices; (2) efforts to create a positive school climate; (3) systematic monitoring of attendance; (4) coordinated services for at-risk students; (5) greater communication among elementary, middle, and high schools to facilitate the transition of students; (6) greater parental and community involvement; and (7) staff training.

There were no specific requirements regarding the components of field-initiated programs.³

²An educational partnership was defined as an LEA teamed with one or more of the following types of organizations: businesses, community organizations, nonprofit private organizations, institutions of higher education, state educational agencies, state or local public agencies, private industry councils established under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), museums, libraries, or broadcasting stations.

³ED also specified two priorities for selecting projects to be funded: (1) early intervention, and (2) parental involvement. For projects of comparable merit, preference was given to those that proposed to conduct (1) intervention activities for elementary school or early middle school students, or (2) activities leading to greater parental involvement in the education process. In addition, ED
(continued...)

ED specified a two-part strategy for evaluating SDDAP, with a subset of programs selected for in-depth evaluation and the remaining programs expected to conduct evaluations using their own resources. Technical assistance to local evaluations was to be provided as needed by the national evaluation contractors. From the set of 65 programs initially funded by ED, the evaluation team selected 20 targeted and 5 restructuring programs for the in-depth evaluation. The evaluation involved extensive site visits by evaluation staff to document program implementation, as well as significant data collection activities by program and evaluation staff to support analyses of program impacts.⁴

The 25 in-depth programs were selected on the basis of on-site observations by evaluation staff and discussions with program directors. The objective was to select sites that were capable of implementing programs of substantive interest from a policy perspective. The sites also had to be able to meet the sampling and data collection requirements of the in-depth evaluation. For targeted programs, these requirements included the ability to implement experimental designs, with random assignment of program applicants to treatment and control groups. In addition, the samples assigned to treatment and control groups at targeted program sites has to be sufficiently large to produce statistically reliable estimates. Of the 18 targeted programs initially selected for the in-depth evaluation, 15 were eventually able to implement a random-assignment design. All seven restructuring programs were included in the in-depth analysis, but only five of these were selected

³(...continued)
encouraged applications from projects proposing to conduct activities to reduce dropout rates among Hispanic Americans.

⁴ED awarded new grants to 20 programs in the 1992-1993 school year, the second year of program funding, bringing the total number of programs in SDDAP to 85. However, because the in-depth evaluation sites were selected in the first year of grant funding, none of the programs that were added in the second year is included in the in-depth evaluation.

for the impact analysis. These five restructuring programs were judged to be large enough to support the impact analysis, and the restructuring intervention was structured in a way that allowed comparison schools to be selected.

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESTRUCTURING PROGRAMS

The five restructuring projects selected for the impact analysis operate in Dallas; Grand Rapids; Philadelphia; Phoenix; and Santa Ana, California. Although the designs of these projects are based on a set of general guidelines, the actual restructuring efforts vary from site to site. There is also variation across restructuring projects in the student characteristics and the school climates. This variation is masked throughout much of the report because data from the five sites are aggregated to present a more general view of students in restructuring schools.⁵ This section describes the restructuring efforts in each of the five sites and summarizes the differences in student characteristics across the sites.

The five restructuring efforts sought to alter the school environment in clusters of schools (see Table I.1). In most cases, the school clusters included schools of a particular feeder pattern, in which students from the feeder elementary and middle schools later attend a particular high school. Although most efforts concentrated on changing the school structure, they also provided additional support services to address the needs of specific segments of students.

- ***The Dallas project***, a partnership between the Dallas Independent School District and Southwest Texas State University, began with an initiative called School-Centered Education, an adaptation of the Comer Process developed at Yale University. Staff and

⁵Because of variation in student characteristics across sites, the overall mean of a particular data item can be sensitive to missing data. For example, if data from a given site are missing for a particular item, the value of the overall mean depends on which site has the missing data. This sensitivity, which occurs with items collected from school records rather than items collected from student questionnaires, is noted in the text as appropriate.

TABLE I.1

CHARACTERISTICS OF SDDAP RESTRUCTURING INITIATIVES

Location/Grantee/Enrollment	Cluster Schools	Project Description
Dallas, TX Southwest Texas State University ^a Dallas Independent School District Total Enrollment: 135,000	Spruce High School Comstock Middle School Florence Middle School 11 elementary schools	Staff development in Comer model or other school-based decision making in all schools A school-based health clinic in the high school and two middle schools Day care for teen mothers' children Extra counselors and social workers
Grand Rapids, MI Grand Rapids Public Schools Total Enrollment: 35,000	Ottawa Hills High School Iroquois Middle School 8 elementary schools	Full-time staff development specialist; consultant for Outcomes-Based Decision Making Small "family" groups for ninth-grade students Four specialists to deal with individual and group problems Eight student advocates/attendance agents
Philadelphia, PA School District of Philadelphia Total Enrollment: 195,000	Gratz High School Gillespie Middle School Rhodes Middle School FitzSimons Middle School 13 elementary schools	Councils at each school to coordinate restructuring activities Training for core teams of teachers (Gratz Connectors) in each school Substitute teachers to relieve Gratz Connectors Parents as attendance monitors and participants in adult education classes Minigrants for cluster schools
Phoenix, AZ Phoenix Union High School District Total Enrollment: 22,250	Central High School Phoenix Preparatory Academy (middle school) 2 elementary schools	Family groupings at the academy Three transitional counselors at the academy Development of a ninth-grade enclave at Central High School Support services provided by three community-based organizations

TABLE I.1 (continued)

Location/Grantee/Enrollment	Cluster Schools	Project Description
Santa Ana, CA Santa Ana Unified School District Total Enrollment: 46,500	Century High School Lathrop Intermediate School Willard Intermediate School Carr Intermediate School 1 elementary school	Six program specialists Support services provided by project nurse and outreach specialist Project outreach consultant and half-time psychologist to work with families

^a The restructuring project in Dallas is a partnership between the Center for Initiatives in Education at Southwest Texas State University and the Dallas Independent School District.

parents were trained by Dr. Comer and his staff to assume increased responsibility for governance, management, and decisionmaking at the school level. School-level decisionmaking led to different restructuring approaches at the various schools. The Dallas project also provided support services--a school-based health clinic at the high school and two middle schools, day care services for the children of 25 teen mothers at the high school, and an assistance and consultation team of counselors, mental health professionals and teachers to develop strategies for improving school climate and helping individual students with problems.

- ***Grand Rapids*** adopted the Outcomes-Based Decision Making (OBDM) model, which emphasizes teaching for mastery. Teachers first attended workshops on OBDM. In 1993-1994, the cluster's middle school and eight elementary schools began implementing OBDM for mathematics, and other subject areas were expected to follow. At the cluster's high school, half of the ninth-grade students were separated into small "family groups" with block scheduling and cross-disciplinary instruction. SDDAP also supported a social worker, student behavior specialist, speech pathologist, and substance abuse specialist, as well as attendance specialists at each participating school.
- ***Philadelphia's Gratz Connection*** had four components. Each of the cluster's 17 schools had a Gratz Connection Council, to coordinate restructuring activities in the school. The councils focused on fostering parent involvement, improving school climate, and redesigning curricula. Second, selected teachers--Gratz Connectors--from each of the 17 schools participated in bi-monthly staff development activities on restructuring. A permanent substitute teacher and two retired teachers relieved the Gratz Connectors at each school so that they could attend staff development sessions. Third, a Parent Corps was established in each school, which paid stipends to parents to serve as attendance monitors. Fourth, small grants were awarded to the schools for the development of articulation plans between the schools.
- ***The Phoenix Project*** focused on a high school, Central High, and the middle school, Phoenix Preparatory Academy. At the middle school, students were divided into nine families, each with its own teachers, guidance counselors, an assigned administrator, and a counselor who moved with the graduating ninth-grade students to the high school, where they were in an "enclave," with smaller class sizes, an extra academic period, and block scheduling. Three local community-based organizations provided support services--a re-entry program for students who had dropped out of high school, after-school tutoring for middle and elementary school students, and a community involvement program at the middle school.
- ***The Santa Ana project*** focused primarily on staff development. Six full-time program specialists helped teachers learn alternative teaching methods through workshops and classroom demonstrations. The grant supported an outreach specialist, nurse, and psychologist, who coordinated activities to involve parents and organize clinics on health care issues.

Characteristics of students in the five sites varied considerably on some dimensions.⁶ The table shows that restructuring projects were most diverse in terms of their students' race/ethnicity. More than 90 percent of the students in Philadelphia restructuring schools were black and about 1 percent were Hispanic, but 85 percent of the students in Santa Ana were Hispanic and only 1 percent were black. Dallas, by contrast, had a combination of black and Hispanic students, Grand Rapids had a combination of black and white students, and Phoenix had a combination of white and Hispanic students.

Of the five restructuring projects, the students in Philadelphia were the most disadvantaged: only 27 percent came from a home with both parents present and 41 percent received public assistance. In Grand Rapids, by contrast, only 14 percent came from a family that received public assistance.

Test score data indicate that students in Grand Rapids are higher achievers than students in Dallas, Philadelphia, and Santa Ana. Test scores for Grand Rapids students were close to the national average while students in other projects had scores that were well below the national average. Grand Rapids and Phoenix students were the least likely to have previously dropped out-- fewer than 5 percent of these students had dropped out, compared with 27 percent in Philadelphia. According to an overall measure of student risk, those in Grand Rapids and Phoenix were the least likely to be at risk, and those in Dallas and Philadelphia are the most likely to be at risk.⁷

⁶For more detailed site-specific summary statistics, see Appendix C.

⁷This measure of student risk is described in detail in Chapter II.

Student perceptions of school climate also varied. Students in Grand Rapids viewed their schools most favorably and students in Philadelphia viewed their schools least favorably.⁸ For example, 50 percent of students in Grand Rapids restructuring schools viewed drug use among students as a moderate or serious problem, compared with 63 percent of students in Philadelphia restructuring schools. Although 70 percent of students in Grand Rapids reported that they felt safe in school, only 38 percent of students in Philadelphia reported that they felt safe.

Overall, students in Dallas and Philadelphia had more characteristics that put them at risk of school failure, and students in Grand Rapids and Phoenix had fewer such characteristics. Although we present aggregate student characteristics across the five restructuring projects throughout the remainder of this report, the patterns shown in Table I.2 are fairly stable across student characteristics.

C. ANALYSIS APPROACH AND DATA STRUCTURE

This report has two main objectives. The first objective is to present descriptive information that is useful for understanding the types of students these programs work with, in particular the nature and extent of the problems they bring to the program. These experiences have affected and may continue to affect their educational performance. Part of this description involves an assessment of whether SDDAP restructuring projects are reaching their target population of at-risk students. We focus on three factors that researchers and educators have identified as related to poor academic performance and dropping out of high school: (1) socioeconomic characteristics that reflect obstacles students may face in achieving school success (such as living in poverty or in single-parent households), (2) previous experiences in school indicating that students have already experienced

⁸A number of other school climate indicators shown in Appendix C generally support the view that students in Grand Rapids see fewer problems in their schools than do students in Philadelphia.

TABLE I.2
SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS IN RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS,
BY PROJECT SITE

Characteristic	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana
Race/Ethnicity (Percentage)					
Black	51.8	54.4	91.1	7.2	0.8
White	11.0	32.8	0.4	38.4	3.2
Hispanic	32.9	4.7	0.8	41.1	84.5
Other	2.1	6.0	5.9	8.2	7.2
Family Structure (Percentage)					
Two Parents	52.1	54.1	27.3	61.0	71.8
Other	47.9	45.9	72.7	39.0	28.2
Family Receives Public Assistance (Percentage)	22.9	13.9	40.5	17.2	16.8
Ever Dropped Out (Percentage)	11.4	4.0	26.8	4.9	10.3
Behind Grade Level (Percentage)	39.4	28.9	39.5	30.2	25.9
Mean GPA	2.43	2.25	NA	NA	2.29
Test Score (NCE)^a					
Reading	26.0	45.5	28.8	NA	28.4
Math	33.8	52.2	29.1	NA	34.3
Number of Days Absent	12.5	14.2	NA	NA	7.9
At Risk of School Failure (Percentage) ^b	65.1	52.9	64.8	49.0	59.0
Perceptions of School Environment (Percentage)					
I feel safe in school	46.4	70.3	37.5	63.5	78.3
Illegal drugs use is a moderate or serious problem at school	56.7	50.2	62.7	60.2	57.6
Fighting is a moderate or serious problem at school	75.8	66.6	75.4	62.9	71.2
Sample Size^c	899	974	236	292	880

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires and student records

NOTE: In each project site except for Phoenix, data from restructuring middle schools and high schools are combined. In Phoenix, only data from the restructuring high school are available.

^a Students took the Norm-Referenced Assessment Program for Texas in Dallas, the California Achievement Test in Grand Rapids, and the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills in Philadelphia and Santa Ana.

^b Student are defined to be at risk if they have at least two of six risk indicators. Details of the procedure used to determine risk are presented in Chapter II.

^c Sample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

NA = not available.

academic failure (such as failing grades or having previously left school), and (3) activities outside of the classroom that reflect behaviors associated with academic failure (such as drug use or delinquency).

The second objective of this report is to describe the environment of restructuring schools at the time restructuring efforts were beginning. We describe three aspects of school environment: (1) the social and academic environment, (2) the disciplinary environment, and (3) the role of parents in the educational process.

In this report, we focus only on the characteristics of students who attend restructuring schools (and their parents and teachers), the group that can be affected by restructuring changes.⁹ Random samples of 250 students in the restructuring middle school and 250 students in the restructuring high school were selected in each site at the beginning of the 1992-1993 school year (cohort 1) and the 1993-1994 school year (cohort 2).¹⁰ Our key data source for the descriptive analysis is the baseline questionnaire, which was administered to 7th and 10th graders during the late fall and winter of the school year in which they were selected into the sample. Other baseline data items were obtained from school records provided to us by staff of the host school districts.¹¹ The reference period for

⁹Data on students in a set of comparison schools in the same districts as the restructuring schools have also been collected and will be used in estimating restructuring impacts. To describe program students, however, we decided that it is most appropriate to focus only on students in restructuring schools.

¹⁰There are three exceptions to this structure: (1) Philadelphia has no cohort 2 sample because of data collection difficulties; (2) Phoenix has no middle school sample because the restructuring middle school is in a different district than the restructuring high school, which created design complications leading to the middle school being dropped from the impact analysis; and (3) Santa Ana has three restructuring middle schools instead of one.

¹¹Phoenix students attended different school districts in eighth grade than they did in ninth grade, so no baseline school records were collected for them. We did use their test scores from the first follow-up year school records as a proxy for a baseline characteristic, because the tests were administered in the fall, making these scores roughly comparable to scores based on baseline year
(continued...)

both the baseline questionnaire and the baseline school records is the school year preceding the year in which students were selected into the sample.

Some of the baseline characteristics of restructuring school students may have been shaped by restructuring, because of the timing of student sampling.¹² Restructuring efforts began during the 1991-1992 school year (grants were formally awarded by ED in September 1991), but students were not sampled until the 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 school years. Thus, the characteristics and attitudes presented in this report may not accurately reflect conditions prior to the implementation of SDDAP restructuring. We believe that restructuring during the baseline, or reference, period did not greatly affect sample members' characteristics and attitudes, however, because full implementation of restructuring efforts took time. This is particularly true for cohort 1 students, whose baseline reference period was the 1991-1992 school year. In addition, restructuring probably did not greatly influence many of the characteristics and attitudes discussed in this report. For example, students' socioeconomic background cannot be affected by restructuring, and characteristics such as the amount of time they spend reading or watching television are unlikely to be greatly affected by the kinds of activities undertaken in these restructuring projects.

To get an idea of how students in SDDAP restructuring projects compare with students nationally, we also examine data from NELS. The NELS data set consists of a nationally representative sample of 25,000 students who were in eighth grade in 1988 and who have been interviewed at two-year intervals since then. We use the NELS 8th-grade sample as a benchmark

¹¹(...continued)
tests administered in the spring. In Dallas, cohort 2 baseline school records were collected but were not available at the time the analysis was done. Cohort 2 first follow-up year school records were available for students in Dallas, however, so we substituted these follow-up data in place of baseline data.

¹²The same is true for parents and for restructuring students and the restructuring school teaching staff.

for students in SDDAP restructuring middle schools and the 10th-grade NELS sample as a benchmark for students in SDDAP restructuring high schools.¹³

Data about the parents and teachers of restructuring school students allow us to draw a more complete picture of the environment in restructuring schools. In spring 1993, the parent survey was sent to the homes of all cohort 1 students who completed baseline questionnaires.¹⁴ One of the student's parents or the primary caregiver was asked to complete the survey. The parent survey provides information on parents' background characteristics, involvement in their children's education, attitudes toward education in general and toward their children's school in particular, expectations for their children's academic performance and future educational attainment, and a description of the family's home environment, which can influence children's study habits and commitment to school. In this report, we focus on parents' attitudes about the environment in their children's school.¹⁵

In spring 1993, we surveyed all staff who taught at least one course during the 1992-1993 school year in each restructuring school.¹⁶ In contrast to the parent survey, the response rate to the staff

¹³The SDDAP and NELS samples differ conceptually in at least two respects. First, the SDDAP middle school sample includes seventh graders (most of whom were in sixth grade during the reference period), while the NELS comparison group includes eighth graders. Second, the reference periods for NELS and SDDAP differ by four to five years for middle school students and by two to three years for high school students.

¹⁴A cohort 2 parent survey was administered in spring 1994, but these data are not yet available for analysis.

¹⁵One problem with the information in the parent survey is that it is not available for all students. First, it is not available for students who did not complete the baseline survey. Second, the response rate to the parent survey was low--56 percent overall--and varied substantially from site to site. For example, at Camelback High School in Phoenix, the response rate on the 1993 parent survey was 29 percent. By contrast, the response rate at Century High School in Santa Ana was 70 percent. For further analyses of response bias on the parent survey, see Appendix A.

¹⁶The staff survey was also given to teachers in comparison schools in spring 1993 and to restructuring and comparison teachers in spring 1994. However, neither of these data sources is used
(continued...)

survey was high.¹⁷ In this report, we focus primarily on items indicating teachers' perceptions about the school environment as it relates to students.

¹⁶(...continued)
in this report.

¹⁷The overall response rate on the staff survey was 85 percent. This rate also varied substantially from site to site. In Santa Ana, the response rate was 99 percent, but in Philadelphia it was 62 percent.

II. STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

In this chapter, we describe the students who attend SDDAP restructuring schools. We concentrate on demographic and household characteristics, as well as on attitudes and aspirations. We also examine students' performance in schools and activities outside the classroom. Finally, we assess the extent to which students in SDDAP restructuring schools are at risk of school failure.

A. DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Students in SDDAP restructuring schools are likely to belong to a racial or ethnic minority group. In restructuring middle schools, for example, 42 percent of students are black and 37 percent are Hispanic, but only 15 percent are white (Table II.1). Nationally, only 13 percent of eighth graders are black, 10 percent are Hispanic, and 73 percent are white.¹ More than a third of the students in SDDAP restructuring projects first learned a language other than English (usually Spanish), compared with fewer than 10 percent of students nationally.

Many SDDAP restructuring students lived in single-parent households and households that received public assistance. For example, 56 percent of SDDAP middle-school students lived in a two-parent household, compared to 78 percent of eighth graders nationally (Table II.2). Among

¹Because of the large sample sizes used in SDDAP and especially in NELS, most of the differences between SDDAP students and 8th and 10th graders nationally presented in this report are statistically significant. This is true even after the NELS design effect is considered. For example, Table II.1 shows that 53 percent of SDDAP restructuring middle school students are male, compared with 50 percent of eighth graders nationally. A t-test assuming a NELS design effect of 2.54 (Ingels et al. 1992) yields a t-statistic of 2.20, implying that this difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent level. In comparing SDDAP students with 8th and 10th graders nationally, we focus only on differences we feel are substantively important in addition to statistically significant.

TABLE II.1
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Age^a (Percentage)				
Less than 11	0	0	0	0
11 to 12	48	0	0	0
13 to 14	51	90	11	1
15 to 16	1	9	80	93
17 to 18	0	0	9	7
19 or Older	0	0	0	0
Average Age (Years)	13	14	15	16
Gender (Percentage)				
Male	53	50	52	50
Female	47	50	48	50
Race/Ethnicity (Percentage)				
Black (Non-Hispanic)	42	13	36	13
White (Non-Hispanic)	15	73	20	72
Hispanic	37	10	39	11
Asian	2	3	3	4
Native American	1	1	1	1
Other	3	NA	2	NA
First Language Learned (Percentage)				
English	66	91	64	91
Spanish	31	6	33	6
Other	3	3	3	3
Sample Size^b	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaires.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aAmong SDDAP students, age is measured as of January 1 during the first follow-up year.

^bSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

NA = not available.

TABLE II.2
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Family Structure (Percentage)				
Mother/Stepmother and Father/Stepfather	56	78	58	75
Mother Only	23	17	23	17
Father Only	2	3	3	4
Other	9	3	15	4
Number of Siblings (Percentage)				
None	4	6	5	5
1 or 2	42	58	45	53
3 or 4	30	23	30	26
More than 5	24	12	20	16
Average Number of Siblings	3	2	3	3
Sample Size^a	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaires.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

students who knew whether their family received AFDC or food stamp benefits, 24 percent in middle schools and 14 percent in high schools reported that their family receives public assistance.

The parents of students in SDDAP restructuring schools had lower educational attainment than the national average. For students in restructuring schools who knew their parents' education level, about a third had fathers who were high school dropouts and a third had mothers who were high school dropouts (Table II.3). Nationally, only 18 percent of 8th and 10th graders have fathers and 17 percent have mothers who are high school dropouts.

B. ATTITUDES AND ASPIRATIONS

As a result of their family background and past experiences, SDDAP students bring a particular set of attitudes about education and other aspects of their lives into the classroom. These attitudes, which relate to the importance of school and the likelihood that hard work in school will lead to labor market success, can affect their success in school. In this section, we examine SDDAP students' attitudes regarding their self-worth, their degree of control over their own destiny, and their educational aspirations.

SDDAP students' self-esteem is relatively high. According to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) scale, the self-esteem of students in restructuring middle schools and high schools is at least as high, if not higher, than that of 8th and 10th graders nationally.² For example, 95 percent of students in restructuring middle schools and 94 percent of students in restructuring high schools agree or strongly agree that "I feel good about myself" (Table II.4). By comparison, 92 percent of students nationally report that they feel good about themselves. Overall, 38 percent of students in

²The RSE is designed to measure global self-esteem and is based here on seven items (Rosenberg 1965, and 1979). The RSE has been shown to be valid and reliable (Wylie 1974; and Chiu 1988).

TABLE II.3
PARENTS' CHARACTERISTICS
(Percentages)

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Father's Education				
Less than High School	33	18	33	18
High School Degree/GED	32	33	27	33
Some College	15	20	18	20
College Degree	11	15	13	15
Graduate Degree	10	14	9	13
Percentage of Original Sample Missing ^a	52	16	38	15
Mother's Education				
Less than High School	32	17	32	17
High School Degree/GED	33	38	30	38
Some College	18	22	21	22
College Degree	9	13	10	13
Graduate Degree	8	9	6	9
Percentage of Original Sample Missing ^a	39	13	26	12
Father's Employment Status				
Employed	82	92	85	91
Unemployed	7	4	6	4
Not in Labor Force	11	4	10	5
Percentage of Original Sample Missing ^a	32	7	30	7
Mother's Employment Status				
Employed	74	88	72	88
Unemployed	7	9	8	9
Not in Labor Force	19	3	20	3
Percentage of Original Sample Missing ^a	29	2	22	2
Family Receives Public Assistance	24	NA	14	NA
Sample Size^b	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

TABLE II.3 (continued)

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaires.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aObservations in the original sample may be missing because the respondent does not know his or her parent (or that parent is deceased) or does not know the parent's education/employment level. The distributions of education and employment levels shown in the table do not include these missing observations.

^bSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

NA = not available.

TABLE II.4
STUDENT PSYCHOSOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS
(Percentages)

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Self-Esteem				
Students Who Agree or Strongly Agree That They:				
Feel good about self	95	92	94	92
Feel they are a person of worth	84	92	90	92
Can do things as well as others	88	92	92	92
Are satisfied with self	86	88	85	85
Usually feel useful ^a	51	49	59	52
Usually think I am good ^a	59	59	66	64
Have much to be proud of ^a	77	86	81	84
Self-Esteem Score ^b				
Upper third	38	33	46	33
Middle third	31	34	31	36
Lower third	32	33	24	30
Locus of Control				
Students Who Agree or Strongly Agree That:				
They have control over life direction ^a	69	80	74	78
Work is more important than good luck ^a	76	88	86	88
They will not be stopped while trying to get ahead ^a	62	72	66	74
Their plans generally work out ^a	71	80	75	79
They can make plans work	82	80	81	80
Chance and luck are not very important in life ^a	38	61	50	72
Locus of Control Score ^c				
Upper third	28	34	36	35
Middle third	27	34	26	32
Lower third	45	33	38	32

TABLE II.4 (continued)

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Students Who Say Other Students View Them As Somewhat or Very:				
Popular	76	83	78	83
Athletic	69	75	66	66
A good student	88	92	91	89
Important	81	86	84	87
A troublemaker	36	28	30	28
Sample Size^d	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaires.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aThe wording of the item shown is the reversed of the wording in the questionnaire. For example, the questionnaire item "I certainly feel useless at times" is reversed to "I usually feel useful." Reversing items in this way creates consistency in the coding scheme and the calculated value of the score.

^bThe self-esteem score is based on student responses to the seven questionnaire items and is normed using the tertile values of the self-esteem score from the NELS sample of 8th graders (for the middle school sample) and 10th graders (for the high school sample).

^cThe locus of control score is based on student responses to the six questionnaire items and is normed using the tertile values of the locus of control score from the NELS sample of 8th graders (for the middle school sample) and 10th graders (for the high school sample). Higher values indicate a more internal locus of control; lower values indicate a more external locus of control.

^dSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

restructuring middle schools and 46 percent of students in restructuring high schools have an RSE score in the upper third nationally.

It is somewhat surprising that the self-esteem of students in SDDAP restructuring projects is higher, on average, than that of students nationally, because the restructuring projects were set up in school districts with high proportions of at-risk students, who are often assumed to have low self-esteem. One possible explanation for this finding is that SDDAP students are simply giving socially desirable responses to the self-esteem questions. In the previous volume of this report, however, we argue that social desirability does not explain a large part of the high levels of self-esteem reported by SDDAP students (Gleason and Dynarski 1994).

Another potential explanation for this finding is that these students' self-esteem seems to depend more on the affective feedback they receive in school than on their academic achievement.³ Thus, even if their levels of academic achievement are low (as indicated by their low standardized test scores), their self-esteem may be bolstered if they attend a school with a supportive affective environment.⁴

Despite SDDAP students' high self-esteem, they are less likely than students nationally to feel in control of their own destiny. The most telling figures indicate that only 38 percent of SDDAP middle school students and 50 percent of high school students at restructuring project sites discount

³This statement is based on evaluator discussions and focus groups with students participating in SDDAP projects. Evaluation staff visited 18 targeted projects and 7 restructuring projects, conducting interviews with staff and focus groups with students. The ways in which programs promoted affective feedback are described in more detail in Chapter VI of the SDDAP implementation report (Hershey et al. 1994).

⁴Although SDDAP restructuring students have low academic achievement (more than half have test scores in the bottom third nationally), their grades are similar to those of students nationally, so they may not perceive themselves as low achievers. See Section C for details on students' grades and test scores.

the importance of chance and luck in life, but the comparable national figures are 61 percent among 8th graders and 72 percent among 10th graders (Table II.4). Among students in SDDAP restructuring middle schools, 45 percent received a score on the Rotter Locus of Control (RLOC) scale that places them in the third of the population nationally with the most external locus of control.⁵

In spite of an external locus of control and a variety of other risk factors, students in SDDAP restructuring projects have high educational aspirations. Among those in restructuring middle schools, for example, three-fourths aspire to obtain at least a four-year college degree and almost half would like to get a graduate degree (Table II.5). Among those in high school, aspirations are only slightly lower--71 percent want to graduate from college (at a minimum) and 40 percent would like to get a graduate degree. At both the SDDAP middle school and high school level, these educational aspirations are as high as or higher than the comparable national averages.

Given the external locus of control of SDDAP students, a logical question is whether they truly believe they can obtain their educational aspirations. SDDAP data suggest that these students may be reporting educational aspirations that they know are unrealistic: 91 percent of restructuring middle school students report aspiring to some education level *beyond* high school, but only 64 percent (compared with 83 percent nationally) say they are "very sure" that they will graduate from high school.

C. PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL

Physical presence in the classroom is a minimum requirement for students to succeed in school. Students will generally not do well in school unless they are continuously enrolled and regularly

⁵The RLOC has become a widely used and popular construct, and we use a six-item version of it here (Rotter 1975).

TABLE II.5

EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS
(Percent Distribution)

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
How Far Student Would Like to Get in School				
Less than High School	1	2	1	1
High School Only	8	11	8	10
Vocational School	5	9	7	13
Some College	11	13	13	3
Four-Year College Degree	27	43	31	47
Graduate Degree	47	23	40	27
Student Self-Rating of Certainty of Graduating from High School				
Very Sure	64	83	76	86
Probably	32	16	20	12
Probably Not	3	1	3	1
Surely Not	1	1	1	1
Student Self-Rating of Certainty of Pursuing Education Beyond High School				
Very Sure	56	61	56	62
Probably	35	29	34	28
Probably Not	7	7	8	7
Surely Not	3	3	2	3
Student Perception of the Amount of Education Their Parents Want Them to Get^a				
Less than High School	1	1	1	1
High School Only	6	5	6	5
Vocational School	3	6	5	7
Some College	9	10	7	15
Four-Year College Degree	26	45	30	46
Graduate Degree	56	29	50	19

TABLE II.5 (continued)

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Occupations that Students Want to Be in at Age 30				
Manager/Professional	53	39	50	58
Business Owner	6	7	7	6
Technical Worker	6	7	8	5
Office Worker/Sales	7	3	7	5
Service Worker	4	6	4	2
Laborer	1	1	1	1
Military/Protective Service	8	11	9	6
Tradesperson/Draftsperson/ Operator	3	5	5	5
Farm Worker	0	1	0	1
Homemaker/Not Working	2	3	1	2
Other Occupation	11	19	9	9
Sample Size^b	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and NELS student follow-up questionnaire.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aThese figures reflect the highest educational attainment level hoped for by the mother or the father combined.

^bSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

attending. To some extent, cause and effect are blurred in this relationship--not being in school causes problems for students in the future but in many cases is also the result of previous school problems. In either case, however, failure to be continuously enrolled and to regularly attend school is an indicator of educational risk.

For students in restructuring high schools, previous dropout is not a large problem. Only seven percent report that they dropped out of school at some time prior to baseline, and most of those who previously dropped out were out of school fewer than six months (Table II.6). This contrasts sharply with the experiences of students in SDDAP targeted high school projects, who have a previous dropout rate of 61 percent (Gleason and Dynarski 1994).

Being retained in grade is a more common than dropping out among students in restructuring schools. Just under a quarter of those in both restructuring middle and high schools have been retained in grade at least once (Table II.6). Just under a third are overage for their grade--that is, they have not progressed to the grade that one would expect, given their age.⁶

In SDDAP restructuring high schools, a substantial fraction of students are frequently absent from school. Just under a third were absent more than 20 days during the baseline year, and 13 percent were absent more than 40 days. Attendance at the middle school level during the baseline year was better; 17 percent were absent more than 20 days, and 5 percent were absent more than 40 days.⁷

⁶In addition to having been retained in grade, students may be overage for their grade because they previously dropped out of school. The overage-for-grade figures are shown in Table II.12.

⁷We did not examine records data in NELS, so we have no national figures to compare with SDDAP attendance rates. Both data sources have questionnaire data on attendance, but in the NELS follow-up questionnaire, the reference period for the attendance question differed from that in the SDDAP questionnaire. The questionnaire data suggest that students in restructuring high schools attend school at approximately the same rate as 10th graders nationally, however. About 11 percent
(continued...)

TABLE II.6
ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE
(Percentages)

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	SDDAP High School Projects
Number of Days Absent During Baseline Year		
0	13	5
1 to 10	50	41
11 to 20	20	24
21 to 40	12	17
More than 40	5	13
Students Who Dropped Out Prior to Baseline	NA	7
Total Time Out of School Among Those Who Dropped Out		
Fewer than 6 Months	NA	72
6 to 11 Months	NA	18
12 to 24 Months	NA	6
More than 24 Months	NA	4
Number of Times Retained in Grade		
0	77	77
1	15	13
More than 1	8	10
Sample Size^a	1,568	1,653

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires and student records forms.

NOTE: Comparable information on enrollment and attendance was not available in NELS.

^aSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

NA = not available.

The grades of SDDAP restructuring school students are similar to the grades of 8th graders and 10th graders nationally. For example, 37 percent of restructuring middle school students report receiving A's or A's and B's and 43 percent report receiving B's or B's and C's, compared with 39 percent and 44 percent among eighth graders nationally (Table II.7). In their English and math courses, students in restructuring schools receive grades in the C range, on average. A likely explanation for the similarity of SDDAP students' grades to those of students nationally is that students' grades are normed against the student population of their school or district rather than against the grades of students nationally. As a result, there is no reason to expect the average grades at one school to differ from the average grades at another school, regardless of the absolute level of ability among students at each school.

A better measure of the academic performance of students in restructuring schools is their average scores on standardized tests, which are normed against a national population. On average, students in SDDAP restructuring schools are at an academic level well below that of students nationally. Those in restructuring middle schools achieved an average normal curve equivalent (NCE) score of 34 in reading and 40 in math on the standardized test they took during the baseline year (Table II.7).⁸ In restructuring high schools, the average NCE scores were 38 on both tests.

⁷(...continued)

of SDDAP restructuring high school students report being absent more than 20 days during the baseline year, and 14 percent of 10th graders nationally report being absent more than 10 days during *the first half* of the 1989-1990 school year. A similar comparison could not be made at the middle school level because the reference period of the attendance question in the NELS baseline questionnaire is only the previous month.

⁸We have baseline test scores for students in four of the five restructuring projects. The tests taken by restructuring students were the Norm-Referenced Assessment Program for Texas in Dallas, the California Achievement Tests in Grand Rapids, and the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills in Philadelphia and Santa Ana.

TABLE II.7
GRADES AND STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Self-Reported Grades (Percentage)				
A's or A's and B's	37	39	32	35
B's or B's and C's	43	44	45	44
C's or C's and D's	15	15	20	19
D's	2	2	3	2
Lower than D's	3	1	3	1
Math Grade (Percentage)				
60 or lower	7	NA	20	NA
61 to 70	22	NA	30	NA
71 to 80	34	NA	28	NA
81 to 90	30	NA	16	NA
91 to 100	7	NA	5	NA
(Mean)	(76.0)	NA	(70.4)	NA
English Grade (Percentage)				
60 or lower	7	NA	11	NA
61 to 70	15	NA	21	NA
71 to 80	34	NA	35	NA
81 to 90	34	NA	25	NA
91 to 100	10	NA	7	NA
(Mean)	(77.2)	NA	(74.4)	NA
Mean NCE Test Score^a				
CTBS				
Reading	28.5	NA	32.9	NA
Math	32.9	NA	34.7	NA
ITBS				
Reading	45.5	NA	50.3	NA
Math	52.2	NA	49.1	NA

TABLE II.7 (continued)

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
SESAT				
Reading	26.0	NA	26.0	NA
Math	33.8	NA	24.2	NA
Total				
Reading	34.3	50.2	38.1	49.5
Math	40.2	49.8	38.1	49.8
Sample Size^b	1,537	24,599	1,505	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires and student records forms; NELS baseline and follow-up questionnaire.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aProjects reported scores for different tests. Thus, the mean scores for each test reflect the experiences of only selected projects. The NCE scores of all students who took standardized tests, regardless of the specific test taken, are averaged in the "Total" row.

^bSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

NA = not available.

CAT = California Achievement Tests; CTBS = Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills;
NAPT = Norm-Referenced Assessment Program for Texas.

These scores imply that, on average, the achievement levels of students in restructuring schools are in the 23rd to 32nd percentile nationally.

Students with low scores on standardized tests do not necessarily know that they performed poorly, since they often do not know their scores or cannot place them into the appropriate context. The low scores do suggest that these students are at risk of school failure, however. Low scores are potentially related to factors such as low ability, poor-quality schools, lack of student motivation, and a shortage of educational support at home. These test scores also suggest that many of the students in SDDAP restructuring schools will not be prepared for the educational challenges that lie ahead.⁹

The fact that SDDAP students receive average grades but low test scores suggests that their grades are not a good predictor of test scores.¹⁰ A comparison of the grades and test scores of individual students confirms this suggestion. Students who receive good grades in their classes (A's or A's and B's) are as likely to have test scores in the bottom tertile as in the top tertile nationally (Table II.8). On the other hand, earning low grades in school does indicate that students will probably score poorly on standardized tests. Among SDDAP students receiving C's and D's or lower, 68 percent have test scores in the bottom third nationally. Low grades are a sure sign of academic trouble among SDDAP students, but high grades do not necessarily mean that these students are free of academic troubles.¹¹

⁹These arguments do not apply to students in restructuring schools in Grand Rapids. In that project, average test scores were close to the median nationally.

¹⁰This argument could be framed in the opposite way--their test scores do not effectively predict how these students will be graded in their classes.

¹¹The SDDAP data do not suggest that grades are arbitrary. In tabulations not shown, we found that schools award higher grades to students who spend more time on homework than to those who spend little time on homework, on average. In addition, students who spend more time reading for fun also tend to get higher grades.

TABLE II.8

STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES AND GRADES FOR
STUDENTS IN SDDAP RESTRUCTURING PROJECTS

Self-Reported Grades	Proportion of Students	Standardized Test Scores		
		High (Above 66th Percentile)	Medium (34th to 66th Percentile)	Low (Below 34th Percentile)
High (A's, A's and B's)	32	34	32	34
Medium (B's, C's)	55	11	29	61
Low (C's and D's and Below)	13	5	27	68
Total	100	17	29	53

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires and student records data.

NOTE: Grades are based on self-reported student data. Standardized test score data are based on student records forms. Results from different tests are combined in this table, as are data on students in SDDAP restructuring middle schools and high schools.

D. STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES

Restructuring students' activities outside the classroom provides evidence that SDDAP students are not engaged in activities that support their academic work or promote their sense of "membership" in school. If anything, students' out-of-classroom activities support the notion that, as a group, these students lack a sense of school membership and are consequently at increased risk of school failure.¹²

SDDAP students are much more likely to spend their leisure time watching television than reading. This tendency to watch television rather than to read is greater among SDDAP students than among students nationally. Among those in SDDAP restructuring middle schools, 67 percent spend one hour or less *per week* reading for fun, but 62 percent watch television for three or more hours *per day* (Table II.9). The ratio of their time spent watching television to time spent reading is approximately 15 to 1.¹³ Among eighth graders nationally, the ratio of time spent watching television to time spent reading is approximately 10 to 1. The figures among those in SDDAP restructuring high schools are similar.

SDDAP students are not heavily involved in organized activities within their schools. For example, 62 percent of eighth graders nationally participate in varsity or intramural sports, but fewer than 40 percent of students in restructuring middle schools do so (Table II.10). Overall, students in SDDAP restructuring middle schools participate in an average of 1.8 in-school activities, compared

¹²Finn (1989) and Wehlage (1988) argue that students who are not engaged academically and do not have a sense of school membership are more likely to fail in school.

¹³In calculating this ratio, we assigned students who reported being in a given interval to the midpoint of that interval. For example, those who reported watching three to five hours of television a day were assigned a value of four hours. For the top intervals, which did not have an upper limit, we assumed that the student spent six hours per week (or per day, in the case of television) on the activity. Finally, we assumed that students spent the same average number of hours watching television on weekends as on weekdays.

TABLE II.9

TIME SPENT READING AND WATCHING TELEVISION
(Percent Distribution)

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Hours Spent Reading for Fun During an Average Week				
None	18	21	17	17
1 Hour	49	32	55	32
2 to 3 Hours	19	31	18	32
4 or More Hours	14	16	10	19
Hours Spent Watching TV on an Average Weekday				
Less than 1 Hour	8	11	12	20
1 to 3 Hours	30	45	41	49
3 to 5 Hours	30	30	29	23
More than 5 Hours	32	14	18	9
Sample Size^a	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaires.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

TABLE II.10
IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
(Percentages)

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Participation in In-School Activities^a				
Varsity/Intramural Sports	39	62	45	52
Cheerleading	7	11	5	6
Music/Dance	36	54	24	21
Drama	9	9	8	11
Newspaper/Yearbook	7	22	4	9
Student Government	7	13	6	8
Academic Club	25	40	15	31
Academic Honor Society	7	13	8	8
Other	17	28	20	26
No In-School Activities	22	12	27	20
Average Number of In-School Activities ^b	1.8	3.1	1.5	1.7
Participation in Out-of-School Activities^a				
Sports	23	38	24	38
Scouting	8	14	4	13
Hobby Clubs	7	16	4	16
Religious Youth Group	9	34	20	34
Other Youth Group	7	15	5	15
4-H	4	10	3	10
Summer Program/Workshop	13	10	12	19
Other	17	51	17	51
No Out-of-School Activities	39	22	42	22
Average Number of Out-of-School Activities ^c	0.9	1.9	0.9	2.0
Sample Size^d	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaires.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aPercentages do not add to 100 because students can participate in more than one activity.

^bOut of a maximum of 16 activities.

^cOut of a maximum of eight activities.

^dSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

with 3.1 among eighth graders nationally. At the high school level, students nationally are twice as likely as SDDAP students to participate in academic clubs. The average number of activities that each group participates in at the high school level is roughly similar, however. SDDAP students are also less likely to participate in organized activities outside school. At both the high school and middle school levels, students nationally participate in twice as many activities outside school as students in SDDAP restructuring schools, on average. Participation in religious youth groups is a particularly striking example of this difference. At the middle school level, one-third of students nationally participate in religious youth groups, compared with only nine percent of SDDAP students (Table II.10).

One factor with the potential to draw students away from their school is employment. Among those in SDDAP restructuring high schools, employment potentially interferes with schooling for a small group.¹⁴ One-third of restructuring high school students had held a job at some time while attending school, prior to baseline. Among those who worked while in school, slightly more than half worked 10 or fewer hours per week, and the remainder worked more than 10 hours per week.

E. ARE SDDAP STUDENTS AT RISK?

Many characteristics of SDDAP restructuring school students suggest that these students are at risk of school failure. In this section, we attempt to define explicitly the extent to which these students are at risk, using two definitions of risk. Our basic approach involves first choosing a number of different “risk indicators” and then defining a student as at risk if he or she has a minimum number of these indicators. The two definitions we use in this section differ with respect to the

¹⁴Because employment questions in the baseline questionnaire were asked only of students who were at least 14 years old, we do not have employment information for those in restructuring middle schools.

characteristics they use as risk indicators. The first definition was formulated by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1990) and uses socioeconomic characteristics as risk indicators. We propose a second definition to take a more inclusive view of what constitutes a risk indicator.¹⁵

1. NCES Definition of Risk

According to the NCES, students are defined to be at risk if they have at least two of the following six risk indicators: (1) living in a single-parent family, (2) coming from a family with an income of less than \$15,000, (3) spending more than three hours a day at home alone, (4) having at least one parent who lacks a high school diploma, (5) having a sibling who has dropped out of school, and (6) having limited English proficiency. According to these criteria, 20 percent of 8th graders and 16 percent of 10th graders nationally can be classified as at risk.¹⁶

Students in SDDAP restructuring schools are more likely than students nationally to have four of the six risk indicators.¹⁷ At the middle school level, 26 percent of SDDAP students do not have a parent with a high school degree and 16 percent have limited English proficiency (Table II.11). By comparison, only 11 percent of eighth graders nationally do not have a parent with a high school degree, and 2 percent have limited English proficiency. These differences are more pronounced for

¹⁵The first volume of this report describes the choice of these risk indicators and the research upon which they are based (Gleason and Dynarski 1994).

¹⁶For high school students, we use only five of the NCES risk indicators; being home alone for more than three hours a day is not considered a risk factor for this group. The original NCES definition of risk was applied only to the baseline sample of eighth graders.

¹⁷It is also probable that SDDAP restructuring students are more likely than students nationally to come from low-income families. We do not have a good measure of income for this group, however. In place of income, Table II.11 uses public assistance receipt as the second at-risk indicator for SDDAP students.

TABLE II.11

INCIDENCE OF NCES STUDENT RISK FACTORS
(Percentage with Risk Factor)

Risk Factor	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	NELS At-Risk 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders	NELS At-Risk 10th Graders
Single-Parent Family	35	22	65	35	23	73
Low-Income/Public Assistance Receipt ^a	24	21	74	14	17	77
Student Home Alone More than Three Hours Daily	13	14	33	--	--	--
Neither Parent Has High School Diploma	26	11	39	27	8	37
Student Has Sibling Who Dropped Out	22	8	30	20	13	49
Limited English Proficiency ^b	16	2	8	20	1	2
At Least One Risk Factor	73	46	100	67	40	100
At Least Two Risk Factors	36	20	100	31	16	100
Sample Size^c	1,568	24,599	5,079	1,653	17,544	2,356

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaires.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aThe SDDAP definition is based on public assistance receipt. The NELS definition is based on family income reported by parents.

^bSDDAP and NELS definitions differ slightly for this variable.

^cSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

high school students. These differences in levels of individual risk indicators lead to a corresponding difference in the percentage of students who are considered at risk overall. According to the NCES definition of risk (having at least two risk indicators), 36 percent of students in restructuring middle schools and 31 percent of students in restructuring high schools are at risk (Table II.11). These figures are almost two times the national average.

2. An Expanded Definition of Risk

One limitation of the NCES definition of risk is that it considers only socioeconomic characteristics. We considered an expanded definition of risk based on a larger a set of factors representing a broad range of circumstances that could lead to dropping out. The larger set of factors fell into three categories: (1) socioeconomic background characteristics, (2) indicators of a feeling of school membership, and (3) indicators of past school failure.¹⁸ A practical consideration was that any risk indicator we chose had to be available in the SDDAP data for all (or nearly all) sample members.

Our expanded definition of educational risk includes eight risk indicators. Three are socioeconomic risk indicators: (1) being from a single-parent family, (2) being from a family receiving public assistance, and (3) having limited English proficiency. Two risk indicators represent a lack of school membership: (1) having children, and (2) experiencing disciplinary problems in school.¹⁹ Two risk indicators reflect previous school failure: (1) having low grades, and

¹⁸The first volume of this report, the descriptive report on students in SDDAP targeted programs, justifies the choice of these three categories (Gleason and Dynarski 1994).

¹⁹The frequency with which students in SDDAP restructuring projects have school disciplinary problems is discussed in Chapter 3.

(2) being behind expected grade level. The final risk indicator is having an external locus of control, which could arguably be put in any of the other three categories.

When this expanded set of risk indicators is considered, many SDDAP students are at risk. Among students in SDDAP middle school projects, the incidence of individual risk indicators is higher than the national average for nearly all indicators. For example, 32 percent of students in SDDAP restructuring schools are behind grade level, and 51 percent have had school disciplinary problems (Table II.12). Among eighth graders nationally, 18 percent are behind grade level, and 30 percent have had disciplinary problems. Overall, 62 percent of students in SDDAP restructuring middle schools have at least two risk factors, and 35 percent have at least three. These levels of risk are much higher than the corresponding levels among eighth graders nationally (37 percent and 18 percent).

A similar pattern can be observed at the high school level. Most of the individual risk indicators are more common among SDDAP students than among 10th graders nationally, and a greater percentage of SDDAP students can be considered at risk overall. Among students in SDDAP restructuring projects, 57 percent have at least two risk indicators, and 32 percent have at least three (Table II.12). Among 10th graders nationally, 31 percent have at least two risk indicators, and 17 percent have at least three.

Whether the NCES definition or our expanded definition of educational risk is used, SDDAP restructuring projects are located in schools with a disproportionate number of at-risk students. Under the expanded definition, the majority of students in restructuring schools are at risk. SDDAP restructuring efforts appear to be reaching their target population.

TABLE II.12

INCIDENCE OF STUDENT AT-RISK FACTORS: EXPANDED SET
(Percentage with Risk Factor)

Risk Factor	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Single-Parent Family	35	22	35	24
Low-Income/Public Assistance Receipt ^a	24	21	14	17
Limited English Proficiency ^b	16	2	20	1
Behind Grade Level ^c	32	18	31	14
Low Grades ^d	11	7	15	8
Disciplinary Problems ^e	51	30	39	41
External/Locus of Control ^f	45	33	38	33
Have Own Children	1	0	3	2
At Least Two Risk Factors	62	37	57	31
At Least Three Risk Factors	35	18	32	17
Mean Number of Risk Factors	2.1	1.3	1.9	1.3
Sample Size^g	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires and student records form; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaires.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aThe SDDAP definition is based on public assistance receipt. The NELS definition is based on family income reported by parents.

^bThe SDDAP and NELS definitions differ slightly for this variable.

^cNELS eighth graders are considered behind grade level if they are at least 14 years old at the beginning of the school year. The variable is defined analogously for NELS 10th graders and SDDAP students.

^dStudents are defined as receiving low grades if they report getting C's and D's or lower.

^eBased on the degree to which students report experiencing specific disciplinary incidents during the previous year.

^fStudents are defined as having an external locus of control if their RLOC score is in the bottom tertile nationally.

^gSample sizes for individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

III. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT: VIEWS FROM STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS

The ultimate goal of SDDAP restructuring projects is to produce better outcomes for students--higher grades, lower dropout rates, and greater motivation. Although this goal does not differ from the goal of SDDAP targeted projects, restructuring projects use a different process to accomplish it. As their name implies, restructuring projects are designed to change, or "restructure," the overall environment and the way things get done in the schools in which they operate. These changes in the school environment are expected to produce greater student, parent, and teacher involvement in the educational process, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes.

In this chapter, we examine three aspects of the school environment at the time the restructuring efforts were getting under way: (1) the social and academic environment, (2) the disciplinary environment, and (3) the role of parents in the educational process. We use data collected from the student baseline survey, a survey administered to parents of sample members, and a survey administered to all instructional staff at restructuring schools.

SDDAP restructuring schools are not representative of all schools in the United States or even of all urban or high-poverty schools. They are selected schools located in large urban areas that enroll a large number of poor and minority students and that have a significant dropout problem. Our examination of the environment in these schools provides insights into problems many schools across the country face, however. We find that students in SDDAP restructuring schools have mixed feelings about their schools--they appreciate the support and respect they get from teachers, but are concerned about student behavior problems. On the other hand, restructuring school teachers have

unequivocally negative feelings about their schools--they are frustrated about what they feel is students' lack of motivation to learn.

A. SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

We measure the social and academic environment in a school by examining the quality of interactions between students and teachers within the school, and in particular, within the classroom. The social environment refers mainly to the relationship between students and teachers--for example, whether they get along, whether teachers give students support and respect, and whether teachers (and other staff members) "care" about students. Relationships among students are also an important part of the social environment in a school, but we have only limited information on these relationships.¹

The academic environment of a school refers to the degree to which a school is conducive to learning. We attempt to measure academic environment by looking at student and teacher perspectives on whether students work hard, get extra help from teachers, and feel that their classes are interesting and make them think.

1. Student Perspectives

*"Most of the students get along with the teachers. They're usually there for you and they support you. . . . They give up a lot of their personal time."
--Focus group participant, Santa Ana*

Students in restructuring schools generally feel that they get support and respect from their teachers, as shown by this comment from a student in Santa Ana. About 80 percent of students feel

¹It could also be argued that information on student disciplinary problems is important in describing the social environment of a school. We present information on student behavior in Section B.

that teachers “pay attention” to them, and more than 90 percent feel that teachers are willing to give students extra help (Table III.1). These percentages are high in absolute terms and also are higher than the percentages of 8th and 10th graders nationally who feel that they receive attention and extra help from teachers. In addition, nearly three-fourths of students in restructuring schools feel that people at their school care about them. This support and attention probably play a role in the fact that three out of four restructuring students say that they are proud to go to their school.²

Restructuring school students also have a positive view of the academic environment in their school, but are somewhat more ambivalent toward the academic environment than they are toward the social one. The majority of students feel that their classes are rigorous academically; more than 80 percent say that their classes make them think, and a similar percentage say that they “learn a lot” (Table III.1). Somewhat fewer students, although still a majority, believe that their classes are interesting (75 percent of middle school students and 65 percent of high school students).³

Students’ reports on how hard they work in restructuring schools are mixed. The majority agree that “most students at [their] school wanted to learn as much as they could” (Table III.1). However, 30 to 40 percent of students *disagree* with this statement. In focus groups, students were quick to point out a lack of motivation on the part of their fellow students:

²Because respondents are quite positive about the support and respect they get from teachers, it is surprising that only about half agree that “students got along with teachers at that school” (Table III.1). One possible explanation is that the question refers to the general relationship between students and teachers, and respondents may be commenting on other students’ experiences rather than their own. If this is the case, a few memorable incidents of student-teacher problems may have created a general impression that students and teachers do not get along.

³These figures probably mask a great deal of variation in the quality of classes that any given student takes. In focus groups with restructuring students, nearly all reported that *some* of their classes were interesting and challenging but others were easy or boring.

TABLE III.1

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SCHOOL'S SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

Percentage of Students Who Agree or Strongly Agree That:	SDDAP Restructuring Middle Schools	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP Restructuring High Schools	NELS 10th Graders
Students Get Along with Teachers	43	67	51	75
Teachers Like Teaching	83	NA	78	NA
Teachers Are Willing to Give Extra Help to Students	91	75	91	76
Teachers Pay Attention to Them	78	68	80	70
They Don't Feel "Put Down" by Teachers	80	78	86	84
They Get Encouragement from Teachers	76	63	68	57
Their Classes Make Them Think	81	NA	83	NA
They Learn a Lot	85	NA	77	NA
Their Classes Are Interesting	75	NA	65	NA
People at the School Care About Them	74	NA	74	NA
Most Students Want to Learn	69	NA	59	NA
They Are Proud to Go to the School	76	NA	74	NA
Sample Size^a	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaire.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

NA = not available.

"Most kids just come to school to associate with people."

--Focus group participant, Dallas

"Some people, the first day of school they make up their minds that they're going to hate school, and so they hate school. And they make problems for everybody else."

--Focus group participant, Grand Rapids

"[A lot of students] don't care, they just want to get out of school. In honors, yeah, they care."

--Focus group participant, Phoenix

Finally, a sizable minority of students (26 percent at restructuring middle schools and 32 percent at restructuring high schools) feel that they "could have done better" if they had tried. As a group, students acknowledge that their motivation level could be higher, but they do not feel that lack of motivation is a major problem.

2. Parent Perspectives⁴

Like their children, parents are impressed with the social and academic climate in the restructuring schools. Although most parents do not directly observe the classroom relationship between teachers and students, they support students' reports of a positive social environment. The vast majority of parents--about 85 percent--report that their child likes school (Table III.2). About three-fourths agree that the school seems interested in their child.

Parents view the academic environment of restructuring schools even more favorably than their children do. Approximately 80 percent believe that their child works hard while in school and also works hard on homework (Table III.2). A similar percentage feel that the school is teaching their

⁴Not all parents responded to the parent survey, so the attitudes reported here do not represent the attitudes of all restructuring school parents. In fact, the parents who responded to the survey tend to be the parents of the higher achieving students, on average. For a more thorough analysis of response bias in the parents' survey, see Appendix A.

TABLE III.2

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC
ENVIRONMENT OF THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL

Percentage of Parents Who Agree or Strongly Agree That:	Restructuring Middle Schools	Restructuring High Schools
Child Works Hard at School	82	85
Child Works Hard at Homework	78	77
Child Likes School	86	85
School Seems Interested in the Child	79	73
People at the School Think Learning Is Important	94	92
School Is Teaching Students a Lot	80	79
School Is Preparing Students Well for Jobs	72	69
Sample Size^a	438	454

SOURCE: Spring 1993 parent survey.

^aThe sample size on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

children “a lot.” The data leave no doubt that most parents feel that restructuring schools are good places for their children to be.

One factor that may contribute to parents’ positive view of the restructuring schools is that their perspective is limited by their lack of education. Of parent survey respondents, 45 percent are high school dropouts and only a third had any education beyond high school. Because most parents have not had positive experiences with school themselves, their child’s restructuring school may not suffer by comparison. Among parent survey respondents, attitudes toward the environment of restructuring schools are negatively correlated with educational attainment. For example, 87 percent of parents who did not finish high school believe that the restructuring school is teaching their child a lot, but only 70 percent of those with some education beyond high school feel this way. Similarly, 86 percent of high school dropouts feel that the school is interested in their child, compared with 66 percent of those with some education beyond high school.

3. Teacher Perspectives

With regard to the academic environment in restructuring schools, teachers have a completely different perspective from that of students and their parents. Teachers feel that the academic environment is poor and that teachers and students have low morale.

Teachers’ main complaint is that students do not place a high priority on learning. Only about 20 percent agree that “students place a high priority on learning,” and well over half report that teachers “find it difficult to motivate students” (Table III.3). Most likely because of their difficulty in motivating students, four out of five teachers report that teacher morale is low. A distressingly large fraction of teachers (just under one-third) “sometimes feel that it is a waste of time to try to do my best as a teacher.”

TABLE III.3

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SCHOOL SOCIAL
AND ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

Percentage of Teachers Who Agree or Strongly Agree That:	Restructuring Middle Schools	Restructuring High Schools
Students Place a High Priority on Learning	15	22
Students Are Expected to Do Homework	81	72
Student Morale Is High	27	24
Teachers Have a Negative Attitude About Students	29	26
I Sometimes Feel It Is a Waste of Time to Try to Do My Best as a Teacher	30	27
Teachers Find It Difficult to Motivate Students	59	64
Teacher Morale Is High	19	22
Sample Size^a	298	351

SOURCE: SDDAP instructional staff survey, spring 1993.

^aSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

Finally, teachers also believe that student morale is low. Only about one-quarter of restructuring school teachers agree that student morale is high (Table III.3).

4. Reconciling Different Perspectives

There are two key differences in the perspectives of students and teachers regarding the social and academic environment of restructuring schools. Most students believe that they work hard and are interested in learning, but teachers believe that students are not motivated or interested in learning. The responses of students and their parents suggest that students feel good about school, but teachers say that student morale is low.

One potential explanation for these differences is that students' perspective is much more limited than that of teachers, so the two groups view the same situation differently. Students typically do not have much experience in other educational environments, so what teachers perceive as low levels of student effort and motivation (compared with the teachers' other teaching experiences or with their own experiences as students) may be perceived by students as hard work and active learning. Students know that they are sitting in class all day and are sometimes assigned homework, so they may truly believe that they are completing a rigorous academic program. The comments of one focus group student, who reported having a more positive academic experience in another school and was thus the exception to the rule, illustrate how questionnaire responses may have differed if more students had experienced other educational settings:

"When I went to private school last year, there was more of an academic focus. Teachers made sure that everybody understood the material. Here, teachers aren't very thorough at making everyone understand stuff."

--Focus group participant, Phoenix

An alternative explanation for the differing perspectives on the social and academic environment of school is that students may focus primarily on the social part of the environment while teachers focus on the academic part. In other words, students may care more about the support and respect they get from teachers than about the degree of academic rigor in their classes. These good feelings about teachers may lead to high student morale and may make students believe that they are working hard and learning a lot. Teacher morale, on the other hand, seems to depend on feelings of professional fulfillment. Their morale is boosted primarily by helping students learn. Teachers clearly do not feel that they are effective in doing this, and may blame students' low motivation levels for their ineffectiveness.

B. DISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENT

An important aspect of operating an effective school is maintaining order among students. Here, we examine the degree to which students, parents, and teachers feel there are serious behavior problems among students in general, problems that may interfere with the educational process. We also examine whether individual students--the respondents of the baseline survey--have behaved in ways that have led their school to take disciplinary action.

1. Student Perspectives

"Some of the students . . . make it hard for the teacher to teach the way the teacher would like to teach. There are problem children and [the teachers] don't get their lessons done because they have to deal with them. . . . There's nothing the teachers can do, really, about these children. They call home and then the children get mad at the teachers or at the school and then they misbehave even more."

--Focus group participant, Grand Rapids

Students clearly believe that behavioral problems adversely affect the climate of restructuring schools. The comment above from a student in Grand Rapids reinforces the finding from the baseline survey that more than 60 percent of restructuring students feel that disruptions by other students get in the way of learning at their school (Table III.4). Even more serious, more than a third of restructuring students report that they do not feel safe at school. By comparison, only about 10 percent of 8th and 10th grade students nationally do not feel safe at school.

The student behaviors that lead to disruptions and to students feeling unsafe are much higher in SDDAP restructuring schools than in schools nationally (Table III.5). Among restructuring middle school students, about half believe that drug and alcohol use are serious problems at their school, and two-thirds believe that theft and vandalism are serious problems. The percentage of restructuring students who cite these problems, as well as problems such as fighting, missing class, and talking back to teachers, is much higher than the corresponding percentage of eighth graders nationally. For example, the percentage of students who believe that fighting is a serious problem at their school is 75 percent among restructuring middle school students and only 43 percent among eighth graders nationally. A composite variable that summarizes student behavior problems shows that the problems reported by 75 percent of restructuring middle school students are serious enough to place their school in the bottom third nationally with respect to student behavior. Behavioral problems at restructuring high schools are about as common as they are at restructuring middle schools.

SDDAP students are more likely than students nationally to be disciplined for behavioral problems. For example, 51 percent of restructuring middle school students were sent to the office for doing something wrong, compared with 32 percent of eighth graders nationally (Table III.6). At

TABLE III.4

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE OVERALL DISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENT OF THEIR SCHOOL

Percentage of Students Who Agree or Strongly Agree That:	SDDAP Restructuring Middle Schools	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP Restructuring High Schools	NELS 10th Graders
There Are Disruptions that Get in the Way of Learning	65	40	58	40
Students Who Break Rules Get into Trouble	85	47	80	47
They Do Not Feel Safe at School	39	12	34	8
Sample Size^a	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaire.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

TABLE III.5

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS IN THEIR SCHOOL

Percentage of Students Who Say That the Following Problems Are Moderate or Severe:	SDDAP Restructuring Middle Schools	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP Restructuring High Schools	NELS 10th Graders
Students Talking Back to Teachers	73	26	67	NA
Students Cutting Class	71	33	78	NA
Students Skipping School	68	40	77	NA
Alcohol Use	51	31	57	NA
Illegal Drug Use	52	25	59	NA
Vandalism	67	30	60	NA
Fighting	75	43	66	NA
Robbery or Theft	64	29	57	NA
School Problems Index ^a				
Upper third	75	33	NA	NA
Middle third	20	33	NA	NA
Lower third	6	33	NA	NA
Sample Size^b	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaire.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aThe school problems score, which is based on responses to eight school problem questions, is normed using the tertile values of the school problems score from the NELS eighth-grade sample (for middle schools). School problem questions were not asked for the NELS 10th-grade sample.

^bSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

NA = not available.

TABLE III.6
STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL

Percentage of Students:	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Who Were Sent to the Office for Doing Something Wrong	51	32	43	32
Who Were Sent to the Office for Problems With Schoolwork	16	10	12	11
Whose Parents Were Sent Warning About Student's Attendance	23	12	32	24
Whose Parents Were Sent Warning About Student's Behavior	40	22	24	15
Who Got Into a Physical Fight	36	23	17	23
Sample Size^a	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaire.

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

the high school level, 32 percent of restructuring students had a warning sent to their parents regarding their attendance, compared with 24 percent among 10th graders nationally.

These figures show that schools regularly take disciplinary actions against students who misbehave. The figures are supported by the fact that more than 80 percent of restructuring students agree that students who break the rules at their school are punished. By contrast, fewer than half of 8th and 10th graders nationally agree with this statement. Despite the fact that the disciplinary environment appears to be strict at restructuring schools, however, the data show that student behavior problems cause disruptions in the classroom, make students feel unsafe, and are much more serious, on average, than at schools nationally.⁵

2. Staff Perspectives

Teachers at restructuring schools were less likely than students to report specific behavioral problems. About half of restructuring middle school students say that drugs and alcohol are moderate to severe problems among students, but only nine percent of restructuring middle school staff report problems with students coming to school under the influence of drugs or alcohol (Table III.7). Similarly, 55 percent of restructuring high school students say that fighting is a problem, but only 27 percent of teachers report fighting as a moderate or severe problem. Tardiness, absenteeism, cutting class, stealing, and vandalism are also cited less frequently by staff than by students.

The levels at which staff members report various problems are high, however. For example, a quarter report that students bring weapons to school. Half feel that vandalism is a problem at their

⁵We did not collect much information from parents regarding student behavior, but we did find that parents concur with students in their perceptions of school safety--43 percent of the parents of restructuring middle school students and 36 percent of the parents of restructuring high school students report that they do not feel their child's school is safe.

TABLE III.7

STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT BEHAVIOR
AMONG STUDENTS THEY TEACH

Percentage of Teachers Who Say the Following Problem Is Moderate or Severe:	Restructuring Middle Schools	Restructuring High Schools
Tardiness	36	56
Absenteeism	49	85
Cutting Class	25	61
Fighting	37	27
Gang Activities	46	36
Stealing While in School	44	31
Vandalism in the School	56	48
Coming to School Under the Influence of Drugs or Alcohol	9	25
Bringing Weapons to School	25	27
Physical Abuse of Teachers	13	12
Verbal Abuse of Teachers	53	38
Racial or Ethnic Conflict	23	28
Sample Size^a	298	351

SOURCE: SDDAP instructional staff survey, spring 1993.

^aSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

school. And absenteeism seems particularly troublesome at restructuring high schools, with 85 percent of teachers reporting it as a problem.

3. Reconciling Different Perspectives

The most obvious explanation for the differing rates at which students and teachers report behavior problems is that the wording of questions about student behavior differs substantially on the student and staff questionnaires. Teachers are asked only about the students they teach, while students are asked about all students in their school. Thus, teachers' basis for assessing student behavior is limited to a smaller pool of students. In addition, several of the questions posed to teachers refer to the behavior of students in school (for example, the drug/alcohol question). In contrast, the questions posed to students are not limited to student behavior in school.

If the difference in question wording explains the difference in the rates at which students and teachers report student behavior problems, this might give us a clue about the nature of behavior problems at restructuring schools. In particular, the serious behavior problems may be limited to a relatively small number of students whose problems may be severe enough to lead nearly all the student body to feel that student behavior is a problem at their school. If the number of problem students is small, however, then not all teachers will have to deal directly with them. As a result, teachers will have a more favorable opinion of behavior among *the students they teach*.

Even if the number of misbehaving students is small, however, their actions can have a negative impact on all students in restructuring schools. As a student from Philadelphia points out, these problem students may have a disproportionate impact on fellow students, who are impressionable and susceptible to peer pressure.

"A lot of the time we end up with these kids who come back from [the juvenile justice system] and that adds to the problem. . . . I feel like there should be a limit to what kind of students we get back. . . . I'm not trying to outcast anybody, but one bad apple spoils the bunch.

--Focus group participant, Philadelphia

C. THE ROLE OF PARENTS

ED required the restructuring projects it funded to include a component designed to promote greater parental involvement in the educational process. This requirement was based on the notion that one way of improving educational outcomes for students is to increase parental participation.

This section examines the degree to which parents are involved in their children's educational experiences. This parental involvement may come at home, where parents encourage (or coerce) their children to complete their homework or talk to their children about what is happening at school. Alternatively, this involvement may come through school visits on the part of parents or through conversations between parents and teachers or counselors.

1. Student Perspectives

Students' perspective on their parents' involvement in their education yields mixed evidence. The parents of these at-risk restructuring school students are more involved in their children's education than some may think. Students report that their parents have created a home environment in which parents (1) expect students to do their homework, (2) discuss school-related matters with their children, and (3) visit their child's school or at least speak on the phone with someone from the school. On the other hand, according to some measures, they are less involved than parents of students nationally.

The disciplinary environment in the homes of restructuring students is about as strict as that in the homes of students nationally. Restructuring students report that their parents are as likely as or

more likely than the parents of students nationally to check on whether their homework has been done, require them to do chores, and limit the amount of television they watch (Table III.8). For example, 80 percent of middle school students report that their parents check their homework, compared with 74 percent of eighth graders nationally.

Other measures also suggest that parents of restructuring students are involved in their children's education to the same extent as parents of students nationally. For example, 57 percent of restructuring middle school students report that their parents attended a school meeting during the previous year, compared with 56 percent of eighth graders nationally (Table III.8). Similarly, 68 percent of restructuring middle school students report that their parents spoke with their teachers or counselors, compared with 67 percent nationally. And the percentage of middle school students whose parents visited one of their classes is much larger than the percentage of eighth graders nationally whose parents did so.

On the other hand, the parents of restructuring students are less likely to talk with their children about school than are the parents of students nationally. For example, 33 percent of restructuring high school students report that their parents talk with them about "things studied in class," compared with 52 percent of 10th graders nationally (Table III.8). Restructuring students' parents are also less likely to attend a school event in which their child is participating.

2. Parent Perspectives

The parent survey asked some questions similar to those asked of students. Many of the findings based on the student data are supported by parent data. For example, the parents' responses about the disciplinary environment in their home (whether they check homework, whether they require chores, and so forth) are consistent with students' responses, as reported in Table III.8.

TABLE III.8

STUDENT-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS

	SDDAP Middle School Projects	NELS 8th Graders	SDDAP High School Projects	NELS 10th Graders
Percentage of Students Whose Parents Sometimes, Often, or Always:				
Check Whether Homework Has Been Done	80	74	64	57
Have Student Do Chores at Home	87	90	83	82
Limit Amount of Television Watching	42	37	30	30
Limit Amount of Time Out on School Nights	64	73	63	67
Parent Discipline Score^a				
Upper Third	29	35	32	34
Middle Third	32	32	36	34
Lower Third	40	33	32	32
Percentage of Parents Who Talk with Students About:^b				
Choosing Classes	74	85	79	85
School Activities and Events	41	57	43	56
Things Studied in Class	41	42	33	52
Parents' School-Related Activities During Previous Year (Percentage)				
Attended School Meeting	57	56	49	56
Spoke with Child's Teachers/Counselors	68	67	63	67
Visited Child's Class	54	30	32	31
Attended School Event Child Participated in	52	63	50	64
Sample Size^c	1,568	24,599	1,653	17,544

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires; NELS baseline and first follow-up questionnaire.

TABLE III.8 (continued)

NOTE: Characteristics of NELS students are calculated using sample weights.

^aThe parent discipline score, which is based on responses to four parent discipline questions, is normed using the tertile values of the parent discipline score from the NELS 8th-grade sample (for middle school) and the NELS 10th-grade sample (for high school).

^bFor “School Activities and Events” and “Things Studied in Class,” the figures indicate the percentage of students whose parents talked with them about these things at least three times during the previous year. For “Choosing Classes,” the figures indicate the percentage whose parents talked with them at least once.

^cSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

Parents are somewhat more likely than their children to report that they discuss school-related matters with their children, but the difference is not large.

Nearly all parents of restructuring students had some contact with their child's school. Three-fourths report that they contacted the school at some time during the previous year. Typically, this contact was about schoolwork, behavior, or attendance. More than 80 percent report that the school had contacted them at some time during the year, usually for the same reasons. Only nine percent report that they had no contact with their child's school during the previous year.

When asked about the involvement of other parents at their child's school, two-thirds agreed that "parents work together to help the school." On the other hand, parents believe that they, as a group, do not have enough influence on school operations. Only about 40 percent of parents agree that "parents have enough say about how the school should be run."

3. Teacher Perspectives

Teachers send mixed signals regarding their feelings about parent involvement in their school. On the one hand, the number of teachers who say that they receive support from and have a cooperative relationship with parents is large enough to suggest that they do not view parents as part of the problem to the same extent that they view students as part of the problem. On the other hand, the picture of parental involvement that teachers draw is much different from the picture drawn by students and parents.

According to teachers, parents participate in their children's education to a lesser extent than students and parents suggest. Teachers estimate that they have had contact during the previous year with the parents of just under half their students (Table III.9). With these parents, teachers estimate about four separate contacts during the year. Although this is a substantial amount of parent-teacher

TABLE III.9

STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS' ROLE IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

	Restructuring Middle Schools	Restructuring High Schools
Percentage Who Agree That They Receive Support from Parents for the Work They Do	47	42
Percentage Who Believe Their Relationship with Parents Is Cooperative or Very Cooperative	53	50
Mean Percentage of Students Whose Parents Have Had Contact with Staff	49.1	41.6
Average Number of Contacts per Parent	3.9	4.0
Sample Size^a	298	351

SOURCE: SDDAP instructional staff survey, spring 1993.

^aSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

interaction, it is less than that implied by parents' responses (91 percent claim to have had some contact with their child's school).⁶

Beyond objective measures of parent-teacher contacts, teachers appear to be wary of the role that parents play, although their assessments of parents are not as negative as their assessments of students. Fewer than half the teachers at restructuring schools agree that they receive support from parents for the work they do. Similarly, only about half believe that their relationship with parents is cooperative.⁷

D. SUMMARY

"It depends on what kind of life you want to lead here. If you make an effort, you can find teachers who care about you. The problem is that a lot of the students don't care about being here."

--Focus group participant, Phoenix

This quote summarizes restructuring students' ambivalence about school. The up side is that teachers respect and care about students, and students can truly learn if they work hard. The down side is that some students' behavior makes it difficult for everyone else.

There is no such ambivalence on the part of teachers. They are unhappy about what is going on at their school, and their main frustration is with students. They do not think that students are motivated to learn. As a result, teachers cannot teach effectively, which destroys their morale.

⁶These figures could be reconciled by arguing that parents may have contact with a nonteaching staff member or with a limited number of their child's teachers. For example, if all parents have contact with exactly half of their child's teachers, then teachers will have contact with half of their students' parents, on average.

⁷By contrast, 60 percent believe that they have a cooperative relationship with the school superintendent, and 62 percent believe that they have a cooperative relationship with the district office.

Parents play a somewhat neutral role in what goes on at restructuring schools. Their opinions about school tend to mirror those of their children. By a number of measures, they are active in supporting their children's education. Teachers do not identify parents as a direct cause of problems in their schools, but they do not view parents as active contributors to solutions, either.

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APPENDIX A
DATA COLLECTION AND DATA QUALITY

This appendix describes the basic processes used to collect student questionnaire data, student records data, parent questionnaire data, and staff questionnaire data in School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) restructuring sites. In addition, the appendix tallies completion rates for each of these data sources and examines the quality of the data received. Data quality was generally high, but problems arose in a couple of restructuring sites.

A. COLLECTING BASELINE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Baseline data collection for the in-depth evaluation of restructuring programs in SDDAP began in the fall of the 1992-1993 school year and ended in the fall and winter of the 1993-1994 school year. Over that period, baseline student questionnaires were obtained for 3,374 out of 4,194 students in restructuring schools, a response rate of 81 percent. This response rate and the quality of baseline student questionnaire data that were collected varied substantially across sites.

The evaluation of SDDAP began in September 1991. After a 10-month design period, during which sites were recruited, instruments were developed, and student samples were drawn, baseline student questionnaires were administered beginning in the fall of 1992. The evaluation design called for program staff rather than MPR staff to administer the baseline student questionnaires, and the questionnaire itself was designed to be completed in 30 to 40 minutes. The length was constrained by the need to fit the total completion time, including time for instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, within an average class period (about 50 to 60 minutes). The questionnaire also was translated into Spanish, and students were told at the time of administration that they could complete either the English or the Spanish version.

Sites administered student baseline questionnaires in a group setting. Ideally, the questionnaires would have been administered soon after sample members were identified (in September of 1992 for cohort 1 and September of 1993 for cohort 2). As a result of delays in receiving usable lists of

students in the sample and the length of time needed to organize school staff to administer the questionnaires, the first baseline student questionnaires were administered in November or December in most sites. Since not all sample members were present the first time the questionnaires were administered, some baseline student questionnaires were not completed until January or February.

The baseline questionnaire was designed to be self-administered, and it was formatted for optical scanning to reduce data entry costs. Both features tended to result in lower-quality data than would likely have resulted from trained interviewers administering the questionnaires, but the cost savings were considerable. The self-administration feature meant that site staff could administer questionnaires at one time to many students. Students sometimes started but did not complete questionnaires, however, or did not answer particular items for reasons that could not be determined. The optical-scanning feature meant that questions were sometimes answered incorrectly or carelessly (for example, students sometimes used check marks inside the response circles or filled in several circles when only one was allowed), and these items had to be coded as missing.

Table A.1 shows that baseline response rates were relatively high (over 85 percent) in Dallas, Grand Rapids, and Santa Ana. In Phoenix, where there was no middle school sample, only 316 of 517 restructuring school students (61 percent) completed a baseline questionnaire. The data quality in Philadelphia was very poor. Fewer than half (47 percent) of cohort 1 restructuring school students completed the baseline questionnaires. The primary reason for the low response rate was that absenteeism in the Philadelphia restructuring school was high, so that many students missed the initial administration of the baseline questionnaire, and efforts to have absent students complete the questionnaires at a later time were minimal. In addition, the student list the school district provided to MPR contained the names of many students who never attended the school.

TABLE A.1
 RESPONSE RATES AND ITEM COMPLETION RATES ON THE BASELINE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE,
 BY PROJECT
 (Restructuring Projects)

	Project						Total
	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana		
Number of Baseline Questionnaires Issued	1,008	1,123	500	517	1,046		4,194
Number of Completed Baseline Questionnaires in the Analysis File	915	974	236	316	936		3,374
Questionnaire Completion Rate (Percentage)	90.8	86.7	47.2	61.1	89.5		80.5
Mean Item Completion Rate ^d (Percentage)	96.3	96.5	82.5	93.6	94.0		94.2

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires.

^aThe number of baseline questionnaires issued exceeds the number of questionnaires in the analysis file because of nonresponse. Some questionnaires also were issued to invalid sample members.

^bThis row displays the percentage of baseline questionnaires that contain valid responses for a given questionnaire item, averaged over the 155 items on the baseline questionnaire. For example, the table shows that for the average item on the questionnaire, 96.3 percent of the questionnaires received from Dallas had valid responses.

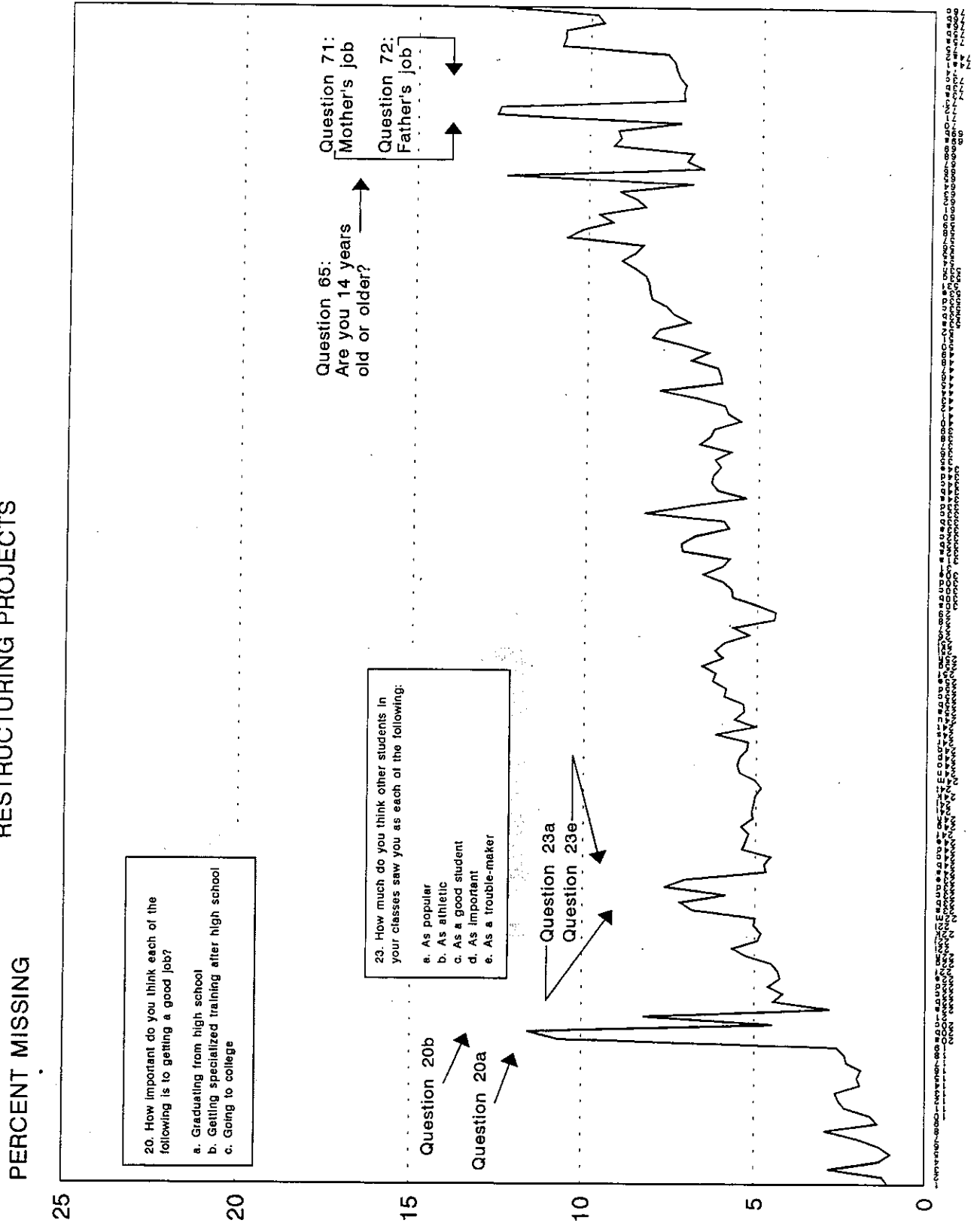
Table A.1 also displays item completion rates for completed questionnaires, a key indicator of data quality. The overall item completion rate across the five restructuring sites was 94 percent (this average is computed over the 155 items in the baseline questionnaire). The site with the lowest item completion rate was Philadelphia, where the average item was completed by 83 percent of respondents.

For the restructuring sample as a whole, missing rates for each of the 155 items are plotted in Figure A.1. Three features of the plot stand out. First, the item missing rate increased progressively from the beginning to the end of the questionnaire, ranging from well below 5 percent on the first items to about 10 percent on the final items. Some respondents apparently did not have enough time to (or did not want to) complete the entire questionnaire. Second, questions laid out in a list format, with respondents directed to answer each item in the list (questions 20 and 21), produced higher missing rates, presumably because respondents did not complete all items on the list. Third, items about mothers' and fathers' occupations had high missing rates (questions 71 and 72), presumably because respondents did not know the answer or because they were dissuaded from answering by the format of the questions, which required them to look across 17 occupational categories to find the most appropriate category.

B. COLLECTING BASELINE STUDENT RECORDS DATA

The process of collecting student records data in restructuring sites differed from that used in targeted sites (described in Gleason and Dynarski 1994). Restructuring sites sent records data to MPR in the form of computer files rather than as hard copies of the student records form (SRF). These computer files contained as much of the SRF information as possible, but in a format determined by district data management systems.

FIGURE A.1
ITEM MISSING RATES
FIRST AND SECOND COHORT BASELINE QUESTIONNAIRES
RESTRUCTURING PROJECTS



20. How important do you think each of the following is to getting a good job?
 a. Graduating from high school
 b. Getting specialized training after high school
 c. Going to college

23. How much do you think other students in your classes saw you as each of the following:
 a. As popular
 b. As athletic
 c. As a good student
 d. As important
 e. As a trouble-maker

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM

The records data used in this report are restricted in three ways. First, we use only cohort 1 records data from Dallas, since we did not receive cohort 2 baseline records from Dallas in time for the report.¹ Second, we use only cohort 1 records data from Philadelphia, since problems in collecting questionnaire data in this site led us to forgo data collection for a second cohort. Third, we do not have baseline records data from Phoenix, since students in the high school sample attended, during the baseline year, middle schools that were in school districts separate from the high school district (there is no middle school sample in Phoenix).

The records completion rate among restructuring school sample members for whom we attempted to collect data was 96 percent (Table A.2). The item completion rate varied across items and across restructuring projects. For example, data on student grade point averages (GPAs) were entirely missing in Philadelphia, as were math and English grades in Santa Ana. In Dallas, on the other hand, the completion rates for these items were over 90 percent. In Grand Rapids, the completion rate for GPAs was 46 percent, the result of GPA information being entirely missing for the middle school sample but fairly complete for the high school sample. Test score information was available for approximately 80 percent of the sample with records data, and attendance information was available for 94 percent.

C. RESPONSE BIAS ON THE BASELINE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Not all restructuring school students completed baseline questionnaires, so our sample may be biased in favor of students who are more likely to attend school. The fact that records data were available for nearly the full sample in Dallas (cohort 1), Grand Rapids, Santa Ana, and Philadelphia gave us the opportunity to examine whether response bias was evident for baseline student

¹However, we had received first follow-up cohort 2 data from Dallas prior to conducting the analysis, and we use this information in this report where possible.

TABLE A.2
 BASELINE STUDENT RECORDS DATA AVAILABILITY
 (Restructuring Projects)

	Project				Total
	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Santa Ana	
Number of Baseline Student Records Requested	500	1,123	500	1,046	3,169
Number of Partially or Fully Completed Baseline Student Records in the Analysis File ^a	500	1,046	500	996	3,042
Student Records Completion Rate (Percentage)	100.0	93.1	100.0	95.2	96.0
Item Completion Rate (Percentage)					
GPA	96.4	46.4	0.0	100.0	64.5
Math grade	92.0	72.7	79.0	0.0	53.1
English grade	92.4	76.1	84.2	0.0	55.2
Reading test score	93.0	87.7	60.4	77.3	80.7
Math test score	93.0	88.1	55.4	77.3	80.0
Number of absences	96.2	88.0	93.0	98.1	93.5

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 student records forms.

^aThe number of baseline student records requested exceeds the number of student records in the analysis file because of nonresponse. In addition, some questionnaires were issued to invalid sample members.

questionnaires. In this section, we examine five aspects of school performance, as measured by school records, among students who completed the baseline questionnaire (respondents) and students who did not complete the baseline questionnaire (nonrespondents).

Records data indicated that baseline questionnaire respondents performed much better in school than nonrespondents. Across the four restructuring sites with records data, respondents had fewer days absent, more credits, higher GPAs, fewer suspensions, and higher scores on standardized tests than nonrespondents (Table A.3).² Each of these differences was statistically significant when the data in the four sites were aggregated. However, because the overall response rate was relatively high (Table A.1), the magnitudes of the differences were not great. The mean NCE reading score on a standardized test was 37.2 among respondents and 36.0 among all sample members, for example (Table A.3). Questionnaire respondents were absent an average of seven days, and all sample members were absent an average of nine days during the year.

There was evidence of questionnaire response bias in all four of the restructuring sites. In three of the four sites, however, response rates were high (over 85 percent) and the bias was modest. In Santa Ana, for example, questionnaire respondents had statistically significantly higher GPAs than all sample members, but the numerical difference amounted to only 0.05 grade points. In the one site with a low response rate (Philadelphia), the only significant difference between the two groups was in the number of days absent. Questionnaire respondents in Philadelphia were absent an average of 16 days during the year, while all sample members were absent an average of 22 days.

²Table A.3 reports the values of the factors in each of the four sites and overall for respondents and for the full sample of respondents and nonrespondents. The difference between these two numbers reflects not only the size of the difference between respondents and nonrespondents but also the response rate. Even if there is a large difference in a particular item between respondents and nonrespondents, the difference between respondents and the full sample may be small if the response rate is high. Table A.3 also reports whether the difference between respondents and nonrespondents is statistically significant. This test also indicates whether the difference between respondents and the full sample is statistically significant.

TABLE A.3
 BASELINE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE BIAS
 (Restructuring Projects)

	Dallas		Grand Rapids		Philadelphia		Santa Ana		Total	
	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents
Percentage of Days Absent	7	6***	8	7***	22	16***	5	4***	9	7***
Number of Credits	5.57	5.57	50.9	52.6***	NA	NA	65.8	66.9***	52.3	54.1***
GPA	2.43	2.51***	2.25	2.35***	NA	NA	2.31	2.36***	2.33	2.40***
Reading Test Score	26.0	28.1***	47.7	48.1**	30.5	31.2	30.4	30.8**	36.0	37.2***
Math Test Score	29.1	31.2***	50.8	51.2**	28.4	29.3	35.6	36.4***	39.3	40.8***
Number of Suspensions	0.03	0.03	0.23	0.19**	2.29	2.12	0.12	0.10**	0.30	0.20***
Sample Size^a	482	414	922	843	465	225	958	868	2,827	2,350

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires and student records forms.

^a Sample sizes for individual items may vary because of incomplete records data.

* Significantly different from the mean value among the full sample at the .10 level, two-tailed test.

** Significantly different from the mean value among the full sample at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

*** Significantly different from the mean value among the full sample at the .01 level, two-tailed test.

The difference between questionnaire respondents and nonrespondents in student performance measures in the records data suggests that the student characteristics based on questionnaire data and presented in this report are also biased. The characteristics reported here are likely to be more favorable than they would be if data were available for all sample members. However, since response rates were relatively high, the bias is not likely to be large.³

D. COLLECTING TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

MPR designed the restructuring school teacher survey as a census, with each member of the instructional staff (teachers and other staff who taught courses) in participating schools receiving a survey instrument. The census approach was possible because restructuring middle and high schools generally had no more than 100 instructional staff members. The names of instructional staff were provided to MPR by the schools in January and February of the survey years, and staff received instruments to complete in March and April.⁴ The survey frame was restricted to include only staff who taught at least one course during the school year, since the focus of the survey was on the climate for teaching and learning. This procedure excluded staff who served only as counselors or administrators or in other support roles. However, counselors or administrators who may have taught a course were included in the frame. The survey instrument was designed to be self-administered and to require about 20 minutes to complete.

³Additional analysis not presented here indicates that the differences between questionnaire respondents and nonrespondents at comparison schools are similar to the differences between these two groups at restructuring schools. Thus, questionnaire response bias is not likely to affect estimates of the impacts of restructuring in these schools.

⁴Staff questionnaire data were collected in the first and second follow-up years (spring 1993 and spring 1994) and will be collected in the third follow-up year (spring 1995). In this report, however, we use only data from the first staff survey.

The response rates and quality of data from the staff survey were high, with the exception of Philadelphia. The overall staff survey response rate was 85 percent, ranging from a low of 52 percent in Philadelphia to a high of over 99 percent in Santa Ana (Table A.4). Problems in Philadelphia arose when the acting principal of Gratz High School was late in sending the questionnaires to the staff and the school year ended before the staff received their questionnaires. Ultimately, the questionnaires were received by staff in October of the following school year, but a new principal was in place by then. Though staff were instructed to complete the questionnaire as it pertained to the climate of the school in the previous year, the change of climate that arose because of the change in principals no doubt affected responses.

The quality of data from completed questionnaires was very high. For all projects, item response rates were well over 90 percent. For the 187 items on the staff survey instrument, an average of 96 percent of respondents gave a legitimate response to the item.

E. COLLECTING PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

The parent survey was administered differently from the staff survey. In the process of baseline student questionnaire administration, it became clear that a number of students were no longer enrolled in the schools because they had transferred, dropped out, or left for other reasons. To ensure that the parent survey frame consisted of parents whose children actually attended the restructuring schools, MPR created the parent frame as *parents of students who had completed the baseline questionnaire*. Surveys were labeled “To the parent of . . .” followed by the name of a student who was indicated by the tracking system as having completed a baseline questionnaire. The surveys were then mailed to homes or handed to students to be given to their parents. The instrument was designed to be self-administered and to require about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The instructions on the instrument said that the person who completed the instrument should be the

TABLE A.4
 RESPONSE RATES AND MEAN ITEM COMPLETION RATES ON BASELINE STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE
 (Restructuring Projects)

	Project					Total
	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana	
Number of Staff Questionnaires Issued	142	98	138	113	270	761
Number of Staff Questionnaires Completed ^a	133	83	72	92	269	649
Staff Questionnaire Completion Rate (Percentage)	93.7	84.7	52.2	81.4	99.6	85.3
Mean Item Completion Rate ^b (Percentage)	95.5	93.5	94.5	96.4	97.1	96.1

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires.

^aThe number of questionnaires issued exceeds the number of questionnaires in the analysis file because of nonresponse.

^bThis row displays the percentage of questionnaires from a given project that contain valid responses for a given questionnaire item, averaged over the 187 items on the questionnaire. For example, the table shows that for the average item on the questionnaire, 95.5 percent of the questionnaires received from Dallas had valid responses.

person most likely to interact with the school that the student attended. In practice, more than 90 percent of completed parent questionnaires were completed by persons who said they were the mother or the father of the named student.

The response rates for the parent survey were low, though the quality of completed questionnaires was adequate. Overall, 57 percent of the parent sample completed the survey, with the rate ranging from 15 percent in Philadelphia to 72 percent in Dallas (Table A.5). In Philadelphia, the acting principal of Gratz High School failed to send the survey to parents, which MPR discovered only during the summer break. A decision was made to not send questionnaires to parents in the fall. The Santa Ana program decided to administer the parent survey by telephone and contracted with a local survey center to do the phone interviews. These efforts yielded a relatively high response rate of 66 percent.

The item completion rate for those parents who completed the questionnaire was 96 percent--comparable to the item completion rates on the student and staff questionnaires. In each of the restructuring sites, the item completion rate was well over 90 percent.

The low response rates on the parent questionnaire increase the possibility that nonresponse bias is substantial in the parent data. In order to examine this issue, we compared the characteristics of students whose parents responded with the characteristics of students whose parents did not respond. In particular, we examined the risk indicators described in Chapter II in comparing the two groups. This analysis was possible because the parent frame was created using the names of students who completed the baseline questionnaire; thus, student baseline data were available for all students for whom a parent survey was attempted.

Parents who did not respond to the parent survey were more likely than those who responded to have children that we classified as at risk of school failure. For example, in the full sample of

TABLE A.5
 RESPONSE RATES AND MEAN ITEM COMPLETION RATES ON PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE
 (Restructuring Projects)

	Project					Total
	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana	
Number of Parent Questionnaires Issued	426	346	236	162	451	1,621
Number of Parent Questionnaires Completed	305	196	35	92	298	926
Parent Questionnaire Completion Rate (Percentage)	71.6	56.6	14.8	56.8	66.1	57.1
Mean Item Completion Rate ^b (Percentage)	93.3	96.2	93.1	96.3	98.4	95.9

SOURCE: SDDAP spring 1993 parent survey.

NOTE: This table and the text tables reporting information from parents include only data from the parents of cohort 1 students.

^aThe number of questionnaires issued exceeds the number of questionnaires in the analysis file because of nonresponse.

^bThis row displays the percentage of parent questionnaires from a given project that contain valid responses for a given questionnaire item, averaged over the 72 items on the parent questionnaire. For example, the table shows that for the average item on the questionnaire, 93.3 percent of the questionnaires received from Dallas had valid responses.

students for whom parent data were requested, 33 percent were behind grade level at baseline and 45 percent experienced disciplinary problems during the baseline year (Table A.6). Among students whose parents responded to the parent survey, however, 28 percent were behind grade level and 39 percent experienced disciplinary problems. There were also significant differences between the two groups in the percentage who were from single-parent families, who were from families receiving public assistance, who received low grades, and who had children.⁵

⁵There was also a difference in the percentage we classified as of limited English proficiency, but the group whose parents responded to the parent survey were actually more likely to be of limited English proficiency.

TABLE A.6
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS, BY PARENT RESPONSE STATUS
(Restructuring Projects)

Characteristics (Percentage)	Dallas			Grand Rapids			Philadelphia			Phoenix			Santa Ana			Total	
	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	Full Sample	Questionnaire Respondents	
Single-Parent Family	39	37	41	33***	54	34***	38	33	22	19**	37	30***	30***	37	30***	30***	
Public Assistance Receipt	28	20***	13	12	41	38	16	17	18	14***	19	17***	17***	19	17***	17***	
Limited English Proficiency	16	14	2	2	4	3	15	14	46	49*	19	23***	23***	19	23***	23***	
Behind Grade Level	42	38***	27	18***	39	24**	33	23***	26	26	33	28***	28***	33	28***	28***	
Low Grades	7	4***	12	9	23	12**	6	1***	17	18	13	10***	10***	13	10***	10***	
Disciplinary Problems	55	53	44	34***	60	52	35	24***	30	30*	45	39***	39***	45	39***	39***	
External Locus of Control	42	41	33	30	43	39	38	31**	49	46*	41	39	39	41	39	39	
Have Own Children	2	1	1	1	4	3	2	1	1	1	2	1***	1***	2	1***	1***	
Sample Size	415	299	395	150	232	35	146	86	439	294	1,627	864	864	1,627	864	864	

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 student baseline questionnaire and spring 1993 parent survey.

NOTE: The student characteristics reported in this table are the at-risk factors presented in Table 11.12.

* Significantly different from the mean value among the full sample at the .10 level, two-tailed test.

** Significantly different from the mean value among the full sample at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

*** Significantly different from the mean value among the full sample at the .01 level, two-tailed test.

APPENDIX B

COMPARISON OF RECORDS AND QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Information was collected from both the baseline questionnaires and student records forms for a number of data items. Two such items are student grades and attendance patterns. The availability of the same data item from two sources allows us to examine the accuracy of students' responses on the SDDAP questionnaire. In this appendix, we compare records and questionnaire data with respect to student grades and the number of days absent during the baseline year.¹ We take into account the results of this comparison in determining whether to focus on the records data or questionnaire data in describing the SDDAP sample.

SDDAP students are reasonably accurate in self-reporting their grades. Table B.1 presents the distribution of student grades during the baseline year, according to student records, by the grades students reported on the baseline questionnaire.² Below this percentage distribution is the mean records-reported GPA for students in each category of self-reported grades. These mean GPA values show that SDDAP students tend to report receiving grades a bit higher than they actually receive, but that this discrepancy is not large. In addition, students' self-reported and records-reported grades are highly correlated. For example, students who report receiving mostly A's have a mean GPA of 3.39, compared with 2.66 for those who report receiving mostly B's, 1.86 for those who report receiving mostly C's, and 1.26 for those who report receiving mostly D's.

Another measure of reporting accuracy is the percentage of students in a given category of self-reported grades whose actual grades were more than one category below their self-reported grades. Among students who report getting mostly A's, for example, 11 percent actually got B's, 7 percent

¹An assumption implicit in this comparison is that data from student records forms are accurate.

²The records and questionnaire data sources are not strictly comparable, since the records report a numerical grade point average, while students report their grades in a verbal form on the questionnaire (for example, "Mostly A's"). We have tried to make these forms consistent by coding the numerical GPAs into the same categories used in the questionnaire.

TABLE B.1
 COMPARISON OF RECORDS AND QUESTIONNAIRE DATA--GRADES
 (Percentage Distribution of Student Records GPA by Self-Reported Grades on Questionnaire)

GPA (Records)	Self-Reported Grades (Questionnaire)								Total	
	Mostly A's	A's and B's	Mostly B's	B's and C's	Mostly C's	C's and D's	Mostly D's	Mostly Below D's		
GPA										
A's (3.75-4.00)	39	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
A's and B's (3.25-3.74)	34	32	11	3	1	2	0	1	1	13
B's (2.75-3.24)	11	34	42	15	5	4	6	2	2	19
B's and C's (2.25-2.74)	7	20	25	33	19	9	3	4	4	21
C's (1.75-2.24)	5	5	13	32	31	23	13	8	8	19
C's and D's (1.25-1.74)	2	3	6	12	30	31	28	22	22	13
D's (0.75-1.24)	2	2	2	4	13	29	38	51	51	9
Below D's (0.00-0.74)	1	0	0	1	1	3	13	12	12	2
Mean GPA (Standard Deviation)	3.39 (0.70)	2.95 (0.58)	2.66 (0.57)	2.23 (0.57)	1.86 (0.58)	1.58 (0.65)	1.26 (0.73)	1.20 (0.64)	1.20 (0.64)	2.40 (0.85)
Sample Size	325	643	415	905	339	331	88	83	83	3,129

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaire and student records forms.

NOTE: Table includes students in both SDDAP restructuring and comparison high schools and middle schools who have both valid self-reported grades and student records GPA. However, since many middle schools do not report GPA, the table primarily reflects the situations of high school students.

got B's and C's, 5 percent got C's, and another 5 percent got grades below C. Thus, 28 percent of those who report getting mostly A's actually got grades that are more than one category below this (that is, they got B's or below). Overall, fewer than one in five overreport their grades by more than one category.

Because students are relatively accurate in reporting their grades, we focus on their self-reported grades rather than records-reported grades in this report. There are two major advantages to this. First, there are fewer missing values in the self-reported grades variable than in the records-reported GPA variable.³ Second, the self-reported variable is more directly comparable to the grade variables in the NELS data set.

SDDAP students are somewhat less accurate in reporting their attendance patterns. For example, 33 percent of students who report that they were never absent during the baseline year were actually absent five or more days, according to records data (Table B.2). Conversely, 46 percent of students who report being absent more than 60 days during the baseline year were actually absent less than 30 days. In general, students who report few absences are likely to be understating the number of times they missed school, while those who report many absences are likely to be overstating the number of times they missed school. For those who report a number of absences somewhere in between these two extremes, the variance in the actual number of absences is high. For example, students who report being absent 21 to 30 times during the baseline year were actually absent 27 times, on average, but the standard deviation of their number of absences was 18.

³Since many middle schools do not report students' GPA, this variable is missing for a large fraction of the sample. However, we also made the records-questionnaire comparison using baseline grades in English and math, which are more readily available for middle school students. This comparison also showed that self-reported grades are reasonably accurate.

TABLE B.2

COMPARISON OF RECORDS AND QUESTIONNAIRE DATA--DAYS ABSENT
(Percentage of Records Reported Absences by Self-Reported Absences)

Days Absent (Records)	Days Absent (Questionnaire)							Total
	0	1 to 4	5 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 30	31 to 60	More than 60	
0	35	11	4	3	4	1	4	10
1 to 4	33	33	13	5	2	7	8	22
5 to 10	19	32	32	13	11	7	9	26
11 to 20	9	16	34	39	22	27	11	23
21 to 30	3	5	9	23	29	17	14	10
31 to 60	2	3	7	14	26	33	26	7
More than 60	0	0	1	3	6	8	28	2
Mean Days Absent (Standard Deviation)	4.6 (7.5)	7.8 (9.3)	13.9 (14.0)	20.4 (15.2)	26.5 (17.9)	30.4 (22.4)	46.5 (40.9)	12.8 (15.6)
Sample Size	487	1,792	973	668	188	103	76	4,287

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaire and student records forms.

NOTE: Table includes students in SDDAP restructuring and comparison high schools and middle schools.

Throughout this report, we focus on the number of absences reported in the student records forms when discussing student attendance. We made this choice because of the likelihood that a given sample member's self-reported number of absences would be inaccurate and because missing attendance data in the records file are not a large problem.

APPENDIX C

**SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR
INDIVIDUAL SITES**

TABLE C.1
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS, BY PROJECT

Characteristics	Project				
	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana
First Language Not English	27	5	6	28	86
Mom's Education					
Less than high school	33	11	16	28	64
High school degree	34	37	46	28	19
Some college	19	25	27	21	12
College degree	13	26	11	23	6
Father Employed	84	83	77	89	82
Agree/Strongly Agree					
I am a person of worth	84	91	83	89	87
I am able to do things well	87	93	84	91	90
I think I am no good at times	37	30	29	39	47
Luck is more important than hard work	18	15	26	13	24
Planning makes me unhappy	26	25	24	25	31
I can make my plans work	82	81	85	76	82
Educational Aspirations					
Less than high school	1	1	1	1	1
High school only	10	5	9	7	10
Vocational school	6	3	13	5	7
Some college	12	10	7	9	16
Four-year college degree	27	34	29	33	26
Graduate degree	44	47	41	45	40
Report 20 or More Absences Last Year	8	8	16	6	9
Self-Reported Grades					
A's or A's and B's	30	38	25	44	34
B's or B's and C's	54	37	44	38	39
C's or C's and D's	14	20	23	12	20
D's	1	2	3	4	5
Below D's	2	3	5	3	4
Sample Size^a	874	964	217	280	853

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline student questionnaire.

^a Sample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

TABLE C.2
INCIDENCE OF STUDENT AT-RISK FACTORS, BY PROJECT

Risk Factor	Project				
	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana
Single-Parent Family	41	39	54	32	20
Public Assistance Receipt	23	14	41	17	17
Limited English Proficiency	13	2	4	12	47
Behind Grade Level	39	29	39	30	26
Low Grades	7	14	23	8	18
Disciplinary Problems	55	48	60	33	32
External Locus of Control	42	35	43	38	49
Have Own Children	3	1	4	2	1
Sample Size^a	886	964	233	285	868

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline questionnaires.

^aSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

TABLE C.3
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE AND PROBLEMS, BY PROJECT

Characteristics	Project				
	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana
Percentage of Students Who Agree or Strongly Agree That:					
Students Get Along with Teachers	33	45	37	52	67
Teachers Give Students Extra Help	87	92	84	96	94
Teachers Pay Attention to Them	79	80	68	83	79
They Don't Feel "Put Down" by Teachers	81	87	83	84	81
They Get Encouragement from Teachers	70	71	65	74	76
Their Classes Make Them Think	79	80	69	85	89
People at the School Care About Them	73	73	65	72	79
There are Disruptions That Get in the Way of Learning	63	64	58	53	59
They Feel Safe at School	46	70	38	64	78
Percentage of Students Who Say That the Following Problems are Moderate or Severe:					
Students Cutting Classes	78	69	86	79	74
Illegal Drug Use	57	50	63	60	58
Vandalism	65	53	73	64	71
Fighting	76	67	75	63	71
Robbery or Theft	62	57	69	60	62
Sample Size^a	866	957	204	280	836

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline student questionnaire.

^aSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

TABLE C.4
STUDENT DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT, BY PROJECT

Characteristics	Project				
	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana
Percentage of Students:					
Who Were Sent to the Office for Doing Something Wrong	53	49	53	38	38
Who Were Sent to the Office for Problems with Schoolwork	13	14	14	10	15
Whose Parents Were Sent Warning About Student's Attendance	38	26	29	17	21
Whose Parents Were Sent Warning About Student's Behavior	41	36	49	22	18
Who Got Into a Physical Fight	29	30	48	22	17
Percentage of Students Whose Parents:					
Attended School Meeting	48	49	50	57	61
Spoke With Child's Teachers/Counselors	69	71	70	68	54
Visited Child's Class	44	39	52	44	42
Attended School Event Child Participated in	47	59	40	59	46
Sample Size^a	858	949	177	277	811

SOURCE: SDDAP 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 baseline student questionnaire.

^aSample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

TABLE C.5
PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL, BY PROJECT

Percentage of Parents Who Agree or Strongly Agree That:	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana
Child Works Hard in School	78	85	73	89	87
Child Works Hard on Homework	74	75	71	74	83
Child Likes School	79	81	85	88	94
School Seems Interested in Child	68	73	64	65	90
People at the School Think Learning Is Important	88	95	82	96	98
School Is Teaching Child a Lot	74	74	63	74	91
School Is Preparing Child Well for Jobs	57	65	59	71	88
Parents Have Enough Say About How School Should Be Run	47	55	41	67	78
Parents Work Together to Help the School	55	70	53	66	81
School Is a Safe Place	43	72	39	70	72
Sample Size^a	307	154	35	92	304

SOURCE: SDDAP Spring 1993 parent questionnaire.

^a Sample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.

TABLE C.6
STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS, BY PROJECT

	Project				
	Dallas	Grand Rapids	Philadelphia	Phoenix	Santa Ana
Percentage of Teachers Who Agree or Strongly Agree That:					
Students Place a High Priority on Learning	11	16	6	30	23
Students Are Expected to Do Homework	74	84	68	60	82
Student Morale Is High	8	25	7	21	41
Teachers Have a Negative Attitude About Students	46	30	30	14	21
I Sometimes Feel It Is a Waste of Time to Try to Do My Best as a Teacher	34	35	18	29	26
Teachers Find It Difficult to Motivate Students	76	64	64	55	56
Teacher Morale Is High	10	18	14	19	30
They Receive Support from Parents for the Work They Do	32	66	32	58	42
Percentage of Teachers Who Say the Following Problems Are Moderate or Severe					
Cutting Class	67	43	60	63	24
Gang Activities	46	5	21	43	53
Stealing While in School	46	22	38	22	41
Bringing Weapons to School	26	2	56	29	24
Racial or Ethnic Conflict	51	17	3	35	18
Sample Size^a	133	83	73	91	269

SOURCE: SDDAP Spring 1993 staff questionnaire.

^a Sample sizes on individual items may vary because of nonresponse.