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Helping Kids Succeed: Implementation of the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For four years beginning in 1991, the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) supported the efforts of 85 local grantees to reduce school dropout rates. The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) awarded SDDAP grants to local education agencies (LEAs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and educational partnerships--65 grants in 1991, and an additional 20 in 1992. The Planning and Evaluation Service in ED contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., (MPR) and its two subcontractors, Policy Studies Associates (PSA) and RMC Research Corporation, to evaluate the SDDAP, focusing on the implementation and effects of 25 projects selected for in-depth evaluation. This report documents the characteristics and implementation of these 25 projects.[1]

ED specified two types of SDDAP projects: (1) ***targeted projects*** to serve an identified group of students within a school or community organization; and (2) ***restructuring projects*** to undertake more comprehensive changes to improve the overall learning environment of schools attended by large numbers of disadvantaged students. For these two types of projects, ED established two quite similar specifications:

- ***Targeted projects*** were to include (1) accelerated learning strategies; (2) challenging and interesting curricula and opportunities for contextual learning; (3) systematic monitoring of attendance; (4) culturally sensitive outreach to help parents create a more supportive home learning environment; (5) counseling, social support services, and coordination of services with other agencies; (6) enhanced linkages and communications between schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels; and (7) career awareness preparation.

- ***Restructuring projects*** were to include (1) autonomy for administrators and teachers to determine curriculum and instructional strategies; (2) implementation of challenging and interesting curricula, including ways to help students learn at an accelerated pace; (3) efforts to create a positive school climate; (4) systematic monitoring of attendance; (5) alternatives to standard retention practices; (6) coordination of services for at-risk students; (7) greater communication among elementary, middle, and high schools to facilitate student transitions; (8) greater parental and community involvement; and (9) staff training to promote progress in all these dimensions.

ED requested an impact analysis and an implementation analysis focusing on the SDDAP in-depth study sites. For targeted projects, the impact analysis uses an experimental design. Two cohorts of students were randomly assigned to program or control group status in school years 1992-1993 and 1993-1994, and only those selected for the program group could participate in the SDDAP project. Impact estimates will be based on comparison of outcomes for the program and control groups during a follow-up period of up to three school years. In restructuring projects, SDDAP activities potentially affected all students in the project schools, so random assignment was infeasible. Outcomes for students in project schools will be compared with outcomes for students in similar local comparison schools. Data for the

[1]Detailed profiles of the projects are presented in Appendix A of the full report.

impact analysis of both targeted and restructuring projects are drawn from baseline and follow-up student surveys and school records.

The implementation analysis--the focus of this report--documents the design and operation of the in-depth evaluation projects. It also identifies factors that affected the projects' ability to realize their original plans. Data for the implementation analysis were collected in site visits in fall 1992, spring 1993, and fall 1993. During these visits, evaluation staff interviewed project staff, other district and school administrators, teachers, and counselors. They also conducted focus groups with SDDAP project participants and observed classes.

Most projects were selected for the in-depth evaluation on the basis of how readily their impacts could be evaluated using rigorous methods. The 18 targeted projects (Table 1) were selected because they appeared able to meet the sampling and data collection requirements for the impact analysis. The selected projects included interventions in high schools, middle schools, and a few elementary schools. Several grantees (Albuquerque, Chula Vista, and Miami) operated components for students of different age groups. The projects included alternative programs apart from the regular school setting, in most cases providing a full-day school program, but in some cases offering a reduced-schedule program for students who were not attending any other school. There were also enrichment programs, which added resources or activities, such as additional classes, reduced class size, special curricula, and more intensive counseling, to programs for students who were still attending regular public schools.

All seven restructuring projects funded by ED were included in the in-depth evaluation (Table 2). Restructuring projects operated in districts with total student populations ranging from just 1,400 in McCormick County, South Carolina, to 195,000 in Philadelphia. Project activities were in some cases concentrated in a small cluster of schools, as in Phoenix, Santa Ana, and South Carolina. In Dallas, Grand Rapids, Philadelphia, and the rural Utah project, the SDDAP grant was used to support more widely dispersed activities, involving as many as 17 schools (in Philadelphia). These projects varied greatly in the activities undertaken, the degree of focus on an overall restructuring strategy, and the stage of school reform reached during the period of SDDAP grant activities.

This report first documents the targeted and restructuring projects and then focuses on three major concerns about how the SDDAP projects affected students:

1. How were students attracted to participate in the targeted projects?

2. How did SDDAP projects affect what went on in classrooms in the targeted and restructuring projects, and to what extent were conceptions of stimulating, challenging, and engaging curricula and instruction realized?

3. In what ways did the projects provide a supportive environment that could help students overcome the stresses of their lives and remain engaged in school?

IMPLEMENTING TARGETED PROGRAM MODELS

The 18 targeted projects were of three types:

TABLE 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF SDDAP TARGETED PROJECTS

Location/Grantee	Name of Project/Component	Grades Served	Characteristics of Target Population	Project Description
Albuquerque, NM Youth Development, Inc.	Middle School Leadership Program	8	Low math/English grades Poor attendance Suspension during previous year Leadership potential	Enrichment program: leadership workshop once a week
	Stay-in-School Program	9-12	Low math/English grades	Enrichment program: math and/or English classes of reduced size, increased counseling, available work experience
Anne Arundel County, MD Anne Arundel County Public Schools	Youth Experiencing Success	10-12	Vocational students behind in math/English credit accumulation	Special math and English classes at vocational center and enhanced counseling
Atlanta, GA Georgia Cities in Schools	Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy	7-8	Behind grade level	Alternative school with small classes
Boston, MA Jobs for Youth	JFY High School and University High[a]	9-12	Dropped out or on the verge of dropping out	Two alternative high schools: competency-based curriculum, enhanced social services
Chicago, IL Chicago Teachers' Center and Chicago Public Schools	Northeastern Illinois University Dropout Prevention Educational Partnership Program	8-12	Low test scores Behind grade level	High school enrichment: block scheduling, group activities, and team teaching, with additional transition programs for eighth graders
Chula Vista, CA Sweetwater Union High School District	Twelve Together Program	7	Poor attendance Low grades Disciplinary problems High achievement (for selected students only)	After-school enrichment: weekly peer discussion groups with volunteer counselors
	Transitions Learning Centers	9-12	Dropped out	Alternative school: independent study with scheduled teacher appointments and homework contracts
Cincinnati, OH Cincinnati Public School District	Peter H. Clark Academy	9-12	Dropped out or on the verge of dropping out	Alternative school: small classes, standard district curriculum, emphasis on reading, adult mentors
Flint, MI Flint Community Schools District	Accelerated Academics Academy	6-8	Behind two grade levels	Alternative school: nontraditional instruction, thematic curriculum
Las Vegas, NV Clark County School District	Horizon High Schools	9-10	Low grades Low standardized test scores Behind grade level Ever dropped out	Four alternative high schools with flexible enrollment policies, enhanced social services, accelerated credit accumulation
Long Beach, CA Long Beach Unified School District	Up with Literacy	6-8 and 9-12	Low standardized test scores	Enrichment program: in-class and after-school tutoring and homework assistance, enhanced counseling

TABLE 1 *(continued)*

Location/Grantee	Name of Project/Component	Grades Served	Characteristics of Target Population	Project Description
Miami, FL Cities in Schools of Miami, Inc.	COMET Program	5	Poor attendance Low motivation Behavioral problems	Enrichment program: reduced class size, full-time teacher's aide, in-class career lab, enhanced social services, mentoring
	Corporate Academy	9-12	Two or more of: Low grades Low test scores Poor attendance Overage for grade Ever dropped out Pregnant/parent	Alternative high school: small classes, enhanced social services, mentoring
Newark, NJ Newark Public School District	Project ACCEL	6-7	Behind grade level Sufficiently high skill and motivation levels	School within a school: team teaching, extra counseling
Queens, NY Flowers with Care Youth Services	Flowers with Care		Dropped out	GED program with intensive counseling component
Rockford, IL Rockford Public Schools	Early Identification and Intervention Project	6-8	Low standardized test scores Poor attendance Behind grade level Dysfunctional family	Enrichment program: general studies class for homework assistance and self-esteem sessions, enhanced counseling services
San Antonio, TX San Antonio 70001/WAVE, Inc.	Work, Achievement, and Values in Education (WAVE)	9-10	Any student in two largely Hispanic, low-income districts	Enrichment program: elective class focusing on career awareness and job readiness
Seattle, WA Seattle Public Schools	Middle College High School	9-12	Ever dropped out Poor attendance	Alternative high school on a community college campus emphasizing team teaching, thematic curriculum, specialized counseling and peer groups, available work experience
St. Louis, MO Human Development Corporation of Metropolitan St. Louis	Metropolitan Youth Academy	9-12	Dropped out Drug abuse or delinquency Low family income Welfare receipt	GED program offering enhanced social services and a work experience program
Tulsa, OK Tulsa County Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 18	Student Training and Re-Entry (STAR)	9-12	Dropped out or on the verge of dropping out	Alternative program on a vo-tech campus: nine weeks of skills reinforcement, career planning, and counseling, leading to re-entry to high school or vocational training

[a]University High was operated by Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), a subcontractor to JFY.

TABLE 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF SDDAP RESTRUCTURING PROJECTS

Location/Grantee/Enrollment	Cluster Schools	Project Description
Dallas, TX Southwest Texas State University* Dallas Independent School District Total Enrollment: 135,000	Spruce High School Comstock Middle School Florence Middle School 11 elementary schools	Comer model or other school-based decision making in all schools Accelerated schools model in five schools; small groupings of teachers and students in others School within a school in the high school A school-based health clinic in the high school and two middle schools; day care for teen mothers Automated attendance monitoring equipment
Grand Rapids, MI Grand Rapids Public Schools Total Enrollment: 35,000	Ottawa Hills High School Iroquois Middle School 8 elementary schools	Outcomes-Based Decision Making (OBDM) as curriculum reform in elementary and middle schools Full-time staff development specialist; consultant for OBDM Four specialists to deal with individual and group problems Eight student advocates "Family groups" featuring block scheduling and cross-disciplinary themes for half of the ninth graders Mentoring for high schoolers
McCormick, SC McCormick County School District Total Enrollment: 1,400	McCormick High School McCormick Middle School 1 elementary school	Teacher teams by grade level and by curriculum area Participatory management and training Cross-cutting thematic units and technology in the classrooms Nonacademic support services
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	School councils in each school Training for core teams of teachers in each school Parents as attendance monitors and participants in adult education classes

TABLE 2 *(continued)*

Location/Grantee/Enrollment	Cluster Schools	Project Description
Phoenix, AZ Phoenix Union High School District Total Enrollment: 22,250	Central High School Phoenix Preparatory Academy (middle school) 2 elementary schools	A ninth-grade enclave "Family groupings" for academy students Three transitional counselors for the academy Additional services provided by three community-based organizations
Monticello, UT San Juan County School District Total Enrollment: 3,500	Monticello High School Whitehorse High School Monument Valley High School Whitehorse Jr. High School Monument Valley Jr. High School Monticello Jr. High School 5 elementary schools	A peer facilitator in each school Training sessions for teachers and administrators A technology center in each high school
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	A program specialist at each school Early intervention for language development and smaller class sizes for language arts in the elementary school Teaming and interdisciplinary instruction in intermediate schools School within a school in the high school 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.

1. ***Alternative secondary programs*** provided a complete educational program for high school youths, in settings apart from regular high schools, and used alternative curriculum and instructional approaches.

2. ***Targeted high school enrichment programs*** provided a specific group of students with extra services or resources in regular high schools.

3. ***Targeted middle school/elementary school programs*** also provided extra services or resources, either as enrichment within the regular school setting or as a full-day alternative program in a physically separate setting.

Alternative Secondary Programs

Eight grantees operated alternative secondary programs, which were of three types: (1) alternative high schools; (2) enhanced GED programs; and (3) re-entry transition programs.

Alternative High Schools. Six grantees ran programs leading to a regular high school diploma, in separate facilities from regular high schools, for students who had already dropped out of school or were on the verge of doing so. These schools differed from regular high schools by offering a smaller school setting, greater emphasis on innovative teaching and curriculum, more individual attention, flexible options for earning credits, and flexible attendance requirements. These programs included:

- The ***Seattle Middle College High School (MCHS)***, operated by the public school district, served up to 250 students between the ages of 16 and 20 on a community college campus. Instruction was organized around interdisciplinary cores in math/science and humanities, each taught by two teachers supported by in-class tutors. Staff provided individual counseling and student peer counseling sessions, group drug and alcohol abuse counseling, and referrals to other health services. Some students participated in an elective career education class and a nine-week paid internship at private companies or public agencies. Adult mentors worked with about 20 percent of MCHS students. Students participated in screening new applicants, running assembly programs, and assessing school policies.

- The four ***Horizon High Schools***, which were located in the Clark County School District in Las Vegas and served 150 to 300 students each, offered dropouts a chance to pursue credits on a convenient, accelerated schedule. Schools operated from 7:00 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. and offered on-site child care. Students took only four 75-minute classes at a time, allowing them to earn credits in six weeks. They could also earn credits through vocational technical centers and independent study projects.

- At the nine ***Transitions Learning Centers*** in the Sweetwater Union High School District in Chula Vista, California, students spent two hours per day on site and committed to 15 hours of homework each week, working independently and in consultation with teachers. Centers, generally located next to comprehensive high schools and equipped like corporate offices, offered instructional software and a wide range of interactive courses, as well as standard textbooks. Students could take learning center courses, regular high school courses, and vocational courses. Funding arrangements allowed the learning center and the host high

school to share a portion of the "recovered" state aid for former dropouts enrolled at the learning center.

- The ***Peter H. Clark Academy***, operated by the Cincinnati Public Schools, offered a traditional high school curriculum to as many as 260 students who entered two or more years behind grade level. School staff emphasized a supportive atmosphere but enforced strict rules governing behavior. Except for a lack of science laboratories, the academy offered classes comparable to those available in small, comprehensive high schools. Although bound by district curriculum guidelines, teachers found ways to integrate curricula across subjects. The academy ran a day care center and recruited mentors and tutors from a major local corporation.

- The ***Corporate Academy***, supported by Dade County Public Schools, Cities in Schools of Miami, Inc., (CIS), and corporate sponsors, served 120 to 150 students in grades 10 to 12 who had dropped out of high school or were about to do so. The academic program paralleled regular district curricula, but class size was reduced to about 10 to 15. CIS provided counselors to link students with outside services and build family contacts, and it also operated an extensive mentor program. About 25 percent of academy students took part in a work experience program for credit.

- ***JFY High School*** and ***ABCD University School*** were run by Jobs for Youth, Inc., (JFY) and its subcontractor, Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). Each school served about 50 students seeking a regular high school diploma. Students attended from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., generally working at their own pace on competency-based curriculum in science and math and on independent projects. Humanities classes incorporated English and social studies material in a more traditional instructional format.

Enhanced GED Programs. Two grantees, both CBOs, provided GED preparation classes, supplemented by counseling and work-readiness activities:

- ***Flowers with Care Youth Services***, a nonprofit agency in Queens, New York, ran a full-time program for high school dropouts. GED preparation classes made up the academic core, but at least equal emphasis was placed on helping participants learn responsible, disciplined behavior. They attended individual and group counseling sessions, had to comply with strict attendance requirements and behavioral standards, and were required to attend after-school recreation. In addition, Flowers with Care offered a job preparation component by developing an in-house desktop publishing training program and student-run enterprise.

- At the ***Metropolitan Youth Academy (MYA),*** run by the nonprofit Human Development Corporation of Metropolitan St. Louis, high school dropouts could enroll at any time and attend classes four hours per day for up to a full school year. Instruction--based on GED preparation workbooks and computer-assisted basic skills software--was provided by teachers from the school district's adult basic education division. Grantee staff offered on-site counseling and referrals to outside services, life skills workshops, and occasional part-time jobs in the grantee's offices.

Re-Entry Transition. A single grantee offered a reentry transition program:

- The Tulsa Area Vocational Technical Center (TAVTC) district in Oklahoma created the ***Student Training and Re-Entry (STAR)*** program as a flexible pathway for high school dropouts from 14 area school districts to resume their education. Participants attended daily three-hour sessions for nine weeks, spending half of their time honing basic skills using instructional software, and the remainder in life skills seminars. Counselors helped students plan their next steps. Some students re-entered regular high school; others enrolled in vocational training programs under a waiver that allowed them to pursue technical training at no cost, even though they were not enrolled in a home high school (as usually required).

Alternative secondary programs incorporated the elements specified by ED to quite varying degrees. This variation is not surprising; grants were awarded to diverse programs that were given broad latitude to define their own approaches. The most consistently visible elements were (1) an emphasis on fostering a positive school climate; (2) close attendance monitoring and followup; and (3) efforts to provide supportive services, counseling, and service coordination. Although judgments about whether some ED-specified elements existed were subject to some ambiguity, these three elements could be identified in all or almost all alternative secondary programs.

Small scale helped foster a positive school climate. Students cited "family atmosphere" as the key difference between these programs and regular high schools. Small scale also promoted communication among students, so cliques, violence, and gang activity were minimal. Students had to apply to these programs, so they usually had some motivation and discipline. Students generally found these programs to be relatively free of the rules and restrictions of regular high schools, although rules clearly played some part in minimizing disruptive behavior.

Alternative schools emphasized close attendance monitoring and vigorous followup on absences, using a variety of methods. In one site, a monitor ensured that students were not roaming the halls, and a social worker made home visits to students whose attendance dropped. In another site, students with five absences were brought before a peer counseling panel, and designated students made wake-up calls to students with attendance problems. Students seemed to favor such personal staff responses over the computerized calling systems used by some regular high schools.

All the alternative secondary programs tried to help students manage the challenge of going to school while dealing with personal difficulties. All had counselors who worked with smaller student caseloads than their counterparts in regular high schools. One site had a "natural helpers program" that trained students to provide peer support, daily drug and alcohol counseling, and AIDS awareness counseling. Two sites offered child care centers. At several sites, counseling was a primary service emphasized as much as or more than academic instruction. Three of the alternative secondary programs made mentor programs part of their supportive service strategy.

Beyond these three elements--fostering school climate, monitoring attendance, and offering supportive services--emphasis on other program elements varied, depending on:

- ***Age of the Target Group.*** Alternative secondary programs served youths 16 to 20 years old. Many had already left school, some several years earlier. Because many participants had tenuous relationships with their parents, outreach to students' families was a low priority. There were some exceptions, such as the Seattle MCHS "parent scholars" program, which recruited some parents to provide special instruction at the school in areas such as CPR or typing.

- ***Relationship to Regular District Program.*** Several programs run by CBOs used teachers provided by local school districts and had little discretion in choosing these teachers. Fluctuating enrollments also resulted in teacher cutbacks or cutback threats. Even in the few programs run directly by school districts, the method of assigning teachers to the alternative program was not always designed to build a cohesive and committed staff. In several sites, staffing constraints as well as district standards limited innovative curriculum and teaching methods. As a result, teaching rarely went beyond coaching on basic skills or traditional question-and-response methods.

High School Enrichment Programs

Four SDDAP grantees offered enrichment of regular high school programs, providing extra teaching or counseling staff, reduced class sizes, specially designed curriculum in particular subjects, team teaching, or a "school within a school" setting:

- The ***Chicago Teachers' Center*** at Northeastern Illinois University worked with the Chicago Public Schools to develop enrichment programs in two largely Hispanic secondary schools. In Lake View High School, at-risk freshmen were block scheduled for most ninth-grade classes and could also participate in a sophomore program. At Wells Academy, selected students were block scheduled in a school within a school for all or some classes during their freshman through senior years. Program teachers collaborated intensively; promoted a feeling of membership by organizing field trips and special projects; worked with an attendance coordinator to follow up quickly on absences; and were trained in team teaching, cooperative learning, and innovative approaches to math and English instruction. Students also had access to special counseling and tutoring services.

- The ***Albuquerque Stay-in-School (SIS) Program*** emphasized reduced-size classes and improved access to counseling. In each of four high schools, about 100 students--mostly in grades 9 and 10--attended English or mathematics classes (or both, depending on need) of only about 15 students. Special SIS counselors worked with participants. In one school, the counselor established a student dispute mediation program. About 15 to 20 percent of SIS students participated in a work experience component involving a semester of paid work and employability skills workshops.

- The ***San Antonio WAVE Program*** offered 9th- and 10th-grade students an elective class designed to build motivation, self-esteem, and career awareness, taught by regular high school instructors trained by the grantee's local affiliate.

- The ***Youth Experiencing Success (YES) Program*** in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, attempted to enrich the educational program of vocational students by offering special counseling and English and math classes at two vocational centers, rather than at their home high schools. Students could thus earn missing credits in applied communications, American literature, English literature, or applied math.

As even these brief descriptions show, the high school enrichment programs varied widely in their incorporation of program elements envisioned by ED. The San Antonio WAVE and Anne Arundel YES programs were narrowly conceived, offering students a chance to take one or two classes with a curriculum and small size that might bolster motivation and academic progress. The Albuquerque model focused on particular academic subjects and social support but incorporated few strategies for changing school climate or creating a sense of belonging for participating students.

The Chicago Teachers' Center developed the most comprehensive design. It included several features created to foster a "community of support," including grouping students in their classes; pairing older students as mentors with freshmen; providing team-training courses for faculty and students; summer orientations and academic workshops for incoming ninth graders; a student support team to identify students' emerging problems; special tutoring; and evening recreation, drama, and athletic activities. The Chicago project also made changes in the existing academic program and in communications with parents, such as providing joint planning time to help teachers work as a team, authorization for teachers to develop their own curriculum, a community liaison worker who made home visits and telephone calls to parents of incoming freshmen, and workshops for parents on school procedures and services and ways to promote students' attention to homework.

Aside from wide differences in design, we identified three salient factors that affected the implementation of high school enrichment programs:

1. ***Outside help to schools is most likely to be useful if it comes from local sources.*** All four secondary enrichment projects were conceived with the help of organizations outside the local school bureaucracy. The most effective help came from locally based organizations and began with joint analysis of local problems and resources, as in Chicago and Albuquerque. In Anne Arundel, in contrast, local project staff decided that grant resources initially allocated to distant university collaborators would be more useful for local needs and terminated their collaboration. In San Antonio, the WAVE class and its curriculum were based on an existing design used nationwide in other WAVE sites, and program implementation efforts had to overcome considerable local reservations about the program's importance.

2. ***Confusion or conflict over program objectives and management weakened prospects for a comprehensive intervention in some sites.*** In Anne Arundel, counseling and motivational efforts seemed to compete with, rather than complement, the program's academic focus, and senior officials provided little help in sorting out objectives. In one of the three project schools in Chicago, a new high school principal gave little support to a plan for block scheduling comparable to that followed in the other two schools. Communications with the Chicago Teachers' Center languished, and the broad program intervention never gained momentum in that school.

3. ***A fiscal crisis overshadowed efforts at innovation in Chicago.*** In fall 1993, severe cuts were made in the Chicago public schools budget, many staff took early retirement, and courses and staff had to be rearranged on very short notice. The project lost teachers, and the scope of block-scheduled classes was reduced. The resource cuts clearly reduced the momentum behind the project's ambitious and cohesive plan.

Middle and Elementary School Enrichment Programs

Eight grantees implemented programs for middle or elementary school students. In six of these sites, students' regular programs were enriched by additional teacher resources, special in-school or after-school activities, or special facilities. In two sites--Atlanta and Flint--students attended their entire school program in a facility separate from the regular middle schools.

- ***Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy,*** supported by Georgia Cities in Schools (CIS) and the local school district, provided a full-day program to students from three middle schools who were behind in grade. The academy adhered to district curriculum plans but used small class sizes and more individual help to try to accelerate students' progress so they could "leapfrog" a year and rejoin their age peers in ninth grade. District teachers, who were assigned to or volunteered for the academy, taught regular academic subjects, as well as a few electives. A counselor from CIS provided resources for extra attention to attendance problems.

- In the ***Middle School Leadership Program*** in Albuquerque, about 30 at-risk eighth graders in each of four middle schools met for one class period every other week with a counselor, who led discussions on personal values and expectations, trust, self-concept, goal setting and decision making, and relationships with other people.

- The ***Accelerated Academics Academy*** (AAA) in Flint provided a full-day, self-contained program for about 100 middle school students who had been retained in grade at least twice by the end of sixth grade and were at least two grade levels behind on standardized tests. The academy stressed an integrated thematic curriculum, small class size, and cooperative learning. A full-time counselor, aided by a part-time social work student, provided counseling, assessment, and referrals to community agencies for specialized mental health, special education, and substance abuse services.

- In the Long Beach ***Up with Literacy Program,*** college student aides worked with at-risk students during the last two afternoon classes and after school from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. in three elementary schools, two middle schools, and a high school. College aides gave intensive help with in-class and homework assignments. They also led enrichment activities, such as hosting guest speakers, teaching keyboarding or word processing, leading drama exercises, and providing training in conflict resolution.

- In the ***COMET Program*** in Miami, fifth-grade students with attendance, behavioral, and motivational problems attended classrooms equipped with a career lab. This lab provided occupational work stations at which students could work on tasks as typesetters, dental technicians, electricians, optometrists, or cosmetologists. Class size was reduced to 16, and

each class had a full-time paraprofessional aide. Teachers emphasized respectful behavior and a serious work atmosphere. CIS caseworkers coordinated social services for students and served as liaison with parents. Adult mentors met with students in school and attended CIS-sponsored events with them.

- The Newark ***ACCEL Program*** provided a self-contained setting to help sixth and seventh graders who had been retained in grade to accelerate their progress and rejoin their peers after one or two years in the program. Students were admitted only if they were no more than two grade levels behind on standardized tests and their parents agreed to sign homework, come to three school meetings per year, and promote learning at home. Four teachers in each of five schools worked together to plan and control the program, choose students, and monitor student progress. A serious environment was emphasized, and substantial homework was assigned. A guidance counselor devoted special attention to ACCEL students, providing four motivational and career awareness sessions each week, monitoring adherence to a tightened attendance policy, and following up on absences. Teachers and counselors supervised after-school activities, such as a science club, debate team, and an interschool ACCEL newspaper.

- The Rockford ***Early Identification and Intervention Program*** placed at-risk seventh graders at four middle schools in a resource room for a general studies class one period each day. The program staff also provided extra counseling attention. The general studies class was designed to offer general academic help and boost self-esteem and motivation. Teachers assisted students with study skills and homework assignments and conducted sessions on conflict resolution, motivation, and other personal skills issues.

- In the ***Sweetwater Twelve Together Program*** in Chula Vista, selected seventh graders were placed in 12-member peer counseling groups, which started the year with a weekend camping retreat to promote bonding, teamwork, commitment to school, and relationships with adult volunteer counselors. The counselors then moderated weekly after-school discussions on personal, family, and social issues affecting students' lives.

Three factors contributed to successful implementation or limited effective implementation. First, we noted an ***innovative approach to funding program expansion*** in the Miami COMET Program. Dade County Public Schools (DCPS) markets implementation guides, student manuals, equipment lists, and training materials to other school districts in Florida and other states, using the proceeds to fund the district's contribution to expanding COMET implementation to new DCPS schools.

Second, we noted the ***importance of concerted efforts to promote consistency in a multisite program***. In Newark, for example, special efforts were made to involve a broad range of staff, including teachers, in planning. The district then ensured that ACCEL teachers "bought into" the program model by gradually expanding the program over several years to additional schools, selecting schools in part on the basis of teachers' and principals' enthusiasm. Emphasis was placed on making the program a team effort, by delegating to each school's team considerable authority for discretionary expenditures and decisions on student admission and discipline. Emphasis was placed on preparation time to ensure teamwork and a common understanding of the program within and across schools. All ACCEL teachers met for a paid week or two of summer training and planning, to promote a consistent understanding of the ACCEL approach, and had five rather than three preparation periods per week.

Third, we observed that ***teacher selection methods affected implementation success***. In some sites, only interested teachers with relevant experience were recruited. In several projects, however, local circumstances constrained projects' freedom to use the most appropriate staff. In various sites, union rules made seniority a key basis for assignment, or teachers were selected primarily to fill out their class schedules, rather than because they had appropriate skills or experience. These factors limited the extent to which interesting or challenging curriculum and instruction took place in several sites.

IMPLEMENTING RESTRUCTURING AND REFORM APPROACHES

Seven grantees received funding for restructuring and reform--efforts to make schoolwide changes in a cluster of schools--rather than for directing special services to a target group of at-risk students. These grants supported district reform efforts at quite different stages in their development, and thus supported activities that related in diverse ways to comprehensive reform strategies. In a few instances, broad strategies devised before the SDDAP grant period had already been constrained or amended because of fiscal constraints, political pressures, short-term crises, or uneven staff support. As a result, some of the activities supported by SDDAP grants are only loosely connected to a clear reform strategy, and some activities are targeted services to respond to urgent service needs. In a few sites, however, the use of the SDDAP grants clearly represents a step in a broad reform strategy defined before the SDDAP grant.

Although SDDAP grants supported diverse activities even within sites, the seven grantees generally emphasized (1) school-based management, (2) curricular and instructional reform, or (3) professional development. The distinctions are hardly clear-cut, however, because all projects addressed each factor to some extent.

Focus on Curriculum and Instruction

The ***Santa Ana Unified School District*** conducted its grant activities in 5 of the district's 40 schools--an elementary school, three middle schools, and a high school--serving an overwhelmingly Hispanic population. The Santa Ana initiative focused narrowly on curriculum and instruction, avoiding any emphasis on social services because of growing school board objections to school involvement in "values" education. The activities funded by SDDAP grant resources were part of ongoing efforts to implement state policy on curriculum and instruction, as embodied in California state curriculum frameworks.

The initiatives in Santa Ana varied at different school levels, and even from school to school. At the elementary school, language development and language arts instruction were emphasized--with a full-day kindergarten, a longer school day, and reduced class size in language arts for grades one and two, ungraded classrooms in grades three to five for language arts, and tutoring for students with reading difficulties. The middle schools created teams of teachers to work on implementing interdisciplinary instruction to emphasize critical thinking skills and make greater use of technology. However, a district move to a year-round schedule disrupted progress by forcing wholesale reshuffling of teacher assignments. At the high school level, grant resources were allocated largely to implementing block scheduling to give students three 90-minute periods each day, with a class in each of six core subjects every other day. The project also supported tutoring of middle school students by college work-study students; peer tutoring at the high school; and a team of a nurse, an outreach consultant, and a psychologist to work with schools on strengthening relationships with parents.

The ***Grand Rapids Public Schools*** planned to use the SDDAP grant in one high school, one middle school, and eight elementary schools to support pilot implementation of Outcomes-Based Decision Making (OBDM), a districtwide vision for curriculum and instructional reform emphasized in the district improvement plan. The OBDM model called for "mastery learning"; teachers would introduce a skill for a week, test for mastery, allow those who demonstrated mastery to proceed to enrichment activities, and reteach using alternative approaches until all students had succeeded. Some teachers participated in developing target outcomes in various subject areas. The district provided staff development to prepare teachers for the new approach to curriculum definition and instruction, including workshops on how to vary curriculum presentation and help all students reach mastery. Faculty resistance, however, prevented participation of the cluster's high school; math teachers contended that their classes were too large for them to reteach or provide extensive individual attention. Instead, the high school introduced a ninth-grade program organized around "family groups," block scheduling, and interdisciplinary themes. The grant also supported "student advocates" in each school, who followed up on chronic absenteeism but also took on roles such as establishing a high school mentoring program, an after-school tutoring program, and an elementary school self-awareness/self-enhancement program.

The ***McCormick County Public Schools*** in South Carolina worked on implementing "New Visions," a plan for involving teachers in developing new curriculum frameworks in all subjects for the district's three schools. Frameworks were developed for mathematics and English/language arts, requiring teachers to organize and present content in new ways. District leaders recognize that full implementation will take time. The ultimate goal is to have most program decisions made at the school level. The principals and about half the district's faculty were trained in participatory management to promote this goal. The SDDAP grant also supported installation of a computer lab in each school, some after-school and summer enrichment programs, tutoring for younger children by high school students, a double promotion program to help middle school students who had been retained catch up to their peers, and a "Mother-Child-Home" program to teach mothers how to play with and read to their preschoolers. The grant thus supported both broad reform and targeted services.

The ***Phoenix Union High School District*** project focused on curriculum and instructional reform but was limited in scope. At the secondary level, the SDDAP grant focused on reducing student attrition by creating a ninth-grade enclave featuring block scheduling and interdisciplinary instruction. A middle school in the separate elementary school district also received some grant funds but used these resources to maintain its counseling staff, offsetting reductions in funding from local sources. The school also used some of the SDDAP grant to work with a community-based organization that sponsored workshops on issues such as drug abuse, sexuality, and gang awareness.

Focus on School-Based Management

Although all restructuring projects made some effort to prepare teachers to assume greater decision-making roles, two made this their predominant focus. They emphasized school-level team building and empowerment as a first step toward involving teachers in decisions about curriculum and instruction.

The ***Dallas Independent School District***, working with Southwest Texas State University, sought to strengthen school-level decision making in the Spruce Cluster, a group of 17 elementary and middle schools and 1 high school. A variety of activities promoted collective decision making: summer workshops for cluster administrators, teachers, and parents; a series of seminars on team building and group decision making; and training and professional development activities of each school's choice. The

schools explored academic reforms that they might adopt, such as alternative school schedules, student grouping strategies, or use of instructional software. Several project components involved developing services urgently needed by students and their families: a program to teach parents of preschoolers to read to their children, health clinics in the high school and two middle schools, and a child care center at the high school. Spruce Cluster schools also installed automated telephone systems for communicating with parents about absences, homework, and school events.

The ***Philadelphia Gratz Connection*** project was primarily an effort to build collaborative decision-making skills among teachers and to promote communications across school levels, in a cluster of 1 high school and 16 elementary and middle schools. The project focused on the formation of "connection councils" in each school, as well as training for selected council members who served as "connectors" among cluster schools. The 64 connectors attended staff development sessions on team building, improving communication and school climate, and new models of student learning. They were expected to serve as catalysts for the reform of curriculum and instruction in their own schools. The Gratz Connection also tried to improve student attendance by creating a small group of parents to serve as attendance aides in the morning (and attend GED or job preparation classes in the afternoon), but the scale of this component was very limited scale.

Focus on Staff Development

One of the restructuring grants went to the ***San Juan County School District*** in Utah, which had already been working for eight years on team-building and decision-making skills in the schools. The SDDAP grant extended this initiative to focus more directly on helping teachers learn new instructional approaches. Experienced teachers were chosen as peer coaches to work with other teachers, and teachers attended intensive summer institutes and other meetings on reform goals. Specific strategies for reforming curriculum and instruction were chosen at the school level. Grant funds also contributed to the development of technology centers at the three high schools, each with its own focus devised at the school level.

Factors Affecting Restructuring

Prospects that SDDAP grants will contribute to significant long-term change appear to depend on the ***relationship between the local restructuring grant activities and the broader agenda of reform*** at the district and state level. In the two rural sites in South Carolina and Utah, grant activities were closely interwoven with broader district or state educational reform plans, and school staff got persistent and consistent messages from district leaders about the direction of change. In Grand Rapids and Santa Ana, the grants mostly supported implementation of district or state reforms, although local circumstances interfered with some aspects of grant-sponsored activity. In Dallas and Philadelphia, reform strategies ran into more obstacles. In Dallas, an earlier district plan to follow the School-Centered Education (SCE) model of James Comer and move toward school-based decision-making was de-emphasized after only two years, in favor of a policy of letting each school select its own approach to school improvement. Some school strategies are also likely to fit poorly with the state emphasis in Texas on achieving accountability through statewide skills tests, which may inhibit adoption of innovative curriculum and instructional strategies. In Philadelphia, staff training on school-based decision making was consistent with district policy, but procedural requirements and limits on the scope of decisions that schools could really make created barriers to progress. Progress toward school-based management and decision making was also

limited by contractual constraints on schools' ability to hire and assign staff, school board control over building-level expenditures, and the low priority the Gratz cluster's regional administrators gave to developing school-based management and decision making.

The direction and progress of restructuring projects were also affected by ***turnover in district and school leadership***. Four of the five urban districts with restructuring grants hired new superintendents during the span of their SDDAP grants. The consequences varied. In two cases, leadership changes led to either delayed commitment of top-level support to the planned activities, or to a shift in a previously established reform agenda. In the other two cases, leadership changes are recent but have created uncertainty about whether earlier reform plans will be carried out. Substantial turnover and reassignment of school principals also weakened the momentum of reform efforts in several districts.

ATTRACTING STUDENTS TO TARGETED PROJECTS

Targeted projects had to attract student applicants or select at-risk students to fill their program slots. Because some students were assigned to an evaluation control group, project staff had to recruit or select far more program candidates than they could serve. One of the criteria used to select projects for the in-depth evaluation was expectation of excess demand for program services. However, only 8 of the 19 project interventions originally slated for inclusion in the impact analysis came within 20 percent of their original targets for sample enrollment. Overall, the targeted projects recruited 5,861 students, compared with an original target of more than 8,000.

Shortfalls in student recruitment occurred for several reasons. In a few cases, local financial crises interfered with recruiting. In most cases, however, shortfalls were due to misjudgments about the number of students who would apply or fit referral criteria, procedural snags in recruiting, or some combination of the two. In three cases, the evaluation data collection process may have complicated normal enrollment, unintentionally cooling student interest or discouraging referrals. Three projects--in Anne Arundel County, Cincinnati, and San Antonio--had such difficulty in attracting or identifying students and in adhering to the sample assignment process order that they were excluded from the analysis of program impacts.

Recruiting practices can affect participation in targeted dropout prevention projects. Some projects devoted considerable efforts each spring to develop lists of suitable students who would then be invited to enroll in the program in the fall. The long lag between student identification and program entry was generally associated with considerable attrition and, in some cases, program underenrollment. In contrast, projects that identified suitable students in the fall saw most of their selected students enter their programs. There was also some indication that outreach to attract applications was strengthened by program staff who individually solicited identified dropouts, rather than relying wholly on public service announcements and general media coverage.

Three impediments to effective recruiting were observed: (1) personnel scheduling constraints; (2) difficulties obtaining information on students; and (3) limits on access to students. Ideally, to minimize the interval between intensive outreach and opportunities for enrollment in alternative school programs, special recruiting should occur during the summer months. School personnel constraints, however, may have to be overcome to carry out heavy summer recruiting. Information about dropouts or near-dropouts who might be recruited by recovery projects was often unavailable for various reasons, including confidentiality concerns, avoidance of publicity about dropout rates, competition between district- and community-run alternative programs, school administrators' concerns about losing enrollment-based

funding when their students transfer, and long delays before nonattending students were designated as dropouts in district databases. The availability of sophisticated student databases containing information on at-risk indicators was also critical for efficient recruitment, particularly if student identification was conducted in the fall, over a compressed period with a minimum of manual records analysis. Finally, staff wishing to recruit students to alternative programs found it difficult in some cases to gain access to those who were still in school but were likely candidates.

Programs also convey messages to students and parents that can affect recruiting success. Some SDDAP program names conveyed positive messages--such as Middle School Leadership Program, Corporate Academy, Middle College High School, ACCEL, and Transitions Learning Centers. Others--such as Early Identification/Intervention, Flowers with Care, and WAVE--gave little clear information that could help attract students. Program staff must also be aware of how standard district approaches to communicating with parents can affect recruiting, and either avoid or supplement complex or alarming bureaucratic language--such as letters giving parents a "right to appeal" the selection of their child for an enrichment program. Location and facilities may also affect recruiting success. One SDDAP project's location on a college campus gave it a recruiting advantage, because students had access to college facilities and the status of associating with more mature students.

Effects of Recruiting on Student Mix

The ways that programs recruit students can affect the suitability of program resources and perhaps program effectiveness. Recruiting practices can influence two key characteristics of the population served: (1) commitment to the program; and (2) skill levels of students who enter the program.

Student commitment and enthusiasm are important ingredients of a positive school climate. Four practices at SDDAP targeted projects could promote recruitment of students with at least some modest level of commitment:

1. A multistep personal assessment as part of the application process
2. Participation of current students in interviewing and screening new applicants
3. Requirements for parents and students to sign contracts to fulfill work assignments and adhere to attendance rules
4. A program design that actually requires substantial student effort and time, and that is clearly communicated to prospective students to promote self-screening

Attention to potential participants' skill levels was also important in some projects. Screening was influential in projects whose design called for accelerated instruction, so the class as a whole could progress at a rapid pace, as in the Newark ACCEL program. At least one project designed for accelerated instruction, in Flint, experienced some first-year difficulties when elementary school principals who did not fully understand the design of the Accelerated Academics Academy referred students with serious discipline problems or special education needs to it.

Effects of Program Features on Recruiting

Attracting students to dropout prevention programs is likely to depend not only on recruiting efforts and program image, but also on program features. We identified three aspects of the targeted demonstration projects that could affect success in attracting and retaining students. First, ***flexibility in program options and schedule*** could increase program appeal. The targeted demonstration projects showed flexibility with regard to (1) the daily schedule of school attendance, (2) the combinations of courses and subjects students could pursue, and (3) options for combining school and employment. Second, ***program location*** must be considered in recruiting. Several projects drew students from wide geographic areas, and a few were located in somewhat remote urban neighborhoods. The feasibility and difficulty of commuting by public transit, and the possibility of using district transportation services, must be considered in defining targets for recruiting students. Third, the ***range of academic and extracurricular activities offered*** can affect the attractiveness of alternative programs. Students in focus groups indicated that some of a small, intimate program's merits may be offset by the difficulties of separation from the familiar social environment of the regular high school, the limited range of academic offerings, or the lack of organized school activities. Several SDDAP alternative high schools, despite their small size, made special efforts to deal with this issue by organizing team sports, school newspapers, and group camping retreats.

MAKING SOMETHING HAPPEN IN THE CLASSROOM

ED specified that one element of the SDDAP projects should be the introduction of interesting and challenging curriculum and instruction. Although the definition of this feature could be the topic of considerable debate, we looked for the following as signs of an interesting and challenging classroom environment for purposes of the evaluation:

- Reading for a clear, personal purpose
- Writing for communication with a defined audience
- Emphasis on higher-order skills rather than drills in basic skills
- Chances for students to share ideas about issues relevant to them
- Opportunities for active and applied, "hands-on" learning
- Instruction that guides students to reason and solve problems

SDDAP projects placed varying emphasis on creating such classroom conditions. Some targeted projects made creating a stimulating, relevant, and challenging curriculum a priority objective, while others focused on helping students get through their school's or district's standard curriculum. Some that did try to change curriculum and instruction faced serious constraints in doing so. Restructuring projects generally emphasized creating preconditions for more challenging and interesting classrooms, through reorganization of student and teacher groupings, efforts to strengthen participatory management at the school level, and

training on teaching methods and teachers' roles in school leadership. We reached the following five conclusions about efforts to make classrooms interesting and challenging.

Students Can Be Challenged Through Acceleration and Credit Accrual Strategies, Even Without Major Curriculum Reform

Rather than emphasizing curriculum development or innovative instruction, some SDDAP projects sought to accelerate students' progress through standard curricula. Two approaches were tried: (1) accelerating instruction and establishing demanding expectations for students' attendance, attention, and effort; and (2) creating flexible ways to attend school, demonstrate progress, and accrue credit.

Staff interviews, observation, and student focus groups suggested that some efforts at acceleration may pose real challenges to students. In Newark, for example, ACCEL teachers maintained a serious, purposeful environment, assigned substantial homework, and expected its completion. Students reacted positively, praising teachers' persistence and attentiveness. Students in the Flint AAA program expressed similar appreciation of the program's academic focus and felt challenged by their assignments and teachers' expectations. However, acceleration programs run the risk of reducing their efforts to "just getting students through." The Griffin-Spalding Academy, for example, had difficulty establishing a consistent atmosphere focused on challenging students; academy teachers were perceived as accepting and friendly, but most were more concerned about making students feel good about themselves rather than about challenging them academically.

These examples suggest that the acceleration model can challenge students only if (1) teachers are selected who believe in challenging students and who have the teaching skills required to do so; (2) classes are small; (3) curriculum is clearly formulated and planned; and (4) students are selected carefully to maximize chances they can keep pace and minimize disruptive behavior.

Some SDDAP interventions serving high school students or returning dropouts were designed specifically to help them earn the credits they needed for graduation. In various combinations, these interventions included contracts for independent study, reduced or alternative attendance hours, flexible options for combining academic and vocational classes or classes at both an alternative program and a regular high school, competency-based credit award, compressed schedules to reduce the elapsed time required for course credit, and options to apply course credit in alternative subject areas. These programs did not stress creating a stimulating, challenging or innovative curriculum. However, they placed substantial responsibility on students for their own progress, which posed a new challenge in the eyes of some.

Interdisciplinary and Thematic Teaching Can Make Classes Challenging and Engaging

Several SDDAP projects tried to make thematic, interdisciplinary instruction a core feature of their intervention. At MCHS in Seattle, instruction was organized around two strands--math/science and humanities--each taught by a team of two teachers. Classes focused on a topic each academic quarter, such as genetics, which combined biology and statistics. At JFY High in Boston, individual teachers organized readings in humanities and American studies around the theme of human relationships. Students expressed appreciation of such classes, but serious efforts at thematic, interdisciplinary instruction were unusual among the SDDAP projects because these efforts depend on a rare combination of circumstances

and resources. First, classroom teachers must have the planning time, energy, and creativity to develop their own curriculum framework and materials. Second, building a thematic, interdisciplinary approach requires a sustained commitment to developing teams of teachers. The fragility of efforts to build interdisciplinary team teaching was apparent in Santa Ana, where a switch to a year-round school calendar disrupted team assignments severely.

Students Appreciate a Classroom in Which Learning Is Taken Seriously

Observation of the SDDAP projects provided ample evidence that many at-risk students relish and respond positively to well-prepared challenges from competent, supportive teachers. When students felt challenged, they believed that they were participating in a high-status program rather than being stigmatized by assignment to low-level classes. Repeatedly, we encountered students whose positive comments about their SDDAP program included statements such as, "Here, they want you to think," or "It's like honors . . . the classes are harder and longer." At the Atlanta Griffin-Spalding Academy, students clearly favored the teacher who taught them Shakespeare and "made us learn something" over others who demanded little of them. However, the ingredients required to challenge students were not consistently observed. Some teachers thought it was more important to raise students' self-esteem through praise and acceptance than to challenge them with meaningful academic expectations. In some cases, project plans were not clear enough to promote challenging experiences or simply were not focused on introducing challenging material or instruction. Plans for the Rockford general studies classes, for example, envisioned a mix of help with homework, discussion sessions to improve self-esteem and decision-making skills, career awareness activities, and conflict resolution training, yet individual schools were free to assign teachers to these classes by any method they chose, and teachers were largely left alone to plan their own classroom activities for this wide range of purposes.

Teachers Can Challenge and Engage At-Risk Students

The teaching skills and personal qualities required to make classes challenging and engaging were observed in some SDDAP projects, but they were not widespread. The evaluation team observed some inspired, innovative, and creative teaching. More commonly, we found teachers using traditional question-and-response methods, in some cases in a very energetic and engaging fashion. However, even more often, the evaluation team observed classes in which little instruction occurred. In such instances, teachers typically lacked classroom management skills, tolerated student inattention and disruptive behavior, and allowed administrative matters to consume disproportionate amounts of class time. The absence of instruction sometimes seemed due in part to teachers' limited mastery of alternative instructional strategies--evidenced, for example, by a teacher using math manipulatives but not allowing students to touch them. Too often, we saw students assigned to work silently at their desks for extended periods while a teacher sat uninvolved at the front of the room. These shortcomings were most clearly visible where selection of project teachers was not consistently based on teaching skills and motivation to work with at-risk students.

Reorganizing Schools and Schedules Can Create Conditions for Challenging and Engaging Teaching

SDDAP restructuring projects sought to create the conditions necessary to foster long-term changes in classroom teaching throughout whole schools and school clusters. They generally followed two strategies: (1) reorganizing aspects of the school environment; and (2) providing staff development to help teachers work together to develop teaching strategies and skills.

The most common reform in the urban restructuring projects was to create small groupings of students and teachers within a school--known as "families," "houses," "teams," or "pods"--to foster more intimate instructional settings, typically with four or five teachers and 150 to 200 students. Such groupings were introduced for ninth graders at restructuring project high schools in Dallas, Grand Rapids, and Santa Ana. In addition to family groupings, some changes were made in the daily school schedule, such as the use of 90-minute block scheduling for English/humanities and math/science at Century High School in Phoenix. Such changes can create fertile ground for the development of challenging curriculum and instruction, in part simply by creating some common planning time for team teachers and the flexibility to tailor instructional time to the demands of a topic rather than an arbitrary class period.

However, reorganization of schools and schedules more directly addresses management and school climate issues rather than curriculum and instruction. Despite instances of creativity and teamwork comparable to those found in some of the smaller alternative programs, the restructuring projects' ability to make organizational changes lead to classroom changes was constrained by larger district pressures, uneven teacher support, or teachers' concentration on bolstering students' self-esteem and feeling of acceptance rather than changing curriculum and instruction.

The leaders of the restructuring projects recognized that organizational changes are only a part of what is needed to bring about substantial change in classrooms. Project staff also sought to stimulate change with a variety of professional development workshops on a range of topics. However, no obvious or immediate effects of staff development activities on curriculum or instruction could be identified in the short term of this evaluation, which provided the opportunity to observe only the beginning of what is likely to be a long, evolutionary process.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Efforts to help at-risk youths stay in school and succeed must consider their life circumstances beyond the classroom. Schools and dropout prevention programs can have little direct effect on the social and economic conditions that lead to the problems enumerated here. However, they can create a generally supportive environment to help students remain attached to school and confront the individual challenges they face outside of school arising from neighborhood violence and substance abuse, health problems, pregnancy and parenthood, and difficult family circumstances. Almost all SDDAP projects incorporated features or activities designed to foster a supportive environment. Their approaches can be described as serving four objectives:

1. Helping students deal with other students

2. Conveying a mix of acceptance and expectations

3. Creating links between students' school lives and the world outside school

4. Providing services to help students deal with specific life problems

Helping Students Deal with Students

The degree of harmony or conflict students experience with their peers, the extent to which they feel valued by other students, and their ability to recognize a kinship with other students in both their accomplishments and their problems are all likely to influence their feeling of belonging in school. We identified four features of SDDAP projects that had the potential to promote harmony and supportive relationships among students:

1. ***Building Bonds Through Joint Activities.*** Students praised groupings such as the Freshman Curriculum Project at Lake View High School in Chicago and the ninth-grade enclave at Ottawa Hills High School in Grand Rapids as helping them form close relationships. Special outings, outdoor team-building exercises, mountain retreats, and collaborative play-writing projects were used in other sites to develop a spirit of common purpose.

2. ***Finding Ways for Students to Help Students.*** Examples included peer counseling at Seattle MCHS, sophomores and juniors at Wells Academy in Chicago introducing incoming eighth graders to the school, Lake View High School juniors and seniors meeting weekly with freshmen to help them adjust to the school, and Spruce High School students tutoring elementary school students in Dallas.

3. ***Reducing Conflict.*** Several SDDAP projects systematically emphasized civil and respectful behavior among students and between students and staff. Staff in Albuquerque, Dallas, Grand Rapids, and Tulsa sponsored training of students in conflict mediation techniques and set up mediation procedures. Efforts to reduce gang influence and activity were also made; they included evening recreation, cultural, and athletic events in Chicago and a gang abatement specialist in Las Vegas to train teachers on how to deal with suspected gang members.

4. ***Promoting Awareness of Common Problems.*** A few SDDAP projects organized group discussions focused on students' life concerns. The most notable example was the Sweetwater Twelve Together Program, which sponsored weekly student meetings led by volunteer counselors.

Balancing Acceptance and Expectations

Most SDDAP projects introduced activities, program elements, and philosophical approaches intended to make students feel accepted and valued. These project features were designed to overcome general alienation from school and the more specific stresses of transitions from one school level to another. Some projects attempted at the same time to establish clear expectations for students' behavior and academic performance. Project features aimed at enhancing students' sense of acceptance or establishing clear expectations included:

- ***Making Efforts to Ease Transitions.*** Lake View High School and Wells Academy in Chicago collaborated with middle schools on a week-long summer program for eighth graders at their future high schools. The Jump Start Program in Grand Rapids gave interested seventh graders three days of orientation and classes on computers, conflict resolution, and study skills to prepare for Iroquois Middle School.

- ***Valuing Each Student.*** Several SDDAP projects built into their curriculum ways to acknowledge the legitimacy and value of students' backgrounds and attitudes. Seattle MCHS built its humanities course around a "people's history" perspective, highlighting struggles in American society for equality and opportunity. In Santa Ana, special efforts were made to introduce multicultural literature as a vehicle for promoting students' interest in reading and writing.

- ***Insisting on Attendance.*** Many SDDAP projects emphasized attendance monitoring. A sophisticated computer database for tracking attendance in Santa Ana was credited with a sharp improvement in attendance at Century High School. Other projects used attendance coordinators, counselors, or direct phone calls from teachers to follow up quickly on absences.

- ***Giving Students Significant School and Community Roles.*** Seattle MCHS encouraged students to behave maturely by assigning them active roles in making school intake decisions and assessing school policies. Numerous SDDAP projects promoted student involvement in community volunteer work, such as United Way campaigns, hurricane relief, and hospice assistance.

Linking Students to the Community and the Future

We observed three strategies that SDDAP projects followed to help students forge positive links to the world outside school:

1. ***Mentoring.*** Four projects--in Cincinnati, Grand Rapids, Miami, and Seattle--organized adult mentoring programs to provide students with positive role models and to expose them to experiences and activities outside the boundaries of their daily lives.

2. ***Widening the Circle of Support.*** Several SDDAP projects sought to strengthen staff resources to reach out to parents and address underlying factors affecting student attendance and school performance. Community liaison staff in Long Beach responded in most cases to attendance issues but also served as links among school, families, and service agencies. Project counselors in Rockford went to parents' homes for "porch talk" to establish themselves as allies in finding strategies to deal with students' problems.

3. ***Establishing Links to the World of Work.*** Employment can help students meet personal and family needs, as well as build general employability skills. Several projects helped students find jobs. Youth Development, Inc. (YDI) in Albuquerque used JTPA funds to subsidize semester-long job placements. JFY job developers found placements and prepared students for them. Corporate Academy in Miami offered credit-bearing work experience to about a

quarter of its students. Seattle MCHS offered paid internships in a wide variety of private firms, linked with a weekly class on workplace demands.

Providing Supportive Services to Meet Particular Needs

SDDAP projects also offered services to deal with very specific student needs or problems. The most common service was personal counseling. In many sites, the SDDAP grants supported increased counseling attention. In a few projects, such as Tulsa STAR and Flowers with Care, counseling was the core of the intervention. In other sites, counselors were closely attached to the academic staff--as in the Newark ACCEL program, the Flint Academy, and Seattle MCHS.

Students seemed to appreciate counselors they perceived as close allies working for students' academic success. This characteristic was undermined in some sites for a variety of reasons. In Rockford, grant counselors handled only special services and were not involved in academic counseling, thus diluting their involvement with students. In Anne Arundel, tensions among staff seemed to undermine the prospects that students would perceive teachers and counselors as a team working for their benefit. Observation in several sites suggested that students generally perceived as unauthentic counseling in the form of classes, lessons, or exercises to promote self-esteem.

Many SDDAP students needed child care services, but several sites' experiences suggest that schools must exercise caution in providing them. Clark Academy, Seattle MCHS, the Dallas restructuring project, and the Las Vegas Horizon High Schools offered child care for at least some period. Because of difficulties in maintaining quality, the Seattle project had to phase out its child care center and instead contract for services. Concerns about the level of stimulation children received even in licensed family care arose in Dallas. Horizon High Schools had to overcome initial legal barriers to allow students' children to ride with their parents on school buses. Clark Academy had to operate its child care center miles from the school and run a shuttle bus because of zoning restrictions.

Only a few projects offered health services. The Dallas project opened a clinic at Spruce High School and two middle schools. Santa Ana staff organized health fairs, but plans to bring medical students to the high school to provide health information were stymied by the objections of a few school board members to discussion of AIDS or family planning in the schools. A few other projects sponsored occasional health screenings.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

The diversity of the SDDAP projects provides a rich base of experience to guide future programs, but it also complicates any effort to draw clear conclusions about program design or implementation. Successes and setbacks often seem related to local circumstances and project designs. An assessment of the full set of projects, however, suggests some overall guidance with respect to the (1) federal role in future education reform demonstrations, (2) organization and features of local dropout prevention programs, and (3) prospects for demonstration projects to improve classroom instruction.

Refining the Federal Role in Demonstrations

Federal demonstration projects can encourage innovation and provide information about the success and effectiveness of innovative interventions. To strengthen the contribution that demonstrations make to our understanding of program effectiveness, two objectives for the future should be considered.

First, it would be helpful to ***focus demonstrations on delivery models.*** Although ED specified program elements for the SDDAP demonstration, these elements did little to create a coherent overall program. Grant applicants had great latitude to come up with proposals for very different projects, because the specified program elements were vaguely defined *qualities* to be achieved in program inputs. As a result, the SDDAP projects varied widely in their target populations, programmatic changes, and underlying conceptions of how to help students succeed. This diversity is due not only to the discretion allowed by the ED specifications, but also to a grant award process that allowed only limited scrutiny of the extent to which projects incorporated the features requested. Organizing grant programs around more clearly defined service delivery models--such as alternative high schools, middle school academic enrichment, or tutoring programs--could focus program development and evaluation attention on programs with similar approaches to the same problem, and could thus yield more robust research findings. To follow such an approach, the grant award criteria and decision process would have to include greater attention to ensuring that funded projects reflect the chosen service model.

Second, it would be useful to conduct ***separate demonstrations for program innovation and broad school reform.*** The same evaluation questions were posed, and similar data collection methods were used, in the SDDAP targeted and restructuring projects, although their designs and objectives were quite different. The reform process in the restructuring projects could be expected to have indirect and long-term effects on student outcomes, at best, so spending substantial resources to look for short-term impacts on students was probably less appropriate than in targeted projects. An alternative approach would conduct separate demonstrations for restructuring and reform projects, or at least define a distinct evaluation strategy for them.

Positive Organizational and Program Features

Although individual projects' practices suggested useful tips for program planners, three broadly applicable lessons emerged. First, ***project partnerships are most productive if formed by local institutions and guided by school needs and talent.*** The most successful SDDAP partnerships involved school districts working with organizations that had strong local roots and that collaborated closely with district staff to define each partner's role. Some partnerships were less productive, in part because the organizations working with schools had a less locally focused mission or were less attuned to needs identified or perceived by district staff. Their experiences suggest that school districts should be cautious in entering collaborations with outside organizations that propose ready-made curricula or other interventions not derived from careful joint study of local needs. Partnerships conceived by universities, community-based organizations, or other nonprofit organizations may be able to stimulate school administrators and teachers, but in the end they can succeed only if school staff play a central creative role.

Second, ***controlling staff resources is important to the success of dropout prevention programs.*** Project leaders in some sites managed to gain and maintain the freedom to recruit and attract teachers who were interested in working with at-risk youths, willing and able to devote time and energy to developing challenging curricula, and committed and skilled enough to focus on serious teaching. In other sites,

programs were staffed to a large extent on the basis of teacher seniority or administrative convenience. The degree to which teaching staff could be chosen to suit the job was clearly visible in the quality of classroom instruction we observed. This finding presents an obvious challenge for the future. Although small alternative programs may be given the leeway to control staffing for some interim period, it is often harder to preserve such discretion for the long term, particularly if a popular or apparently successful program is expanding.

Third, ***alternative programs are most likely to be sustainable if they benefit regular schools.*** Regular district and school administrators often perceive alternative programs as a threat. Such concerns can be mitigated if alternative programs are established in ways that provide useful services or financial advantages to regular schools. One SDDAP program recruited dropouts from 14 area districts but provided testing and diagnostic services to the districts; program students were formally enrolled in the district schools and thus contributed to schools' official enrollment base for state aid determinations. In another program, students who had dropped out of high school and then attended special learning centers to complete missing high school credits brought with them renewed state aid. A portion of the aid was allocated to discretionary funds in the host high schools, giving regular administrators an incentive to support the learning centers.

Promoting a Positive Affective Environment and Improved Academic Instruction

In varying degrees, SDDAP projects sought to improve the affective conditions of students' school environment, and to improve the quality and appropriateness of curriculum and instruction. They often succeeded in the former objective, but the challenges in achieving the latter remained substantial.

The most important step that SDDAP projects took to enhance students' environment was ***reducing its size.*** This reduction was achieved by establishing alternative schools, setting up distinct enrichment programs within regular schools, or clustering students together for most or all of their classes. Reduced scale was clearly a precondition for positive changes noted by both students and staff. Students felt staff treated them as individuals and cared about them, student relationships were more positive and less marred by conflict, and teachers were less burdened by school administrative and disciplinary tasks and could focus more on planning and teaching.

Consistent enhancement of instruction and curriculum was more difficult to achieve, however. Specific actions--or in some cases existing conditions--had the potential to promote strong teaching and innovative curriculum. Some projects recruited or already had strong teachers. In other projects, steps were taken, usually associated with reducing scale, to improve teaching conditions. These steps included block scheduling, creating teacher teams, reducing class size, and increasing teachers' planning time. Several projects gave teachers time to develop interdisciplinary or thematic curricula, as well as professional development activities to help them move in this direction. Other forms of professional development, particularly in the restructuring projects, were designed to help teachers develop new teaching strategies. Nevertheless, the classes we observed generally fell short of the goal of being "interesting and challenging." Changing teaching conditions, adopting new curricula, or giving teachers a mandate to develop curricula on their own seem to have produced benefits for some talented, energetic teachers and their students, but did not necessarily affect the academic experience in the classroom with any broad consistency. This observation underscores the complexity of teaching and the difficulty of changing long-term teaching behavior through limited demonstration projects. It also highlights the importance of more far-reaching factors, such as undergraduate and graduate teacher-training systems,

incentives for talented youths to enter teaching, the conditions and incentives for teaching at-risk students, and the resources their teachers have to work with in the classroom.

I. INTRODUCTION

For four years beginning with the 1991-1992 school year, the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) supported the efforts of 85 local grantees to reduce the rate at which students leave high school before graduation. The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) awarded SDDAP grants to local education agencies, community-based organizations, and educational partnerships. ED awarded 65 grants that began in 1991, and an additional 20 in 1992. The Planning and Evaluation Service in ED contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., (MPR) and its two subcontractors, Policy Studies Associates (PSA) and RMC Research Corporation, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the SDDAP. The evaluation focuses on the implementation and effects of 25 projects selected for in-depth evaluation. This report documents the characteristics and implementation of the projects undertaken by these 25 grantees. It also offers lessons about the design and operation of dropout prevention initiatives based on their experiences.

This introductory chapter presents background for the detailed examination of SDDAP projects in the body of the report. Section A summarizes the overall design and purposes of the SDDAP. Section B presents a brief overview of the SDDAP evaluation and its in-depth evaluation component, including the impact and implementation analyses. Section C identifies the projects selected for the in-depth evaluation and salient characteristics of their project activities. Section D describes the major challenges that faced the SDDAP grantees in fulfilling their local project objectives, as well as longer-term goals implicit in the SDDAP design.

A. THE SCHOOL DROPOUT DEMONSTRATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Although the overall incidence of school dropout has declined and high school completion rates have increased during the past few decades, failure to complete high school continues to be a severe problem affecting certain population groups and areas of the country. Dropout rates exceed 50 percent in many

cities, and children from low-income families are three times as likely as children from middle-income families to drop out of high school before graduation (National Research Council 1993). Minority youths are more likely to drop out than white students; although dropout rates have declined to about 23 percent among African Americans, they continue to run as high as 45 percent among Hispanic youths (Carter and Wilson 1991).

The persistence of high dropout rates has evoked widespread concern and stimulated efforts by local, state, and federal governments to reduce dropout rates. A 1986 nationwide survey identified more than 1,000 local programs serving dropouts or youths at risk of dropping out (U.S. General Accounting Office 1987). Concern about the dropout problem also increased during the 1980s, as data indicated that the dropout rate continued to be highest among minority populations (National Center for Education Statistics 1992). Data also showed that dropouts' low educational attainment and poor work-force readiness were a major factor in declining real wages and could jeopardize efforts by American producers to be competitive in world markets.

In 1988, to bolster the federal role in dropout prevention, Congress created the SDDAP, under Title VI of the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988 (PL 100-297). The program consisted of two-year discretionary grants from ED to 89 dropout programs operated by local education agencies and community organizations. These programs were expected to establish and demonstrate:

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

Subsequent events reflected continuing and heightened interest in the dropout problem. In November 1989, the National Governors' Association and the president established 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." In 1991, Congress passed legislation creating a new SDDAP program extending through 1995, incorporating the goal of a 90 percent high school completion rate, and stated that "the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance 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 features of projects it would fund. Projects were expected to replicate successful programs or expand a successful program already operated by a grantee, and to operate in schools or areas with very high numbers or percentages of dropouts. ED reserved 80 percent of the SDDAP funds for grantees whose projects, as described in their applications, would incorporate ED specifications for two types of projects: (1) targeted projects; and (2) restructuring projects. Targeted projects were to provide services to a defined population of eligible youths within a school or community organization. Restructuring projects 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 funded innovative field-initiated programs, for which ED did not specify any project components.[1] Grants were awarded to local educational agencies (LEAs), community organizations, and educational partnerships.[2]

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[1]For all three categories of grant awards, ED also specified two priorities it would apply in selecting projects to be funded: (1) early intervention; and (2) parental involvement. For projects considered to be of comparable merit, preference was given to those that proposed to conduct intervention activities for elementary school or early middle school students, or activities leading to greater parental involvement in the education process. In addition, ED encouraged applications from projects designed to reduce dropout rates among Hispanics.

[2]An 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 JTPA, museums, libraries, or broadcast media stations.

ED required targeted and restructuring programs to include specific elements judged to be important for promoting improved student outcomes. The two overlapping specifications included the following elements:

- ***Targeted programs*** were to include (1) accelerated learning strategies; (2) development of challenging and interesting curricula and opportunities for contextual learning; (3) systematic monitoring of attendance; (4) culturally sensitive outreach to help parents create a more supportive home learning environment; (5) counseling, social support services, and coordination of services with other agencies; (6) enhanced linkages and communications between schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels; and (7) career awareness preparation.

- ***Restructuring programs*** were to include (1) autonomy for administrators and teachers to determine curriculum and instructional strategies; (2) implementation of challenging and interesting curricula, including ways to help students learn at an accelerated pace; (3) efforts to create a positive school climate; (4) systematic monitoring of attendance; (4) alternatives to standard retention practices; (5) coordination of services for at-risk students; (6) greater communication among elementary, middle, and high schools to facilitate students' transitions; (7) greater parental and community involvement; and (8) staff training to promote progress on all these dimensions.

B. THE EVALUATION DESIGN

ED specified a two-part strategy for the SDDAP evaluation. First, it requested broad documentation for all 85 grantees, including their project designs, project settings, students served, and uses of grant resources.[3] Most of the evaluation, however, focused on the second part of the evaluation strategy--the in-depth evaluation of 25 projects (18 targeted and 7 restructuring), selected from among the 65 SDDAP projects funded for the 1991-1992 school year.[4] The in-depth evaluation has two major parts: (1) an

[3]The results of this evaluation component are presented in a separate report (Adelman and Rubenstein 1995).

[4]ED awarded new grants to 20 programs in the 1992-1993 school year, the second year of program funding, bringing the total number of SDDAP programs to 85. However, because the in-depth evaluation sites were selected in the first year of grant funding, the programs added in the second year were not included in the in-depth evaluation.

impact analysis; and (2) an implementation analysis. The extent of the SDDAP projects' inclusion in the evaluation is summarized in Table I.1.

For the impact analysis, different designs are being used to evaluate the two types of projects. For the targeted projects, the impact analysis employs an experimental design; students who applied or were identified by school staff as suitable for the special interventions in school years 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 were randomly assigned to program or control group status, and only those selected for the program group were eligible to participate in the SDDAP project. Impacts are being estimated in these sites by comparing outcomes for the program and control groups during a follow-up period of up to three school years.[5] Impacts will be compared with program costs in a cost-effectiveness analysis.

For restructuring projects, a comparison design is being used, because SDDAP project activities potentially affected all students in the project schools, and random assignment of students was therefore infeasible.[6] Outcomes for students in schools with grant-supported activities are being compared with outcomes for students in similar local comparison schools. The impact analysis for both targeted and restructuring projects is based on data collected in baseline and follow-up surveys of students and from school records.

The implementation analysis documents the design and operation of the in-depth evaluation projects, in order to identify factors that affected the projects' ability to realize their original plans and gauge the extent to which the projects actually changed the educational environment for students. Data for the implementation analysis were collected in a series of three site visits, in fall 1992, spring 1993, and fall 1993. During these site visits, evaluation staff interviewed project staff, other district and school

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[5]Preliminary impact estimates will be reported to ED in 1995 on the basis of student followup through June 1994. A final impact analysis in 1996 will cover impacts through June 1995.

[6]Random assignment of schools into project and comparison groups was also infeasible, because districts, in their grant applications, designated schools that would participate in the restructuring activities in advance.

TABLE I.1

SDDAP EVALUATION COMPONENTS AND PROJECTS INCLUDED
(Number of Projects)

Grantee Year/ Project Type	Basic Descriptive Analysis	In-Depth Evaluation			
			Impact Analysis		
		Implementation Analysis	Random Assignment Design	Comparison Group Design	Cost Effectiveness
1991 Grantees					
Targeted	49	18	15	--	15
Restructuring	8	7	--	5	5
Field-initiated	8	--	--	--	
1992 Grantees					
Field-initiated	20	--	--	--	
Total	**85**	**25**	**15**	**5**	**20**

administrators, teachers, and counselors, and conducted focus groups with SDDAP project participants. Evaluation staff also observed classes attended by project participants.[7] This report is the product of the implementation analysis, based on these three rounds of site visits.

C. THE IN-DEPTH EVALUATION PROJECTS

Targeted projects were selected for the in-depth evaluation and its two main components largely on the basis of how readily they could be evaluated using rigorous methods (Table I.2). MPR selected 18 targeted projects, after consultation with ED, on the basis of thorough review of grant applications, telephone calls to most targeted project grantees, and preliminary site visits to 27 sites. These projects were selected because they were judged capable of implementing programs of substantive interest from a policy perspective, but also because they appeared able to meet the sampling and data collection requirements for the impact analysis. Other SDDAP targeted projects were implementing ambitious and potentially valuable ways of helping students, but they were excluded from the in-depth evaluation because their small size or implementation approach made it unlikely that a rigorous impact analysis using random assignment could be conducted.

Given the small number of restructuring project grants and the importance of documenting these reform efforts, seven restructuring projects were included in the in-depth evaluation.[8] The schoolwide nature of these projects made a random assignment design impossible, so the only concern affecting inclusion in the impact analysis was the feasibility of selecting comparison schools of adequate size. Five of the seven restructuring projects were selected for the impact analysis component of the in-depth

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[7]Because the size of the schools in which targeted and restructuring projects operated varied considerably, we did not attempt to observe statistically representative samples of classes or teachers. However, the assistance of project staff in selecting classes for observation reassured us that we were observing at least typical classes, or in some cases, strong examples of the project model in action. In smaller projects, we were able to observe most or all teachers.

[8]One project applied for its SDDAP grant as a restructuring project but was actually planning a targeted intervention.

TABLE I.2

CHARACTERISTICS OF SDDAP TARGETED PROJECTS

Location/Grantee	Name of Project/Component	Grades Served	Characteristics of Target Population	Project Description
Albuquerque, NM Youth Development, Inc.	Middle School Leadership Program	8	Low math/English grades Poor attendance Suspension during previous year Leadership potential	Enrichment program: leadership workshop once a week
	Stay-in-School Program	9-12	Low math/English grades	Enrichment program: math and/or English classes of reduced size, increased counseling, available work experience
Anne Arundel County, MD Anne Arundel County Public Schools	Youth Experiencing Success	10-12	Vocational students behind in math/English credit accumulation	Special math and English classes at vocational center and enhanced counseling
Atlanta, GA Georgia Cities in Schools	Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy	7-8	Behind grade level	Alternative school with small classes
Boston, MA Jobs for Youth	JFY High School and University High*	9-12	Dropped out or on the verge of dropping out	Two alternative high schools: competency-based curriculum, enhanced social services
Chicago, IL Chicago Teachers' Center and Chicago Public Schools	Northeastern Illinois University Dropout Prevention Educational Partnership Program	8-12	Low test scores Behind grade level	High school enrichment: block scheduling, group activities, and team teaching, with additional transition programs for eighth graders
Chula Vista, CA Sweetwater Union High School District	Twelve Together Program	7	Poor attendance Low grades Disciplinary problems High achievement (for selected students only)	After-school enrichment: weekly peer discussion groups with volunteer counselors
	Transitions Learning Centers	9-12	Dropped out	Alternative school: independent study with scheduled teacher appointments and homework contracts
Cincinnati, OH Cincinnati Public School District	Peter H. Clark Academy	9-12	Dropped out or on the verge of dropping out	Alternative school: small classes, standard district curriculum, emphasis on reading, adult mentors
Flint, MI Flint Community Schools District	Accelerated Academics Academy	6-8	Behind two grade levels	Alternative school: nontraditional instruction, thematic curriculum
Las Vegas, NV Clark County School District	Horizon High Schools	9-10	Low grades Low standardized test scores Behind grade level Ever dropped out	Four alternative high schools with flexible enrollment policies, enhanced social services, accelerated credit accumulation
Long Beach, CA Long Beach Unified School District	Up with Literacy	6-8 and 9-12	Low standardized test scores	Enrichment program: in-class and after-school tutoring and homework assistance, enhanced counseling

TABLE I.2 *(continued)*

Location/Grantee	Name of Project/Component	Grades Served	Characteristics of Target Population	Project Description
Miami, FL Cities in Schools of Miami, Inc.	COMET Program	5	Poor attendance Low motivation Behavioral problems	Enrichment program: reduced class size, full-time teacher's aide, in-class career lab, enhanced social services, mentoring
	Corporate Academy	9-12	Two or more of: Low grades Low test scores Poor attendance Overage for grade Ever dropped out Pregnant/parent	Alternative high school: small classes, enhanced social services, mentoring
Newark, NJ Newark Public School District	Project ACCEL	6-7	Behind grade level Sufficiently high skill and motivation levels	School within a school: team teaching, extra counseling
Queens, NY Flowers with Care Youth Services	Flowers with Care		Dropped out	GED program with intensive counseling component
Rockford, IL Rockford Public Schools	Early Identification and Intervention Project	6-8	Low standardized test scores Poor attendance Behind grade level Dysfunctional family	Enrichment program: general studies class for homework assistance and self-esteem sessions, enhanced counseling services
San Antonio, TX San Antonio 70001/WAVE, Inc.	Work, Achievement, and Values in Education (WAVE)	9-10	Any student in two largely Hispanic, low-income districts	Enrichment program: elective class focusing on career awareness and job readiness
Seattle, WA Seattle Public Schools	Middle College High School	9-12	Ever dropped out Poor attendance	Alternative high school on a community college campus emphasizing team teaching, thematic curriculum, specialized counseling and peer groups, available work experience
St. Louis, MO Human Development Corporation of Metropolitan St. Louis	Metropolitan Youth Academy	9-12	Dropped out Drug abuse or delinquency Low family income Welfare receipt	GED program offering enhanced social services and a work experience program
Tulsa, OK Tulsa County Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 18	Student Training and Re-Entry (STAR)	9-12	Dropped out or on the verge of dropping out	Alternative program on a vo-tech campus: nine weeks of skills reinforcement, career planning, and counseling, leading to re-entry to high school or vocational training

[a]University High was operated by Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), a subcontractor to JFY.

evaluation; two projects in small, rural districts were excluded from this part of the in-depth analysis because grant activities were conducted in all district schools, thus eliminating the possibility of identifying comparison schools. However, all seven restructuring projects were included in site-visit data collection.

The targeted projects selected for the in-depth evaluation included a wide range of interventions for children in high schools, middle schools, and even elementary schools (Table I.2). Although 18 targeted project grantees were selected for the in-depth evaluation, Table I.2 lists 21 project components, because several grantees operated distinct components for students of different age groups. Grantees in Albuquerque, Chula Vista, and Miami implemented interventions for both high school students and either middle or elementary school students.[9] The targeted projects included both alternative and enrichment programs. Alternative programs operated apart from the regular school setting, in most cases providing a full-day school program, but in some cases offering a reduced-schedule program for students who were not attending any other school. Enrichment programs added resources or activities, such as additional classes, reduced class size, special curricula, and more intensive counseling, to programs of students who were still attending regular public schools.

Restructuring projects operated in a variety of settings (Table I.3). These settings varied from districts with total student populations ranging from just 1,400 in McCormick County, South Carolina, to 195,000 in Philadelphia. Project activities were in some cases concentrated in a small cluster of schools, as in South Carolina, Phoenix, and Santa Ana. In Dallas, Grand Rapids, Philadelphia, and the rural Utah project, the SDDAP grant was used to support more widely dispersed activities, involving as many as 17 schools in

[9]A slightly different set of projects and components will be included in the impact analysis, which will be presented in a separate report. For purposes of the impact analysis, only the middle school components of the Albuquerque and Chula Vista projects are included, because the design of the high school components precluded random assignment. Both the elementary and high school components in Miami, however, will be included in separate analyses for the impact analysis. In addition, three projects that are included in the implementation analysis presented here (Anne Arundel, Cincinnati, and San Antonio) were dropped from the impact analysis because of inadequate sample size or deviations from rigorous sample assignment procedures.

TABLE I.3

CHARACTERISTICS OF SDDAP RESTRUCTURING PROJECTS

Location/Grantee/Enrollment	Cluster Schools	Project Description
Dallas, TX Southwest Texas State University* Dallas Independent School District Total Enrollment: 135,000	Spruce High School Comstock Middle School Florence Middle School 11 elementary schools	Comer model or other school-based decision making in all schools Accelerated schools model in five schools; small groupings of teachers and students in others School within a school in the high school A school-based health clinic in the high school and two middle schools; day care for teen mothers Automated attendance monitoring equipment
Grand Rapids, MI Grand Rapids Public Schools Total Enrollment: 35,000	Ottawa Hills High School Iroquois Middle School 8 elementary schools	Outcomes-Based Decision Making (OBDM) as curriculum reform in elementary and middle schools Full-time staff development specialist; consultant for OBDM Four specialists to deal with individual and group problems Eight student advocates "Family groups" featuring block scheduling and cross-disciplinary themes for half of the ninth graders Mentoring for high schoolers
McCormick, SC McCormick County School District Total Enrollment: 1,400	McCormick High School McCormick Middle School 1 elementary school	Teacher teams by grade level and by curriculum area Participatory management and training Cross-cutting thematic units and technology in the classrooms Nonacademic support services
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	School councils in each school Training for core teams of teachers in each school Parents as attendance monitors and participants in adult education classes

TABLE I.3 *(continued)*

Location/Grantee/Enrollment	Cluster Schools	Project Description
Phoenix, AZ Phoenix Union High School District Total Enrollment: 22,250	Central High School Phoenix Preparatory Academy (middle school) 2 elementary schools	A ninth-grade enclave "Family groupings" for academy students Three transitional counselors for the academy Additional services provided by three community-based organizations
Monticello, UT San Juan County School District Total Enrollment: 3,500	Monticello High School Whitehorse High School Monument Valley High School Whitehorse Jr. High School Monument Valley Jr. High School Monticello Jr. High School 5 elementary schools	A peer facilitator in each school Training sessions for teachers and administrators A technology center in each high school
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	A program specialist at each school Early intervention for language development and smaller class sizes for language arts in the elementary school Teaming and interdisciplinary instruction in intermediate schools School within a school in the high school Support services provided by project nurse and outreach specialist Project outreach consultant and half-time psychologist to work with families

*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.

Philadelphia. These projects varied immensely in the activities undertaken, the degree of focus on an overall restructuring strategy, and the stage of school reform reached during the period of SDDAP grant activities.

D. THE CHALLENGE OF SDDAP IMPLEMENTATION

This report focuses on explaining the short-term accomplishments of 25 SDDAP grantees. Grantees received SDDA funds for planning during school year 1991-1992, followed by three years of implementation funding extending through the 1994-1995 school year. The findings presented in this report are based on site visits conducted in the first two of these three years of implementation activity. The primary purpose of this report is to document what the SDDAP projects achieved during the grant period and the factors affecting their accomplishments, rather than the longer-term consequences of the projects.

For both targeted and restructuring projects, however, longer-term concerns cannot be overlooked. Targeted projects were not necessarily designed to achieve long-term institutional change, and restructuring projects could at best be expected to lay the groundwork for change, rather than make sweeping reforms in a few years. All the SDDAP projects, however, had the potential to establish foundations for permanent, meaningful change that could help students of the future succeed. This short-term implementation report cannot conclusively assess the long-term significance of the SDDAP projects; their further development and even survival after the expiration of federal funding is generally uncertain. However, factors that are likely to affect the continuation and future impact of initiatives supported by SDDAP funding were visible during the evaluation period to some extent. These factors, described in later chapters, give some clues about prospects for the SDDAP projects' lasting effects. The challenges in achieving short-term and longer-term effects in targeted and restructuring project sites are explored next.

1. Challenges for Targeted Projects

For targeted projects, the ingredients of successful implementation in the short term may be quite different from the ingredients of long-term success in changing local institutions and practices. As pointed out in later chapters of this report, implementation appeared most effective for SDDAP projects that established a clear identity, maintained some distinctions between what they offered and the conventional educational program, and were able to exercise some control over program quality and staff resources without excessively bureaucratic procedures. In the longer term, however, the innovations these projects demonstrated can have lasting or growing importance only if they become accepted parts of the institutional landscape. Achieving this acceptance while preserving the distinctive qualities that contribute to success can be difficult.

The strengths of the 18 targeted projects observed in this evaluation were directly related to their success in establishing a well-defined identity in the minds of administrators, teachers, counselors, students, and parents. At the outset, project sponsors had to formulate a plan that was distinct enough from existing services to win local approval for the grant application and a federal funding award. In some cases, local funding had to be secured as well. The interventions had to be distinct and clearly communicated if project leaders were to succeed in attracting and motivating staff who could realize the plan. In some sites, implementation weaknesses described in this report arose from intervention designs that were vague, unfocused, and poorly communicated and, as a result, failed to mobilize strong consensus and attract staff with the appropriate skills. Many projects had to interest potential students, a difficult proposition if the differences between the project and the regular school program were not obvious. Offering something out of the ordinary, moreover, often justified atypical advantages or arrangements, such as waivers of district rules or procedures, extra resources, substantial decision-making autonomy, or public school resources put at the disposal of community organizations.

The longer-term significance of the targeted projects depends, however, on the extent to which the "specialness" of a valued demonstration initiative can be reconciled with competing, sometimes even contrary, requirements for sustained effectiveness and possibly expansion. Projects that win initial favor and funding by being exceptional often encounter disfavor and funding cuts as the winds of local school politics and district leadership shift, whatever their evidence of success or support from students and parents. The longer-term importance of demonstration projects may depend on their ability to stimulate emulation elsewhere in local schools and thus lose their distinctiveness. If they cannot, and if local school boards do not increase support for demonstration projects after grant funding ends, these federally funded projects may yield insights for education policymakers without leading to lasting change in local schools.

The potential tension between requirements for short-term project success and longer-term significance was observed even within the term of the SDDAP evaluation. We found community-based organizations intent on preserving the autonomy that could distinguish their programs but at the same time dependent on districts' wavering commitments of support. Alternative schools run by school districts defined themselves quite differently from the regular schools that their students had attended in the past, but they also encountered jealousies among other school administrators and district restrictions. In some cases, these jealousies limited the alternative schools' ability to attract students or to develop their programs as they had envisioned. We observed leaders of extremely innovative and creative dropout prevention strategies who were left with diminished authority and resources after new district leaders, with no personal commitment to their predecessors' strategies, were installed. Later chapters of this report point out how factors such as these, which can affect the lasting significance of SDDAP projects, in some cases influenced their shorter-term implementation success as well.

2. The Challenge of Restructuring

Restructuring projects funded under the SDDAP were expected to use grant resources to advance the long-term cause of reinventing schools to meet students' needs, particularly the needs of students at risk

of dropping out. Educators generally use the term "restructuring" to describe a comprehensive approach to school reform that, if ultimately successful, dramatically alters school management and organizational structures as well as classroom practices and dynamics. Restructuring strategies variously emphasize that schools should set higher expectations for student learning, teachers should adopt new teaching methods, schools should reorganize the learning environment for more effective teaching, and principals, teachers, and sometimes parents should have greater authority in educational decision making. Any one of these shifts presents a challenge, but significant long-term change in most settings requires carefully balanced progress on all these fronts. The challenge facing restructuring projects, as opposed to targeted projects, was not simply to create enhanced educational conditions for a selected group of students, but to use the SDDAP grant resources to effect change throughout a group of schools.

A maritime analogy can clarify this difference. The targeted projects can be viewed as efforts to bring to a desired destination a small group of passengers from a crowded, listing ship, some of whom may have jumped overboard already; a swift launch of innovative design will serve the purpose. The restructuring projects, however, are seeking ways to nudge the troubled ship, with *all* its passengers, its sometimes beleaguered crew, and its continuing need to function day to day, onto a new course, to gain momentum on that course, and to convince both passengers and crew that they have roles to play in defining the new course, changing the ship's direction, and reaching a destination.

The SDDAP restructuring projects represented very different stages of such an ambitious undertaking. They differed with regard to two key ingredients of restructuring: (1) decision-making processes; and (2) the vision of what schools of the future will look like. In a few project sites, considerable effort was spent in the years preceding the SDDAP grant on developing the readiness and skills of teachers and school-level administrators to engage in building-level decision making. These sites, by the time we observed them, were ready to apply these skills in reshaping curricula and instruction in their classrooms. At other sites,

however, much more remained to be accomplished in getting administrators and teachers to understand, accept, and support the idea of their own active involvement in changing schools.

The restructuring sites also reached quite different stages in defining a vision of how classrooms and teaching should be redirected. At the time of SDDAP grant receipt, some districts had already reached some consensus on a model that could guide changes in classroom practices. District staff may have developed a single vision for the future, or left individual schools to create their own blueprints for change. In some sites, however, much of the SDDAP grant period was spent trying to define a common model for reform.

Whatever their status when they received SDDAP funding, all grantees were attempting changes that are almost inevitably achieved gradually. Developing shared decision-making skills and some degree of consensus on the goals of reform are only beginning steps. Realizing restructuring goals requires many teachers to change their attitudes about and expectations for students, and to alter practices and behavior that in many cases have defined their professional lives for many years. Beliefs and habits do not yield quickly. Even if the efforts at change observed during the course of the SDDAP grants retain local support and continue to focus on clearly defined goals, the participating schools will be working to achieve their objectives for some years to come.

The difficulty of achieving and maintaining momentum in these restructuring endeavors lies largely in harnessing disparate forces. On the one hand, strong and consistent leadership is needed from district and school administrators who are committed to a vision of reform and ready to cultivate and nourish it persistently. On the other hand, imposed visions sometimes meet resistance, so leaders must not only lead but also develop initiative, energy, and creativity from the bottom up in their schools, while ensuring that school-based efforts adhere to common principles and move forward. Surrounding this delicate effort at balancing strong leadership and grass-roots initiative, events continue that buffet it from all sides and can throw it off course. State education policy can impose approaches to student assessment or accountability

structures that constrain local innovation just as it is gaining support. School board politics can produce dictates that interfere with professional staff's discretion and conflict with students' and parents' wishes. Bureaucratic rules, accountability safeguards, and teacher union objections can reduce visionary strategies to fragmented changes. The challenge all the restructuring projects faced was to use available resources in the service of some consistent plan for long-term change, despite these numerous constraints.

E. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The body of this report first documents the SDDAP projects and then seeks to interpret how they achieved three important objectives. Chapters II and III describe the projects and factors that affected their implementation. Chapter II describes the different types of targeted SDDAP projects and the specific service models they adopted, identifying local circumstances that promoted or impeded the realization of their plans. Chapter III presents the restructuring projects, describing their overall conception, the very diverse activities undertaken in the name of their broad goals, and the local factors that affected their progress. In both of these chapters, we assess the extent to which targeted and restructuring projects reflected the elements envisioned by ED when it created the specifications for these two project types. More details on the projects can be found in Appendix A.

The remainder of the report focuses on three major concerns about how the SDDAP projects affected students:

1. How were students attracted to participate in the kinds of programs or activities that educators designed to help them? Chapter IV examines this issue on the basis of evidence from the targeted projects. (The restructuring projects were designed to promote broader schoolwide changes and yielded little evidence on this issue.)

2. How did SDDAP projects affect what went on in classrooms, and to what extent were conceptions of stimulating, challenging, and engaging curricula and instruction realized? Chapter V addresses this question, drawing on observations from both targeted and restructuring projects.

3. In what ways did the projects provide a supportive environment that could help students overcome the stresses of their lives and remain engaged in school? Chapter VI pieces together the diverse features of SDDAP projects that could help create a supportive climate.

II. IMPLEMENTING TARGETED PROGRAM MODELS

The projects funded by the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) sprang from diverse local initiatives and responded in very different ways to the challenge of dropout prevention. Whether grantees proposed "targeted" or "restructuring" approaches, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) asked them to formulate a cohesive plan incorporating a wide range of program features but still responding to local problems. The result was a rich variety of approaches to changing educational experiences and helping students. Grantees' projects varied in their target populations, institutional settings, relationship between the interventions supported by the SDDAP grants and other dropout prevention efforts, range of resources and methods used, and resulting ability to address students' needs.

In this chapter and the next, we describe the diverse projects implemented by the 25 grantees included in the in-depth evaluation of the SDDAP.[1] We classify the projects (Table II.1) according to the following four broadly defined dropout prevention models:

1. ***Targeted Alternative High School Programs.*** These programs, which provided a complete educational program for high school youths, had a distinct setting apart from regular public high school programs and used alternative curriculum and instructional approaches. The programs served students who applied to participate on their own or after being referred.

2. ***Targeted High School Enrichment Programs.*** These programs enrolled a specific group of identified at-risk students, providing them with extra services or resources in regular high schools to supplement or strengthen their programs.

3. ***Targeted Middle School/Elementary School Programs.*** These programs provided extra services or resources, either as enrichment within the regular school setting or as a full-day alternative program in a physically separate setting.

4. ***Restructuring Projects.*** These broad efforts were designed to enhance educational experiences and school climate for all students in a related cluster of elementary, middle, and high schools.

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[1]Appendix A includes detailed profiles of all projects included in the in-depth evaluation. An earlier report describes the settings and characteristics of all 86 projects funded under the SDDAP (Adelman and Rubenstein 1994).

TABLE II.1

CLASSIFICATION OF TARGETED PROJECTS

Project Models and Sites
Alternative Secondary Programs
Alternative High Schools
Middle College High School (Seattle)
Horizon High Schools (Las Vegas)
Transitions Learning Centers (Chula Vista/Sweetwater)
Corporate Academy (Miami)
Clark Academy (Cincinnati)
Enhanced GED Programs
Flowers with Care Youth Services (Queens)
Metropolitan Youth Academy (St. Louis)
Re-Entry Transition Program
Student Training and Re-Entry (Tulsa)
High School Enrichment Programs
Chicago Teachers Center (Chicago)
Stay-in-School Program (Albuquerque)
Work, Achievement, and Values in Education (San Antonio)
Youth Experiencing Success (Anne Arundel County)
Middle and Elementary School Enrichment Programs
Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy (Atlanta)
Middle School Leadership Program (Albuquerque)
Accelerated Academics Academy (Flint)
Up with Literacy (Long Beach)
Early Identification and Intervention Program (Rockford)
COMET Program (Miami)
Project ACCEL (Newark)
Twelve Together Program (Chula Vista/Sweetwater)

These four project models, although convenient for organizing our discussion, are somewhat arbitrary distinctions because of some projects' complexity. Some targeted projects included several components that represented different models. Although these components may have been part of a broad local strategy for dropout prevention, we discuss them separately as examples of targeted interventions of different types or for different age groups.[2] Restructuring projects also defy simple categorization. Most focused on efforts to foster schoolwide or even broader changes, but some project components were designed to introduce or strengthen direct services to at-risk students. These components thus resembled some of the targeted project interventions.

In this chapter, we describe the three targeted project models, variations in project design across sites, and the extent to which programs reflected the comprehensive range of features that the demonstration was intended to promote. For each model, we identify factors that affected implementation and, in some cases, project design or emphasis. A similar review of the restructuring projects is presented in Chapter III.

A. ALTERNATIVE SECONDARY PROGRAMS

The SDDAP sites included in the in-depth evaluation offered three forms of alternative secondary programs: (1) alternative high schools; (2) enhanced GED programs, combining academic instruction and other services; and (3) a re-entry transition program. Each of these variants is described next, followed by a discussion of the range and cohesiveness of these interventions and the factors that have affected their implementation. In the discussion, five findings are highlighted:

1. Reducing the scale of the school environment was the most important element in fostering a positive school climate and improving attendance monitoring in the alternative secondary programs.

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[2]For some targeted projects with multiple components for students of different ages, the evaluation impact analysis will focus only on students entering one component. This choice was necessary because, in some cases, implementing the experimental design for the evaluation was feasible in only one program component.

2. Alternative secondary programs did little to promote outreach to students' families, in large part because students ages 16 to 20 were often relatively independent of their parents or had tenuous relationships with them.

3. Some alternative secondary programs run by community-based organizations experienced staffing disruptions or difficulties putting together an appropriately qualified staff because of their reliance on school districts for teachers or funding.

4. A small-scale school environment facilitated personal attention in the alternative secondary programs, but it also constrained the variety of curriculum offerings.

5. Tensions between regular school administrators and alternative school staff in several sites limited efforts to recruit appropriate students to the alternative programs.

1. Alternative High Schools

Alternative high schools provided paths to high school graduation and a regular high school diploma, operating in facilities outside regular high schools. These programs enrolled students who either had already dropped out of a regular public high school or were on the verge of doing so. The alternative programs also differed from regular high schools by providing students with the following, in varying degrees from site to site:

- A ***smaller school setting***, to promote closer and more personal relationships among students and staff
- Greater emphasis on ***innovative teaching and curriculum***, including an interdisciplinary approach to subject matter and team teaching
- More ***individualized instruction***, to allow students to learn at their own pace
- ***Options for earning credits*** required for graduation in ways other than standard course completion, such as competency demonstration or intensive short courses
- ***Flexible attendance requirements***, to accommodate other demands on students' time, such as employment or child care

Six grantees operated alternative high schools. Five of these--in Cincinnati, Las Vegas, Miami, Seattle, and Sweetwater--were run by public school districts. In Boston, two nonprofit community-based

organizations operated alternative high schools approved by the public school district as diploma-path programs.

The ***Seattle Middle College High School*** (MCHS) served up to 250 students between the ages of 16 and 20, in modular buildings on the campus of an urban community college. Academic instruction was organized around two interdisciplinary cores: (1) math/science; and (2) humanities. Each core was taught by a team of two teachers, supported by two or three paid, in-class tutors. Classes mixed students of different ages, because students who were technically in different grades, on the basis of their accumulated credits, could take the same class, depending on their program needs. Staff provided individual counseling and student peer counseling sessions, ran group sessions on drug and alcohol abuse, and made referrals to other health services. About 20 percent of students participated in an elective career education class, which included a nine-week paid internship at private companies or public agencies. "Parent scholars" were recruited--as many as 20 each semester--for support roles, such as hall monitoring, clerical support, telephone followup with absentees, lectures on AIDS or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), or typing instruction. In addition, adult mentors were recruited from major Seattle firms to work with about 20 to 25 percent of MCHS students. Students were active in school governance and operations, participating in screening new applicants, running assembly programs, and contributing to decisions on such issues as attendance and discipline policy.

The four ***Horizon High Schools*** in Las Vegas, which served between 150 and 300 students each, offered dropouts a chance to pursue credits they lacked for graduation on a convenient, accelerated schedule. Schools, which operated from 7:00 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. to accommodate students who worked at part-time or second-shift jobs, also offered on-site child care. Rather than taking six full-semester courses at a time, as required in the regular high schools, students took four 75-minute classes that met for six weeks. This arrangement allowed students to earn credits even if they found it difficult to stay in school

for a traditional-length semester. Students could also earn credits for courses at vocational technical centers and independent study projects.

In the Sweetwater Union High School District in Chula Vista, California, the ***Transitions Learning Centers*** allowed students to combine enrollment in a flexible variety of courses. Students could take their entire program at any of the nine learning centers. They were required to spend two hours per day on site and to contract to complete 15 hours of work at home each week. Centers were equipped and furnished like corporate offices; students had office cubicles and worked at computer stations that ran local instructional software and were linked to a wide range of interactive course offerings through NOVANET. Assignments included a mix of work with computer-assisted instruction packages and textbooks. Most centers were located adjacent to comprehensive high schools. Students could pursue a mix of learning center courses and some regular high school courses (typically laboratory sciences) and enroll in vocational courses through the California Regional Occupational Program. A creative funding arrangement allowed the learning center and the host high school to share the "recovered" state aid for former dropouts enrolled at the learning center as supplementary discretionary funding, to the extent that the aid exceeded the center's budget.

The ***Peter H. Clark Academy***, operated by the Cincinnati Public Schools, offered a traditional high school curriculum in a small setting for up to 260 students who were two or more years behind grade level for their age. About a third of its female students were pregnant or parents. School staff emphasized a supportive family atmosphere but enforced strict rules governing behavior, dress, and respectful attitudes. Although lack of such facilities as science laboratories imposed some limits on curriculum content and course offerings, the academy provided a range of academic classes approaching that found in small, comprehensive high schools. Academy teachers, although bound by district curriculum guidelines, used daily morning meetings to plan ways to integrate curricula as much as possible across subjects. Students who read at or below a sixth-grade level took several class periods in the Strategies and Techniques for

Advancement in Reading program. These classes, which were smaller in size than the academy's typical class (with about 15 students instead of 20), were taught by a core of teachers and emphasized increasing the time devoted to reading. An off-site day care center and transportation services linking it to the academy helped students who had children. Mentors and tutors recruited from a major local corporation also worked with students.

Beginning in 1989, the Dade County Public Schools (DCPS) in Miami operated the ***Corporate Academy***, with assistance from the nonprofit Cities in Schools of Miami, Inc., (CIS) as well as corporate sponsors. The academy, which served about 120 to 150 students, accepted individuals into grades 10 to 12 who either had dropped out of a regular public high school or were contemplating doing so. The academic program paralleled the regular DCPS curriculum, but class size was reduced from the typical 30 in regular high schools to between 10 and 15. CIS provided counselors dedicated to working with students in the demonstration project. They coordinated referrals to outside services and, with reduced student caseloads, they could maintain higher levels of communication with students' parents than typical school counselors. CIS also operated an extensive mentor program linking most students with adults in the community. About 25 percent of academy students took part in a work experience program for credit.

Two community-based organizations in Boston--Jobs for Youth (JFY) and Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD)--shared an SDDAP grant to support, respectively, ***JFY High School*** and the ***ABCD University School***. In these alternative high school programs, students could earn a regular high school diploma. Each school served about 50 dropouts or near-dropouts, usually referred by the Boston Public Schools. Students attended classes five days per week from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., generally working at their own pace on competency-based curriculum materials in science and math and, to some extent, on independent projects. Humanities classes incorporated English and social studies material in a more traditional instructional format.

2. Enhanced GED Programs

Two grantees included in the SDDAP in-depth evaluation offered enhanced GED programs. Community-based organizations operated both of these programs, which provided classes to prepare high school dropouts for GED examinations, as well as counseling and support to deal with life problems.

In the New York City Borough of Queens, ***Flowers with Care Youth Services***, a nonprofit agency originally established by the Catholic archdiocese, ran a program for high school dropouts that emphasized development of mature behavior, attainment of an educational objective, and preparation for a job. Greatest emphasis was placed on helping participants learn responsible and disciplined behavior. Participants attended individual and group counseling sessions and had to comply with strict attendance requirements and clear standards of courtesy and mutual respect. They were required to participate in an after-school recreation program to help them avoid getting into trouble after school hours. GED preparation classes made up the core of the educational program. In addition, Flowers with Care developed an in-house desktop publishing training program and student-run enterprise--thus resurrecting a job preparation component from the organization's early years that originally found jobs in the retail flower industry for youthful ex-offenders released from jail.

The Human Development Corporation of Metropolitan St. Louis operated the ***Metropolitan Youth Academy*** (MYA). The high school dropouts served in this program could enroll at any time, and attended classes four hours per day for up to a full school year. Classroom instruction--based largely on GED preparation workbooks and computer-assisted basic skills software--was provided by teachers on loan from the public school district's adult basic education division. Grantee staff offered on-site counseling and referrals to outside services; life skills workshops on such topics as drug abuse, AIDS, and employability skills; and occasional part-time jobs in the grantee's offices or programs.

3. Re-Entry Transition

A single grantee, the Tulsa Area Vocational Technical Center (TAVTC) district in Oklahoma, created its ***Student Training and Re-Entry (STAR)*** program as a flexible pathway for high school dropouts to resume their education. At any time during the school year, high school dropouts (and, in some cases, near-dropouts) from any of 14 school districts in the metropolitan area could enter a nine-week transition program, attending a morning, afternoon, or evening session. Half of their class time was devoted to independent work on basic skills, using instructional computer software. The remainder was spent in life skills seminars led by the program instructor. A program counselor worked with students at intake, during their tenure in the program, and when they completed the program, assessing their interests and aptitudes and helping them to choose their best next step. Some students re-entered regular high school after completing the one-credit, nine-week STAR program. Others, if recommended by STAR staff, could enroll in vocational training programs offered by TAVTC under a waiver that allowed them to pursue technical training at no cost (even though they were not enrolled in a home high school, as usually required).

4. Program Elements and Implementation Factors

Three rounds of site visits to the alternative secondary programs provided a basis for describing the comprehensiveness of program features and the extent to which they added up to a cohesive dropout prevention intervention. Because the grantees had broad latitude in designing their programs, there is no clear standard for specifying the features that grantees should have incorporated into their programs. However, the program elements expected by ED in grant proposals, as described in Chapter I, provide a consistent framework for examining the breadth and cohesiveness of grantees' programs.

The elements we identified in each program (Table II.2) reflect our assessment of the grantees' emphasis on each element in their program designs as well as our observation of the prominence of each

TABLE II.2

ELEMENTS OF ALTERNATIVE SECONDARY PROGRAMS

	Alternative High Schools						Enhanced GED		Reentry
Program Elements	Seattle MCHS	Las Vegas Horizon High Schools	Sweetwater Learning Centers	Cincinnati Clark Academy	Miami Corporate Academy	Boston JFY/ABCD High Schools	Queens Flowers with Care	St. Louis MYA	Tulsa STAR Program
Autonomy for Teachers/ Principals	X			X		X			
Interesting and Challenging Curricula	X			X		X			
Accelerated Learning		X	X			X			X
Emphasis on a Positive School Climate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Close Attendance Monitoring and Follow-Up	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Outreach to Families	X				X				X
Service Coordination, Counseling, and Supportive Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Interschool Communication			X						
Career Awareness Preparation	X				X	X	X	X	X

element in programs as actually implemented.[3] Whether to consider a particular element part of a grantee's program is often a difficult decision, because there can be considerable debate about what constitutes a particular element, or about an element's relative importance or degree of implementation. To decide whether to identify an element as part of a program, we used two major criteria: (1) whether program staff gave priority to addressing the objectives of the element; and (2) whether there was evidence--from discussions with staff, classroom observations, and student focus groups--that this priority created program features or school conditions distinct from what students would have otherwise experienced in regular high school.

Despite some inevitable ambiguities, it is clear that the alternative secondary programs in the SDDAP differed most from regular high school programs with respect to the smaller scale of the school environment and the program elements promoted by this reduced scale. All the alternative secondary programs took place in settings that were physically apart from and considerably smaller than the high schools that students had been attending. In the smaller ones--the Tulsa STAR program, the St. Louis MYA, and the Boston schools run by JFY and ABCD--total program enrollment at any given time typically fell in the range of 25 to 75 students. The larger programs that operated as freestanding schools with traditional classroom groupings of students--the Seattle MCHS, the Horizon High Schools in Las Vegas, the Miami Corporate Academy, and the Cincinnati Clark Academy--each enrolled a total of 120 to 300 students across three or four high school grade levels. The Sweetwater Learning Centers, although they each served 100 or more students at a time, functioned on a considerably smaller scale, because students were at the centers for only a few hours per week, for appointments with teachers and on-site work according to very flexible schedules.

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[3]Table II.1 includes two program elements specified by the ED in the model for restructuring projects, but not in the model for targeted projects (autonomy for teachers and principals, and emphasis on a positive school climate). We include these elements in the following discussion because they proved to be prominent features of alternative secondary programs.

Small scale is an important precondition for two of the most consistently observed elements of alternative secondary programs: (1) fostering a positive school climate; and (2) monitoring attendance closely. Students regularly cited "family atmosphere" as the feature that distinguished these programs from the regular high schools they had attended. This atmosphere, from the students' perspective, was created in large part by the attention they received from teachers and staff. A student at the Corporate Academy, for example, said that "in other schools, the teachers don't really have time for every student. Out here, they have time for every student." At Clark Academy, students commented that "they treat me like a human being--not like a number like at the school where I came from." Students often remarked on the individual, one-on-one teaching attention they received.

Small scale--as well as staff's conscious efforts to provide individualized attention--also fostered more communication among students, thus averting the cliques, separatism, and violence commonly found in large, diverse schools. The alternative secondary programs also promoted a calmer school setting by rejecting applicants with a history of violent behavior, although some took referrals from the criminal justice system and had to tread a careful line in their efforts to serve troubled youths while maintaining a calm and productive atmosphere. Students had to apply to these programs, so there was probably some self-selection of youths who had the motivation and discipline to pursue an educational program. Yet, the importance of small scale and a high degree of personal attention should not be downplayed. Students at Flowers with Care described the environment as more relaxing because they had no fears of gang activity there. In Seattle, students commented that "everyone gets along here--no fights or racism like at other schools." They also said that distinct cliques did not form at MCHS, unlike at other schools, where "jocks don't talk to skateboarders." Although students found these small programs to be relatively free of the rules and restrictions they had experienced in regular high schools, rules clearly played some part in minimizing disruptive behavior.

Among the specified program elements, alternative schools emphasized close attendance monitoring and vigorous followup on absences almost as universally as a positive school climate. At the Horizon High Schools, a "school success monitor" tracked attendance, a campus monitor ensured that students were in classes and not roaming, and a social worker made home visits to students whose attendance dropped. In Seattle, students with five unexcused absences were brought before a peer counseling panel to work out ways to improve their attendance, and designated students made wake-up calls to students with attendance problems. Students in several sites favored strict but personal attention to attendance. Several students at a Sweetwater Learning Center, for example, expressed appreciation that center staff called them personally at home if they were absent, rather than relying on the computerized calling system used by the regular high schools. Close monitoring of attendance was usually linked with standards for attendance and eventual expulsion of students who did not meet them; project staff often tried to combine a supportive, flexible, and caring approach to students with clear expectations that they fulfill their responsibilities (see Chapter VI). Insistence on regular attendance irritated some students, and attendance problems were probably the most common cause for termination in alternative secondary programs.

In addition to promoting a personal, family-like atmosphere and consistent attendance, all the alternative secondary programs tried in some way to help students manage the challenge of going to school while dealing with the personal difficulties they faced outside of school. These difficulties included unstable relationships and sometimes abuse at home, violence on the streets, health problems, homelessness and hunger, responsibilities as parents, and the temptations or effects of drugs and alcohol. All these programs had counselors on staff who worked with far smaller student caseloads than their counterparts in the regular high schools. Seattle MCHS staff developed or adopted a particularly rich set of counseling approaches--a "Natural Helpers program" that trained selected students to provide support to their peers, daily drug and alcohol counseling sessions as part of a recovery assistance program, and AIDS awareness counseling. Child care centers were operated by the Clark Academy and each of the

Sweetwater Learning Centers. At both the Flowers with Care and Tulsa STAR programs, academic achievement was actually a subordinate program objective; greater emphasis was placed on helping students redirect their lives and reorder priorities through their interactions with supportive counselors and teachers and involvement in a program that set clear expectations.

Promoting relationships between students and adult mentors was part of the supportive services strategy at three of the alternative high schools: (1) the Cincinnati Clark Academy; (2) Miami Corporate Academy; and (3) Seattle MCHS. Clark Academy worked with a single local employer, a major accounting firm, whose employees met with students twice a month, often for group outings, and sometimes for individual tutoring. The Seattle MCHS recruited about two-thirds of its 45 mentors from government, entertainment, small business, professions, and the clergy. Another third came from a major Seattle software company. Corporate Academy students--as many as 100 at any given time--were paired by CIS staff with mentors recruited through local banks, college fraternities and sororities, an air force base, and local police and firefighter associations.

Beyond their consistent emphasis on school climate, attendance monitoring, and supportive services, alternative secondary programs placed varying importance on the other program elements proposed by the ED. The degree of emphasis appears to be related to the age group served, the relationship between alternative education programs and regular public school bureaucracies and staff, and the programs' small scale, as explained in the following sections.

a. Dealing with Older Students

The program priorities for alternative secondary programs observed in the in-depth evaluation were definitely affected by the ages and experiences of the students they served. These programs generally enrolled youths between the ages of 16 and 20. Many had already left school, and some had not attended school for several years. Questionnaires completed by applicants to these programs indicated that more than 60 percent had had prior work experience, including 44 percent who had held jobs while attending

school, and that one of every seven was a parent. In many instances, according to project staff, participants had tenuous relationships with parents or guardians. This observation may partially explain students' past difficulties in school and the degree of independence they had asserted or had been forced to develop in their lives.

Not surprisingly, outreach to students' families--a common emphasis in programs for younger students--had relatively low priority among the alternative secondary programs. Project staff generally acknowledged that it is much more difficult to contact and work with parents of teenage students. In many cases, dealing with parents who have a problematic relationship with their own child can bring additional turmoil, rather than support, into a student's school life. There were some exceptions, however. For example, to build a sense of community among students as well as between students and faculty and between students and parents, Seattle MCHS recruited several dozen "parent scholars" per semester to devote some of their time and special skills to supportive roles at the school.

b. Program Scale and Relationships to the Regular District Program

What programs really deliver sometimes differs from what their planners envision. The reasons for deviation from an ideal plan in the SDDAP were often related to the relationship between the alternative secondary programs and the local school district whose students they enrolled. This relationship affected the degree of autonomy that principals and teachers of the alternative programs had in defining and operating their programs. Effects on autonomy in turn affected the feasibility of developing an appropriately qualified staff, as well as prospects for designing and implementing innovative, challenging curriculum. In some cases, the relationship between the alternative program and the district even affected the fundamental task of identifying and attracting students who might benefit from the program. Each of these factors is discussed next.

Effects on Recruiting and Maintaining an Effective Staff. Alternative secondary programs face challenges in recruiting, training, supervising, and retaining effective staff. Personnel policies and

sometimes union contacts constrain the ability of administrators in regular public school programs to choose, assign, promote, and dismiss teachers. Alternative programs are similarly limited, and their small size sometimes makes them particularly vulnerable to the effects of district policies.

Programs run by community-based organizations that integrate teachers provided by local school districts into their instructional staff can be disrupted by district decisions. In three SDDAP in-depth evaluation sites--Boston, Queens, and St. Louis--fluctuating enrollments exposed the community-based organizations to the risk that public school administrators, under general budgetary pressures, would reassign teachers. The risk was created by short-term events that resulted in low student-teacher ratios. For example, in Boston, JFY expanded its program in school year 1992-1993 to a second instructional site, as planned in its grant continuation proposal. However, enrollment early in the following school year fell short of projections, so district administrators withdrew three teachers from the JFY program and offered the 40 students enrolled at the new site the option of enrolling in a district-operated alternative program. In Queens, Flowers with Care narrowly averted a threatened district withdrawal of two teachers from the program. Fall enrollment, which usually surged to about 100 per month after school started, fell sharply for several months when an asbestos crisis delayed the opening of the regular schools and the usual flow of students from them to Flowers with Care. In St. Louis, low enrollment in spring 1993 led to district reassignment of one of MYA's four teachers. When the student-teacher ratio remained below 15:1 in the fall, further staff withdrawal appeared imminent.[4]

The relationship between school districts and alternative secondary programs, particularly those run by community-based organizations, can also complicate the formation of a stable, appropriately selected, well-trained staff. This is a particular problem because working with high-risk adolescents is one of the

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[4]In both Queens and St. Louis, recruitment problems were accentuated (although not entirely caused) by the random assignment of some applicants to control group status under the evaluation plan. These problems were alleviated by temporary adjustments of sample assignment rates to allow a higher percentage of applicants to enter the program, thus avoiding threatened staff withdrawals.

most challenging and demanding of teaching assignments. Yet, administrators of some alternative secondary programs sometimes have even less chance than their counterparts in regular schools to choose staff to work with their high-risk students. In St. Louis, for example, the district's adult education division assigned teachers with backgrounds in speech therapy, special education, and English as a second language to the MYA GED program immediately before the start of the program year and could not ensure that they would remain at MYA the following year. District rules limited their allowed time on site (as well as their pay) to the hours of actual instruction, seriously reducing staff meeting and preparation time. Staffing challenges can also arise in alternative schools operated directly under district auspices. For example, an energetic principal at one alternative high school, who was disappointed that district commitments to allow him discretion in hiring were not entirely fulfilled, found it necessary to circumvent usual personnel policy by using service contracts to assemble an imaginative and dedicated staff. In another district that operated an alternative secondary program, central administration required the project director to accept several teachers and a counselor whom she viewed as inappropriate for the program. In this district, the method of assigning both teachers and administrators to the alternative program appeared to undermine efforts to build a cohesive and committed staff.

Effects on Curriculum and Instruction. Aside from staffing constraints, district standards and guidelines can limit the extent to which alternative program staff implement truly innovative curriculum and teaching methods. For the most part, teachers at the alternative schools we observed followed the same curriculum guidelines used in regular high schools. To be sure, smaller class sizes, smaller school size, and the emphasis on individual teaching created a high level of personal attention, and teachers adopted instructional styles and materials that, to a large extent, allowed students to learn at their own pace. Only in rare cases, however, did teaching approaches go beyond coaching on basic skills or traditional lecturing and response methods to incorporate exceptionally challenging or interesting curriculum, as explained in Chapter V.

Small scale, while facilitating personalized, supportive attention, also constrained the breadth and richness of curriculum in the alternative secondary programs. The small size of these programs narrowed the range of the academic curriculum they could deliver. Six of the nine alternative secondary programs were designed to help participants obtain a regular high school diploma--the academies in Miami and Cincinnati, MCHS in Seattle, the Horizon High Schools in Las Vegas, the Sweetwater Learning Centers, and the JFY/ABCD high schools in Boston. Yet, these programs generally lacked science laboratories, although the Sweetwater Learning Centers located on high school campuses addressed this problem by allowing students to take science classes at the host high schools. Most programs had difficulty providing stimulating, hands-on learning opportunities in the sciences. Working with a small faculty also narrowed elective options; in Cincinnati, plans to offer Spanish courses were on hold, and foreign languages were generally absent from these programs.

Small enrollment can also pose challenges to efforts to implement interesting and challenging curriculum, because students with very different skill levels, interests, and needs for course credit may be assigned to the same classes. For example, with a fall 1993 enrollment of 150 students and nine full-time teachers, North Horizon High School in Las Vegas had to combine English 1, 2, 3, and 4 students in one classroom; world history and political science students were combined in another. In the Boston JFY High School, students needing credits in English and social studies were placed in the same humanities classes.

These situations shaped the curriculum that could be offered and the way teachers could teach. The diversity of students in each classroom made effective teaching dependent on individualized assignments and largely individual instruction and coaching. Such individualization could, of course, have very positive aspects. At JFY, for example, teachers responded to their mix of students by planning thematic interdisciplinary projects in which students could progress at their own pace and level. Students in focus groups reported that this format was engaging and challenging. The risk in such diverse classrooms, however, is that teachers may adopt more "homogenized" curriculum or teaching methods--relying heavily

on exercise books and textbook reading assignments that students work on independently. The result observed in some program sites was that students appeared busy, working independently for most or all class periods on traditional exercises, but they did not appear to be intellectually engaged or to be benefiting from any active teaching--as explained further in Chapter V.

Effects on Recruiting Students. Unlike most public high schools, which students attend on the basis of their place of residence, alternative secondary school programs must attract students. Some students may respond to word-of-mouth information from friends and relatives, public service announcements and newspaper notices, or referrals by current or former counselors or teachers. Alternative programs' ability to attract students by these means determines their enrollment level, which is a critical factor affecting ongoing funding.

The SDDAP sites provided clear examples of how mistrust or miscommunication between regular school administrators and alternative high schools can undermine efforts to promote alternative school enrollment among students or dropouts who appear likely to benefit. Site visits revealed that several factors can be involved. Some regular school principals were reportedly jealous of what appeared to them to be unfairly generous allocation of resources, attention, and administrative latitude to alternative schools and, as a result, were less than fully cooperative about referring students. Principals of some regular high schools were described as fearful that, if alternative schools were too successful, their own enrollment and funding would decline. In Boston, these concerns initially led principals to argue against their district's plan to allow JFY and ABCD to offer public school diplomas. In several sites, these concerns seemed to affect alternative programs' ability to recruit students. In Cincinnati, administrators in the regular high schools were uninterested in having staff from the alternative (district-operated) high school visit to provide information about the alternative program. One program operated by a community-based organization acquired a list of district high school dropouts for recruiting only through "unofficial" sources, because the district operated its own alternative programs.

Regular high school and alternative school administrators may also hold conflicting views about the type of students alternative schools should serve, and this disagreement can hurt enrollment at the alternative schools. At Clark Academy, for example, the principal tried to promote a calm school climate and weeded out applicants whose violent behavior had resulted in suspension or other disciplinary actions in a regular school. She believed that regular school principals expected her to accept these students, although they would have been suspended for the same behavior at her school, under district policy. The alternative school administrator felt that "they want to dump the worst students on us," and the regular school administrator perceived that "they don't want to take the students they should be serving." With such conflicts, cooperation in referrals can be difficult.

Some alternative projects adopted very innovative approaches to avoid problems in their relationships with regular school programs. In two sites--Sweetwater and Tulsa--creative solutions allowed regular and alternative programs to share equitably in supporting alternative education and even in the increased funding that returning dropouts generate for a school (see Chapter VII).

B. HIGH SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

In four of the SDDAP sites--Chicago, Albuquerque, San Antonio, and Anne Arundel County in Maryland--grantees pursued enrichment for secondary students within their regular school programs. In these programs, participants continued to attend their regular school. However, they received various forms of special attention or additional resources, including extra teaching or counseling staff, reduced class sizes, specially designed curriculum in particular subjects, team teaching, or assignment to a "school within a school," in which teachers worked together as a team and only with designated at-risk students.

Three findings emerged from analysis of these programs:

1. All of these projects were initiated by partnerships between school districts and community-based or nonprofit organizations or universities. These partnerships were productive only when there was close collaboration in the formulation of needs, goals, and programs design, however.

2. Project implementation was strong if program objectives were clear; in two sites, however, confusion and conflict over program objectives weakened the intervention in at least some of the school locations.

3. Fiscal disruption in the Chicago school system as a whole seriously undermined the progress of one of the most comprehensive school enrichment programs.

1. Description of Programs

The ***Chicago Teachers' Center*** at Northeastern Illinois University, working with the Chicago Public Schools, developed intensive enrichment programs for at-risk students in two largely Hispanic secondary schools. In Lake View High School, selected at-risk freshmen were "block scheduled" as part of the Freshman Curriculum Project. They were kept together as a group--for their homeroom, English, math, science, and social studies classes, which they took with a group of teachers who worked closely together. These students, as well as others, could also participate in a "sophomore options" program, in which they were scheduled together for homeroom, U.S. history, geometry, English, and drafting. In the Wells Academy, selected students were block scheduled in a school-within-a-school program for all or some classes from the freshman through senior years. In freshman year, they were grouped together for English, life science, algebra, art, and homeroom. As sophomores, they were grouped together for English, geometry, and homeroom; in 11th and 12th grades, they were grouped for just one class. In both high schools, program teachers collaborated intensively; promoted a feeling of membership in a high-status program by organizing field trips and special projects; worked with an attendance coordinator to follow up quickly on absences; and participated in staff training to develop skills in team teaching, cooperative learning, and innovative approaches to math and English instruction. Students also had access to special counseling and tutoring services.[5]

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[5]Under the SDDAP grant, a third high school was slated to implement a similar school within a school, but changes in school leadership and support led to implementation of a more narrowly defined initiative emphasizing supplementary tutoring for a selected group of students grouped together only for their English class.

The ***Albuquerque Stay-in-School (SIS) Program*** emphasized reduced-size classes and improved access to counseling. In each of four high schools, about 100 students--from all four grades but predominantly from grades 9 and 10--attended English or mathematics classes (or both, depending on need) that included only about 15 students. These classes were taught by teachers from either the regular Albuquerque public schools or the nonprofit Youth Development, Inc. (YDI), the project grantee. A special SIS counselor at each school worked with the 100 participants--in contrast to the 400-student caseload of the regular school counselors. In one school, the counselor established a student dispute mediation program. About 15 to 20 percent of SIS participants participated in a work experience component funded by the JTPA. This component involved a semester of paid work in a nonprofit organization and special workshops on work habits and ethics, employment goals, values and attitudes, and job search skills.

The ***San Antonio WAVE Program*** offered 9th- and 10th-grade students from two high schools, located in two different local districts, an elective class based on a curriculum developed by the national office of WAVE, Inc., the project grantee. The curriculum focused on building motivation and self-esteem and on developing career awareness. It was taught by regular high school instructors who were assigned to the program and received some training from WAVE, Inc., and its local affiliate on how to teach the class.[6]

The ***Youth Experiencing Success (YES) Program*** in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, attempted to enrich the educational program of vocational students by offering special counseling and English and math classes at the vocational centers, rather than the home high schools at which they would normally take these classes. Students already enrolled as 10th- or 11th-grade vocational center students could take these

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[6]The local affiliate also provided a variety of other community services besides those funded by the SDDAP grant to adults and out-of-school youths. These services included alcohol/substance abuse counseling, adult education and GED programs, and preparation classes for the Texas high school proficiency exam.

classes to make up credits in applied communications, American literature, English literature, or applied math. Project staff also took students on occasional field trips. This program, which was implemented in two county vocational centers, was later discontinued at one center because of staff conflicts and lack of administrative support and guidance. At the second center, the program remained smaller than planned, in part because it proved difficult to recruit students who could take the YES classes and still fit all the required courses at their home schools into their schedules.

2. Range of Program Elements at High School Enrichment Programs

The SDDAP targeted programs that operated within existing high school programs differed widely in the comprehensiveness of their designs (Table II.3). At one extreme, the San Antonio WAVE and Anne Arundel YES programs were narrowly conceived; they offered students primarily a chance to take one or two classes with a curriculum and small size that might bolster students' motivation and academic progress. At the other extreme, the Chicago Teachers' Center worked with two project high schools to create a comprehensive design incorporating most of the concepts or practices envisioned in the SDDAP plan, although sustained implementation of the full design was disrupted by serious fiscal crises in the Chicago public school system. The Albuquerque model was somewhat less ambitious, focusing on particular academic subjects and social support, but it incorporated few strategies for changing the overall school climate or creating a sense of belonging for participating students.

Many features of the Chicago program were designed to foster a "community of support"--a positive climate in which students could rely on each other, their teachers, and other adults for help and encouragement. Participants were grouped together for their classes to foster a sense of belonging, as well as closer relationships among students and between students and teachers. Older students, selected on the basis of academic success and maturity, were paired as mentors with freshmen. Faculty and students attended a team-training course, designed to develop self-esteem, group bonds, and cooperative problem-solving skills. Summer orientations and academic workshops for incoming ninth graders sought to build

TABLE II.3

ELEMENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Program Elements	Chicago Teachers' Center	Albuquerque SIS Program	San Antonio WAVE Program	Anne Arundel Project YES
Autonomy for Teachers/Principals	X			
Interesting and Challenging Curricula	X			
Accelerated Learning		X		
Emphasis on a Positive School Climate	X			
Close Attendance Monitoring and Follow-Up	X			X
Outreach to Families	X	X		
Service Coordination, Counseling, and Supportive Services	X	X		X
Interschool Communication	X			
Career Awareness Preparation		X	X	X

students' sense of belonging and readiness for high school. A student support team--the project director and facilitator, an attendance coordinator, the teacher coordinator, and youth workers from two local community service agencies--met to identify students' emerging problems and ways to help them, including simple encouragement; more formal counseling or referrals to community agencies; additional tutoring; and involvement in evening recreation, drama, and athletic activities.

The Chicago project also included changes in the academic program and in communications with parents. The program teachers benefitted from training and joint planning time to help them work closely together as a team. They were given substantial latitude to develop curriculum, and the result in at least some observed cases was a notable intensity of instruction and success in engaging students in active, cooperative learning. Concerted efforts were made to increase communication with students' parents. The attendance coordinator--really a community liaison--made home visits and telephone calls to parents of all incoming freshmen. Orientation packets were mailed to families, with invitations to parent/student orientation and medical screening opportunities. School staff hosted workshops for parents on school procedures, support services, gang-related issues, and ways to promote students' attention to homework.

The Albuquerque program was a somewhat more restricted enrichment program. Students were placed in smaller English and math classes, and teachers were encouraged to emphasize individual attention and support to help students make more rapid progress. However, the program did not stress innovation in curriculum and instructional methods. Increased availability of counselors was an important ingredient; it allowed a high level of communication--mostly by telephone--with students' parents and made it more likely that students who needed intensive services would receive them. The work experience component provided some students with a temporary source of income, as well as exposure to the world of work and some training in how to meet employers' expectations.

3. Factors Affecting Implementation of the High School Enrichment Model

The high school enrichment programs were shaped in both their design and implementation by factors that are likely to affect other similar initiatives. Three factors are worth noting: (1) the role of outside assistance; (2) the clarity of program objectives; and (3) the stability of regular district funding and operations.

a. Local Versus Distant Help from Outside the School System

All four secondary enrichment projects were conceived with the help of organizations outside the local school bureaucracy. The Chicago Teachers' Center, a professional outreach and training program at Northeastern Illinois University, had worked with school personnel since 1987 to understand and respond to the challenges of serving at-risk Hispanic students. In Albuquerque, YDI, a 23-year old community organization, worked closely with the public school system to identify ways to address dropout problems. YDI began the Stay-in-School Program in the mid-1980s, expanding it with the SDDAP grant. In San Antonio, a national nonprofit organization, WAVE, Inc., took the initiative to obtain grant funding and then sought to develop, with local school officials and its own local affiliate, a plan for implementing a standard course curriculum used for at-risk students in many districts around the country. In Anne Arundel County, the YES program grew out of an earlier collaboration between the local school district and multisite dropout prevention demonstrations led by researchers from Clemson and Ohio State Universities.

Implementation experiences suggested that the most effective outside help came from locally based organizations and began with joint analysis of local problems and resources. In Chicago and Albuquerque, local organizations worked closely with district personnel and school staff to identify promising strategies for dropout prevention, forging a close working relationship on the basis of jointly developed plans. In Anne Arundel, in contrast, local project staff quickly decided that grant resources initially allocated to distant university collaborators would be more useful for local needs and terminated their collaboration with them. In San Antonio, the WAVE curriculum was developed by the organization's national office

rather than by a team involving local partners. As a result, program implementation efforts had to overcome district staff's reservations about the program's importance.

b. Clarity of Program Objectives

A closely related variable that affected program implementation was the extent to which program objectives were clearly defined and program activity was tailored to these objectives. In several sites, confusion and even conflict over program objectives and program management weakened prospects for a comprehensive intervention or undermined chances of implementing an ambitious plan.

Confusion about program objectives was most problematic in Anne Arundel. Program staff split in the relative emphasis they placed on two objectives: (1) increasing academic engagement to help students accumulate missed credits; and (2) increasing students' motivation and sense of connection to school. English and math classes were the program focus, but little systematic effort was made to develop innovative curriculum, assign teachers with appropriate backgrounds, or train them to work with the target population. Counseling and motivational efforts seemed to compete with, rather than complement, the program's academic focus, in large part because of staff discord. Senior school and district officials provided little help in sorting out objectives and resolving conflict. As a result, the YES program, although envisioned by its planners as addressing a wide range of student needs, ended up as a narrow intervention.

Difficulties in maintaining a focus on defined objectives were also observed in one of the three high schools in the Chicago project. At this school, an approach comparable to that followed in the other two schools was planned, involving block scheduling, formation of teacher teams, and promotion of a sense of belonging among students. However, the new high school principal, with no stake or prior involvement in the development of the plan, gave little support to the project. Communications with the Chicago Teachers' Center languished, and teachers were not involved in planning for program implementation. As a result, the broad program intervention never crystallized or gained momentum.

c. Fiscal Disruption

The Chicago project also illustrates how a school financial crisis can severely undermine creative, cohesive interventions for at-risk students. In fall 1993, severe cuts were made in the overall Chicago public schools budget, and many school staff took advantage of a districtwide early retirement option designed to trim staff and costs. Schools opened weeks late, and, because of personnel losses, courses and staff had to be rearranged on very short notice. The School-Within-a-School (SWS) at Wells Academy, for example, lost its lead teacher and three other teachers. Science had to be eliminated from the range of block-scheduled classes for participating students, and the one senior-year class in which students had been kept together--English--was eliminated. SWS teachers were deprived of their joint preparation periods, so collaboration was more difficult, and their ability to develop strategies for individual students was limited. Although two of the Chicago project schools appeared to retain a strong commitment to the program, the resource cuts clearly reduced the momentum of efforts to realize the promise of the project's ambitious and cohesive plan.

C. MIDDLE AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Targeted interventions were implemented for younger students in middle or elementary schools in eight sites--Atlanta, Albuquerque, Flint, Long Beach, Miami, Newark, Rockford, and Sweetwater.[7] In six of these sites, students' programs were enriched by additional teacher resources or special in-school or after-school activities and connected to the regular school facilities. In two sites--Atlanta and Flint--the program was housed in a facility separate from the regular middle schools. We describe these two sites as enrichment programs, however, because students were selected and assigned to them. This selection

[7]In three sites--the Albuquerque SIS Program, the Miami Corporate Academy, and the Sweetwater Learning Centers--the middle school enrichment program was one part of a larger program that also included secondary school interventions described earlier.

process distinguishes these programs from the alternative secondary programs, which in most cases served students who applied to them as returning dropouts or in an effort to leave the regular school program.

On the basis of our study of these sites, we arrived at three findings:

1. A consistent program model in multiple school sites can be promoted by thorough, detailed formulation of the model and its documentation, as well as careful recruitment of teachers who "buy into" the model.

2. In unusual cases, a successful or popular program model involved installation and use of special equipment. Marketing a package of equipment or setup manuals to other school districts can help these programs generate revenue for expansion.

3. Teacher selection methods had a clear impact on the quality of instruction in the middle school enrichment programs.

1. Program Features

These eight middle and elementary school programs can be divided into two groups on the basis of the range of program elements they included (Table II.4). Four were comprehensive in their design and implementation; they put interventions in place that addressed most of the suggested program elements. These programs were designed to alter all or a large part of the students' school day. In Flint, Miami, and Newark, students attended a distinctive full-day program designed specifically for them; in Long Beach, the intervention affected students' afternoon classes and extended into the after-school hours.

Interventions at the other four sites were more narrowly conceived or were implemented in a way that incorporated fewer of the demonstration program elements. In Albuquerque, Rockford, and Sweetwater, the dropout prevention intervention was designed to introduce a new activity into the regular school program for participants--periodic discussion groups or a daily academic support class.[8] In the Atlanta site, the intervention was a full-day program, but implementation was constrained in several respects, discussed

[8]In describing these projects' designs as "narrow," we are referring to the intervention developed with the support of the SDDAP grant for a particular group of at-risk students. Participants' regular school programs may have reflected substantial efforts in these sites to address other concerns in ways that would affect the entire student population.

TABLE II.4

ELEMENTS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Program Elements	Atlanta Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy	Albuquerque Middle School Leadership Program	Flint AAA	Long Beach Up with Literacy Program	Miami COMET Program	Newark ACCEL Program	Rockford Early Identification & Intervention Program	Sweetwater Twelve Together Program
Autonomy for Teachers/ Principals			X			X		
Interesting and Challenging Curricula			X		X			
Accelerated Learning				X		X		
Emphasis on a Positive School Climate	X		X	X	X	X		
Attendance Monitoring and Follow-Up	X		X	X	X	X		X
Outreach to Families			X	X	X	X	X	
Service Coordination, Counseling, and Supportive Services	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Interschool Communication							X	
Career Awareness Preparation		X			X			

in the following section. The result was a program that effectively incorporated only a few of the demonstration elements.

The SDDAP grant to Georgia Cities and Schools supported the ***Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy***, which shared space and faculty with a district-run high school academy on the rural fringes of the Atlanta metropolitan area.[9] The academy operated as a service center for the district's middle schools, rather than as an independent alternative school. The district's three middle schools each referred about 75 seventh and eighth graders who had been retained in grade to the full-day academy program, generally specifying the courses they should take. The academy adhered to the district's general curriculum plans but used small class sizes and more individual help to try to accelerate students' progress so they could "leapfrog" a year and rejoin their age peers in ninth grade, as they entered high school. District teachers, who were assigned to or volunteered for the academy, taught regular academic subjects, as well as a few electives that changed from year to year, but that included chorus, vocational instruction, and home economics. A counselor from Georgia CIS, the project grantee, provided resources for extra attention to attendance problems, following up on absences and even providing occasional transportation to ensure that students came to school.

The SDDAP grant to YDI in Albuquerque supported not only the high school SIS Program described earlier, but also the ***Middle School Leadership Program***. Each fall, about 30 at-risk eighth-grade students were selected in each of four middle schools that were feeders for the four SIS program high schools. A YDI counselor met with each group for one class period every other week--in most schools, in place of a regular class, but in one case, after school hours. Sessions typically involved group discussions led by the YDI counselor or guest speakers, covering such issues as personal values and expectations, trust, self-concept, goal setting and decision making, and relationships with other people. Students in the Middle

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[9]The Georgia CIS grant also supported joint efforts with other Georgia school districts, but the in-depth evaluation focused on activities in the Griffin-Spalding district.

School Leadership Program were given preference for placement in the SIS Program when they reached high school, but their participation was not certain because they may not have been judged in need of the SIS classes, or may not have been able to fit them into their schedules.

The ***Accelerated Academics Academy*** (AAA) in Flint provided a full-day program to about 100 at-risk middle school students in a small, self-contained setting apart from the regular middle schools. Students were chosen because they had been retained in grade at least twice by the end of sixth grade, and were at least two grade levels behind on standardized tests. The academy stressed the use of an integrated thematic curriculum, small class size, and encouragement of cooperative learning. Teachers had substantial discretion in the allocation of their time among the basic academic subjects (English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and art). Two student advocates assisted teachers in the classroom and provided individual tutoring. Conscious efforts were made to build students' sense of community, responsibility, and self-esteem. Each staff member led a "family group" of ten students that met for half an hour each day to discuss personal and social problems or class-related work. Selected AAA students served as mentors and tutors to younger elementary school students, and staff tried to develop opportunities for volunteer work in the community. Parent volunteers were visible helpers around the school, and an average of 15 to 20 percent of parents attended monthly meetings. A full-time counselor, aided by a part-time social work student, provided on-site counseling and assessment, as well as referrals to community agencies for specialized mental health, special education, and substance abuse services.

In the Long Beach ***Up with Literacy Program***, college students were employed to work with at-risk students during the last two afternoon classes and after school from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. in three elementary schools, two middle schools, and a high school. Under the supervision of an instructional aide--required to have at least an associate's degree--these college aides (CAs) worked four days per week in some schools, and two days per week in others. Each CA worked with three or four students, giving intensive help with in-class and homework assignments. The CAs also presented after-school assignments in

reading and writing and led enrichment activities--hosting guest speakers, teaching keyboarding or word processing, leading drama exercises, and providing training in conflict resolution. Regular school teachers helped the CAs plan special after-school lessons and assist with tutoring. Once selected for this voluntary program in elementary or middle school, students were encouraged to continue in it through the 10th grade.

The grant to CIS of Miami allowed an enhancement of the Dade County Public Schools' ***COMET Program*** (Career Opportunities Motivated through Educational Technology). Incoming fifth-grade students--recommended by fourth-grade teachers because of attendance, behavioral, and motivational problems--attended school in a modified classroom that included a career lab. The career lab consisted of occupational work stations at which students would read an instructional manual, perform prescribed tasks, and write a description of what they had done--for example, as typesetters, dental technicians, electricians, optometrists, or cosmetologists. Class size was about 16--roughly half the size of most elementary school classes--and each COMET teacher had a full-time paraprofessional aide. Teachers maintained a serious atmosphere of study and insisted that students behave respectfully toward their teachers and other students. Students had to earn--through their behavior and attention to class work--the right to work independently at the career lab stations. The SDDAP grant to CIS made it possible to add caseworkers and mentors to the COMET Program. Caseworkers coordinated social services for students and provided a liaison with parents. Adult mentors, selected, trained, and monitored by CIS, were matched with COMET students, met with the students in school, and attended CIS-sponsored events with them.[10]

The Newark ***ACCEL Program*** provided a small, self-contained setting to help sixth and seventh graders who had been retained in grade to accelerate their progress. Students were admitted only if they were deemed able to succeed in an accelerated environment; generally, only those who were no more than two grade levels behind on standardized tests were chosen. Parents and students agreed to a contract that

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[10]Under the SDDAP grant, CIS caseworkers and mentors also supplemented the Corporate Academy program described earlier, working with students in two middle schools and two high schools not included in the in-depth evaluation.

required parents to sign homework, come to three school meetings per year, and promote learning at home. Four teachers in each of five elementary schools worked closely together to plan and control the program, choose students, and decide on students' promotions and terminations. A serious, disciplined environment was emphasized, and substantial homework was assigned. Students rotated among the teachers, who each taught a particular subject to classes of 12 students, but teachers collaborated on lesson planning to reinforce each other's instruction. A guidance counselor in each school devoted special attention to the ACCEL students, providing four motivational and career awareness sessions each week, monitoring adherence to a tightened attendance policy, and following up with parents on absences. Teachers and counselors supervised special after-school activities for ACCEL students, such as a science club, debate team, and an interschool ACCEL newspaper. Students who succeeded in the program could skip a grade after one or two years in the program and catch up to their age peers in eighth or ninth grade.

The Rockford ***Early Identification and Intervention Program*** placed identified at-risk seventh graders from four middle schools into a small resource room for a general studies class one period each day. The program also provided supplementary counseling resources for program students.[11] Program organization varied across schools. In three schools, five different teachers conducted one general studies class each day, while in the fourth school, a single resource teacher was responsible for all general studies classes. In three schools, a program counselor worked with students on addressing personal and family problems and building self-esteem, but the students still worked with a regular counselor for course selection. In the fourth school, the program counselor was the students' sole counselor. The general studies classes were intended primarily to provide affective and general academic support rather than a focused academic curriculum. Teachers conducted rap sessions, worked with students on study skills,

[11]A more intensive full-day program was implemented in the first demonstration year for students with more serious academic problems. Ten students were bused from each middle school to a single location, at which a team of two teachers and a counselor provided the full core curriculum and supportive services. This component was dropped in the second year because of a cut in federal grant funding.

helped them with homework assignments from their regular academic teachers, and conducted sessions on conflict resolution, motivation, and other personal skills issues.

The ***Sweetwater Twelve Together Program*** was one of many components in a large alternative education project, along with the Sweetwater Learning Centers described earlier. This component provided affective support to middle school students. Incoming seventh graders who were identified as at risk were grouped together with some higher-achieving students (to create a mix of abilities and attitudes) into peer counseling groups of about 12 students each. At the start of the year, these groups went on a weekend camping retreat to promote bonding among students, develop teamwork skills and relationships between students and adult volunteer counselors, and create commitment to schoolwork, good attendance, and responsible behavior. Throughout the school year, the counselors moderated weekly after-school discussions with their group. Topics were based on students' interests and usually focused on personal, family, and social issues.

2. Factors Affecting Implementation

Three important concerns for dropout prevention projects were evident in projects serving middle and elementary school students: (1) how to generate and sustain financing to expand a pilot program; (2) how to promote adherence to a defined program model in a multischool intervention; and (3) how to recruit well-suited teachers who will deliver an interesting and challenging curriculum. Approaches to these issues in several sites provide useful guidance--and some cautions--for program developers.

a. Funding for Expansion

Innovative, effective programs should be replicated and expanded, but this effort requires sustained and increasing funding. The Dade County Public Schools adopted an innovative approach to creating a financial base for expansion of its COMET Program. The core prerequisite for the program was a career laboratory designed for fifth-grade students, with equipment, supplies, and instructional books for a series

of career exploration stations. The COMET model also required staff training and extra staff resources, to reduce class size and provide an in-class paraprofessional aide. However, the program critically depended on the availability in each classroom of the laboratory setup, which cost approximately $9,000 in 1992. Half of this cost was met by principals' commitment to allocate some of their small pool of building-level discretionary funds, and the other half by Dade County Public Schools' Office of Career Awareness Lab Programs. The office generated a continuing flow of funds to expand COMET to dozens of elementary schools by selling program materials, including implementation guides, student manuals, lists of necessary equipment and available sources, and training materials and services to other school districts in Florida and other states. Although sustained expansion and operation of COMET depended on continuing district approval and funding, marketing program materials substantially reduced the local tax funds required to expand the program.

b. Steps to Promote Model Consistency in a Multisite Program

It is difficult to implement a single-site program according to plans, but consistent implementation in multiple schools presents even greater challenges. Not every program begins with a clearly formulated model; in some instances, school administrators and instructional staff receive no more than a general mandate or direction, and their own creativity, initiative, and discipline determine eventual program design and quality in individual schools. However, when a clearly defined model is developed, steps can be taken to maximize consistency of implementation. The Newark ACCEL Program, for example, has achieved a notable level of consistency and commitment to the program model in its enrichment program in five schools. Several factors appear to have been important in achieving consistent implementation.

The ACCEL initiative began with a collaborative process to formulate a model for working with sixth- and seventh-grade retained students. A broad committee was formed that included central office staff from the research and evaluation and guidance departments as well as school board representatives and teachers. The committee reviewed experience with an earlier local initiative generally acknowledged to be

counterproductive because it pulled students from regular classes and heightened stigma. This committee then decided that ACCEL would be modeled after Project Bridge in Hartford, thus opting for a clearly defined model. A broad spectrum of district staff, from central office to line teachers, supported this decision.

The district then used several practices to ensure that ACCEL teachers "bought into" the program model:

- ***Recruiting Eager Teachers.*** Schools were selected for early implementation of ACCEL on the basis of the availability of space and the severity of perceived need, but also on the basis of enthusiasm about and interest in the program model among a core of teachers and administrators.

- ***Delegating Operational Responsibility to Teachers.*** The ACCEL team in each school--four teachers and a counselor--was given authority for important operational decisions. Each team had a $2,000 discretionary budget annually. Team members jointly decided on which students to admit to the program, on the basis of a standard procedure for gathering information and established criteria. Team members also jointly decided whether to remove a student because of persistent attendance or behavioral problems.

- ***Helping Staff Coalesce as a Team.*** Several practices or design features helped ACCEL teachers form effective teams. Each instructor taught a particular subject area in the context of a four-teacher team working with a small group of students. This arrangement seemed to break down teachers' sense of isolation; they worked actively together to find ways of "overlapping" their instruction, which in turn promoted students' sense of a unified program. All ACCEL teachers met for a paid week of summer training and planning to promote a consistent understanding of the ACCEL approach, and had five rather than three preparation periods per week, including at least three with all team teachers present.

The district took a further stop to maintain consistent implementation of the ACCEL model: expanding the program gradually. Two schools started ACCEL programs in 1989-1990, before the SDDAP grant was received, two more were added in 1991-1992, and a fifth in 1992-1993. The district thus relied on initial positive experiences among ACCEL teachers to build broader interest among teachers in other schools.

c. Approaches to Teacher Selection

Although plans for some middle and elementary school interventions stressed interesting and challenging curricula and accelerated learning, these features proved difficult to realize (as described further in Chapter V). In some cases, to be sure, the SDDAP interventions were defined narrowly and did not directly address curriculum or instruction. For example, the Albuquerque Middle School Leadership Program added counseling and discussion to participants' school day but did not directly affect their academic curriculum or pace of instruction. In the Long Beach Up with Literacy Program, after-school tutoring instructional approaches attempted to accelerate academic progress, but the basic academic curriculum was not affected. In other instances, project plans proposed a different curriculum or instructional approaches that could accelerate students' progress, but implementation was incomplete.

Teacher selection methods were an important determinant of the degree to which objectives were realized. In Newark, only interested teachers were recruited, and new teachers were added as they began to share the enthusiasm of teachers already involved. In other sites--middle school as well as secondary programs--motivated, experienced teachers were recruited whose energy and skill in the classroom engaged students in challenging academic material. In several projects, however, local circumstances constrained project leaders' freedom to attract or select the most appropriately qualified or motivated instructional staff. In Rockford, for example, union rules required that teachers be given the option of transferring to open positions--including the resource teacher positions serving the project participants--on the basis of seniority, rather than on assessments of their qualifications or experience in working with at-risk students. Some teachers were assigned to program classes to fill out their class schedules, rather than because they had appropriate skills, background, or inclination. Implementation of curriculum and instructional enhancement was also constrained in the Griffin-Spalding Academy outside Atlanta. The district assigned most of the academy teachers because slots were available at the academy; most of these teachers had little experience or training in working with at-risk students, and some lacked a strong interest

in doing so. The consequences of teacher selection practices--for holding students' interest and making effective use of instructional time--are discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

III. IMPLEMENTING RESTRUCTURING AND REFORM APPROACHES

In addition to the targeted dropout prevention projects described in the previous chapter, the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) provided support for more broadly defined "restructuring and reform" approaches to dropout prevention. As envisioned by the U.S. Department of Education, restructuring and reform projects would make schoolwide changes in a cluster of schools--for example, in a high school and its feeder elementary and middle schools--rather than directing special services to a target group of at-risk students selected from a broader population. Eight grants were awarded for restructuring projects, and seven of these projects were selected for the in-depth evaluation.[1] This chapter first describes these projects and their diverse elements. In the second part of the chapter, we identify factors that shaped the projects' approaches and affected their chances for effective implementation and long-term effects on students' educational progress.

The Department of Education solicited grant proposals to implement a broad set of program elements for restructuring projects (Table III.1), although it did not endorse any particular model for school reform. Some of these elements closely resembled features specified by the department for targeted projects, but restructuring projects were expected to incorporate the proposed elements as part of efforts to change schools as institutions, rather than to develop programs for selected students.

The elements of the restructuring model proposed by the department reflected two broad streams of education research. On the one hand, the research literature has focused on three ingredients of school reform: (1) school-based management; (2) curricular and instructional reform; and (3) professional

[1]One project was not included in the in-depth evaluation because, although its grant was awarded in the restructuring category, the activity undertaken more closely resembled a targeted initiative. All seven projects in the in-depth evaluation were examined in site visits, and five of the seven were also included in the impact analysis. Two of the projects, located in rural areas, were not included in the impact analysis because they affected entire districts, and there was thus no possibility of identifying comparison schools.

TABLE III.1

ELEMENTS OF RESTRUCTURING PROJECTS

Program Elements	Phoenix, AZ	Santa Ana, CA	Grand Rapids, MI	Philadelphia, PA	McCormick County, SC	Dallas, TX	San Juan County, UT
Autonomy for Teachers/Principals		X	X	X	X	X	X
Interesting and Challenging Curricula	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Accelerated Learning	X		X		X		X
Emphasis on a Positive School Climate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Attendance Monitoring and Follow-Up		X	X	X	X	X	
Outreach to Families		X		X	X	X	
Alternatives to Retention	X		X		X	X	
Service Coordination, Counseling, and Supportive Services	X	X	X		X	X	
Interschool Communications/Transitions			X		X		
Staff Development	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

development. These ingredients are reflected in three of the components specified by the department: (1) autonomy for principals and teachers to determine curriculum and instructional strategies; (2) interesting and challenging curricula that move students along as fast as their capabilities allow; and (3) staff training. The second body of research has focused on the characteristics, behavior, and background problems of students who drop out of school. Dropping out has been linked directly to early academic failure, poor attendance, disciplinary problems, a sense of anonymity, low parental educational attainment, and personal or family problems that make school a low priority. Restructuring projects were asked to address these issues by:

- Creating a ***school climate*** in which students feel comfortable and connected to individuals and the institution
- Adopting ***alternatives to retaining students*** in grade because of school failure
- Improving methods of ***monitoring attendance***
- Developing outreach strategies to increase ***parent and community involvement*** in the school
- Paying special attention to students' ***educational transitions***, such as between elementary and middle school and between middle school to high school
- ***Coordinating social services*** to increase accessibility for at-risk students and their families

Each grantee developed a unique local approach, reflecting these elements in different degrees and ways. Yet, three broad strategies emerged based on the grantees' relative emphasis on school-based management, curricular and instructional reform, and staff training and development. The distinctions are hardly clear-cut, however, because each project addressed each element to some extent. In Section A, we describe these three strategies. In Section B, we discuss factors affecting the implementation of the seven restructuring projects. Three broad observations emerge in that discussion:

1. The coherence of the restructuring projects and their apparent prospects for any long-term effect varied with the degree to which the projects were part of a larger plan for academic reform.

2. Local politics, bureaucratic constraints, and union rules limited the implementation of specific project features or related school reforms in several sites.

3. Personnel turnover in top leadership positions slowed the progress of reform plans or created uncertainty about whether efforts to implement the reform plans would continue.

A. RESTRUCTURING PROJECT STRATEGIES

The strategies and detailed program elements used by the restructuring project grantees reflected the complexities of the state and district policy arenas in which they operated as well as participating schools' previous experiences with reform. Even before the SDDAP funding became available, each district was trying to understand the problems it faced and formulate effective responses. The SDDAP grants should not be viewed simply as the stimulus and primary support for a fresh restructuring initiative; rather, they were infusions of resources to an ongoing process with a complex local history. In some cases, broad strategies had been devised some years earlier and had been amended by fiscal constraints, political pressures, short-term crises, and staff interests. By the time of the SDDAP grant application, these strategies and amendments had led to a focus on very particular, even narrowly defined project components that could be considered relevant to restructuring only when viewed in the overall historical context of local reform efforts. In other cases, the availability of SDDAP funding coincided more closely with district efforts to formulate a broad plan for educational change, and grant activities were more clearly linked to an overall reform agenda.

Despite the resulting diversity of activities supported under the SDDAP grants, three different emphases can be distinguished. Four of the seven projects emphasized curriculum and instruction, two stressed development of school-based management, and one concentrated on staff development for teachers. In Section A, we describe these three strategies, and in Section B we discuss factors affecting the implementation of the seven restructuring projects. Three broad observations emerge in that discussion:

1. The coherence of the restructuring projects and their apparent prospects for any long-term effect varied with the degree to which the projects were part of a larger plan for academic reform.

2. Local politics, bureaucratic constraints, and union rules limited the implementation of specific project features or related school reforms in several sites.

3. Personnel turnover in top leadership positions slowed the progress of reform plans or left it uncertain whether efforts to implement them would continue.

1. Focus on Curriculum and Instruction

In four of the restructuring project sites--Santa Ana, Grand Rapids, McCormick County, and Phoenix--the reform of curriculum and instruction drove the restructuring effort. However, the four projects also differed widely, as illustrated in the following profiles, in both the context of reform and in project leaders' visions for the kinds of changes that could improve students' education.

a. Santa Ana Unified School District (California)

The restructuring and reform project in Santa Ana focused on selected schools in a large, heavily Hispanic school district. Located southeast of Los Angeles, the Santa Ana Unified School District was the ninth largest in California and one of the 100 largest in the nation. Its student population was 92 percent minority, almost all Hispanic. The composition of the school board, however, did not reflect the demographic make-up of the almost entirely Hispanic population in the district, and came mostly from a small area of the district removed from the serious social problems facing large segments of the student population. There was clear political tension between board members who wanted to minimize school programs they perceived as dealing with "values" and staff and faculty who saw an urgent need to develop programs that addressed the rising incidence of AIDS, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, gang activity, and school dropout. For example, earlier efforts by the schools to address some of these pressing problems were halted by a board-initiated directive forbidding classroom discussion of topics such as AIDS or family planning, and by distribution to teachers of strict instructions and confining scripts to follow if students

raised such topics. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that the Santa Ana initiative focused quite narrowly on curriculum and instruction issues, and did not include components addressing broader social problems, as some of the other restructuring sites did.

The SDDAP grant project operated in 5 of the district's 40 schools--1 elementary school, 3 middle schools, and 1 high school. These schools did not form a clearly defined cluster, because the boundaries used to determine attendance areas for the elementary, middle, and high schools overlapped. Instead, these schools were selected primarily because they had previous working relationships with the project director. As a result, the Santa Ana project gave relatively little emphasis to students' transitions from one school level to another.

The activities funded by SDDAP grant resources were part of ongoing implementation of state policy on curriculum and instruction. State curriculum frameworks defined what students should know and be able to do in each subject area, and the state of California defined an assessment system aligned with the curriculum frameworks. In its blueprints for change--*Caught in the Middle* for middle schools, and *Second to None* for high schools--the state described its view of the content, teaching, and learning inherent in "interesting and challenging" curriculum. These blueprints emphasized active learning in thematic student projects, student cooperation and teacher teaming, interdisciplinary "core" learning, and the goal of mastery by *all* students, regardless of initial achievement level or primary language. The SDDAP grant was only one of several sources of support in Santa Ana for the effort to achieve this considerable task; funding also came from the state, local staff development resources, other federal programs, and private and philanthropic grants. However, the SDDAP grant provided critical resources for a full-time program specialist in each participating school and a staff development coordinator. These individuals focused on creating opportunities for faculty to learn the kinds of instructional strategies needed to realize the state's vision for interesting and challenging curriculum.

The initiatives to change curriculum and instruction in Santa Ana--as at other project sites--varied at different school levels, and even from school to school. At the elementary school, greatest emphasis was placed on strengthening language development and language arts instruction. These efforts included a full-day kindergarten emphasizing language development, a longer school day and reduced class size in language arts for grades one and two, ungraded classrooms in grades three to five for language arts, and individual tutoring for students with reading difficulties. The district emphasized language development because of its very large population of bilingual students and students with limited English proficiency. At the three middle schools, the emphasis was on creating teams of teachers who provided students with all their academic instruction.[2] Stimulated and supported by staff development opportunities, the teacher teams worked on implementing interdisciplinary instruction to emphasize critical thinking skills and make greater use of technology. Yet, observable change in classroom practices came slowly in most cases. In two of the middle schools, a district move to a year-round schedule, which was triggered by overenrollment, seriously disrupted progress by forcing wholesale reshuffling of teachers' team assignments and focusing teachers' attention on adjusting to staffing and scheduling changes.

The high school level of the SDDAP project in Santa Ana was represented by Century High School, a new, state-of-the-art building that, from the start, addressed the dropout problem in its program, physical design, and technology. Century was built around a large courtyard with a single monitored gate that provided the sole entry to the building, to create a safe environment. It boasted a hand-picked faculty, chosen by its first principal to help create a "college prep for all" program. A sophisticated computer network was installed; one of its most important uses was to support rapid on-line collection of class-by-class attendance data directly from classroom teachers, and systematic requirements for students to document the reasons for their absence.

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[2]New instructional groupings were instituted in most of the restructuring sites, often for multiple purposes related to both school climate and academic reform. We discuss these strategies in Chapter V.

In this setting, SDDAP grant resources were allocated largely to efforts to implement block scheduling. Students had three 90-minute periods each day, with a class in each of six core subjects every other day. Although there was some teacher resistance, implementation was generally smooth, and at least some students reported that they concentrated better and had more time to work with their teachers under the new schedule. Students also appreciated the new assessment system--required in honors courses and optional in others--which involved projects developed over several weeks and then presented to an audience of teachers, parents, and other interested parties. In school 1993-1994, one team of teachers at Century implemented a pilot school within a school called "Aquarium House" that also involved block scheduling (discussed in Chapter V).

Beyond these structural changes affecting the academic program, some other aspects of the Santa Ana project were designed to provide direct support for students and their families. All of the participating schools offered individual tutoring for students. Work-study students from local colleges tutored middle school students. At the high school, high-achieving seniors tutored other students, earning credit and pay. The grant supported a nurse, an outreach consultant, and a half-time psychologist; these professionals were available to all participating schools and played particularly important roles in strengthening relationships with parents. For example, the nurse coordinated an annual Parent Empowerment Day that, in spring 1993, drew 40 community agencies and more than 2,000 parents.

b. Grand Rapids Public Schools (Michigan)

The Grand Rapids project, in Michigan's second largest city, was primarily a pilot implementation of a districtwide vision for curriculum and instructional reform. This plan was eventually expected to affect the entire district--whose total student population of about 31,000 is about 50 percent minority, principally African American. As originally designed, the SDDAP grant was to involve a feeder pattern--one middle school and eight elementary schools feeding into Ottawa Hills High School. However, in the same year it received the SDDAP grant, the district received federal magnet schools funding, which it used

to create magnet middle schools throughout the city, thus blurring the feeder relationship among these project schools.

The primary reform strategy supported by the SDDAP grant was formulated at the district level several years before the grant was received. Although Michigan has a strong tradition of local control over education, statewide concerns over declining educational quality led the legislature to enact Public Act 25, mandating the development of district and school improvement plans. Grand Rapids undertook extensive strategic planning and adopted a curriculum reform process called Outcomes-Based Decision Making (OBDM). Under OBDM, teams of educators define desired outcomes for students at all grade levels. The elementary schools and the middle school participating in the SDDAP project were the first to implement the new approach. The high school in the cluster, however, decided not to participate in the pilot implementation of OBDM and had little involvement in the major project activities.

The OBDM process was based on a mastery learning model. Teachers introduced material designed to develop a skill, taught it for a week, and then assessed students' progress. Students who achieved the defined outcome by demonstrating that they had mastered the skill moved into extension and enrichment classes, while their peers who did not were retaught using different instructional strategies. After a second assessment, students who still had not achieved mastery received additional assistance. In the one elementary school that had fully implemented the OBDM process by the end of school year 1993-1994, administrators and faculty reported that they were pleased with improvements observed in student scores on California Achievement Tests.

The pilot implementation involved teachers as active participants and as staff development trainees. Some cluster teachers participated in the process of developing districtwide target outcomes in various subject areas--contributing to OBDM implementation and gaining expertise that they could then impart to others. The district provided heavy doses of staff development to prepare teachers for the new approach to curriculum definition and instruction. The grant supported a full-time staff development specialist for

the cluster, as well as regular, on-site training and technical assistance from the consultant who developed the OBDM model. Workshops planned by district staff introduced teachers to instructional strategies they could use to vary their presentation of curriculum, in order to help all students eventually reach mastery of the core objectives of OBDM. These strategies included thematic instruction, cooperative learning, mastery learning, higher-order thinking skills, and multicultural education.

Faculty resistance prevented participation of the cluster's high school, Ottawa Hills, in the pilot OBDM implementation. Math teachers objected to the change, saying that their classes were too large for them to reteach or provide individual attention for students who failed to master new concepts. Instead of pushing forward with OBDM reforms, the high school introduced a ninth-grade program organized around "family groups," block scheduling, and interdisciplinary themes. This program, which began with three teachers (English, science, and social studies) and about half of the freshman class in fall 1992, grew slightly in the 1993-1994 school year. The SDDAP grant supported some planning time for participating teachers.

In addition to the reform of curriculum and instruction, the Grand Rapids restructuring project had two other dimensions: (1) a diagnostic team; and (2) student advocates. Four professionals with backgrounds in social work, classroom behavior problems, substance abuse prevention, and speech pathology were part of a diagnostic team available to all cluster schools. Most of the team's work, however, focused on a few schools in which staff identified how they could use help and asked for it. The diagnostic team worked with school administrators and classroom teachers to plan solutions to classroom problems. At the middle school, team members were instrumental in developing a summer elementary-to-middle school orientation program, an after-school program of volunteer tutoring, and an acceleration program to help a small number of students who were above age for their grade catch up with their peers. These project components, taken individually, resembled some of the interventions implemented by targeted dropout prevention projects.

The Grand Rapids project also included a component not fully foreseen in the original plan--an active group of "student advocates." The original grant proposal called for hiring attendance specialists--individuals from the community who would follow up on cases of chronic absenteeism. Specialists were hired at first specifically for this purpose, but these individuals' roles expanded. They took on the role of student advocates, with responsibilities that went beyond attendance matters, although they continued to work with students and families on getting to school regularly. One student advocate established a high school mentoring program, pairing students with adults in the community. Originally, this program was targeted to at-risk African American males, but it expanded to include any interested student who appeared likely to benefit. The middle school advocate became an integral part of the staff that ran the after-school tutoring program designed by the diagnostic team. The advocate also acted as a resource to all the cluster schools that were interested in introducing conflict resolution strategies. Another student advocate at an elementary school conducted a self-awareness/self-enhancement program for selected fifth and sixth graders called PEAKS (Physical Appearance, Experience, Accomplishments, Knowledge, Skills).

c. McCormick County Public Schools (South Carolina)

School reform in McCormick County was based on a plan developed by district leaders called "New Visions." In the late 1980s, a state review found this small rural district in the western part of South Carolina to be "impaired." The district hired new leadership specifically to reform the system, which operated just three schools for a population of about 1,400 students, almost 90 percent African American. The primary focus of the plan was redefining curriculum content and training teachers in new instructional strategies, although some training was also designed to encourage participatory, school-based management.

The strategy developed by district leadership was to involve teachers in the development of new, research-based curriculum frameworks in all subject areas and at every grade level. The aim was to improve curriculum coherence and sequencing and to present all students with a challenging academic

program. A mathematics framework, based on the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards for math instruction, was developed. The English/language arts framework endorsed the "whole language" approach to instruction--integrating all communication skills and encouraging meaningful language-related activities for all grades and ability levels. These curriculum reforms required teachers to organize and present content in new ways; district leaders recognized that full implementation would will take time as well as a widespread commitment to change from all teachers.

The ultimate goal of the McCormick County plan was to have most decisions about the school program made at the school level. The principals and about half the faculty from the three McCormick schools were trained in participatory management by Monsanto, a major local employer. The middle school made the greatest progress in developing participatory decision making. For example, the middle school faculty as a team decided to convert to a Chapter 1 schoolwide project to eliminate disruptive pullout classes.

Other initiatives associated with New Visions supported the core effort to reform the academic program. The SDDAP grant allowed installation of a computer lab in each school. Using other funds, the elementary school acquired 20 computers available for families to use at home. Parents were given training in how to use basic skills instructional software and work with their children, and they could then take computers home for a week or more at a time. After-school and summer programs provided enrichment (writing, arts, Spanish, careers), although student activities were somewhat constrained by transportation issues. High school students tutored younger children. A double promotion program allowed middle school students who had been retained to catch up.

McCormick County's school leaders also created an interagency group to focus on children's issues. Participating organizations included the Department of Social Services, the McCormick Literacy Association, the health clinic, the mental health clinic, the Clemson University extension office, and the school district. One program that emerged from this collaboration fostered mother-daughter

communication for preteens. In a "Mother-Child-Home" program for which the SDDAP grant supported a staff coordinator, three home visitors taught mothers how to play with and read to their preschoolers, visiting more than 70 homes twice a week.

d. Phoenix Union High School District (Arizona)

The project in Phoenix focused on curriculum and instructional reform, but the reform efforts were more limited in scope than those in other restructuring sites. Academic reform supported by the SDDAP grant involved only the ninth grade in one high school. A middle school in the separate elementary school district also received some grant funds but used these resources to strengthen guidance counseling.

The academic reform plan at Central High School, developed largely by the school's principal, focused on reducing student attrition that resulted from course failures in the ninth grade. Central High School served a population that was about 60 percent minority, mostly Hispanic. The high school created a ninth-grade enclave featuring block scheduling, interdisciplinary instruction, and an instructional technique called "Socratic dialogue," in which participating teachers led students in discussion and debate on issues affecting their lives and schools.

The SDDAP grant also contributed to the startup of the Phoenix Preparatory Academy, the first middle school for seventh and eight grade in the Phoenix Elementary School District, which operated independently of the high school district. All of the elementary district's schools had previously served students from kindergarten to eighth grade. By supporting counseling staff costs, the SDDAP grant allowed the new school to maintain a low student-to-counselor ratio, compared with that in other schools, and to implement a competency-based counseling curriculum. The school counselors, in turn, were assisted by a community-based organization, Chicanos Por La Causa, which sponsored workshops and presentations on issues such as drug abuse, sexuality, and gang awareness.

Other community-based organizations served small numbers of students from the two participating schools. Friendly House ran an afterschool educational assistance center offering tutoring and homework

assistance to students who attended voluntarily. Arizona-Call-A-Teen served about 25 Central High School students in an off-campus alternative program.

2. Focus on School-Based Management

All of the restructuring projects except Phoenix made an effort to prepare teachers to assume some decision-making authority over matters that were traditionally decided by school or district administration. The goals of these efforts to promote school-level autonomy were variously labeled as school-based management, site-based management, school-centered education, school- or site-based decision making, and so on. In two sites, this aspect of restructuring was the predominant focus of grant activity. In both cases, the emphasis was on school-level team building and empowerment as a first step toward involving teachers in decisions about curriculum and instruction.

a. Dallas Independent School District (Texas)

The Dallas restructuring project sought to strengthen decision making at the school level in the Spruce Cluster, a group of 17 elementary and middle schools in a geographically remote area of the district that were feeder schools for Spruce High School. The Spruce Cluster schools served a diverse population of mostly poor and working class white, Hispanic, and African American students, who were largely segregated by residential patterns in elementary and middle schools but came together at Spruce High School. The Spruce Cluster project was a partnership between the school district and the actual grantee--the Center for Initiatives in Education at Southwest Texas State University. The center had a long history of working with districts in the state, including a previous dropout prevention project in Dallas funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

In 1991, efforts to promote school-based decision making began in Dallas with the adoption and pilot implementation of the School Centered Education (SCE) model, an adaptation of James Comer's School Development Program. This action came in response to a state mandate requiring all school districts in

Texas to move toward school-based management. Training in SCE was conducted by Comer associates from Yale University and district staff they had trained. Although the district dropped its focus on implementing the adapted Comer approach in all schools, encouraging decision making at the school level remained a state policy and a district priority.[3]

The restructuring grant built on the earlier SCE initiative. The SDDAP grant gave Spruce Cluster schools support in developing decision-making and team-building skills through exercises to define and pursue school improvement goals. The grant also provided resources for extra counselors and social workers, positions central to implementation of the Comer model.

To help schools develop school-based management capabilities, the university and the district allocated resources to a variety of activities designed to promote collective decision making. For two summers, the SDDAP grant brought teams of teachers, parents, and administrators from each of the cluster schools to the campus of Southwest Texas State University for workshops on restructuring. At Spruce High School, the grant supported a series of seminars on team building and group decision making. Participating teachers and administrators were expected to take a leadership role as their schools addressed issues, including changes in curriculum and instruction, related to their approved plans for school improvement. The restructuring grant provided modest funds to each school for training and professional development activities of its choice. These resources were deployed in various ways but, in general, the schools used them to explore academic reforms that they might adopt, such as alternative school schedules, student grouping strategies, or use of instructional computer software.

Several components of the Dallas project went beyond school-based management issues and developed services urgently needed by students and their families. To promote children's school readiness and parents' involvement in their children's education, the project staff developed a program at a recreation

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[3]The shift away from the Comer model, as described in Section B, affected the district's ability to organize restructuring efforts around a unified theme.

center to encourage parents of preschoolers to read and discuss stories with their children. These classes were taught by other parents who had been through the program. The project and Parkland Hospital jointly developed health clinics in the high school and two middle schools, because the area served by the cluster schools had no local health care facility of any kind. Grant funds were used to prepare space and partially subsidize the salaries of the hospital medical staff, who operated the clinics two days a week at Spruce High School and one day a week at each middle school. Project staff estimate that half of all Spruce High School students visited the clinic for one purpose or another, including general physical examinations, help with specific medical or emotional problems, birth control information or prescriptions, or simply to find a sympathetic ear. A child care center at the high school provided free care for children of about 25 students, who could also attend after-school parenting classes.

The SDDAP grant was also used to promote communications with parents. Spruce Cluster schools installed automated telephone systems for informing parents of student absences, electronic voice mail equipment so that families could call in to get information about homework assignments and important school events, fax machines, and computers. At one middle school, the new telephone communications links with families were credited with a large increase in parent interest and involvement with the school.

b. Philadelphia School District (Pennsylvania)

The Gratz Connection project in Philadelphia was primarily an effort to build collaborative decision-making skills among teachers and to promote communications across school levels. The project was being conducted in Simon Gratz High School and 16 elementary and middle schools. These schools served a very poor and almost entirely African American student population in economically devastated areas of North and West Philadelphia.

The efforts supported by the SDDAP grant were preceded by related ongoing initiatives affecting all Philadelphia schools. In an effort to promote school-based management and decision making, the district promoted the creation of school-based management councils. Each school's council was authorized to

develop a governance and restructuring plan that could be submitted for district approval if it was supported by 75 percent of the school staff. These councils, however, did not attract great support, because district policy precluded them from dealing with allocation of the school's budget or hiring, leaving them to focus on what many school staff perceived as marginal procedural issues. The efforts funded by the Department of Education were paralleled by efforts undertaken through the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative, supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The Trusts provided substantial funding for staff development and release time for teachers to promote restructuring at the high school level throughout the district.

The restructuring project focused on the formation of "connection councils" in each school, as well as extensive training for selected members of these councils who served as "connectors" among cluster schools. Each school determined the composition of its own council, but all included teachers, administrators, and parents. These councils, which in some cases were the previously established school-based management councils, considered restructuring and reform options. The Gratz Connection project selected teachers from these councils to serve as connectors--three from each elementary school, five from each middle school, and eight from Gratz High School. These 64 connectors attended periodic staff development sessions--provided almost exclusively by an outside consultant--on topics such as team building, improving communication and school climate, and educational restructuring to support new models of student learning. They were expected to serve as catalysts for revising curriculum and instruction in their own schools. With a few exceptions, however, the cluster schools did not, during the period observed for the evaluation, progress to the point of applying this training to make significant changes in curriculum and instruction.

In addition to helping cluster schools prepare for school-based decision making and management, the Gratz Connection emphasized improving student attendance. The project created a "parent corps," which combined attendance monitoring and adult education. Originally, unemployed parents from the community

were to be hired as attendance aides in the morning and attend GED or job preparation classes in the afternoon. However, project administrators soon discovered that the payment of a wage or stipend could affect welfare benefits and potentially Medicaid eligibility. Instead, the parents were given only a $10 per day reimbursement for expenses such as child care and transportation. Ten parents participated in the first year of the grant, and 20 in the second year. In the third year, however, the parent corps was eliminated at the request of the school councils to free up funds for mental health experts in the cluster schools.

3. Focus on Staff Development

San Juan County, a vast district larger than the state of Connecticut in the southeast quadrant of Utah, serves about 3,450 students. At the time of our observation, a restructuring effort called "Paradigm Shift" had been under way for more than 10 years. By the time of the SDDAP grant, this effort had progressed from the development of team-building and decision-making skills (similar to the stage observed in Philadelphia and Dallas) to the stage of developing individual teachers' instructional skills. The project affected the district's 12 schools, including 5 Navajo reservation schools with populations that were more than 90 percent Native American.

When San Juan received its SDDAP grant, it was already eight years into a restructuring initiative called the "Outcome Driven Development Model" (ODDM). Under ODDM, representatives from all of the district's schools learned team-building and decision-making skills; the product of this phase of reform was a new set of goals for the district. Lead teachers from each school were trained to identify instructional reform strategies that would help their school achieve district goals.

San Juan County's restructuring grant was an extension of this previous initiative. Most of the grant funds were used to support peer coaches--experienced teachers who were released from classroom responsibilities to work with other teachers individually. Intensive summer institutes and other occasional meetings during the school year kept the overall district goals for reform visible, but the bulk of staff development activity took place at the school and classroom level, supporting the efforts of individual

teachers to change and improve instruction. Specific strategies for reforming curriculum and instruction were chosen at the school level, using the decision-making skills developed in the earlier stage of reform.

Technology provided a unifying theme for the reform of curriculum and instruction in San Juan County, particularly at the high school level. By combining funding sources, each high school developed a technology center. At one high school, the center provided two-way interactive instruction using telecommunications links, which helped promote interdisciplinary approaches to teaching. At another, the center focused on career development and was organized around 11 core competencies that included the traditional disciplines as well as Navajo culture, human relations, personal management, technology, and health/physical education. Students could explore a variety of career clusters, including video production and editing, radio broadcasting and communications, construction and manufacturing, transportation, Navajo decor and architecture, and business management. When the concept was fully implemented, instruction was expected to be project oriented, team taught, and interdisciplinary.

B. COMMON FACTORS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the diversity of the restructuring project approaches and the varying stages of reform supported by the SDDAP grants, it is possible to identify some common factors that affected progress toward implementing a restructuring strategy. Some of these factors can be found in the relationship between the activities supported under the restructuring grant and the broader context of local educational reform. Others arise from local personnel practices and turnover.

1. Relationship Between Restructuring and the Broader Reform Context

The experiences of the restructuring projects reflected quite different relationships between grant activities and the broader reform context, and these differences may affect prospects for long-term reform success. The restructuring projects' chances for having a long-term effect were probably strongest when the activities funded by the SDDAP grant complemented, supported, or were actually part of a larger plan

for academic reform. Conversely, prospects appeared weakest when the grant activities were isolated, organized as a separate project, or even at odds with a larger district agenda.

In the two rural sites--McCormick County, South Carolina, and San Juan County, Utah--grant activities were closely interwoven with or complementary to broader district or state educational reform plans. In both cases, restructuring efforts were districtwide and involved all schools. Both districts had been involved in the reform process for a long time; their SDDAP grants represented an infusion of funds to continue and expand activities that were already well under way as local initiatives. Although not all teachers and administrators in these two districts may have been ready to abandon traditional approaches to curriculum and instruction and wholeheartedly embrace the reform vision, they at least received persistent and consistent messages from district leaders about the direction of change.

Among the urban sites, the Grand Rapids and Santa Ana reform efforts most closely approached the coherence reflected in the rural projects. As the pilot implementation site for a districtwide curriculum reform initiative, the cluster of schools involved with the Grand Rapids SDDAP grant led the implementation of the district's reform agenda, which remained focused on OBDM. In Santa Ana, the restructuring grant was one of several sources of support for implementation of statewide reforms in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. School, central administration, and state reform goals were closely aligned.

In other sites, activities were undertaken with SDDAP grants in a context of competing policy or reform agendas, or of an emerging agenda that may have been inconsistent with the project efforts. This concern was clearest in Dallas, where some of the curricular innovations that schools might have been interested in pursuing as they developed school-based strategies were not well aligned with the state-mandated Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). This test--part of the accountability structure that emerged from the Perot Commission of the 1980s--provides sanctions and rewards for schools on the basis of student performance. Consequently, when the test looms, other activities cease as teachers

concentrate on reinforcing the skills to be tested. This is particularly true in schools singled out for low performance on previous tests, which was true in earlier years for the Spruce Cluster. The TAAS--although it serves as an effective instrument of state control over educational policy--may inhibit the kind of exploration, adoption, and implementation of innovative curriculum and instructional strategies that the Spruce Cluster was trying to foster.

In Grand Rapids and McCormick County, local reforms may run up against state reform mandates. In both sites, the reform initiatives supported by the SDDAP grants were undertaken independently of state-level reforms. Both of these states have been engaged in statewide systemic reform efforts, however, involving development of new curriculum standards, frameworks, and assessments. These state-level activities parallel similar local efforts in the two sites. In Michigan, some observers believe that emerging reform plans will move the state toward a more prescriptive relationship with local districts. It is likely, of course, that at least in some subject areas, the same national standards will be adopted (for example, the NCTM standards for mathematics). However, in other subjects, prescriptive state reforms could conflict with the direction of local reforms.

Bureaucratic controls that limit or alter the scope and pace of reform also arose locally. In Philadelphia, for example, staff training undertaken with SDDAP grant support was consistent with the districtwide policy of moving all schools toward school-based management and decision making. However, procedural requirements and limits on the significance of school-based management created barriers to progress. It proved difficult for schools to muster the support from 75 percent of their faculty required to win district designation as a site-based management school. In large secondary schools such as Gratz High School, consensus was elusive, because faculty loyalties rested largely with the charters within the school, rather than the institution as a whole. The process for district approval of school

management plans loomed as another difficult hurdle; even a well-established alternative school that had managed itself for 20 years had its plan turned down at first submission.[4]

Prospects for progress toward school-based management and decision making were also constrained in Philadelphia by district bureaucracy and teachers' union limits on the scope of building-level autonomy. The Philadelphia Teachers' Federation opposes giving individual schools the right to hire their own staff. The school board has tight control over the use of funds; it must enact a resolution authorizing any expenditure over $99 that falls outside the small discretionary sums available to principals. The district organizational structure also placed a good deal of authority at a subdistrict level, between the central district offices and the schools. In the Gratz cluster, the subdistrict put a low priority on school-based management and decision making as a reform strategy.

The highly political nature of local school governance also affected some restructuring efforts, which rest on the premise that professional educators can improve education by examining their enterprise and retooling the way they function. In Santa Ana, vocal school board members opposed the direction of state education reforms being implemented by the district. In fact, Santa Ana was one of several districts in California that initially refused to administer the state's new performance-based assessment system during the 1993-1994 school year. These school board members asserted that the assessment instruments emphasized values that were inappropriate in school curricula. Intervention by the courts resolved this situation in the state's favor, but opposition to the state reform effort was growing among local governing boards in California. In Grand Rapids, similar questions have been raised--much less stridently so far--in response to the district's emphasis on measurable educational outcomes.

Local tolerance for persistent reform efforts varies. Real change in educational institutions takes time, particularly when change affects professional practice and requires staff training. Educational

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[4]This school was not part of the SDDAP project; no school participating in the restructuring project had reached the stage of submitting a school management plan.

accountability systems in many localities, however, force early assessment of the impacts and outcomes of reform efforts and, in some cases, cut them short as a result. In Dallas, what appeared at the outset of the SDDAP grant to be a districtwide commitment to a version of the Comer process, which involves a lengthy, perhaps perpetual, process of educating administrators, teachers, and parents, turned out to be short-lived. After an independent evaluation of the local version of the Comer process, based on two years of data, showed little impact on participating schools, the district backed away from its mandate of school-based decision making. Schools were then allowed to select their own approaches to school improvement; indeed, they *had* to do so because school-based management remained a state mandate. This district policy change may have been logical and appropriate, but it left the restructuring initiative without a unifying theme. What began as a project with real potential to articulate a clusterwide vision for educational improvement became more like a set of unconnected activities.

The two rural restructuring sites, in contrast, exhibited much more tolerance for the lengthy process of changing professional practice and improving academic outcomes. McCormick County had been engaged in its restructuring plan for about 6 years, and San Juan County, for close to 10 years. This contrast was due in large part to the fact that the pressures for results in these rural districts were largely self-imposed, rather than coming from a higher level in the educational system. In San Juan County, this situation was not likely to change in the foreseeable future. In South Carolina, McCormick County may experience increasing top-down pressure for results, as the state pursues its systemic reform agenda.

2. Personnel Turnover

Changes in personnel--at the highest levels of leadership as well as among project staff and teachers--were an important factor affecting the direction and progress of restructuring projects and related reform agendas. In some cases, these changes had clear effects on reforms. In other cases, personnel changes were still too recent for any effects, other than fresh uncertainties, to be evident.

Turnover affected top leadership in four of the five urban restructuring project sites. The Dallas, Grand Rapids, Philadelphia, and Santa Ana districts hired new superintendents during the span of their SDDAP grants. In Dallas, this turnover occurred after two years of grant activity; in Philadelphia and Santa Ana, after three. The superintendent in Grand Rapids, hired at about the time the grant was awarded, did not participate in planning the restructuring activity.

The consequences of these leadership changes vary. In Dallas, the new leadership turned away from the commitment to the Comer approach made by the previous superintendent, leaving the SDDAP project without a unifying theme. In Philadelphia, the new superintendent, a former chief state school officer in Maryland and architect of Kentucky's statewide systemic reform, was likely to place his own stamp on school reform, bringing some uncertainty to the direction for the Gratz Connection project. In Grand Rapids, the new superintendent was immediately confronted with pressing school finance and central administration issues, and it took some time for him to focus on curriculum and instruction and throw his support behind the restructuring project as the vanguard implementation of OBDM. In Santa Ana, the departing superintendent had overseen district efforts to implement the state's reform plan and served as a buffer between the schools and the school board bloc that opposed the restructuring efforts. His departure left the future of reform uncertain.

Stability of top leadership was less of an issue in the rural sites. In San Juan County, the change process evolved over a long period, and administrative shifts did not disrupt the long-range vision for reform. In McCormick County, the superintendent and assistant superintendent were hired specifically to create the kinds of changes and improvements that the SDDAP restructuring model promotes. The leadership barriers there tended to exist at the school level, and district leadership had to win the commitment of principals and teachers to the district's vision of reform, and particularly to participatory management.

Leadership turnover at the school level was most significant in Phoenix, where restructuring activity was limited to two schools. Plagued by numerous start-up problems, the new Phoenix Preparatory Academy had four principals, including two interim appointees, in two years. This turnover impeded implementation of the restructuring grant's planned activities at the school. At Central High School, the principal was largely responsible for initiating the ninth-grade academy and moving its implementation forward, but he moved on to another district. It was thus unclear whether the ninth-grade initiative would continue in the final year of the SDDAP grant.

In some cases, district personnel policies contributed to instability in school-level leadership and could thus undermine the continuity of reform efforts. In one district, principals were routinely shuffled around so that strong leaders could be assigned for a year or two to "fix" failing schools. In that site, the high school, the two middle schools, and some of the elementary schools associated with the restructuring project had at least two principals over the life of the project. Evaluation staff visiting these schools had the impression that the schools started anew each year, as illustrated by the response of successive principals in one middle school to a question about their primary goals: "Get this school under control."

District personnel actions also affected project leadership. The project director at one site was forced to return to a principal's post because the district personnel office, midway through the grant period, reclassified the director's position to a lower level. In another site, the original project director (who was primary author of the grant proposal) was ousted when a new person was hired at a higher administrative level. At another site, it appeared for some time that the day-to-day project coordinator would have to move to a school principalship for the last year of grant implementation. Although this turnover was averted, the threat it posed illustrates a perennial problem in positions funded with "soft" money: as the grant draws to a close, key staff must worry about job security and their next assignment.

In several sites, district financial problems and staff reductions contributed to substantial staff turnover at the school level. At one middle school, one-third of the staff members were new to the building as the

process of establishing school improvement goals began. This school had to cope with the issue of building community at the same time that it embarked on implementing curriculum reform, and the latter effort suffered as a result. At another site, almost all the guidance counselors were laid off just before school began in the first grant year. Because the restructuring strategy included a key role for counselors, grant managers were forced to divert resources from other planned components to rehire the guidance personnel.

The SDDAP restructuring model addressed the issue of leadership only tangentially, by assuming that, if principals and teachers have the authority to make key decisions about what happens in schools and classrooms, then reform will have a chance to succeed. The examples in this chapter of activities during a three-year period in some of the restructuring sites suggest that stable leadership and stable staff are important ingredients for the implementation of reform. High turnover requires regular reacquaintance with the reform plan for new personnel, which can erode support built at considerable effort.

IV. ATTRACTING STUDENTS TO TARGETED PROJECTS

One of the challenges the targeted School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) projects faced was how to attract students and keep their attention long enough to have a chance of affecting their academic progress and motivation. The projects relied in varying degrees on students to apply for or at least accept assignment to the special program, and on parents to consent or take some initiative to have their children included in the program. Once enrolled, students could still drop out of school or leave the special program and return to a regular school program. Other students who remained in the program could disengage--through poor attendance or minimal effort--and stand little chance of benefiting.

The projects' ability to attract students and keep them engaged was intertwined with other program implementation issues. Success in making instruction and curriculum stimulating, engaging, and challenging (as discussed in Chapter V) is likely to be an important factor in effective student retention. By affecting a program's reputation, program curriculum and instruction can also help or hinder efforts to attract new students. Similarly, the extent to which the program design, available services, and staff commitment and skill create a supportive environment--discussed in Chapter VI--can affect students' ability to continue in the program despite the stresses of school and life outside it.

Observation of the targeted projects in the in-depth evaluation produced findings related to three broad issues. In Section A, we examine the projects' success in recruiting students and point out factors that appeared to help or hurt chances of attaining planned enrollment levels, including the timing of student recruiting, the use of individual attention in recruiting, the relationship between alternative and regular school programs, and public perceptions of the program. In Section B, we discuss the process of selecting students and how this process affects the mix of participants in terms of their commitment, behavior, and skill levels. Section C examines how the ability to attract and retain students can be affected by program

features such as schedule flexibility, program location, and the range of academic and extracurricular activities offered.

A. RECRUITING STUDENTS: RESULTS AND OPERATIONAL FACTORS

The targeted dropout prevention projects relied on two approaches to recruiting: (1) voluntary applications; and (2) selection by school personnel. All of the alternative secondary programs used an application process, for two reasons. First, many of the students these programs expected to serve had already dropped out of school and could not be invited or referred by school staff. Second, the alternative secondary programs generally intended to serve students who had some level of commitment and motivation; the effort required to complete an application could help to screen out unmotivated students. Enrichment programs at both the middle and high school levels, in contrast, relied on school personnel to identify current students who fit a definition of "at risk" and to assign them to the program or to suggest that they participate.

These approaches are not entirely distinct, however. Even when students had to complete an application, school personnel and others often referred individuals to the project on the basis of their knowledge of a student's school performance and personal profile. This was particularly true for individuals who were close to dropping out but were still attending school. In some cases, the criminal justice system referred students as a condition of probation or reduction of charges. Students were also referred by social service agencies. On the other hand, many projects that relied on school staff to identify and select at-risk students still had to elicit a positive response from students and their parents. This was particularly true when the program required some extra effort or time commitment from students--as in the after-school tutoring offered in the Long Beach program or the weekend activities included in the Sweetwater Twelve Together Program. It was also true when parents had to commit themselves to provide some support--as in the contractual commitment expected from the parents of Newark ACCEL students to attend school meetings and provide a suitable place for homework. Thus, to some extent,

recruitment to voluntary application programs also entailed staff discretion, and recruitment to at-risk identification programs required to some degree that potential participants be sold on the program.

Attracting students into the programs offered by the targeted projects often presented challenges. In the following sections, we explain four key findings related to the successes and difficulties they encountered:

1. Most of the targeted interventions attracted fewer students than expected.
2. The process for selecting students affects participation levels.
3. Project staff often faced barriers to active recruiting.
4. Program image is an important ingredient in attracting students and winning parental acceptance.

1. Attracting the Planned Number of Students

Targeted projects were selected for the in-depth evaluation partly as a result of discussions with project staff indicating substantial excess demand for program spaces.[1] Some project staff were reluctant to adopt random assignment for evaluation purposes but accepted its use as a fair way of allocating limited program services among potential participants who could not all be served. These staff generally thought that there would be more candidates for program services than available slots. In some projects that required students to apply for admission, staff noted that they had been forced in the past to maintain waiting lists because of lack of space. In sites that had school staff choose students rather than admit them on the basis of an application, project directors generally anticipated no difficulty in identifying an expanded pool of suitable candidates for the program and control groups. The magnitude of excess

[1]In three sites (Albuquerque, Chicago, and Chula Vista), projects enrolled students in several components independently, and only one component was selected for the impact analysis portion of the in-depth evaluation. In these cases, we monitored only the recruiting of students into the one component. In Miami, both program components--the COMET Program and the Corporate Academy--were included in the in-depth evaluation. In total, the evaluation monitored student recruiting in 19 targeted interventions.

demand that project staff anticipated varied from site to site, but all projects expected enough applicants or referrals to be able to assign between a third and a half to the control group, without leaving program slots unfilled. The capability to fill program slots and also allocate students to a control group can be viewed as evidence that demand or need for program services exceeded a program's capacity. Table IV.1 presents project directors' anticipated recruitment, or the approximate number of students they thought would apply or be selected during sample enrollment.[2]

Project staff were expected to take applications from or otherwise identify far more program candidates than they would actually serve, but most did not. After adjusting for delays in the start of sample enrollment, we identified eight sites in which project staff met or came close (within 20 percent) to meeting targets for anticipated sample enrollment--Atlanta Griffin-Spalding Academy, the Boston Jobs for Youth (JFY) and Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) consortium, Las Vegas Horizon High Schools, Newark ACCEL, Rockford Early Identification/Intervention, Seattle Middle College High School, St. Louis Metropolitan Youth Academy (MYA), and Sweetwater Twelve Together. These projects together had estimated that they would take applications from or identify a total of 3,300 students. In the end, they actually enrolled 3,785 in the evaluation sample. The remaining 11 projects had difficulty finding enough eligible and interested students to fill program slots and allocate students to a control group; they anticipated identifying 4,795 students but actually identified only 2,516.

Shortfalls in student recruitment can, of course, be due wholly or partially to factors that have little to do with recruitment methods or program appeal. This was clearly the case in Long Beach, where a general school finance crisis and a resulting freeze on hiring for several months stopped expansion of the

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[2]In most sites, the anticipated sample enrollment was the target agreed to by project staff for total sample enrollment during a two-year period, including students assigned to the program and the evaluation control group. In Atlanta, Boston, and Miami, however, the start of sample enrollment was delayed; the anticipated enrollment in these sites was a prorated target for the actual period over which sample members were enrolled--one year for the Atlanta and Miami COMET programs, and about a year and a half for the Boston and Miami Corporate Academy programs.

TABLE IV.1

ANTICIPATED AND ACTUAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT IN TARGETED PROJECTS

Project	Approach to Student Recruitment	Anticipated Recruitment[a]	Actual Recruitment[c]	On/Near Target
Albuquerque Middle School Leadership Program	Selection (Fall)	800	335	
Anne Arundel YES Program	Selection (Spring)	400	170 (est.)	
Atlanta Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy	Selection (Spring)	200[b]	169	√
Boston JFY and University High Schools	Application (Ongoing)	250[b]	288	√
Chicago Wells Academy School Within a School	Selection (Spring)	400	249	
Chula Vista (Sweetwater) Twelve Together Program	Selection (Fall)	400	508	√
Cincinnati Clark Academy	Application (Ongoing)	400	50 (est.)	
Flint Accelerated Academics Academy	Selection (Spring)	400	285	
Las Vegas Horizon High Schools	Application (Ongoing)	400	485	√
Long Beach Up with Literacy Program	Selection (Ongoing)	400	309	
Miami COMET Program	Selection (Spring)	320[b]	189	
Miami Corporate Academy	Application (Ongoing)	200[b]	142	
Newark ACCEL Program	Selection (Fall)	550	621	√
Queens Flowers with Care Youth Services	Application (Ongoing)	400	161	
Rockford Early Identification and Intervention Program	Selection (Spring with Fall Fill-In)	600	813	√
San Antonio WAVE	Application (Spring)	275	217	
Seattle MCHS	Application (Ongoing)	600	518	√
St. Louis MYA	Application (Ongoing)	300	383	√
Tulsa STAR Program	Application (Ongoing)	800	409	
Total		**8,095**	**6,301**	

[a] Anticipated recruitment is the estimated total number of appropriate students who were to be identified for the evaluation sample during the planned two-year enrollment period. This estimate was made in discussions with project staff during negotiations over implementing random assignment procedures.

[b] The recruitment period was less than the planned two years. The anticipated recruitment for two years was adjusted downward to estimate the goal over the shortened period.

[c] The actual number of students recruited includes all students identified as suitable for the program. It exceeds the number ultimately included in the impact analysis for several reasons. A few students in some sites were treated as "wild cards"--admitted to the program for emergency reasons and not randomly assigned. In sites that selected students in the spring, some students had moved or transferred by the fall and were never notified about the program. Three sites--Anne Arundel, Cincinnati, and San Antonio--attempted to select evaluation samples but were eventually excluded from the impact analysis (along with the students they had enrolled). Students in these categories are included here as recruited but are not included in analyses of program impact that will be presented in other evaluation reports.

corps of tutors and blocked recruiting of new middle school students. Sample recruitment in Long Beach was also constrained because referred students who had been in the Chapter 1 Student Improvement Program were automatically admitted to the targeted program, in keeping with an existing program linkage, and were not treated as part of the evaluation sample. Thus, although the number of suitable students who could be enrolled in the evaluation sample fell below expectations, considerably more students were actually served.[3]

In most cases in which sample recruitment was lower than projected, the explanation is more likely related to misjudgments about the number of students who would apply or fit referral criteria, procedural snags in recruiting, or some combination of the two. In Albuquerque, program staff wanted to fill 200 slots across four schools in the Middle School Leadership Program and planned to identify a total of 400 students each year. School staff identified fewer students, however, and some students who were invited to program orientation failed to attend. In Miami, each of 10 elementary schools was to identify 32 fourth graders, of whom half would be assigned to the 16-seat COMET class. After most schools had difficulty meeting this target, it was lowered to 24 (with only a third to be assigned to the control group). Seven schools met this reduced goal and identified an average of 27 students, but the remaining three schools had to be dropped from the evaluation because they could identify just enough suitable students to fill their one COMET class. In the Miami Corporate Academy, the originally anticipated flow of applicants did not materialize.

Three sites had enough difficulty in attracting or identifying students and in adhering to the sample assignment process to prevent them from being included in the evaluation of program impacts. In Cincinnati, enrollments at Clark Academy were declining, and the number of applications never outstripped the number of open program slots during the 1992-1993 school year. Although some applications were

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[3]For example, in 1992-1993, Up with Literacy staff identified 140 rather than 200 students for the evaluation sample. Of these, 82 were assigned to the program, but the program also served an additional 46 students from the Chapter 1 Student Improvement Program.

received (roughly 37 by February of the first sample enrollment year), project staff placed almost all applicants directly in vacant program slots, rather than allowing their names to be randomly assigned. In Anne Arundel County, only about 170 students were identified for two cohorts. The evaluation was compromised further by the elimination of one of the two program sites at the end of the first sample enrollment year, and there was confusion over whether some identified students belonged in the sample. In San Antonio, the 217 students who applied for WAVE as their elective class and were randomly assigned fell short of the target of 275, and local school staff incorrectly placed students in the WAVE program who had been assigned to the control group.

In some cases, the evaluation data collection process may have affected recruitment success. In Albuquerque, some students who attended orientation were reluctant to complete the baseline questionnaire required to participate, because they viewed it as a test. The rate of applications in Tulsa was only half the original target, and project staff said this was due largely to evaluation-related factors. Shortly after the start of sample enrollment, program staff concluded that they could not handle the doubled volume of individual intake interviews required for both the program and control groups, so expectations were reduced from 800 to about 400. The program exceeded its first-year target of 200 but, by the second year, counselors at the 14 referring schools had reportedly begun to withhold some referrals to avoid the risk of assignment to the control group. After random assignment ended, the rate of referrals reportedly increased.

2. Effects of Recruitment Method on Participation

Difficulties in recruiting students were of most immediate concern to the evaluation team because they undermined the evaluation impact analysis, but they also focused attention on strategies that dropout prevention programs used to identify and attract students. We must be careful in drawing inferences about links between recruiting strategy and recruiting success, however, because shortfalls in enrollment were in many cases affected by external factors, and not all projects even made concerted efforts to attract students. Nevertheless, the details of project operations suggest two lessons about approaches to attracting

students. These lessons relate to the timing of student recruiting and conducting outreach through personal, individual solicitation.

a. Timing of Student Recruiting

Projects recruited students according to two kinds of schedules: (1) ongoing; or (2) episodic. The alternative secondary programs--in Boston, Cincinnati, Las Vegas, Miami, Queens, Seattle, St. Louis, and Tulsa--practiced ongoing intake, accepting applications and enrolling students throughout the school year to fill openings, either at defined intervals (such as the start of academic quarters) or at almost any time. A middle school enrichment program in Long Beach also enrolled students on numerous occasions through the school year. In contrast, all of the high school and middle school enrichment programs (with the exception of Long Beach) identified students annually in the relevant grades and invited selected students to enter the program as a group.[4]

The timing of student recruitment varied in still another way for programs that selected a group of at-risk students. In all cases, these programs intended to have students begin participating in the fall, but some programs identified appropriate at-risk students in the fall, and some in the preceding spring. In the Albuquerque Middle School Leadership, Newark ACCEL, and Sweetwater Twelve Together programs, teachers and counselors developed a referral list in the fall, and students from this list who were randomly assigned to the program sample were immediately invited to join the program.[5] For the Atlanta Griffin-Spalding Academy, the Chicago Wells Academy, the Flint Accelerated Academics Academy, the Rockford

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[4]In several projects, most students were enrolled following the primary selection process, but some additional students were selected a bit later in the school year to fill program slots vacated when students in the original group either failed to enter the program or dropped out of it.

[5]In Newark, where the intervention was an intensive, full-day curriculum, high priority was placed on rapid identification in September, so parental and student consent could be obtained and students enrolled before much of the school year had passed. In Albuquerque and Sweetwater, where the project intervention consisted of "add-on" activities, there was less pressure to identify all candidates quickly at the start of the year, and lists were developed and students selected over about two months, extending into November.

program, and the Miami COMET Program, school staff identified candidates in the spring, and those selected for the program sample were notified in the fall and invited into the program.

Differences in the timing of recruitment efforts are important because they affect the interval between the identification of potential participants and the point at which they might begin participating. In the programs with ongoing enrollment, applicants could enter immediately or at the start of the next academic quarter, if openings were available. Similarly, projects that selected students in the fall gave them a rapid invitation to enter the program. However, students who were selected in the spring could only begin participating three or four months later, in the fall.

Creating a long lag between student identification and program entry undermines the efficiency of the effort required to review student records, canvass relevant staff who might make referrals, and select students who meet program criteria. This effect was evident in the rates at which students selected in the spring in some sites responded to program invitations in the fall. In Chicago, for example, 150 eighth graders who were expected to attend Wells Academy as freshmen in fall 1992 were identified as meeting program criteria for the School-Within-a-School, but 27 percent did not attend Wells Academy in the fall. Similarly, more than a quarter of the students identified for the dropout prevention program in Rockford were no longer attending the same school in the fall and thus could not participate. In Flint, more than half of the students identified in spring 1992 had either moved or transferred by the fall and could not be included in the demonstration program or the study sample.

In contrast, projects that identified suitable students in the fall had very limited attrition. Administrative constraints may make it difficult to avoid spring recruiting, but filling a program, even a popular one, using spring recruiting is likely to require substantial overbooking. This is particularly true in most large urban settings.

b. Outreach Through Individual Solicitation

The demonstration evaluation simulated the student recruiting task that projects would face if program resources were expanded and they had to fill larger programs.[6] Their responses to the recruiting challenge varied. Some projects that selected students on the basis of screening and referral could expand sample enrollment simply by applying existing criteria and imposing a cutoff based on total sample requirements rather than program capacity. Some projects that used applications had already been receiving excess applications in the past; they dealt with this excess during the evaluation by assigning some applicants to control group status rather than to a waiting list. In some cases, however, target enrollments were likely to be met only if substantial and effective steps were taken to attract students. Experience with concerted recruiting efforts in the demonstration was thus somewhat limited. Only some of the demonstration projects faced the need to recruit, and only a few adopted different or more intensive recruiting strategies than they had followed before the demonstration.

The evidence from the demonstration projects about recruiting practices suggests that individual attention may be as important in attracting students as it is in the classroom. Individual outreach was used by at least two sites. The Seattle MCHS, even before the start of the demonstration sample enrollment, made outreach telephone calls to former students listed in district databases as dropouts. The MYA in St. Louis sent invitation letters to students on a similar local list and, to at least some extent, made follow-up telephone calls. No systematic data exist on responses to these solicitations. Seattle staff, however, offered anecdotal evidence of why such personal recruiting might be important. They described students who, when asked why they had decided to come back to school and enroll at MCHS, said that their return to school had never before been requested. Some St. Louis students reported in focus groups that many

[6]Although project staff may have been less enthusiastic about recruiting students who would end up in a control group than they would have been about recruiting additional participants, the effect of under-recruiting in the demonstration was to leave existing program slots vacant. As a result, strong incentives existed for meeting recruiting targets.

dropouts find out about programs like MYA from invitation letters. The potential importance of this kind of outreach is consistent with the value student focus group participants placed on individual attention. For many students, attention to their individual needs, and the spoken and unspoken messages that they were wanted and valued as program participants and students, were the clearest difference from their earlier school experiences. Individual invitations to program candidates may thus be an important complement to more impersonal forms of recruiting, such as radio, television, or print announcements.

3. Observed Barriers to Active Recruiting

Project staff who actively sought to recruit students encountered a variety of impediments. Although only some grantees had a need to recruit actively and made such efforts, any effort to expand the percentage of at-risk students served by such programs should consider three constraints: (1) availability of staff resources at the right time; (2) availability of information; and (3) access to students.

a. Staff Availability for Recruiting

Using program resources efficiently to attract students into dropout prevention or recovery programs implies having those resources available at prime recruiting times. As suggested earlier, long intervals between identifying appropriate students and inviting them to join may lead to serious attrition. The same is true for programs to which students or dropouts apply. Staff of most recovery projects acknowledged that accepting applicants and then placing them on waiting lists often meant that they would never enroll; when space became available, many applicants would either be impossible to locate or would have gravitated toward another pursuit. Efforts to attract students will be most efficient if they take place as close as possible to the times that students actually respond and enroll.

School calendars, however, do not always lend themselves to timely outreach and recruiting. Students who have dropped out of school or are uncertain about returning after the summer may be most receptive to the appeals of an alternative program late in the summer, when the prospect of the new school term and

the need to decide are more immediate. Outreach staff, however, may be less available during the summer vacation months, unless staff work schedules and compensation terms are designed to ensure that recruiting can occur during traditional school vacations. Special arrangements may thus be necessary in some districts to make recruiting resources available when they are most needed.

b. Availability of Information on Potential Program Candidates

Active recruiting and screening require information. For example, dropout recovery projects that want to reach out to youths who have already left school need information about who these youths are and where they can be found. We observed two constraints on the availability of such information in the project sites. First, school districts sometimes guard information about dropouts very closely, for three reasons. Some are concerned that releasing their names and addresses will violate confidentiality rules. Other districts want to avoid publicity about the magnitude of the overall dropout problem, and still others, if they operate their own alternative programs, prefer not to have other community-based programs recruit from the same population. One project, run by a community-based organization, was able to gain access to dropout lists only because a district employee was willing to copy and convey the relevant material without formal approval.

Even dropout recovery projects that are run directly by school districts may not have adequate access to information. Confidentiality concerns may not be relevant, and releasing data to an "inside" project may be less likely lead to unfavorable press, but administrators of regular district schools may still be reluctant to acknowledge the number of students they are losing, even if recognizing students as dropouts might make it easier for alternative programs in the district to recruit them. Strategies that give both the regular school and the dropout recovery program incentives to bring former students back to school can help overcome these reservations. For example, the funding arrangement developed in the Sweetwater district allocated a portion of the state aid for returning students to discretionary funds for both the learning centers and host high schools in which the returning students may have been previously enrolled.

The second constraint on the availability of information is that the relevant data may be difficult to retrieve when needed. In some instances, districts may take a long time to designate a student as a dropout. For example, one district included in the SDDAP evaluation reported that a student who did not return to school in the fall was not counted as a dropout until the following January, because efforts first had to be made to determine if the student had transferred. In order to conduct prompt outreach to dropouts to get them to consider returning to school in an alternative program, districts may have to define dropouts less rigidly, at least for this purpose. For example, a substantial period of absence may be used as the basis for allowing outreach efforts by alternative programs.

Information retrieval may also be affected by the quality of information systems. Many of the projects that selected at-risk students began by applying criteria based on information that is stored in most student information systems--such as recent standardized test scores, attendance rate, and age relative to grade. An information system that stores such data and can select students who meet specified criteria is an important asset in finding the right students for a dropout prevention program.

Manual screening of student files to identify appropriate students is also possible. One targeted SDDAP project was located in an urban district with no centralized student database, so all screening to identify appropriate students had to be performed by building-level staff working with paper files. Manual screening may also be necessary if program criteria include items not found in automated databases. However, the capacity of district and school staff to make at least a first-level selection using an automated database can limit manual file inspection and save time. This issue is potentially important because the time required to review and screen student records may affect whether program candidates can be identified in the fall rather than in the spring--and thus may affect the percentage of identified students who end up participating.

c. Access to Students

Constraints on access to students can also be a barrier to active student recruiting. Just as some district bureaucracies guard information about students who have dropped out of their schools, some administrators do not want representatives of alternative programs to make presentations to students who are still in regular school. This obstacle to recruiting can exist even in the alternative schools run by the public school district, as was true in one SDDAP site. Building administrators may be reluctant to acknowledge the existence of a near-dropout population that they are not serving well. They may also resist transfers out of their schools and the resulting drop in enrollment, which can affect their budgets.

4. The Importance of a Positive Program Image

To the extent that students and their parents must be convinced that a particular dropout prevention program is worth pursuing, recruiting success is influenced by explicit and implicit messages conveyed to them. The language used in recruiting materials and presentations to describe programs and to invite participation, as well as where and how the program is run, may encourage or discourage students and parents from accepting the invitation. Although systematic investigation of students' and parents' responses to such messages could not be included in this evaluation, we can note some observed practices with the potential to affect recruiting.

The name of a program is the most obvious message for students and parents. Program names can convey a positive or negative image, thus making students and parents eager or reluctant to be associated with it. The Albuquerque program, for example, selected middle school students who had serious difficulties in school, but they were invited to join a "leadership program." The invitation referred not to their past difficulties but to their future potential. Names that suggest a connection to higher education, which even most at-risk students aspire to, or to the world of employment may be useful. For example, the University School in Boston, Middle College High School in Seattle, and the Corporate Academy in Miami reflect this characteristic. Some names may signal seriousness of purpose, or a "fit" between

program objectives and students' needs--for example, the Newark ACCEL Program, the Accelerated Academics Academy in Flint, the Transitions Learning Centers in Sweetwater, and the Stay-in-School Program in Albuquerque. This characteristic can affect parents' sense of whether the program is a step forward or a form of retention for their children.

If names are developed without attention to this issue, they may be bureaucratic or meaningless to students and parents and may add little or nothing to program appeal. The Early Identification/Intervention Program in Rockford, for example--and even "General Studies," the term used for its special classes--were unlikely to convey anything about program design or purpose. Some names are simply puzzling or uninformative, like the Flowers with Care program in Queens, or the San Antonio program's commonly used acronym, WAVE. Some names risk being misleading; for example, one student in Boston reported that he had expected the Jobs for Youth program to help him find employment, and he was disappointed to find that it offered only classes.

Inattention to standard school or district procedures may inadvertently undermine efforts to build a positive program image and affect the responses of at-risk students and their parents. In Miami, for example, students were invited to join COMET--an energetic-sounding acronym for "Career Opportunities through Educational Technologies." However, the letter sent to parents requesting consent for their child's participation, mandated by the state legislature for all alternative education programs, referred to parents' "right to appeal" the school's placement decision--even though the child was entering an enriched classroom with lower pupil-teacher ratios and added technology in the form of the career labs. Parents could interpret this type of language as signaling an action taken *against* their child. Project staff were aware of this potential response and took pains to send a more reassuring cover letter on top of the mandated consent request letter.

The image, and thus the reputation, of a dropout prevention or recovery program may also be affected by its location and facilities. MCHS staff reported that being on a college campus was appealing to

potential applicants; students could use the college library, exercise facilities, and cafeteria. Staff also reported that students took on more mature attitudes because they were associating with older college students. High-quality, well-equipped facilities--often difficult to create in financially strapped districts--are key elements, along with a warm and welcoming staff, of a message of caring that potential applicants can sense immediately. For example, the well-equipped Sweetwater Learning Centers, with individual work carrels and computer stations, helped to build an image that the program was working to give youths the tools needed for success. However, location can also create impediments to recruiting. Attending Clark Academy in Cincinnati and Flowers with Care in Queens, for example, required long bus rides for most students, and the Clark Academy was in a somewhat isolated location, far from appealing commercial establishments. Isolation can help keep students focused on their work once they arrive, but it can also hamper recruiting.

B. EFFECTS OF RECRUITING ON STUDENT MIX

Dropout prevention programs must find ways to attract enough students to make full use of program resources, but they must also determine *which* students to attract. Program planners have to consider the staff and other resources that are appropriate for the student population they expect to enroll. The clarity with which the target population is defined, and the care with which recruiting efforts are tailored to attract that population, may affect whether available program resources are suitable and effective. If recruiting efforts yield a different group of students than anticipated, pressures may build for the program to change direction, and the originally conceived mission may have to be modified. The recruiting approach can thus be an important determinant of how fully operations reflect the program plan.

Observation of the targeted demonstration projects showed how these factors can affect dropout prevention programs. Next, we discuss some examples of how recruiting practices can affect the mix of participating students, including their commitment to the program and the skill levels they bring into the program.

1. Recruiting Students with Appropriate Commitment and Behavior

If students who participate in dropout prevention or recovery programs are to succeed and graduate from high school, some commitment on their part is essential. From the standpoint of program staff, this commitment is important for two reasons. First, staff generally prefer to work with students who are willing to make an effort, because they are more likely to succeed. Second, staff generally recognize that students who are apathetic, withdrawn, or hostile can sour the classroom atmosphere and undermine other students' chances for success.

We observed five factors in the targeted demonstration projects that can affect a program's chances of enrolling students with some modest level of commitment to school:

1. Multistep, personal assessment as part of the application process
2. Student participation in applicant screening
3. A contract as part of the agreement to participate
4. A significant level of required activity as a condition of participation
5. Extent of referrals from courts

In programs that required students to apply for admission, a thorough, multistep application process that included substantial personal contact and assessment reflected a concern for selecting relatively motivated students. This process gave project staff the opportunity to gauge an applicant's interest, suitability for the program, and level of commitment to getting "on track." In Tulsa, for example, the Student Training and Reentry Program (STAR) conducted intake in steps:

- An initial "get-acquainted" discussion by phone or in the office
- A 90-minute intake session, usually several weeks later, which included completion of an intake form and, for youths under 18, a discussion with parents
- A subsequent appointment for assessment testing

- A follow-up interview, with parents attending if possible, to discuss the assessment results and the various routes the applicant might take back into an educational program (including the nine-week STAR course)

Flowers with Care in Queens used a similar series of steps that applicants had to complete to be admitted. Individuals who called or dropped in to express interest got an appointment for an initial interview; those who attended this first session had a second appointment several days later for assessment testing. At the second session, they received instructions to call back the next day for results and an admission decision.[7] Project staff viewed this process as a way to confirm applicants' commitment to the program.

The screening conducted in these and other sites was intended in part to weed out individuals whose violent, disrespectful, or unruly behavior could disrupt the purposeful atmosphere staff wanted to maintain, or, in the extreme, those who might pose a danger to other students and staff. In Tulsa, for example, students were not admitted to the STAR program if they were under suspension from a regular high school.[8] At one time, the Cincinnati Clark Academy would not accept students who had been expelled or suspended from a regular high school for violent behavior and put all students through a two-week probationary period. However, it eventually dropped the probationary period because of concern that the period eliminated students too quickly who had academic potential but could not conform rapidly with academy behavior standards.

In one site, the intake process reflected the view that the motivation of dropouts who apply for an alternative program can be judged not only by staff but by the applicants' peers. At the Seattle MCHS, the head counselor convened panels of students (and sometimes graduates) to interview applicants who

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[7]During the period of evaluation sample enrollment, applicants had to return a third time to complete the baseline questionnaire.

[8]Caution in admitting suspended students also avoided the appearance of recruiting students out of their regular schools, and thus helped maintain positive relations with regular school administrators. Exceptions were made, but STAR staff discussed them with regular school staff.

had passed an initial staff screening and then to recommend whether they should be admitted. MCHS staff felt that students selected for the interviewing process had been through similar life situations and could often distinguish between genuinely motivated applicants and applicants who had applied only because of pressure from parents, courts, or other parties. They also viewed this process as an early opportunity for applicants who were admitted to form bonds with existing students and to become part of the school community.

Contracts were also used by some projects to underscore the seriousness of the program and the effort required to succeed in it. Students referred to the Newark ACCEL Program were admitted only after they and their parents had signed a contract. This agreement committed the student to comply with a stricter-than-usual attendance policy and committed parents to sign their children's homework, attend several school meetings during the year, and provide a suitable place at home for their children to do their homework. In the Sweetwater Twelve Together Program, all new students participated in a weekend mountain retreat that culminated in a stirring candlelight ceremony, at which they pledged to support each other, do their schoolwork, attend school faithfully, and behave like good citizens.

However, students' involvement in the program must require substantial time and effort in order for commitment to be significant. Many of the demonstration projects clearly required this type of commitment. In Long Beach, for example, students stayed after regular school hours for up to four days per week, to get extra help with their homework and to take part in other activities. In all of the dropout recovery projects, applicants who had been out of school had to adjust to returning to a regular schedule, close attendance monitoring, and staff who insisted that they attend. In some projects, however, the program design and student selection process did not make clear to prospective participants that they would be taking part in a special activity that would demand a greater commitment than they had put forth in the past. In San Antonio, for example, the WAVE class was simply one elective class among others and fit in students' schedules no differently than other classes. Similarly, the Anne Arundel project substituted

English or math classes at the vocational center for comparable classes at students' home schools, changing only the proportion of the school day that they spent at the vocational campus. With these program designs, the recruitment and selection process was unlikely to have much effect on the commitment level of the participant group.

In addition to projects' application and selection procedures, referral sources are likely to affect the mix of behaviors that project staff encounter. In programs that receive a substantial portion of their referrals from the courts or probation officers, there is probably higher risk that applicants will exhibit disruptive or violent behavior. Some projects screened such referrals carefully to minimize chances of disruptive behavior. Project staff in several sites described the consequences of lapses: incidents in which they had to take guns from students, or had to make special rules to limit chances of on-site drug transactions (for example, one student at a time in the rest room).

2. Recruiting Students with Appropriate Skill Levels

In some of the demonstration sites, project leaders and staff stressed the importance of serving students who collectively had a particular mix of academic skills. Concern over participants' initial skill levels arose for two reasons. First, some project designs explicitly called for acceleration of instruction and learning, so that students could make up for having been retained in grade and rejoin their age peers. Staff of some of these projects made it clear that, among retained students, students with the lowest basic skills would have difficulty succeeding in accelerated classes. Second, the mix of students can affect program reputation; if a program is perceived as serving only the least successful, it may be difficult to recruit additional students and to gain parental consent for their participation.

In two sites--Newark and Flint--project staff put particular emphasis on the importance of enrollees' skill levels. In Newark, teacher teams in each program school screened prospective ACCEL students. In addition to looking for evidence of motivation, the teachers favored students whose Stanford Achievement Test scores were no more than two grade levels behind the normal grade for their age, who they therefore

believed could keep up with the brisk pace of instruction. This skill-based screening, combined with district retention policies, affected the mix of ACCEL students. The Newark public schools maintained a strict policy of retaining students in grade who had more than 18 unexcused absences per year--regardless of their academic progress. Some students missed school because of extended family trips to Puerto Rico, for example, or pressures to baby-sit for younger siblings. As a result, some fairly capable students were retained and became candidates for the ACCEL Program.

The Flint project illustrates how difficulty controlling student selection may affect the skill mix of participants and strain program resources. The Accelerated Academics Academy had an objective similar to that of the Newark ACCEL Program--to help students who had been retained in grade (at least twice, in Flint) catch up with their peers. Because parents had to apply for their children's entry to the academy, which many felt was the last chance before they dropped out, there was some evidence of family motivation supporting the sixth-grade children being considered for enrollment. However, staff did not have the degree of control over recruiting and applicant screening that Newark ACCEL staff did. In the academy's first year of operation, elementary school principals referred many students with serious discipline problems or special education needs, and academy staff themselves described the school as serving children with "severe discipline problems." In subsequent years, closer attention was paid to applicants' skills; the academy arranged for testing of applicants and referred some to other services. Nonetheless, the director estimated that 20 to 25 percent of the student body qualified for special education--about twice the district average. In a program designed for accelerated instruction, this mix of students posed a considerable challenge to teachers.

C. EFFECTS OF PROGRAM FEATURES ON STUDENT RECRUITING AND RETENTION

Attracting students to dropout prevention programs--and keeping them involved--depends not only on recruiting efforts and program image, but also on program features. To the extent that enrollment in these programs involves students' decisions, information about program features--derived from conscious

program orientation, outreach, or word-of-mouth--can influence decisions to apply. These same features as well as others that students experience once in the program can affect their likelihood of staying in the program. We identified three aspects of the targeted demonstration projects that could affect success in attracting and retaining students: (1) flexibility in program options and schedule; (2) program location; and (3) the range of nonacademic activities offered.

1. Flexibility in Program Options and Schedule

Students who participated in the demonstration projects were individual human beings--with their own interests, strengths, and weaknesses; different learning styles; varied school performance; diverse family circumstances; and different responsibilities for family and self-support. Discussions with students in evaluation focus groups underscored how often perceived rigidity in regular school programs had conflicted with students' sense of their individual needs. Particularly in the alternative secondary programs, many students complained that the teachers and administrators in the regular schools they had attended before did not treat them as individuals, did not care about their success, and rigidly enforced too many stifling rules. Such complaints, of course, can reflect common adolescent reactions to even the most benign expressions of authority, but the collision between school rules and student tastes cannot be ignored as a factor affecting dropout.

One way that alternative programs can respond to students' individuality and varying needs and constraints is by creating a set of flexible options for what students study and when they attend school. The targeted demonstration projects showed flexibility with regard to three issues: (1) the schedule of school hours; (2) the combinations of courses and subjects students could pursue; and (3) options for combining school and employment.

In two sites, program features allowing students considerable flexibility in the time they spent at the school site helped attract students. In the nine-week Tulsa STAR program, for example, applicants could choose a morning, afternoon, or evening session, thus fitting their return to school between other family

or job demands. In the Sweetwater Learning Centers, students committed to working at the centers for two hours each day and doing 15 hours of homework per week, but they could negotiate their attendance period for any time within their center's hours, which ran from early morning until late evening.

The same two projects found ways to respond to the fact that not all students need or want the same school program. The Sweetwater Learning Centers gave dropouts who were returning to school several options for the composition of their program. Some took all their course work at the center, attending 10 hours per week for scheduled meetings with teachers. Others combined some courses at the center with regular academic classes in the high school adjacent to the center. Often, these academic courses were science classes, because the centers did not have laboratory facilities. Students could also combine center courses with JTPA training courses or with courses at a regional occupational center, an adult education center, or a community college. In Tulsa, the STAR program created flexibility not so much during the nine-week transitional program, but in the subsequent choices it opened up for students. Students who completed the STAR program could return to a comprehensive high school for their entire program or return as a vocational student, splitting their time between the high school and vocational center campuses. Some might take a GED exam upon finishing STAR. In addition, a major attraction of STAR was that students who completed the program and were recommended by staff could enroll at no cost in a Tulsa Technology Center vocational program, without being simultaneously enrolled in high school, under a waiver of the standard fees they would otherwise have to pay as adult participants.

Some programs created flexibility by allowing students to shape their program on the basis of the subjects in which they needed credits for high school graduation. In some cases, students could actually select among different courses. For example, in the Sweetwater Learning Centers, students could take almost any high school course, through supervised independent study or enrollment in a course at a host high school. At JFY in Boston, students in a humanities class who lacked credits in English or social studies could be assigned to different independent projects to earn credits where they needed them. As

noted in Chapter II, however, some small alternative programs that attempted to help students fulfill diverse credit requirements awarded credits in different subjects for participation in a single class. In these cases, the appearance of broad choice for students did not really correspond to actual course enrollment choices.

Opportunities to combine school and employment can determine whether students are willing to return to school or stay there. Several of the alternative secondary programs made explicit provisions for student employment. In Miami, the Corporate Academy offered a work experience component, in which students attended school for five of the normal six class periods of the day and received credit for their afternoon part-time jobs. The Seattle MCHS provided internships that involved four afternoons of part-time employment each week and a career awareness class the fifth afternoon. The Albuquerque Stay-in-School Program provided one- or two-semester paid work experience for some of its participants.

2. Program Location

Program location can be of some importance in attracting and retaining students. Location, combined with transportation facilities and services, obviously determines the time that students must spend getting to and from school, and thus the true "catchment area" from which students can be drawn. Location can also, however, affect the extent to which nearby attractions or distractions promote or undermine program objectives.

Students often face a longer commute to attend an alternative high school than a regular high school, and this burden must be considered in program planning. In Miami, the Corporate Academy served students from a large area across the northern part of Dade County. The school district provided special transportation, running 14 buses just to the academy--some transporting only a few students--and paid for bus passes for students who could use public transportation. In Las Vegas, where the four Horizon High Schools also served students from a large area that was underserved by public transportation, about three-quarters of the students took advantage of special transportation arrangements provided by the district.

In some alternative programs, students must rely more strictly on public transportation, and location may be more of a hurdle. The Cincinnati Clark Academy and the Flowers with Care Program in Queens, for example, were both in urban locations somewhat remote from major commercial or residential areas and participating students' homes. Long public bus rides tested participants' motivation.

However, isolated locations can have advantages too, if transportation difficulties are overcome, according to some program staff. A major objective for staff at Flowers with Care was to keep students out of the kind of trouble they could easily get into on New York City streets. Once at the program's facility, students were removed from urban temptations and amusements, and program staff reinforced this isolation by serving lunch, prohibiting students from leaving the building during the day, and providing a required recreation period after classes ended. Staff at the Clark Academy in Cincinnati viewed their remote site as an advantage, because it prevented students from finding reasons to skip classes and thus reinforced the school's serious atmosphere. Both alternative schools in Boston were centrally located downtown and easily accessible by public transportation, but staff at both schools viewed their convenient location as something of a disadvantage. The student body was small, and there were many accessible commercial and other distractions. Rather than congregating for lunch, students dispersed. Some staff felt this aggravated the problem that small programs face in creating a sense of social cohesion and a stimulating social environment.

3. Range of Academic and Extracurricular Activity

Students' attachment to school depends not only on the academic curriculum and the stimulation and chances for success it offers, but also on the personal and social connections that students make in school and through school-related activities. For many students who participated in demonstration projects with small school settings--either at separate sites or within larger schools--escape from a large, impersonal school was a strong reason for their interest in the project and a feature that they appreciated after

enrollment. However, focus groups also showed that, for some students, the merits of a small, intimate program can be somewhat offset by the difficulties of separation from a familiar social environment.

Students recounted the dangers, pressures, and boredom they felt in the schools they left for the freestanding alternative programs, as well as what they missed. Students complained of gang activity within their former schools, of student cliques wary of each other, and of specific acts of violence--one student described a shooting in his school cafeteria. In describing their former teachers, they often focused on the lack of caring and effort, the low demands placed on them, and teachers' apparent apathy about being at school. However, in several of the alternative programs, some students made it clear that they also missed the chance to "hang out" with their friends and to be part of the activities of a larger school. This comment underscores a major challenge facing small dropout prevention or recovery programs: to maximize students' engagement and persistence in the program, they must create a warm, personal environment in which teachers work hard at teaching, but they must also promote a strong sense of social belonging and activities that support it.

Some of the demonstration projects provide interesting examples of such efforts to build social connections. In Seattle, MCHS began its school year with a two-day orientation for students and staff at a remote camp site. The Flint Accelerated Academics Academy ran a leadership training camp for its students, involving team building and outdoor winter sports. Although total enrollment at the Miami Corporate Academy was only about 150, it formed a school newspaper and a basketball team that sought recognition from the state's high school athletic association. Although such efforts are unlikely to displace students' interests in local neighborhood socializing, they can create the kinds of interactions outside the classroom that help students feel they belong to a school with an identity they like.

V. MAKING SOMETHING HAPPEN IN THE CLASSROOM

From the perspective of both students and educators, the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) initiatives reflected dual purposes--to get students through school's formal requirements so they could receive a diploma, and to imbue them with the skills and knowledge they would need to sustain themselves and continue to develop after they left school. These dual purposes reflect a similar balancing of objectives that goes on throughout American education. Students are encouraged to stay in school through high school graduation, or return to high school or an equivalency program if they have already dropped out, because credentials are a potentially important asset in their efforts to find jobs and gain access to higher education. Simply going to school, however, does not mean being educated; students and teachers often view courses required for graduation as obstacles to be passed rather than opportunities to learn. Tension between these two objectives can arise; overemphasis on getting students through formal requirements can lead to lower expectations for real learning, and high standards for learning are sometimes viewed as jeopardizing students' chances to receive a diploma. The SDDAP projects were funded on the premise that schools can do both--find ways to help and challenge students to learn, and at the same time get them to stay in or return to school. In this chapter, we examine how SDDAP projects balanced these two purposes and look at the factors that affected their success in creating engaging, challenging learning opportunities.

Past research has suggested that, for students to learn better, they need more challenging and meaningful curriculum and instruction than is often found in classrooms. On the one hand, there is evidence that even the most at-risk students are best served by an academically challenging curriculum, and that mastery of the basics should not be an absolute prerequisite for exposure to more meaningful classroom experiences that can develop higher-order thinking, build problem-solving skills, and help students apply skills to real-life situations (see, for example, Knapp and Shields 1991). The evidence also

strongly supports the view that repeated doses of basic skills instruction, in isolation from students' lives, are unproductive. A consensus has emerged that students are more likely to stay in school and succeed if they perceive important connections between school and later life. Wehlage (1989), for example, concluded that meaningful curricula and activities engaging students in the academic and extracurricular life of school can exert a strong holding power, even for students who might be considered most at risk of dropping out.

As a result of this research and emerging consensus, the U.S. Department of Education adopted as one element of the SDDAP design the premise that all students can learn advanced skills if content and instruction are sufficiently engaging and motivating. The department made curriculum and instructional changes a key component of its demonstration guidelines. The SDDAP guidelines called on restructuring projects to implement "interesting and challenging curricula that move students along as fast as their capabilities allow" and "instruction in high order skills." They also directed targeted projects to develop "accelerated learning strategies for improving academic performance."

One objective of the SDDAP evaluation was to identify how the demonstration projects tried to make classrooms challenging and interesting for students and to evaluate the extent of their success. Clear consensus on the attributes of effective classrooms or the ingredients of challenging and interesting curriculum may be difficult to achieve, but for purposes of this evaluation, we settled on several key features that we looked for when we visited SDDAP project classrooms. As indicators of success in creating the challenging and interesting learning environment envisioned, we observed the extent to which students:

- Were ***reading for a clear, personal purpose*** in classrooms and assignments, rather than simply to identify the correct response to place on a worksheet or to earn a check mark for work completed
- Had frequent opportunities to ***write for communication with an audience***--through letters, journals, or reports on topics of interest to them

- Were expected to ***learn higher-order skills***, rather than being drilled ceaselessly in basic skills--for example, being exposed to algebra, geometry, and statistics, even if they had not memorized multiplication tables perfectly

- Had chances to ***share their own ideas about issues relevant to them*** and their communities, and to hear and react to the ideas of others

- Had ***opportunities to learn actively*** by doing as well as by listening, and to learn not only theory but its application

- Had teachers who guided them as they ***learned to reason and solve problems***

The challenge for the SDDAP projects was making this kind of classroom, which is familiar to many honors students, a common experience for students who are most at risk of failure.

SDDAP projects placed varying emphasis on creating such classroom conditions. Changes in classroom practices during the grant period were most likely to occur in targeted projects, which worked with small groups of students and teachers. However, emphasis on changing classroom practices varied. Some targeted projects made it their primary objective to give students a stimulating, relevant, and challenging curriculum and expected them to become very involved in their own education. Others focused not on creating the ideally challenging and interesting classroom, but on finding ways to help students through a standard curriculum. Some projects that set out to create a new kind of classroom experience faced serious constraints. The ways in which different priorities were reflected in classroom practices are described in Sections A through D, focusing mostly on the targeted projects.

Restructuring projects, particularly the large urban ones, confronted the enormous task of changing not a few classrooms for a select group of students, but whole schools. Their strategies focused on creating preconditions for more challenging and engaging classrooms, through reorganization of student and teacher groupings, efforts to strengthen participatory management at the school level, and a wide variety of training to familiarize teachers with concepts about both classroom teaching and their role in school leadership. These efforts are described in Section E.

There is thus no basis for applying to all SDDAP projects a simple standard of project success based solely on whether they created classroom conditions like those set forth in the SDDAP guidelines. However, it is still informative to examine the SDDAP projects in relation to these ideal classroom features. The projects illustrated a wide variety of approaches to helping students, and they yielded quite different results in the classrooms we observed. In the following sections of this chapter, we explain five main points, derived from our observations, about strategies for improving classroom challenges for students:

1. Students can be challenged through acceleration and credit accrual strategies, even without major curriculum reform, if programs establish a serious atmosphere of study.

2. Interdisciplinary and thematic teaching can be an effective vehicle for creating challenging and engaging new curricula, but it requires special resources and sustained commitment from staff and administration.

3. Even at-risk students relish and respond to classrooms in which learning is taken seriously, but in some cases, the SDDAP interventions did not appear to reflect a strong belief that students would react that way.

4. Teachers can challenge and engage at-risk students, in both traditional and innovative ways, but to do so they must have strong classroom skills, prepare thoroughly, and teach with commitment.

5. Reorganization of schools and schedules can help create restructured conditions that might facilitate challenging and engaging teaching, but more is needed for teachers to exercise the creativity, energy, and skills required to change the culture of the classroom and the school.

A. ACCELERATION AND CREDIT ACCRUAL STRATEGIES

Although the reasons students fall behind in school and drop out are complex, slow-paced instruction, minimal expectations, and inflexible school procedures often play a role. Even if standard curricula are not overhauled, correcting these deficiencies can get some students back on track. Rather than emphasizing curriculum development or innovative instructional approaches, some of the SDDAP projects adopted strategies that challenged students to accelerate their progress through relatively standard classes, maintaining an intensive pace of instruction and establishing demanding expectations for students'

attendance, attention, and effort. Other projects sought to accelerate students' progress toward graduation by creating more flexible ways for them to attend school, study, and demonstrate academic progress.

Being bored, ignored, and confined by school rules is a common student complaint. Students in evaluation focus groups consistently identified boredom as a factor in their past lack of success in school or their decision to drop out. Some students praised their experiences in the SDDAP projects by contrasting their project teachers with others they had encountered earlier, who had treated them "like a number." Some complained that such teachers discouraged or ignored questions and gave them little encouragement, attention, or praise. Several students attending the Corporate Academy in Miami asserted that their past teachers and counselors, rather than setting high expectations for their success, reacted to their problems in school by encouraging them to leave:

> It got to a point that my math teacher told me, "Hey, you know what? If I were you, I'd drop out of school, because no matter what you do, you're not gonna pass." Like that year, I felt like I wasn't nobody anymore.
>
> I had family problems, huge family problems, and then I went to the counselor, because I was flunking my geometry class. And what does she do over there? Did I get advice or something? No. She said, "Why don't you just drop out. I'll give you the papers right now." And I just looked at the lady, and I said, "I don't want to drop out." It really bothered me.

For many students, their perceptions of an uncaring staff are part of their disengagement from school. Students may exhibit growing attendance problems, have increasing difficulties with assignments, fall behind in credits or be retained in grade, and eventually drop out.

For students who had fallen behind their age group, some SDDAP projects adopted strategies designed primarily to help them catch up to their age peers. Two distinct approaches were observed: (1) accelerated instruction; and (2) flexible credit accrual procedures. Accelerated instruction was favored in middle school programs and credit accrual approaches in high schools, most likely because the approaches fit the usual organization of middle school and high school studies, respectively. Because middle school students generally follow a fairly uniform class schedule, acceleration programs can readily

group students who have fallen behind into an intensive version of the schedule their classmates have been using. In high school, students' programs are more individualized, so flexibility to accommodate the variety of patterns in students' progress and failure is more practical and important.

1. Accelerated Instruction

The accelerated instruction approach was adopted in the Newark ACCEL Program, the Accelerated Academics Academy (AAA) in Flint, and the Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy outside Atlanta.[1] In all three cases, middle school students who had been retained in grade were to accomplish two years of progress in one (or three in two) and be able to enter high school with their age peers. Although all three programs emphasized helping students catch up, they represented three different examples of the extent to which acceleration and an emphasis on moving students along a formal path can be combined with a meaningful challenge to learn.[2]

The primary difference among these three accelerated instruction programs was the manner in which they combined the objective of acceleration with attention to curriculum and instruction. In Newark, program staff concentrated on intensive teaching of a mostly standard curriculum, as well as clearly enunciated standards for attendance and student commitment to assignments. Working only with carefully selected students judged able to keep up with a brisk classroom pace, teachers kept students focused on their work. In contrast, AAA staff in Flint developed their own curricula, including interdisciplinary thematic units, relied little on district textbooks, and gave students intense individual attention and

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[1]We use the term "acceleration" to describe the program objective of helping students regain lost ground and rejoin their age peers; the term does not refer to the kind of school change process envisioned by Dr. Henry Levin and his colleagues under the name "accelerated schools."

[2]Several restructuring projects also included small targeted interventions designed to help students catch up with their age peers--similar to the Newark and Flint projects. In Grand Rapids, an acceleration program was created for about 25 eighth graders who had failed two or more subjects the previous year. In McCormick County, the middle school implemented a "double promotion" program for students who were two or more years behind, allowing them to earn some high school credits while making up failed middle school courses.

instruction to maintain their progress. For a variety of reasons, the formal goal of accelerated learning in the Griffin-Spalding Academy was only marginally reflected in either new curriculum or intensive teaching. The major difference between the academy and the middle schools students appeared to be the academy's more personal atmosphere and its staff's supportive attitude.

Students' reactions to the acceleration model, and staff interpretations of it, suggested that some efforts at acceleration may pose real challenges to students, while others may simply move them along. Classroom observation in Newark revealed an orderly, attentive group of students, attuned to their assigned tasks and aware of both the opportunity and challenge that ACCEL presented them. Teachers assigned homework and expected it to be completed as well as signed by a parent. The challenge and support created in ACCEL was described by various students:

> The teachers stay on you. . . . They'll keep on staying on you until you get your goal.
>
> In regular class we didn't work on science and social studies a lot; in ACCEL, we work on it a lot.
>
> The extended day helps you because you get to spend more time with your teacher.
>
> When we do tests, we got to show them how we got the answer.

Teachers were able to maintain a consistent emphasis on learning in the classroom because only motivated students were selected, high attendance and behavior standards were followed, and classes were small.

The Flint AAA had a similar strong focus on learning. Students said that they were challenged by their assignments. Their negative comments focused on disruptive students who were not intent on learning and had been admitted in the first program year, when some regular school principals sent their most problematic students to AAA. The positive comments suggested some appreciation of the program's academic goals. About one teacher, a student said, "If you really want to learn, she'll talk to you, and you can talk back. That's how to learn." Other students, about a second teacher, said:

> She's perfect. . . . She'll make you put your periods on your paper and your question marks and all this.
>
> To her you're never dumb; if you don't know something, you just lack the skills.
>
> She's always ready to help you. . . . When I first came to school, I didn't like her, 'til I realized that the only thing she was trying to do was help me.

About the academy, students commented, "They teach you school work as well as responsibility. . . . They let you do stuff that normal people probably wouldn't trust you to do."

However, if this goal of catching up is not accompanied by intensive attention to curriculum, excellent teaching, high expectations, and careful student selection, the practical focus in acceleration programs risks being reduced to just getting students through. Although its program design stressed rapid academic progress, the Griffin-Spalding Academy had difficulty establishing a consistent atmosphere focused on challenging students with either conventional or innovative curricula. According to students, the major difference between their academy teachers and their previous teachers was that the academy teachers were more accepting, lenient in their application of rules, and friendly. One or two teachers conducted clearly planned and stimulating classes, but others gave mundane assignments and barely managed to keep order. Some teachers placed the greatest emphasis on playing an accepting, supportive role with students, arguing that they had to make students feel good about themselves before they challenged them academically.

These three examples suggest that the acceleration model can present students with appropriate challenges in the classroom, but only under certain conditions. Teachers must be selected who believe that students will respond to a challenge and who have the teaching skills needed to present challenging material coherently. Classes must be small enough so that students can get the intensive attention they need to keep up with the challenge of fast-paced instruction. Curriculum must be clearly formulated and planned so teachers know where they are going. Finally, the selection of students and the rules for continued participation must be clearly stated and adhered to, to prevent the seriousness of program purpose from being undermined by disruptive behavior, lack of progress, or poor attention.

2. Flexible Credit Accrual Procedures

High school students often drop out when they realize how far behind they have fallen in earning the credits required for graduation. They may be lagging in their progress toward the overall number of credits required, or they may be making adequate overall progress but have failed particular courses required for graduation, such as math or English. Some of the SDDAP interventions were designed specifically to help students who were behind earn the credits they needed, by altering the standard school requirements for attendance or the basis for awarding credit. These interventions included, in various combinations, six ingredients:

1. ***Contracts for Independent Study.*** Students at the Sweetwater Learning Centers attended school for 10 hours a week to meet with their teachers and do computer-assisted independent study, agreeing to complete 15 hours of homework per week. Credit was earned as students passed tests for each course.

2. ***Reduced or Alternative Attendance Hours.*** In addition to the Sweetwater Learning Centers, other programs offered less demanding or more convenient schedules, perhaps making it possible for students to stay in or return to school because they could also hold a job or because they could endure a short school day better than the standard-length day. Horizon High Schools in Las Vegas operated from 7 A.M. to 12:30 P.M., and Boston's Jobs for Youth (JFY) High School and University School required only three or four hours of attendance daily.

3. ***Flexible Program Combinations.*** Sweetwater Learning Centers and Horizon High Schools gave students options to combine academic classes with vocational classes, as well as to take some classes given by their alternative program and some at other district schools.

4. ***Competency-Based Credit.*** Rather than earning credits by sitting through standard semester-length courses and passing final exams, students in some projects--such as JFY High in Boston--earned credit by completing independent projects. Others, including students at the Sweetwater Learning Centers and the Boston project, took tests after making adequate independent progress on their own schedule through a standard curriculum.

5. ***Alternative Allocation of Credits.*** Some projects offered classes with a somewhat interdisciplinary curriculum and allowed students the option of applying credit from these classes to the subjects in which they were deficient in credits. At the Youth Experiencing Success (YES) program in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, for example, students could apply credit from an applied communications class to graduation requirements in either speech or composition. Similarly, Boston's JFY High offered a humanities course that could provide the basis for credit in alternative subjects required for graduation.

6. ***Reduced Elapsed Time for Accruing Credits.*** By lengthening class periods and reducing the number of classes students take at a time, the Horizon High Schools "packaged" credits into six-week periods. Students could earn credit for successfully completing a 6-week course, rather than having to complete an 18-week semester.

These programs emphasized credit accrual, rather than creating a particularly stimulating, challenging, or innovative curriculum. Under some circumstances, students were more challenged and engaged than they had ever been by their regular school programs. At a minimum, these programs placed much greater responsibility on students for their own progress, which in itself was a challenge of sorts. More importantly, a particularly effective teacher, linked to a particularly motivated student, could tailor challenges to the student. One student at JFY High in Boston, for example, complained that resources in his former high school were limited, class work was uninteresting, and, although he was bored, he was discouraged from taking college prep math. In contrast, at JFY High, he found the work interesting and challenging.

B. INTERDISCIPLINARY AND THEMATIC CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

A popular way to make curriculum more challenging and interesting for students--in the SDDAP projects and more widely in American education--is to develop thematic, interdisciplinary units of instruction. A single teacher, or several teachers with backgrounds in different disciplines, organize curriculum materials, reading assignments, student activity, and discussion around topics that students will perceive as relevant to their own lives and the world around them. These endeavors aim to organize instruction around questions that students will be motivated to explore, rather than around seemingly abstract skill exercises or material that is unconnected to life or to the other classes students take.

Several SDDAP projects tried to make thematic, interdisciplinary instruction a core feature of their intervention. At Middle College High School (MCHS) in Seattle, instruction was organized around two interdisciplinary curriculum strands--math/science and humanities--each taught by a pair of teachers who developed a theme for each quarter's instruction. For example, a quarter of math/science was devoted to

genetics, combining biology and statistics, and a quarter of humanities was devoted to rights and responsibilities, combining literature and history. At Clark Academy in Cincinnati, despite requirements to use standard district curricula, teachers developed month-long instructional themes, such as the environment of the Ohio River, change and decision making, and cultural heritage. AAA staff in Flint--teachers of math, science, social studies, and art--put considerable effort into developing thematic units, such as one on the family. In this unit, students designed an apartment and its interior, developed a budget for the family that might occupy it, and studied nutrition to plan family meals.

In some cases, project teachers' efforts to develop instructional themes or interdisciplinary coordination were a bit less ambitious, in that they did not truly integrate multiple disciplines in the classroom or join the efforts of teachers from different disciplines. At JFY in Boston, for example, individual teachers organized readings in humanities and American studies around the theme of human relationships, with readings from sources such as Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and Sandra Cisneros's *House on Mango Street.* In Newark's ACCEL Program, teachers of several subjects tried to keep abreast of the content of each other's classes. They still taught the standard district curriculum, and rather than developing entirely new thematic units, they tried to give students reminders of links to their other classes, and in some cases chances to apply skills in one class that they had learned in another.

Full-blown efforts at thematic, interdisciplinary instruction were unusual among the SDDAP projects because these efforts depended on a rare combination of circumstances and resources. First, classroom teachers must have the planning time, energy, and creativity to create their own curriculum framework and materials. When classes are organized around themes and disciplinary boundaries are abandoned, traditional textbooks and related materials become less useful, and teachers must search for richer, more eclectic readings and other sources of information. Pairs or larger groups of teachers who share a common conception of how disciplines can be united in the classroom must be attracted and retained. Even more broadly, it is important for general unanimity to prevail in the school about the value of organizing

instruction around themes rather than disciplines. Teachers must somehow--through some combination of a reduced teaching schedule and greater use of their own personal time--be able to spend substantial amounts of time planning. Traditional class periods of about 50 minutes probably have to be expanded to allow teachers to work together with students and to accommodate the kind of discussion that is kindled when themes really engage students. For example, we observed an MCHS classroom discussion of the civil rights movement that became so animated and emotional that some students lingered after the double-length class period to continue the discussion.

Building classroom challenges on a thematic, interdisciplinary approach requires, most of all, a sustained commitment of relevant resources. Successful thematic instruction depends on a considerable initial investment in building teams of teachers and their investment in curriculum. Disruption of teams erodes the value of this investment. The fragility of efforts to build interdisciplinary team teaching on a schoolwide scale is illustrated by the experience of the restructuring project in Santa Ana. Efforts to build teaching teams in a middle school were seriously delayed after the district was forced to switch to a year-round school calendar, because of overcrowding. This schedule required that teachers, on the basis of seniority, be given choices of the calendar cycles in which they would teach. Only one four-member team was preserved in the process, and only because its original members, despite the options seniority gave them, chose the least popular calendar cycle to ensure that they would be able to remain a team.

C. STUDENT AND TEACHER ACCEPTANCE OF CHALLENGING CURRICULUM

Creating challenging and engaging classroom environments implies taking a risk. For students who have experienced considerable failure too often and the excitement of discovery and mastery too seldom, the expectation that they should work hard, expose and address their weaknesses, and proceed from one challenge to another can be threatening. Most teachers, despite their best efforts, have probably known students who shrink from such a challenge. Observation of the SDDAP projects, however, provided ample evidence that many at-risk students relish and respond positively to the increased demands of well-prepared

challenges from competent, supportive teachers. Moreover, participating in challenging classes, even if organized specifically for at-risk students, can help students overcome the stigma of being assigned to clearly remedial classes characterized by repetitious drilling of low-level skills. Ironically, the evaluation found as much evidence of teachers' reluctance to challenge students as of students' unwillingness to accept difficult classroom work.

The reactions of students to the wide range of classroom experiences offered at SDDAP projects support this finding:

- A student at MCHS, in explaining how it differed from his former high school, said, "There they just wanted you to memorize things. Here they want you to think."
- At Lake View High School in Chicago, students in the freshman Project Success classes distinguished their program from the regular freshman curriculum with satisfaction, saying "It's like an honors class. . . . The classes are harder and longer. . . . We get three extra periods of algebra a week and it's more difficult than regular algebra. . . . We have the same math book that's out there in the suburbs, so we get to learn, it helps us more."
- At the Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy, students in a focus group who were asked to name their favorite teacher almost unanimously identified an English instructor who taught them Shakespearean plays and expected their active involvement in class. They clearly favored this teacher over others who demanded little, because "we learn something."
- At the Corporate Academy in Miami, students respected the teachers who pushed them hardest, singling out their math teacher in particular and noting that he was the toughest in the school.

Students' complaints about other school programs or about the SDDAP project in which they participated also reflect a common preference for challenges and purpose in the classroom. A student at Chicago's Wells Academy who had not participated in its School-Within-a-School complained that, in many classes, "you don't have to do any work." At the Corporate Academy in Miami, students generally praised the "seriousness" of their academic program and focused their complaints on aspects that lacked substance. Students expressed particular disfavor for one English teacher: "All she does is talk. . . . I ain't heard her say nothing about a verb or a noun yet, and I'm in English 2. What happens if I decide to go to

college?" Dissatisfaction with lack of academic substance was voiced elsewhere as well. The views of students in the general studies classes at one school in Rockford, for example, were typified by one student, who remarked, "It's an easy class, but all you do is just go in there and sit around and talk." Students said that they would prefer getting systematic help with their homework or going back to their regular class, where they learned more.

To be sure, student preferences for rigorous demands were less than unanimous, and some program experiences that students cited as favorable may not have presented much true challenge. Some students in the Albuquerque Stay-in-School (SIS) program, for example, felt that their homework was too hard or "unfair." They also thought that they should not be given the same quantity or kind of homework given to students in non-SIS classes and complained that their teachers did not recognize that they were "special." Some students, particularly in middle school programs, cited "giving too much homework" as a teacher characteristic that did not appeal to them. Even at Miami's Corporate Academy, where students appeared to favor challenging classes, they acknowledged that they had less homework than in the schools they had attended before.

On balance, however, SDDAP projects produced enough evidence of students' positive responses to a challenging, serious academic environment to raise the question of why they were not consistently faced with this type of environment in all SDDAP projects. In some sites, challenging classes were missing because of uncertain commitments on the part of individual teachers or program designs to emphasize serious academic engagement. The lack of commitment to serious academics sometimes stemmed from teachers' view that raising students' self-esteem with praise and acceptance was a higher priority than challenging them with meaningful academic expectations. For example, at one middle school academy, a teacher who represented the views of several members of the small staff said, "The personal touch is more important than academics. . . . Until students accept us and know we care about them and love them, until then, students will not be receptive." A single teacher in this group dissented: "No, you

can do both, and if you don't you have failed the students miserably." At that site, only this latter teacher had perceived what students at both the middle and high school levels in many sites made clear in focus groups--that students will respond to greater academic challenges when they are posed by teachers who care for them. This view was most clearly expressed by high school students in Long Beach, who said that when teachers showed that they cared, students paid close attention and worked extra hard. Under such conditions, they said, "You want to come to class and do algebra. . . . They believe you can do the work and you don't want to let them down." Some teachers at a few SDDAP sites had difficulty grasping the necessary link between empathy and the chances of getting students to take up a challenge.

In some cases, SDDAP projects may have done little to make students' classroom experiences more challenging, simply because project plans were not clear enough to promote such experiences or did not aspire to introduce challenging material or instruction. Plans for general studies classes in Rockford, for example, seemed to envision a mix of help with homework, discussion sessions to improve self-esteem and decision-making skills, career awareness activities, and conflict resolution training, yet individual schools were left free to assign teachers to these classes by any method they chose, and teachers were largely left alone to plan their own classroom activities for this wide range of purposes. In three of the four schools observed, the general studies classes had little academic content. Similarly, classes on Work, Achievement, and Values in Education (WAVE) in San Antonio focused on work readiness and personal values. Although the formal curriculum suggested that students would do substantial writing, we observed little evidence that students were successfully engaged in such activity. In the blunt expressions often characteristic of adolescents, students at one of the two WAVE high school sites described their classes as "boring and stupid," "useless," and "too easy," although at another school they found them somewhat useful.

D. THE IMPORTANCE OF SKILLED AND COMMITTED TEACHING

Making classes challenging and engaging for students requires teachers with skills and personal qualities that were observed in the SDDAP projects but were not widespread. Although the classes observed by the evaluation team represented only a small fraction of the total days taught by the teachers, observation of small projects usually included most staff. In large projects, evaluation staff generally had the opportunity to choose which classes to observe and in some cases used tips from students or project staff to choose teachers reputed to be particularly effective. The evaluation team observed some examples of inspired, innovative, and creative teaching that obviously engaged students intellectually. More commonly, we found teachers using quite traditional question-and-response methods. In some instances these methods were applied in such an energetic and engaging way that students clearly realized and appreciated that they were benefiting from committed teaching. However, the evaluation team also observed many classes in which virtually no instruction occurred.

Examples of intensive, systematic, engaging, and challenging teaching were found in varied SDDAP project circumstances. A few examples illustrate the potential for sparking the efforts and interest of at-risk students:

- In an alternative high school program, a teacher led a lively discussion of the civil rights movement. Students had read in advance relevant portions of Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States*. The teacher initiated a general discussion of racism. A student then read aloud from the assigned reading material a passage about Martin Luther King's role in promoting nonviolent civil rights protest, which in turn led to animated discussion of the roles of violent and nonviolent tactics in winning civil rights. In later portions of the class, the teacher lectured briefly about various aspects of the civil rights movement--such as desegregation of public accommodations, bus boycotts, black capitalism, the role of the Black Panthers, and leadership in African American communities. Lively discussion continued even after the end of class.

- In a ninth-grade reading class in another alternative high school, the teacher led a discussion of an allegorical Chaucer tale that students had read for homework. Students had been asked to develop a "character map" naming the symbolic identity of various figures. The teacher confirmed several students' identification of death. A student read aloud a portion of the story about greed, which led to discussion of greed and violence related to students' own experiences. The latter part of the class was devoted to reviewing students' essays on

vandalism, and the discussion connected vandalism to the costs of graffiti. Students analyzed their own work on the basis of the guidelines provided by the teacher, who then led a discussion on how to structure an essay, including approaches to transitions between paragraphs.

- In an after-school tutoring program, a college aide math major used manipulatives to help two students who were having difficulty in geometry, until they finally appeared to grasp the concept she was teaching. Later, in a focus group, one student testified to the powerful effect of the aide's personal commitment and persistent teaching effort: "My geometry teacher was not explaining it. . . . he would always say the same thing. The aide broke it down and made it easier. . . . she made it into regular English." What made students responsive to persistent teaching, they said, was that the aides "treat you like a friend. . . . they just help you, they pay attention to us and get involved in how we're feeling."

- In a sixth-grade science class, students worked in pairs on a solar system project, constructing models of the sun and planets, recording information on notecards, and writing reports on computers in the classroom. There was no formal lecturing; the teacher circulated from pair to pair, reminding students of the steps they should follow, stressing the importance of organizing their work, and helping with problems.

Observation of classes in which teaching was competent but more traditional suggests that students respond to teaching that is planned, coherent, and consistent with a sensible curriculum design, whatever the teaching technique. Both popular new techniques, such as cooperative learning, interdisciplinary structure, and game formats, and more traditional methods, such as teacher presentation, homogeneous grouping, and graded homework, can work. Either can be engaging and effective, or confusing and disjointed. The potential effectiveness of traditional teaching methods was clearly illustrated in an 11th-grade English class at Spruce High School in Dallas. The evaluation team observed a decidedly old-fashioned class on what could be a very uninteresting topic--proper use of gerunds--based entirely on a grammar textbook. The teacher listened to students' responses, determined quickly what they misunderstood, and retaught on the spot. Students clearly found the exercise challenging but stayed engaged, helped each other, and made obvious progress. In a later focus group, students praised this teacher as one who made them think and work hard while still keeping things lively.

These examples of persistent, dedicated teaching, however, were countered by many classrooms in which very little instruction of any kind took place and students were almost totally disengaged. In such

classrooms, teachers typically lacked classroom management skills. Student inattention and unruly, disruptive behavior went on throughout some classes. In some cases, teachers tolerated this behavior as long as even a few students stayed attentive; in other cases, they made loud threats of disciplinary action. In many classrooms, administrative business (recording attendance, and distributing and collecting materials) occupied a disproportionate amount of class time. An observer described one such class as follows:

> During the hour and 15 minutes, nothing productive went on. Students had science books and were told to turn to the page they had ended with the day before and to read on their own. About midway through the class, three girls walked in munching on chips and sat down and started talking to other students in the class. The teacher made an attempt to direct them toward the reading assignment, and although they opened their books, they did not read; rather, they continued chatting with the other students.

The absence of observable instruction often seemed due in part to teachers' limited mastery of instructional strategies. For example, in one math class, the teacher used math manipulatives as part of her presentation but did not allow the students' to touch the manipulatives. In another, the teacher attempted to engage students in role playing but was unable to explain to students what they were to do; the activity rapidly degenerated into chaos. Many classes--like the one described earlier--consisted of assigning students pages to read from the text, followed by students' completion of worksheets or preparation of answers to questions in the text. At its worst, this approach left students to work silently at their desks--to the extent that order was maintained--while the teacher sat uninvolved at the front of the room. Given the often boring and repetitious nature of much instruction, it is not surprising that students in focus groups tended to highlight their appreciation of teachers who even occasionally varied the instructional format. One high school student suggested that his teachers should take a course to help them "be more inspiring." This might help teachers, he said, because "they get depressed."

Too often, lack of instruction also seemed due to lack of preparation. In the examples of inspiring classes cited earlier, teachers were clearly following a plan that resulted from extensive planning and

organizing of resources, sometimes in concert with other teachers. In the less encouraging examples, a thorough plan, coupled with skills even in traditional instruction methods, would have helped the teacher accomplish something productive.

E. CREATING CONDITIONS FOR CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE

Short-term progress in delivering challenging, engaging curriculum and instruction occurred in the SDDAP mostly in small, alternative programs, both at the middle and high school levels. Observation of the SDDAP in-depth evaluation sites suggests that this progress resulted from several advantages shared by programs such as Seattle's MCHS, the Flint AAA, and the Clark Academy in Cincinnati. These programs were more likely than regular public schools to create a unanimity of purpose and approach among their teaching staff, counselors, and administrators. In part, this common vision resulted because the programs used an initial formulation of their vision to attract interested teachers and, in some cases, had enough control over staff selection to choose these teachers. Once connected to a program whose staff have a common purpose, teachers may be more likely to remain in place. The relatively small scale of these programs made more personal relations possible between staff and students; it also allowed rules for conduct and academic standards to be enforced in a personal, more sensitive way. This type of environment is most likely to promote some of the characteristics, identified earlier, of challenging, engaging classrooms--including thematic, interdisciplinary curriculum, teachers who are eager to challenge students, and teachers who have the time, energy, and background to plan and implement ambitious teaching goals.

The alternative programs observed in the SDDAP evaluation, however, served a small fraction of the at-risk students in their districts. Many school districts, given their scale and organization, have schools that are full of students who feel the anonymity and alienation that alternative programs try to mitigate. Constrained by the organization of existing physical plant, union restrictions on hiring and assignment, bureaucratic rigidities, and politically charged governance bodies, large school districts--including some

of the SDDAP restructuring projects--rarely seek to address these problems by creating a chain of small, autonomous alternative schools. Instead, the SDDAP restructuring districts concentrated on creating conditions that could in the longer term foster the kind of school climate, staff commitment and vision, and relationships with students found in the alternative programs. They have generally followed two strategies: (1) reorganizing aspects of the existing school environment; and (2) providing staff development activities to enhance teachers' ability and willingness to take advantage of this environment and work together to develop teaching strategies and skills.

1. Reorganizing School and the Learning Environment

To address the needs of their large at-risk populations, the SDDAP restructuring projects undertook three kinds of changes to create positive conditions for challenging and engaging teaching. In varying degrees, the restructuring projects reorganized the grouping of students within schools, modified class schedules, and changed the broad structure of course requirements for students.

The most common reform in the urban restructuring projects was to create small groupings of students and teachers within a school--known variously as "families," "houses," "teams," or "pods."[3] These steps created smaller environments within large schools, to foster stable, more intimate instructional settings with which both students and teachers identified and in which they might relate to each other in a more personal way. A further objective of some such groupings was "detracking"--breaking down barriers among students based on achievement, ability levels, and race/ethnicity--so that diverse students could be exposed to similarly challenging curricula. Family groupings--an innovation of the middle school reform movement that has spread to high schools and elementary schools--typically bring together four or five teachers and

[3]The rural restructuring projects did not emphasize this kind of organizational change because the schools were already small.

150 to 200 students for all of their academic instruction; sometimes a counselor is assigned to the group.[4]

Examples in the SDDAP restructuring projects include:

- Phoenix Preparatory Academy, which divided its 1,400 seventh and eighth graders into eight families of about 175 students, each with its own teachers and the equivalent of about two-thirds of a full-time counselor
- Comstock Middle School in Dallas, with six pods, each including five teachers and about 135 students
- Carr Intermediate School in Santa Ana, which created teams of four teachers to work with seventh and eighth graders
- Iroquois Middle School in Grand Rapids, which established one core teaching team for seventh graders in 1993-1994 and had slated all students and teachers to be organized in teams for 1994-1995
- Gillespie Middle School in Philadelphia, which created three interdisciplinary and cross-grade houses, each with a teacher-director and a core teaching team with common planning time

Efforts to create groupings within schools have expanded beyond middle schools, in the process focusing on the critical ninth-grade transition to high school. Three of the restructuring projects included such a focus:

- A ninth-grade enclave at Century High School in Santa Ana, which grouped students together for five periods a day with a team of teachers who had developed interdisciplinary curriculum units
- A ninth-grade program at Ottawa Hills High School in Grand Rapids that, in 1992-1993, involved English, science, and social studies teachers and about half of the freshman class
- Encouragement of some ninth-grade teachers at Spruce High School in Dallas to organize into pods and develop their own approach to working together

Freshmen at Ottawa Hills High School explained how creating ninth-grade family groupings can ease students' entry to high school. In focus groups, they reported that their program made it easier to make

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[4]See, for example, Carnegie Council (1989).

friends at the beginning, because they kept seeing the same people in different classes, and it made class discussions and group work more fruitful because everyone in the class knew each other. Moreover, they said that their teachers tried to relate what they taught to what they knew the entire group was covering in another class.

Some SDDAP projects also sought to foster improved curriculum and instruction by reorganizing the daily school schedule. For example, Central High School in Phoenix created a ninth-grade enclave in which students took English/humanities and math/science in 90-minute blocks each day. Each block was taught by a single teacher, to reduce the number of students each teacher dealt with and to enhance teachers' chances of getting to know and understand their students. In the ninth-grade enclave at Century High School in Santa Ana, students spent one full day per week with one teacher, who tried to help them synthesize what they were learning in their classes and their life experiences outside school.

Reorganization efforts also focused on changes in the nature or scope of students' course requirements. For example, in the Phoenix ninth-grade enclave, the number of academic periods for freshmen increased from six to seven, so that students who passed all classes were more than a third of the way toward meeting graduation credit requirements. In addition, all freshmen took a "language/culture wheel," in which they rotated through introductory units on foreign languages and culture, to broaden their cultural perspectives and encourage them to continue studying a foreign language the next year. In Santa Ana's ninth-grade Aquarium House at Century High School, the program design reflected efforts to raise the standard of English acquisition for the entirely Spanish-speaking group of participants. In the past, Santa Ana had grouped students in English classes on the basis of their English proficiency, isolating students with limited English skills from those with stronger knowledge. Because students chose to participate in Aquarium House, language proficiency levels were mixed, and all students were expected to learn to communicate effectively in both English and Spanish.

These efforts to reorganize students, teachers, time, and course requirements within a large school can create fertile ground for development of challenging curriculum and instruction, but they do not ensure that this development will happen. These changes often create common planning time for team teachers, and sometimes the flexibility to make the time spent on an instructional activity fit its demands rather than the arbitrary limits of a 50-minute class. Teacher teams can search for connections across their disciplines, even if the school or district as a whole is not officially promoting development of interdisciplinary or thematic instruction.

Observation of the SDDAP restructuring projects suggests, however, that these kinds of reorganization mostly accomplished the more preliminary goal of addressing student management and school climate problems rather than noticeably changing curriculum and instruction. Despite instances of creativity and teamwork comparable to that found in some of the smaller alternative programs, the ability of district or school administrators or project staff to make organizational changes, leading to classroom changes, was limited in a variety of ways. First, reorganization within schools was vulnerable to larger district pressures, as shown in Santa Ana, where creation of middle school families with interdisciplinary teacher teams was disrupted by a districtwide change in the school calendar. Second, the feasibility of translating the formal concept of a small, unified instructional setting into real classroom changes depends on teacher buy-in and proficiency, which may come slowly in some schools. For example, at one restructuring project high school, English, science, social studies, and special education teachers accepted a plan to create an interdisciplinary ninth-grade grouping but the school's math department declined to participate. Although students appeared to respond positively to the team of teachers that was formed, the teachers were unable, at least in the first year, to capitalize on the reorganization to improve the coordination of curriculum and instruction. In another school that emphasized "Socratic seminars" for all freshmen, at least some teachers were uncomfortable and unskilled in moderating these dialogues among students so that they would be useful instructional experiences.

Third, creation of groupings within schools often gives teachers the permission but not necessarily the resources, know-how, or immediate inclination to change their curriculum or instructional methods. For example, at Spruce High School in Dallas, where ninth-grade teachers were encouraged to organize themselves in teams, some teams focused on achieving affective results with students rather than changing curriculum and instruction--that is, on trying to create a supportive but more structured environment in which students would learn responsibility as well as academic material. One teacher stressed that the early effects of reorganization were on teacher communication and ability to "keep track of kids and what they are trying to get away with." As the teaming arrangement stabilized, this teacher noted, they would probably turn their attention to coordinating curricula and instruction, if joint planning time could be made available.

2. Staff Development

To deliver challenging, engaging curriculum and teaching, more is required than rearranging schedules and groupings of students. Such organizational changes, as argued by Fullan (1992), may be called "restructuring," but they do not substitute for "reculturing"--that is, basic change in what is taught, how students are assessed, and how people work together. According to Fullan:

> The heart of change--the skills and the know-how, the commitment and the motivation, the attitudes--cannot be mandated, cannot be mobilized from the top . . . . The things that matter most in terms of teaching/learning effectiveness cannot be mandated.

The leaders of the SDDAP restructuring projects recognized that the organizational changes described here--as hard as they may have been to plan, implement, and sustain--were only a part of what needs to develop within schools to have a profound and widespread effect on what happens in classrooms. Project staff sought to stimulate and help sustain momentum for change by exposing teachers and other staff in the SDDAP project schools to a wide variety of professional development activities, provided by both outside consultants and project staff. For example, in two sites--Santa Ana and Grand Rapids--staff

development sessions covered more than 20 different topics (Table V.1). Similar arrays of staff development were provided in the other urban restructuring sites.

Serious questions remain about the effects of such staff development activities. Even in project sites at which teachers made collaborative decisions to engage in staff development as a way to alter a school's direction or develop classroom skills, the SDDAP evaluation gave us the opportunity to observe only the beginning of what is likely to be a long evolutionary process. It is not surprising that, despite glimpses of inspired teaching, this type of instruction was not yet widespread.

TABLE V.1

ILLUSTRATIVE RANGE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, SANTA ANA AND GRAND RAPIDS SITES

Santa Ana	Grand Rapids
Thematic instruction	Thematic instruction
Active teaching strategies	Cooperative learning
Philosophy for Children	Mastery learning
UCI Writing Project	Cooperative discipline
Change process	Synergy
Brain Compatible Instruction	Higher-order thinking skills
Technology training	Multicultural heritage series
Critical thinking	Change process
Spanish for Non-Spanish-Speaking Staff	Elements of instruction
Alternative assessment	Tribes (conflict resolution)
Student self-esteem	Self-enhancing school

VI. CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Efforts to help at-risk youth stay in school and succeed must consider their life circumstances beyond the classroom. Neighborhood violence, substance abuse, poor access to health care, and pregnancy and parenthood can seriously interfere with students' ability to become fully engaged in school and devote adequate attention and effort to it. Students' ability to focus on school can also be affected by family circumstances, such as unemployment, illiteracy, and parental divorce, separation, substance abuse, or violence. Immigrant students whose families are struggling to adapt to and integrate into American society face potentially bewildering challenges in school. Practical problems, such as lack of transportation and the difficulty of squeezing employment and school into a daily schedule, can get in the way of the best intentions to succeed. This chapter examines how School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP) projects worked to overcome the effects of these issues in students' lives by creating a supportive environment for them in school. Our intent is not to rate or compare projects' efforts but to portray their range, explore how they might affect students, and examine some implementation issues projects faced in developing these program features.

Although schools and dropout prevention programs can have little direct effect on the social and economic conditions that lead to the problems enumerated here, they can create a supportive environment to help students confront their individual challenges. Difficult life circumstances create the risk that students will disengage from school--that they will feel unappreciated as individuals by their teachers and other school staff, that their self-image will be eroded rather than strengthened by their school experiences, and that dealing with problems out of school will consume the time and emotional energy required for success in school. However, a growing body of research suggests that, given appropriate social and emotional support, students can develop personal and social competence, maintain engagement in school, and achieve academic success (Bernard 1991). According to this research, programs in which staff

communicate a caring attitude, set high expectations for conduct and academic performance, and create meaningful opportunities to participate can help nurture the resiliency students need to cope not only with the demands of school but with the pressures of their lives away from school.

Schools can convey powerful messages and deliver practical services to students that can reinforce their desire, commitment, and ability to persist in school. Students' perception of these messages is affected by myriad encounters with teachers, administration, and peers throughout their school lives. In large part, the SDDAP projects were either explicitly or implicitly designed to strengthen or modify the messages students got from and about school. In some sites, these messages were only marginally affected by components of the dropout prevention initiative. In other cases, the efforts funded by the SDDAP grant replaced most or all of students' school program and thus had the potential to change their perceptions of school and their place in the school community dramatically.

SDDAP projects, to varying extents, created a supportive environment by conveying five messages to students:

1. We want you here at school.
2. School staff and other students accept and value you for who you are.
3. We expect you to commit yourself to school and to behave responsibly, and we believe you can.
4. What you do in school is important for and relevant to your future.
5. We will help you with personal problems you face in or out of school.

To assess the "support-building" aspects of the SDDAP projects, we synthesized information from several sources. In conversations with the evaluation team, project and school staff sometimes explicitly expressed the importance of conveying such messages to students, as they described what they were doing and the motivation behind their efforts. In some instances, however, we assessed how students might interpret what we observed their school and project staff doing. In many instances, students in focus groups

provided direct accounts of the messages they received from their school and the SDDAP project, and their statements offer insights about ways in which the SDDAP projects actually helped to create a supportive environment for students.

The relationship between SDDAP project components and the ways in which they built a supportive environment for students is complex. Any school feature or project component could contribute in diverse ways to the broad goal of helping students form strong bonds to school that could endure despite the strains they encountered in their lives. There is no simple way to catalog what SDDAP projects did and the message inherent in each program component. Instead, this chapter describes a range of program features we observed at the in-depth evaluation sites that could contribute to a supportive student environment. It also looks at the contributions these features could make to the five important messages listed earlier. In the following four sections, we present details of four major findings:

1. Many SDDAP projects fostered ***positive and supportive relationships among students*** by building bonds through collaborative activities, organizing students to help other students, taking explicit steps to reduce conflict, or promoting communication among students about their feelings.

2. Projects found various ways to promote students' ***sense of acceptance and expectations.*** Some worked to ease transitions from one school level to another; others emphasized curriculum that explicitly valued students' backgrounds. Expectations were emphasized by insisting on regular attendance persistently and personally, and by giving students significant roles in school governance or community volunteer work.

3. Efforts were made in some projects to make students feel closer ***links to the community***--through mentoring programs, community liaison workers to mobilize parent and neighborhood support for students, and placements in community jobs and internships.

4. Projects provided specific services to help students ***address emotional or life management problems***, including increased in-school counseling, child care services, and even health care services, in a few cases.

The extent to which we actually observed program features that illustrated these points in individual sites varied considerably, for four reasons. First, projects were generally designed to respond to unmet needs. They reflected project staff's perceptions of what was needed but missing, as well as the services

or supportive aspects of the school environment that already existed. Some in-school dropout prevention projects did not address the full range of ways to create a supportive environment, at least in part because the host schools were already working toward some of the same objectives. The evaluation focused on the interventions funded wholly or partially by the SDDAP grants, so we cannot confidently portray for all sites the full range of local efforts to help students in the ways described in this chapter. Second, projects operated within organizational frameworks and constraints that affected the range of support they could offer. Alternative programs run either by community-based organizations or school districts, for example, had more control over students' whole school environment than did programs that affected students' school day more marginally. As a result, the alternative programs are a more abundant source in this chapter for illustrations of supportive features. Third, the students involved in or potentially affected by project activities varied widely and had quite different needs. Most obviously, they differed in age group, racial/ethnic background, and degree of attachment to school. These factors affected the responses that project staff viewed as most important.

Finally, projects exercised some degree of selection that affected the kinds of supportive measures students would need most. Such selection undoubtedly reflected staff judgments about the range of supportive measures their projects could provide. Some projects, for example, were quite careful during intake to screen out students with serious behavioral problems or severe lack of motivation. The requirement that students apply for some projects required them to demonstrate a level of motivation that might reduce the need for services dealing with behavioral issues, thus making it feasible to focus on building a community of support. In contrast, programs that accepted judicial referrals for parole violations or other indicators of behavioral problems faced great challenges relating to some students' socialization.

Although the discussion in this chapter examines program features and services from a variety of perspectives, we should not lose sight of the fundamental importance of broad commitment to helping students at the district level and the crucial role of devoted, committed individuals. Some districts clearly

made comprehensive commitments to helping at-risk students. The most prominent example we found was in the energetically led array of alternative programs in the Sweetwater district in Chula Vista (see Appendix A), with its learning centers, Twelve Together Program, transition orientations for new middle school students, self-contained classrooms for at-risk middle schools students, links with JTPA work experience programs and jobs, a parent/child fishing activity program, child care services, and a shelter program for students who had experienced traumatic life crises. In many sites, however, we found examples of staff whose energy and commitment were evident to students.

A. HELPING STUDENTS DEAL WITH STUDENTS

Any casual observer of adolescents can readily testify to the tremendous importance that peer groups have in students' experience of school and what they get out of it. Feeling part of a student body is a powerful force that can keep adolescents in school, just as alienation can increase chances of dropping out (Ekstrom et al. 1987). The degree of harmony or conflict students experience with their peers, the extent to which they feel valued by other students, and their ability to recognize a kinship with other students in both their accomplishments and their travails are all likely to influence their feeling of belonging in school. Kinship with other students is a key element of the message of acceptance: "You belong here among us."

SDDAP projects explicitly or implicitly used four features or program components to affect relationships among students:

1. They involved students in productive joint activities designed to build bonds among them.
2. Some projects organized ways for students to help each other or younger students.
3. Certain project activities addressed the importance of reducing conflict among students.
4. In some sites, students were encouraged to take part in activities that promoted awareness of their common difficulties.

1. Building Bonds Through Joint Activities

Common experiences can build bonds among people of all ages, but increasing independence from home during adolescence heightens the importance of peer-group experiences as a determinant of one's sense of belonging. Some students who participated in evaluation focus groups gave compelling statements about the importance of peer bonds to their success in school. Students at Lake View High School in Chicago, for example, stressed that the key to their success in the Freshman Curriculum Project was being able to form close relationships with other program students, with whom they were scheduled as a group for core academic classes. Freshmen at Ottawa Hills High School in Grand Rapids, who were block scheduled for their English, science, and social studies classes, echoed this sentiment and wished--contrary to the school administration's decision--that this small-scale grouping could continue in 10th grade.

Some projects, however, went beyond the classroom in their efforts to help students develop friendships and feelings of belonging to a larger group. Staff of the School-Within-a-School at Chicago's Wells Academy, for example, organized outings for participants, including a weekend field trip to the state capital in Springfield. At Seattle Middle College High School (MCHS), the school year began with a two-day orientation at a remote mountain camp, including games, social events, and a physical challenge course requiring team cooperation and decision making. Similar exercises in team building through physical challenges formed part of a program called "SOAR" for incoming freshmen at the Wells Academy in Chicago. Middle school students selected for the Sweetwater Twelve Together Program began the year with a weekend mountain retreat to create bonds based on out-of-school experiences.

Joint or collaborative activities can also give students a sense of camaraderie and belonging as they face the potentially isolating effects of the transition from middle school to high school. To help eighth graders make the transition from their elementary schools to Wells Academy in Chicago, for example, the SDDAP project helped organize a play-writing competition. Students attended a professional performance

at the academy, went back to their elementary schools to write a play together, and then entered their work in a competition judged by the professional theater group. This activity was designed to promote students' interest in writing, get them to work together on a joint product, and in the process allow them to gain some experience at the academy, which they would attend the next fall.

2. Students Helping Students

In addition to program settings or activities that gave students common experiences and chances to collaborate, SDDAP projects found ways to give them opportunities to help other students. The stated or implicit motivation of some of these program features was that helping others can enhance one's self-worth, win external recognition and appreciation, promote mutual reliance among students, and contribute to building a community of support.

Some of these strategies involved getting students to help peers within their own program. Seattle MCHS, for example, ran a peer counseling program; a counselor and a panel of four or five students (or former students) with strong program attendance and performance conducted group discussions with students who had persistent attendance problems. Panel members called absent students and helped them in practical ways to improve their attendance--for example, by calling them in the morning. At Clark Academy, staff made a conscious effort to find ways for students to help their peers. For example, they encouraged a student bake sale to raise money for social activities at the child care center attended by some children of academy students.

School staff can also find ways for students to help younger students, promoting not only younger students' feeling of acceptance but also older students' sense of playing a valued leadership role within the school environment. Sophomores and juniors at Wells Academy, for example, played host in a "shadowing" day to eighth graders who would attend Wells the next fall. At Lake View High School, juniors and seniors who had been in the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) program were paired with incoming LEP freshmen, attending weekly meetings to help them adjust socially and academically. MCHS

students who took a laboratory course developed and taught by physicians from a cancer research institute were enlisted to teach a modified version of the course to fifth graders, in an effort to promote interest in science among elementary school students. A Dallas middle school arranged for students to tutor elementary school students. Dallas teachers also nominated 60 students at Spruce High School who became, after special training, emissaries to ninth-grade classes as part of the Diverse Intercultural Awareness Leadership (DIAL) program. As part of the program, they led discussions with younger students on nonviolent conflict resolution and tolerance.

3. Reducing Conflict Among Students

Efforts to build a sense of community that promotes students' sustained attention to school are seriously undermined by conflict and violence within a school, as well as by threats or repercussions of violence outside that can follow students into the school building. The specter of violence was present in many of the schools that SDDAP students attended and remained a concern for many project staff in alternative programs at sites removed from regular school grounds. At Metropolitan Youth Academy (MYA) in St. Louis, project staff told of a student being shot, hospitalized, and shot again; of a former student facing murder charges; and of another student shot at a downtown mall. Staff at the Accelerated Academics Academy (AAA) in Flint found a gun in a middle school student's locker, had experienced a robbery in school the week before, and lived with the memory of two AAA students who had been shot and killed in the city the previous summer. Even short of such extreme violence, fighting among students is a common threat to the calm atmosphere students need in order to focus in school. Moreover, project staff are well aware that eruptions of school violence are only a conspicuous manifestation of the many dangers that affect students outside school and can seriously limit their ability to concentrate on schoolwork, in school and once they leave the grounds. Students in many project sites spoke of violence in their daily lives--gunshots heard at night, neighbors or other students hit in random shootings or shot in

direct attacks, students' homes sprayed with bullets, and guns and other weapons brought to school by other students.

SDDAP projects adopted five strategies for dealing with conflict among students and trying to reduce their risks of involvement in violence outside school: (1) promoting habits of respectful interaction; (2) screening out students who were likely to exhibit disruptive behavior; (3) expelling students who failed to abide by behavioral standards; (4) promoting nonviolent resolution of conflicts through mediation; and (5) instituting gang abatement and weapons control measures.

All SDDAP projects were concerned about the quality of students' interactions, but a few took distinctive approaches to fostering habits of everyday civility that they hoped would preserve calm at school and affect students' interactions outside of school. For the fifth graders in Miami who participated in the COMET Program, a strict code of behavior was established. Students were expected to address their teachers as well as each other respectfully, using their surnames. They were instructed to greet visitors to the classroom, introduce themselves, and shake hands. In general, they were taught that words, rather than force, are the tools for communication, and staff hoped that this message would remain with them as they entered the turbulence of adolescence. A similar effort was made for students of high school age at Flowers with Care Youth Services in New York. Project staff, aware that helping students develop the personal goals and discipline to succeed was as important as helping them attain a GED, firmly established a standard of calm and reasoned communication at the project site.

In projects that served selected groups of students, efforts to foster productive relationships among students and avoid conflict in some cases also involved choosing students carefully and, on occasion, removing them from the program. Projects like the STAR Program in Tulsa and Flowers with Care used several rounds of contact with students during the application process as a basis for gathering information and judging whether an individual could conform with behavioral standards. Staff at Clark Academy pointed out that their program could operate successfully if it enrolled a few students with a history of

disruptive behavior, but it needed to be very careful to avoid enrolling more, for fear of undermining the atmosphere of mutual respect and common purpose that staff worked hard to achieve. Despite careful screening, however, some students got into fights or other misdeeds that required decisions balancing the needs of one student against the needs of the overall student body. For example, to maintain the calm atmosphere that staff at Flowers with Care felt was so important, students were clearly told that they would be expelled immediately the first time they got in a fight at school. Other programs adopted somewhat more lenient but clearly delineated rules.

SDDAP project staff, along with many other school districts around the country, sought to reduce the frequency of violence by training students in conflict mediation. This approach appears to have two potential values. First, it involves students as mediators proposing nonviolent resolutions of simmering conflicts, thus building clear sources of peer pressure against violence. Second, it can teach students whose conflicts are mediated how they might be able to resolve or defuse situations in the future, perhaps reducing the need for formal mediation. At Highland High School in Albuquerque, the Stay-in-School Program counselor began a mediation program in which students mediated disputes not only among students, but also between students and teachers or other adults. The counselor believed that the program actually reduced the number of fights in school. Similar training and intervention programs were conducted in Dallas, Grand Rapids, and Tulsa at the middle school level. At the Mulick Park Elementary School in Grand Rapids, for example, peer mediators were stationed on the playground at recess; when they saw pushing or fighting developing, they stepped in, isolated the students, and took them aside for an immediate discussion. According to school staff, the program reduced referrals to the school office and stimulated a new sense of responsibility among some of the mediators, who had been selected for the role precisely because of their own past involvement in fighting with and instigating others.

Efforts directed specifically at limiting gang activity or influence and preventing introduction of weapons into schools were also observed. Students at Wells Academy in Chicago were encouraged to join

evening activities such as theater groups, athletic competitions, and other recreation, to reduce the attractiveness of street activities. The Las Vegas project hired a gang abatement specialist to train teachers on how to deal with suspected gang members, and to conduct individual counseling and a peer counseling program for gang members.[1]

4. Promoting Awareness of Common Problems

Youths--as well as adults--can feel isolated from their peers if they believe that the personal problems besetting them are theirs alone. Particularly when life problems relate to family dysfunction or disintegration, children can quickly turn their frustrations and disappointments into anger and accusations against themselves. Such anger and self-doubt can undermine students' feelings of self-worth and confidence in school.

The SDDAP intervention that was most clearly designed to combat such isolation and its emotional repercussions was the Sweetwater Twelve Together Program. Trained adult volunteers led groups of middle school students--who had attended a weekend retreat together early in the year--in weekly discussion meetings. The volunteer counselors helped students organize their discussions and identify common problems--absent or alcoholic parents, loyalties split between separated parents, drug abuse by older siblings, violence or other abuse directed against their mothers, or abuse they themselves suffered. A more limited effort was undertaken at the Iroquois Middle School in Grand Rapids, in brief advisory classes led by a regular classroom teacher for 20 minutes twice a week. This effort, however, met with mixed response from both teachers and students. Some teachers were uncomfortable discussing students' personal problems, and students' views of this activity ranged from "interesting" to "boring--just sitting

[1]Reduction of violence and gang activity was also addressed in two of the Long Beach Up with Literacy schools, under a separate grant. That grant supported an attendance review team's efforts to inform the district attorney of chronically absent students who might be active in gangs, special efforts by probation officers to promote school attendance required under probation agreements, assignment of police officers around schools, and group counseling.

around and visiting friends." These reactions probably emerged because there had been little training or guidance for teachers in advisory objectives or on how to approach sensitive topics.

B. BALANCING ACCEPTANCE AND EXPECTATIONS

Schools throughout the country are struggling for an effective balance in dealing with American youths--a balance between caring acceptance and rigorous expectations. SDDAP projects introduced a wide variety of activities, program elements, and philosophical approaches intended, on the one hand, to make students feel accepted, valued, and appreciated. On the other hand, some projects also included features intended to pose clear academic or behavioral expectations, and in some cases to raise these expectations above standards previously applied to at-risk students. Efforts to make entering high school students feel more accepted and comfortable are often necessary because of the sudden academic and social strains students encounter when they move from middle school to high school. Introducing more challenging academic curricula, or expecting more responsible behavior, represents a reaction to concerns about the absence in many students' lives of serious teaching or personal guidance. Some projects tried to counter deficiencies of both sorts, by developing features that sent students clear messages of both acceptance and expectation.

These messages of acceptance and expectation were sent in a variety of ways. Some projects worked to increase students' sense of initial acceptance and comfort through interventions designed to ease their transition from one school level to another. Other projects strove in various ways to emphasize the value that the school and its staff placed on all students and their cultural backgrounds. Efforts were also made, however, to convey expectations. Many SDDAP projects focused on reinforcing the expectation that students would be important in determining their success, by attending consistently and working hard. At some sites, students were also expected to make a contribution to something beyond themselves--their school or the larger community.

1. Easing Transitions

Entering a new school creates stress for students. Larger and more imposing physical surroundings, new teachers, different students to get to know, and sometimes unfamiliar and even dangerous commutes can add immensely to the ordinary challenge of encountering new material in classes each fall. SDDAP grants helped support project efforts specifically aimed at easing this strain, usually by introducing students in advance to the new school environment, and sometimes by creating personal links with older students to sustain them through their first year in the new setting. Examples from the Chicago and Grand Rapids sites illustrate this approach for the high school and middle school transitions, respectively.

With assistance from the Chicago Teachers' Center, Lake View High School and Wells Academy collaborated with feeder middle schools to prepare eighth graders for the transition to high school. A group of students deemed most at risk were recruited for a one-week summer program at their future high school, involving motivational assemblies, classes in art and use of computers, a tour of the building and orientation about school social activities, and an introduction to the school library. Sophomores and juniors helped organize and run the week-long program and presented a theater and dance performance at the concluding assembly. In addition to this program for a select group of students, Wells Academy offered all eighth graders from feeder elementary schools tours of the high school. It also involved them in the collaborative play-writing program, described earlier, which brought them to the academy in the spring of their eighth-grade year.

The Jump Start Program in Grand Rapids represented a similar effort to ease the transition to middle school. This three-day summer program at Iroquois Middle School was provided to about a quarter of the incoming seventh graders (those who responded to the program invitation). Students divided into nine groups and attended classes on conflict resolution, concentration, self-esteem, and introduction to computers. They also participated in a scavenger hunt designed to help them learn their way around the school building. The day concluded with snacks in the school cafeteria. School staff contended that they

could later tell which students had attended Jump Start by the confidence they exhibited at the start of school.

2. Valuing Each Student

To a large extent, respect is conveyed to students through the seriousness of the curriculum prepared for them and the energy and caring of their teachers. Repeatedly, we heard students link teachers' ability and willingness to make students work with their caring attitudes. As one student at Flowers with Care said, "It's different here, because the teachers care more, they give you more work." In preparing curriculum and instruction, some projects also found ways to acknowledge the legitimacy and value of students' backgrounds and attitudes.

Instructors at Seattle MCHS, for example, developed their humanities course from a "people's history" perspective. Much of the curriculum and discussion revolved around events, movements, and divisions in American society that represent struggles for democracy, equality, and opportunity. Drawing on a sophisticated array of texts, original materials, and video, the two team teachers found a way to help students see the relevance of history to their own lives. They also acknowledged the historic pain suffered by minorities and others who do not always fit into predominant social molds--descriptions that indeed fit a large portion of the student body.

A writing improvement component of the restructuring project in Santa Ana reflected a similar respect for students' diverse backgrounds and the value of their self-expression. As part of an extended collaboration, a faculty member from the English department at the University of California at Irvine worked with middle school teachers in Santa Ana on the use of multicultural literature as a vehicle for promoting students' interest in reading and writing and their ability and willingness to express themselves in writing. The teaching approach emphasized getting students to express their personal responses to literature, drawing on their own life experiences, rather than simply reciting cookbook summaries of what they had read. Like the discussion sessions conducted in the Sweetwater Twelve Together Program, this

approach to literature and writing recognized students' willingness and ability to express their thoughts--and in the process pushed them to develop verbal expression skills.[2]

Finding ways such as these to value students seems particularly important because of the tendency for recognition and praise to be directed only at a select group of students. This concern was voiced most poignantly by high school students in Grand Rapids. They pointed out that, in their school, athletes and A-average students won the awards and public praise, but little recognition was given to students who were simply trying hard and earning middling grades. Curriculum approaches such as those described here cannot, of course, be construed as merit awards or replace other potential forms of recognition, but they can enhance students' sense of being valued and taken seriously.

3. Insisting on Attendance

The simplest message of support a school can convey to a student is, "We want you to be here." Unfortunately, contrary messages often abound. Students who misbehave are suspended and barred from classes. Teachers sometimes act as if they would rather not engage in any real interaction with their students, giving them assignments to complete in silence. Students who stop attending school may find their absence ignored. A student at MCHS, when asked why he had returned to school there quite some time after dropping out of a regular high school, said, "Nobody ever asked me to come back before they [MCHS staff] called." Many of the SDDAP projects devoted part of their efforts to making it clear to students that their attendance was expected. They established systems, staff, and procedures for monitoring attendance closely and following up promptly and systematically when students were absent from school, missed classes, or were tardy. Two approaches to attendance monitoring and response were taken--one based heavily on computer technology, the other on personal monitoring and intervention.

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[2]A move in the same direction was made in Dallas, where Spruce High School, through the school-based decision making encouraged under the School-Centered Education process, selected a multicultural literature textbook for 10th graders and obtained a state waiver allowing its use.

Under the technology-based approach, some projects stressed the development of sophisticated data systems, rapid data entry, and automated identification of students with emerging attendance problems. In the quest for reliable, consistent response to absences, several projects implemented automated calling systems that dialed absent students' homes and delivered taped messages informing parents of their children's absence. The most sophisticated example was observed at Century High School in Santa Ana, where teachers used a schoolwide network of computers to enter attendance data from the classroom into the "Athena" attendance database. For the first time, the "real-time" accumulation of information about attendance allowed school administrators to identify and follow up quickly on absentees; this capability appeared to produce positive results. Overall, absenteeism, after climbing from an annual average of 9.2 percent of enrollment in school year 1989-1990 to 10.9 percent and 13.2 percent in the next two years, fell in the first two years of the Athena system's operation to 9.1 percent and then to 4.6 percent. This improvement in attendance occurred while the district's other three high schools experienced steady absenteeism rates of about 9.3, 12.8, and 11.5 percent. Both unexcused and excused absences declined during this period, by 60 and 70 percent, respectively, from their peaks before the introduction of the system.

Technological solutions must be adopted carefully and with full preparation, however. The Philadelphia project purchased autodialers to contact parents. However, the equipment was ordered without full recognition of the costs of installing a dedicated phone line and its ongoing use. As a result, the equipment remained unused during the multiyear observation period of the evaluation.

The less technology-based approach relied on staff communications with students and parents. Attendance coordinators at Wells Academy and Lake View High made calls and home visits to parents of students who were absent three days in a week or who averaged more than one absence per week during a quarter. Community liaison workers in Long Beach played similar roles, following up on absences and other problems to determine what home circumstances might be contributing to poor attendance.

Numerous other projects, including the Tulsa STAR Program, Clark Academy in Cincinnati, the Flint AAA, and others made special efforts to follow up rapidly, even on single absences. In Grand Rapids, attendance officers at each project school made follow-up phone calls and home visits and could arrange to give students wake-up calls and even pick them up at home to get them to come to school. Yet, such intensive personal efforts to keep close tabs on attendance problems can also run into snags. For example, in Lake View High School in Chicago, a decision was made to cut down on class tardiness as well as absences; students who were more than four minutes late for class had to obtain a readmission slip from the school's attendance office. During one site visit, observers noted that this process could last between 10 and 20 minutes! However, students were likely to view more personal approaches to dealing with attendance problems as an expression of caring.

A sophisticated combination of personal attention and use of technology to monitor and follow up on attendance was found in the Sweetwater Learning Centers. Each teacher at the centers had a personal telephone as well as a computer linked to the districtwide administrative system for alternative education. Teachers called students who missed appointments for their in-school work and entered data on attendance at their work stations. This arrangement allowed teachers to hold their own students individually responsible for meeting their appointments, while maintaining an up-to-date and detailed database on student attendance at the centers.[3]

4. Giving Students Significant Roles in School and Community

Students' self-worth and their engagement in the school community may be enhanced when they get to perform functions that are important to others. The SDDAP projects engaged students in two types of responsibility: (1) school governance and operations; and (2) volunteer roles in the community or in other schools.

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[3]Under the very personalized learning center schedules, this detailed database on attendance was key to enabling the program to claim and receive state aid for returning dropouts, on the basis of attendance.

The clearest emphasis on involving students in school governance was found at Seattle MCHS. A selected group of students took an active role in program intake, serving on a panel with school counselors to interview applicants and make recommendations on admission. Another panel of students, selected at random, was asked to comment on concerns about school operations and then to present them before the student body. Their presentation formed the agenda for subsequent faculty and administration meetings about changes in the school that could address student concerns. This symposium was slated to become a regular part of school governance, with students providing collective input to policy on attendance, discipline, and other matters affecting students.

Numerous SDDAP projects, however, found ways to help students contribute in their community. In some instances, these efforts involved tutoring younger students, as described earlier. In other cases, students were encouraged to see themselves as part of the broader community. Students at the Corporate Academy in Miami established a United Way fund-raising effort at their site and charted their considerable success in collecting money for local charities on a hallway chart. After Hurricane Andrew, academy students helped organize a party for elementary school students in the affected area. Staff at the middle school academy in Flint were seeking ways to involve their students in volunteer roles at a local hospice. The Tulsa STAR Program, which established an expectation that students would perform at least three hours of some kind of community service during their nine-week enrollment period, expected students to find opportunities to perform services. In these and other examples, project staff attempted to encourage students to see themselves as responsible members of a community, able to contribute as well as to take. This effort to connect students to a larger community is reflected in other efforts to link them with people and purposes outside their schools, as explained next.

C. LINKING STUDENTS TO THE COMMUNITY AND THE FUTURE

To help students confront trying life circumstances as well as the usual stresses of school and adolescence, some SDDAP projects created links between students and the world outside school. These

linkages can be grouped into three categories. Some projects created adult mentoring programs to increase students' contact with responsible adults and positive role models, and to expose them to experiences and activities outside the boundaries of their daily lives. SDDAP projects also took steps to create circles of support, attempting to build cooperative teams of school staff, parents, and community agencies working to promote students' success and address problems in school or at home. Some projects worked to create links to the world of work for students, offering students chances to earn money to meet personal needs, gain some exposure to the demands and satisfactions of work, and learn about possible career directions.

1. Mentoring Programs

At least four of the SDDAP projects studied in the in-depth evaluation ran organized adult mentoring programs. Cities in Schools of Miami (CIS) recruited, trained, and supervised adult mentors for both high school students at the Corporate Academy and fifth graders in the COMET Program, arranging mentors for about three-quarters of all program participants. Mentors were generally expected to talk to their assigned students at least once a week and meet with them--sometimes for group activities sponsored by CIS--at least once a month. Seattle MCHS participated in a districtwide mentoring program in which mentors, drawn largely from the business community, were expected to meet with students at least twice a month over a period of at least a year; by spring 1993, there were about 45 active mentors. Clark Academy in Cincinnati recruited mentors primarily from the staff of a large accounting and consulting firm. These mentors were also expected to commit to meeting with students twice a month for a year. In some cases, mentors who had difficulty establishing social rapport with students focused on tutoring, whereas others took students to social, cultural, or sporting events. In Grand Rapids, Ottawa Hills High School established a mentoring program initially designed to match African American male students with successful African American men, although the program later expanded to include some white students and females.

The impact of school-sponsored adult mentoring programs on students is extremely difficult to judge, but observation of these programs does clarify the operational challenges that must be addressed to create opportunities for meaningful interaction and the possibility of some effect.[4] Programs that aspire to make mentoring a common experience for students face the challenge of recruiting large numbers of mentors while still screening for appropriate motivation, patience, and ability to communicate with program students. One mentoring program coordinator pointed out, for example, that some adults volunteer to be mentors out of a belief that they will "save a kid," and others are seeking a friend with whom they can share their own problems. Miami CIS and Clark Academy dealt with the dual challenge of recruiting large numbers through a safe, selective process by recruiting primarily through large organizations such as banks, other corporations, and university sororities and fraternities. This approach has the potential to yield substantial numbers of mentors, eases the process of obtaining background information, facilitates communications with the roster of mentors, and creates natural and enthusiastic groups of mentors for organized social events or outings with students, which can broaden the range of adults they come in contact with.

Making student-mentor matches that "click" is also a common challenge that requires both creativity and persistence. CIS staff in Miami reported that matching COMET elementary school students with mentors was relatively easy. The students were generally quite appreciative of any attention they received from their mentors. Some mentors made contacts with students by calling them at school; according to staff, receiving a phone call at school from an adult was often a source of great pride and pleasure for students. Corporate Academy students, however, were often quite finicky in their response to assigned mentors. Staff worked hard to find mentors students could admire and relate to--in one case, for example, responding to a student's expressed dream and getting an assistant coach of the Miami Dolphins football

[4]A detailed exploration of these mentoring programs and others at SDDAP sites not included in the in-depth evaluation will be presented in a special paper, as part of a series of SDDAP evaluation topical reports.

team, a former player and idol of the student, to serve as his mentor. Usually, however, staff had to try several times before finding a mentor-student match that worked, because either the student or the mentor lost interest.

2. Widening the Circle of Support

SDDAP project staff found that helping students in troubled circumstances often required knitting together the efforts of a variety of potential sources of support and assistance. Most commonly, projects addressed this challenge by having staff reach out to communicate with students' parents and other relatives, solicit advice and help from specialized services available through the school district or other community agencies, and work with parents and these other agencies to develop coherent plans for overcoming severe behavioral or academic problems. We also found, however, examples of projects that as a matter of course sought to widen students' circle of support by bringing parents and community members into the schools.

SDDAP grants were partially devoted in some sites to strengthening staff resources to reach out to parents to establish problem-solving strategies. Beyond simply monitoring absenteeism and conveying insistence on attendance to students and parents, some sites sought to develop a capacity to respond more comprehensively to the underlying factors contributing to students' absenteeism and lack of progress in school. The community liaison staff in Long Beach and special counselors supported by the SDDAP grant in Rockford illustrate this approach. Although both school systems had regular school counselors and networks of agencies to whom counselors could refer students for services, these counselors typically had large caseloads--more than 500 students each, for example, in Long Beach.

Two community liaison workers addressed the needs of the Up with Literacy Program participants in Long Beach, serving as a link among program staff, school and district resources, and community social service agencies. Typically, they got involved with an individual student because of apparent attendance, behavioral, or academic problems, and responded by trying to determine the root of the problem and ways

to address it. Their first step was usually to meet with the parents and the student together and try to establish trust with the parents. Once parents were engaged in a joint search for solutions to problems, the liaison workers might recommend special peer tutoring in class, activities to keep students out of gangs, or referral to a school or agency counselor if they were having serious emotional or hygiene problems.

Grant-supported counselors in Rockford also stressed the importance of establishing open communications with parents as a key step in developing plans to help students through their difficulties. Although attendance problems often triggered contact with parents, discussions almost always covered much broader ground, because the counselors found that poor attendance was usually related to a web of problems that could not be addressed by simply focusing on the attendance symptom. The Rockford counselors emphasized the merits of "porch talk" with parents--informal discussions on their own turf--over simply trying to get parents to attend school meetings. Confirming the view of the Long Beach staff, the Rockford counselors found that only by establishing themselves as trustworthy allies, rather than school-based adversaries, could they hope to gain parents' collaboration in developing productive ways of dealing with their children's problems and in taking advantage of other specialized resources. The experiences of these two sites confirm the value of parents' roles in strengthening students' circle of support to deal with individual problems, a role that can be encouraged if school staff have the time and personal skills to seek out parents as allies on their own territory.

SDDAP projects placed much less emphasis on bringing parents into the schools in the absence of crises in their children's lives. A wide variety of factors inhibited ongoing parental involvement or contact with the schools--the strains and problems of parents' own lives, the difficulty of finding effective rallying issues that could elicit a sustained response from parents, some students' reluctance to encourage any school contact with their parents, and the practical problems some parents faced in getting to their

children's schools.[5] Some SDDAP projects did, however, find ways to promote some ongoing presence of parents in schools. In Seattle, for example, MCHS developed a "parent scholars" program, which paid students' parents to perform a variety of useful roles at the school, including teaching skills such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation or typing to students. MCHS staff viewed this strategy as beneficial both for individual students and the broader school community. Participating parents had reasons to come to the school in the morning with their children, a practice that helped remedy some instances of poor attendance or tardiness. More broadly, MCHS staff viewed the parents' presence as another symbol to the entire student body of the supportive community behind them. The Flint academy also brought parents into the school as volunteers.

3. Promoting Links to the World of Work

For some students, being supportive may mean helping them get out of school--and into the workplace. Helping students find part-time jobs that can fit with their school schedule may make it possible for them to earn money that they need to help support themselves or meet other responsibilities. Working at a job or taking part in a workplace internship can help students develop positive work habits and some appreciation of possible career directions and the schooling required for them. For some students, a positive workplace experience, success in meeting an employer's expectations, and in some cases even the prospect of further job opportunities could contribute a great deal to their sense of control over their lives and their sense of schools' importance to their futures.

Several SDDAP projects helped some returning dropouts find jobs. Job development and placement sometimes involved a combination of resources from other grants and other sources, such as JTPA funds. For example, Youth Development, Inc. (YDI), in Albuquerque, using its own job development staff and

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[5]The logistical problems of involving parents in school activities were most vivid in the San Juan County, Utah, site. These schools typically serve areas of up to 3,000 square miles, and students may ride up to 50 miles to school.

JTPA funds, placed about 48 students each semester in minimum-wage jobs, complemented by work-readiness workshops. Both Jobs for Youth (JFY) and Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) employed job developers (funded by non-SDDAP sources) who worked intensively with employers to find opportunities for students, and with students to help them understand and adjust to the importance of meeting employers' expectations. At the Corporate Academy in Miami, about a quarter of the student body participated in a credit-bearing work experience program, which allowed them to leave school one period early each day for a job. A program coordinator helped them plan their job search and develop leads.

At Seattle MCHS, a one-semester career education and internship program combined extensive work-readiness preparation, carefully selected internship positions, and income opportunities for students. Four afternoons a week for four hours, they worked, for $5.20 an hour, at a wide variety of employer sites--law offices, clinics, software firms, travel agencies, retail firms, local government offices, and corporate offices. Friday afternoons, students attended a class on goal setting, personal assessment, job hunting skills, personal grooming, and work habits, and they had the chance to discuss and reflect on their workplace experiences. The combined class and internship earned them an elective course credit. The generally positive reputation of MCHS contributed to success in lining up internships; the program coordinator reported having far more commitments from employers for internship slots than the number of students her class could accommodate.

D. SERVICES TO MEET SPECIAL NEEDS

A wide range of program features such as those already discussed can contribute to a supportive environment for at-risk students. In this chapter and the previous one, we highlighted the wide array of SDDAP program features created or promoted by project staff to help students feel tied to a community of support as valued members. Small-scale instructional settings, serious curriculum and committed teachers, efforts to promote positive student interactions, a balance between acceptance of students as

individuals and expectations for their responsible behavior, and ways to link school to the world of work can all help students stay connected to school. In addition, however, the SDDAP projects provided supportive services to help students deal with problems in their lives.

Most projects, through specially hired or regular school counselors, provided access by referral to a wide range of specialized services, although the particular services used varied with the student population served and the range of available referral agencies. For example, JFY in Boston reported that its case managers used a wide variety of public agencies and nonprofit organizations to deal with the distressing problems of the youths served. These organizations included homeless shelters, Planned Parenthood and other health clinics, rape crisis centers, legal aid, and others. Some projects run by community-based organizations also offered a wide range of services. YDI in Albuquerque, for example, operated more than 20 social service programs for at-risk youths that could be tapped for participants in the Stay-in-School or Middle School Leadership programs. Some of these programs targeted substance abusers, pregnant teenagers, violent youths, and gang members and victims. In addition to the wide reliance on referral services, SDDAP projects offered three direct services that merit discussion because of the challenges that they posed to program staff: (1) general in-school counseling; (2) health care services; and (3) child care.

1. General Counseling

Counselors with various job titles worked with students at most SDDAP projects, in a wide variety of capacities. In some cases, such as the Tulsa STAR and Flowers with Care programs, counseling was the core of the intervention, and counselors were far more available to students than is generally true in most schools. Flowers with Care, for example, had a ratio of one counselor to 30 students. Counselors at these sites met regularly with students to help them formulate goals, deal with life problems, and correct lapses in their behavior and reliability at the program site. In other sites, counselors served in effect as classroom staff, dealing not only with affective issues but lending a hand in giving students help with academic work. For example, counseling staff at the Anne Arundel YES Program doubled at times as

classroom teachers. In Long Beach, a counselor aide worked in elementary school classrooms, helping students with assignments, trying to reinforce their interest in their work, and substituting on occasion for college aides as a tutor. Counselors also played coordinating and administrative roles in some cases--monitoring attendance, informing teachers and other staff of the dropout prevention project objectives, and arranging appropriate meetings and staff development activities. Project staff also provided specialized group and individual counseling on common problems of participants. For example, at Seattle MCHS, one counselor focused specifically on drug and alcohol abuse problems.

To be most effective, counselors must be perceived by students as helpers rather than monitors. Although it is impossible to judge the relative effectiveness of the roles counseling staff at the SDDAP projects played, observation and discussions with staff and students suggested that counselors were most helpful and appreciated by students when they had natural, ongoing contact with students and were seen as an integral part of a close-knit team of staff dedicated to helping them.

This principle was reflected in the way that some SDDAP projects integrated counseling into their services. Counselors were central members of the staff at the Tulsa STAR Program. Students met counselors during the application and intake process and encountered them casually in the program offices when they arrived for daily classes. Some STAR graduates who went on to vocational programs clearly viewed program counselors as the "family" who had gotten them onto a productive track. In the Newark ACCEL Program, the four-teacher team in each ACCEL school was assisted by a counselor who spent a large portion of her time in the ACCEL classrooms, available to ACCEL students. In the small, self-contained AAA in Flint, the counselor was a constant presence among teachers and students. At Seattle MCHS, counselors, like other staff, played multiple roles and were thus integrated into overall school operations and came into contact with students quite naturally. The drug counselor, for example, also ran the "Natural Helpers" program, in which students counseled and assisted other students, and pitched in to transport some students to workplace internships. Similarly, a science teacher organized training for

student volunteers to provide peer AIDS education. At Lake View High School in Chicago, "youth workers" from a community social services agency also had responsibilities that blurred the lines between academic help and counseling, working not only on affective issues and service coordination, but also as classroom tutors at times. In many of the targeted projects, counselors' chances of establishing rapport with students were enhanced by the location of their offices very close to the classrooms where participants attended project classes.

Choices of staffing arrangements can weaken counselors' presence in students' everyday school experiences, however. At the Rockford site, for example, four middle schools used different approaches for grant-supported counselors. In three schools, the counselor supplemented students' regular counselors. Students still saw their regular counselors, who had around 300 students assigned to them, for academic counseling; grant counselors provided additional resources for monitoring attendance, following up on absences, and meeting with individual students. In the fourth high school, students in the project classes were assigned to the grant counselor for all counseling matters. This person's responsibilities included academic counseling, class schedule changes, discipline referrals, attendance monitoring, home visits, and referrals to community-based services. This arrangement, focusing rather than dividing counseling responsibility, appeared to create more natural and frequent opportunities for the counselor to get to know students.

Observation in some sites also suggested that counselors were most valued and appreciated by students when they were perceived as close allies working for students' academic success. This quality can be undermined by two factors observed at SDDAP sites. First, discord or conflict over program objectives or procedures between teachers and counselors can weaken students' sense of being supported by a close-knit "family." At one site, lack of administrative leadership at the school level and personal conflicts led to serious tensions within the project staff of counselors and teachers. These tensions were quite apparent to students, to the point that the major focus of discussions between project staff and

evaluation site visitors seemed airing of individual grievances. At Flowers with Care, the potential for divergences between teachers and counselors was handled more constructively. At times, the academic and counseling objectives of the program and of the respective staff seemed to compete slightly. However, the project staff worked hard to forge a common understanding of the relative roles of counseling and GED preparation. They also worked together to ensure that, while students' personal development and resolution of life problems were a major focus of the program, counselors and teachers would be united in conveying to students that these issues could not be used as excuses for inadequate academic effort.

Observation in several sites also underscored a second risk--students' low tolerance level for efforts by counselors (or teachers) to teach or guide them using classroom formats or curricula that seemed strained and divorced from students' academic efforts or perceptions of their life problems. One counselor's efforts to begin each day of the week with an exercise on some theme--from positive affirmation through goal setting, wellness, humor, and "celebrating something positive"--were described by students as embarrassing. Unless led by gifted and imaginative counselors or teachers working with carefully developed curriculum tailored to the particular group of students, general classes on "self-esteem" that we observed also rang hollow with students. Group sessions appeared more productive when they were organized to let students develop themes of concern to them, as, for example, in the Sweetwater Twelve Together discussion groups, rather than when they followed a prescribed motivational curriculum.

2. Delivering Child Care Services

Many of the SDDAP projects served students who were parents, and a few made conscious efforts to provide them with child care services so they could continue in school. The Clark Academy in Cincinnati, for example, operated a licensed day care center for its students and provided bus service between it and the academy. In Seattle, MCHS at one time ran its own child care center in a nearby church basement. In Dallas, the SDDAP project arranged for payment of child care costs for students at Spruce

High School, at a licensed center and in licensed family day care. In Las Vegas, a child care center operated at the site of each Horizon High School.

These project services clearly made it possible for some students to stay in school. However, the projects had to address practical problems that could exist for other dropout prevention or recovery programs envisioning similar services. Most importantly, the projects had to determine the extent to which they could ensure high-quality child care, not just a level of care adequate to ensure safety and students' ability to attend school. In Seattle, MCHS eventually phased out its own child care center and contracted instead with its host community college for child care services, because MCHS could not maintain the desired quality of care in its own operation. In Dallas, the relatively low level of supervision over even licensed family care appeared to leave some children in safe but decidedly unstimulating environments. Ensuring high-quality care by actually establishing and running a licensed child care center--as at Clark Academy and the Horizon High Schools--requires a substantial population base and involves considerable expense.[6]

More mundane practical matters also arose. Clark Academy had to locate its child care center miles away from the school building and run a connecting bus service, because ordinances prohibited operation of child care facilities (but not schools) in flood plains. In Las Vegas, fears of district liability at first led to a prohibition against students bringing their infants and toddlers on the school buses they themselves rode to the Horizon High Schools, making use of project child care centers quite inconvenient. Later, attorneys for the district relented and permitted such transportation. These practical challenges are just a few of those that are likely to be encountered elsewhere when schools try to extend services to provide child care.

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[6]The child care facility at Clark Academy received about $250,000 of the SDDAP grant for the site. Based on the population served, costs averaged about $500 per month, per child.

3. Delivering Health Services

To our knowledge, the challenge of linking students to health services was taken on in only two SDDAP sites. In Dallas, the SDDAP project supported a clinic, staffed by a Dallas area hospital, at Spruce High School and the two project middle schools. The clinic was viewed as meeting a critical need because of the absence of any other readily accessible health facilities for students. Two days a week, the clinic provided high school students with sports physicals, AIDS testing and counseling, family planning counseling (but not contraceptive devices or pills), and general health services and counseling. General health services were provided one day a week at the middle schools. Staff estimated that as many as half of the high school's students came in contact with the clinic, some for specific services and some just to talk about health issues. In Santa Ana, the SDDAP project nurse organized health fairs at the schools, bringing in the Red Cross, medical school staff, and a mobile van full of videos and health education materials operated by a local community organization. To meet students' needs for health education, the project also arranged for regular visits to the high school by pediatric interns doing rotations in adolescent health, to discuss health concerns of students. Other projects, such as the CIS project in the Atlanta area, sponsored less intensive or less frequent health-related services, such as health fairs for screening and discussion of health problems.

Forays into providing health care or health information services also involved challenges. One dilemma that may be encountered elsewhere was created in Santa Ana by the vehement opposition from some sectors of the community to the visits of young doctors to the high school to provide health information. A group of parents from the small non-Hispanic population in the district formed a committee that succeeded in sharply limiting the topics be discussed in these visits, to ensure no mention of controversial subjects such as AIDS or family planning. At the committee's insistence, the project nurse was forced to develop a script instructing teachers or visiting interns to respond to all questions on such

topics by advising students to seek advice from their parents. As a result of such limits, the medical staff declined to continue with the planned visits.

VII. CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Future efforts to reduce rates of school dropout can benefit from the substantial efforts, diverse program designs, and varied experiences of the projects involved in the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP). The SDDAP projects described in this report used many approaches to dropout prevention and school reform. They served students in diverse age groups, through programs sponsored by a variety of organizations and partnerships. The projects also diverged widely in scope, comprehensiveness, and scale. As observed in the field, they achieved different degrees of success in implementing the elements of the comprehensive dropout prevention strategy envisioned by the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

However, the diversity of the SDDAP projects complicates any effort to draw simple conclusions about how dropout prevention programs or restructuring reform initiatives should be defined or carried out, for two reasons. First, because projects differed so much, most observations about a specific program element were drawn from the experiences of one or a few projects. Successful implementation of a program strategy or feature in one or a few sites could be linked to local circumstances and might be more elusive elsewhere. Similarly, disappointments experienced in particular sites could be related to unusual local circumstances rather than to shortcomings in the project approach. Second, the ability to identify program strategies or features that seem to contribute to smooth implementation, local support, and student and staff enthusiasm is not evidence that students will achieve or have achieved greater academic success as a result of the program.

Despite these caveats, the SDDAP experience suggests several clear challenges for dropout prevention initiatives and the federal role in supporting and evaluating them. In this chapter, we suggest three broad challenges for school program reform and for the federal role in any major demonstrations that may be conducted in the future:

1. For evaluation results from large-scale demonstrations to be most useful, ED should focus grant resources on clearly related projects.

2. Certain organizational features--most notably, strong local partnerships and project control over staff resources--contribute to effective implementation of dropout prevention initiatives.

3. Short-term demonstration projects can readily affect school climate but face much stiffer challenges in improving the quality of curriculum and instruction.

A. THE FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION REFORM DEMONSTRATIONS

Federal demonstration projects in education can serve two useful purposes. First, they can encourage innovation. By providing resources to local school districts and other organizations, and by specifying project goals, they can stimulate creative program development that might not otherwise be possible. They can also extend the value of grantees' experience by publicizing ideas and models developed in demonstration sites. Second, demonstration projects can provide information about the success and effectiveness of educational interventions. They can document progress and obstacles resulting from program implementation and systemic reform. If rigorous evaluation methods are used, demonstrations can also provide strong evidence about program impacts, showing whether particular interventions really make a difference in student outcomes. With carefully designed evaluations, ED can encourage educators to look critically at the methods and models they espouse and, if necessary, search for ways to address problems that could limit their effectiveness.

These different purposes involve different requirements for demonstration design, particularly concerning how much the range of grantee plans funded under the demonstration ought to be restricted. To promote innovation, a wide range of program interventions and models is appropriate, although project applications must of course be reviewed for quality and thoroughness. Maximizing what can be learned from evaluations of demonstration programs, however, may involve more stringent requirements. The variety of program models included in a demonstration affects the evaluation strategy and the nature of the

issues that can be addressed thoroughly. If rigorous evaluation is a high priority, the SDDAP evaluation suggests two challenges for the design of future demonstrations.

1. Focus Demonstrations on Delivery Models Rather than on Input Qualities

ED established criteria for SDDAP projects, but these criteria did little to create a coherent set of projects. Although ED specified a set of elements that should be part of each SDDAP project, these elements were described mostly in terms of *qualities* that it was hoped they would achieve. For example, projects were to include ***accelerated*** learning strategies, ***systematic*** attendance monitoring, ***challenging and interesting*** curricula and instruction, ***culturally sensitive*** outreach to parents, steps to create a ***positive*** school climate, and measures for communicating with parents to get them ***more involved***. Applicants were given latitude in interpreting and defining these qualities, and they could readily describe their proposed projects or even aspects of their existing program in ways that appeared responsive to grant requirements. Some project plans addressed the full range of qualitative objectives, but others addressed only some. As a result, the programs differed not only in their target populations, programmatic changes, and underlying ideas on how to help students succeed, but also in their degree of conformity with the model ED had defined. The evaluation, in assessing implementation of ED's proposed model, must recognize that many projects had defined their own set of objectives in place of the ED model.

If the primary objective of a demonstration is to support and promote program innovation, diversity in the projects funded can be viewed as positive, but the effects of project diversity on the value of the evaluation are less favorable. With sharp differences in program models and target groups, the project implementation successes and difficulties observed might be the result of idiosyncracies in the projects or their context rather than essential aspects of the project approaches, making it difficult to draw clear lessons from the evaluation. The more diverse the projects, the less defensible it is to pool data across sites for an impact analysis. The challenge of drawing clear inferences from the evaluation is made more difficult by relatively small sample sizes in individual sites. Yet, the importance of site-by-site analysis creates

pressure to maximize individual site samples, which in turn focuses the evaluation on the largest funded projects.

If the primary purpose of a demonstration is to help policymakers understand how to design and implement effective programs, it would be appropriate, within legislative limits, to organize grant programs around service delivery models rather than around qualities of the intervention or outcomes to be achieved. A demonstration examining, for example, alternative high schools, middle school academic enrichment, or tutoring programs might focus the efforts of local program developers and federal evaluators on programs that are using similar methods to address similar problems. Demonstrations that are more focused would provide greater opportunity to test the robustness of evaluation findings to differences in program settings and to variations in implementation approach or quality.

Focusing demonstrations on service delivery models would pose new challenges for demonstration design and the grant application review process. Grant award criteria would have to be defined more specifically, to ensure that applications can be measured against a concise model. The individuals involved in grant award decisions would have to scrutinize whether applications truly incorporate the intended interventions.

2. Distinguish Between Demonstrations Supporting Service Innovation and Broad Reform

The SDDAP sought to promote and assess the effects of specific program innovations as well as broad school reform. Targeted projects enhanced the educational program available to a group of students in some way. Restructuring projects attempted the kinds of far-reaching systemic changes that would, perhaps over a longer term, alter students' experiences in an entire school or school cluster. The SDDAP targeted and restructuring projects used similar evaluation questions and similar data collection methods. Impacts on the same performance and attitudinal outcomes are being estimated for students who participated in targeted projects or attended restructuring project schools, largely on the basis of a standard survey instrument and school transcripts.

Using consistent evaluation methods for all sites in a demonstration is important, but the advantages of this consistency are reduced when the projects' objectives are as different as those of the targeted and restructuring projects. Targeted projects provided clearly defined services to selected students, to affect their academic progress or other related outcomes, such as attendance, directly. Restructuring project activities were more likely to be directed at teachers, including efforts to change the extent and nature of their involvement in school decision making or enhance their teaching skills. Any hypothesized project effects on students would thus be indirect and dependent on effects on staff, and these effects could be expected to emerge over a longer period, if at all,. Spending substantial resources to look for short-term impacts on students in restructuring project schools may be less appropriate than in targeted projects.

An alternative approach would involve conducting separate demonstrations for school restructuring and reform projects, or at least defining a distinct evaluation strategy for them. This strategy would emphasize the effectiveness of efforts to modify teacher behavior and skills. Student impact estimates would focus on the effects that might be reasonably hypothesized, given the nature of the reforms and the length of the demonstration.

Learning from the experience of restructuring or reform efforts also requires carefully selecting which projects to fund. Although the SDDAP restructuring projects largely involved efforts to reshape instructional practices, change general school climate, or otherwise set schools on a new path, in some cases the grants simply funded services that might not otherwise have been delivered. For example, SDDAP grants supported health clinic operations, guidance counselors' salaries (to offset local budget cuts), child care and other support services for teen mothers, substance abuse workshops, and after-school homework clubs. Although these might have been important improvements in student services, their lasting significance would depend on either (1) alternative funding sources to continue the services after the demonstration ended, or (2) the questionable argument that providing these services even for a limited period can help redirect school practices. In effect, the restructuring grants were used for a mix of far-

sighted reform initiatives and shorter-term budgetary support. The aim of assessing the significance and effects of restructuring efforts might be served better if project funding criteria and award decisions placed greater emphasis on supporting activities truly related to a broad reform agenda.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROGRAM FEATURES

In many dropout prevention projects, the strengths and difficulties encountered were related to project organization and staffing. Three lessons emerged from the SDDAP that suggest future challenges for local project sponsors and designers of federal demonstrations.

1. It Is Easier to Sustain Partnerships Formed by Local Institutions and Guided by School Needs

At least 9 of the 25 SDDAP projects included in the in-depth evaluation involved collaboration between local school districts and other organizations. These partnerships generally paired school districts with local community-based organizations, local or national nonprofit organizations, or universities.

Partnerships were most productive when the partner institutions had strong local roots and worked closely with school district staff to define the role that each partner would play. In some instances, successful relationships involved truly local organizations, such as Youth Development, Inc. (YDI) in Albuquerque, which had developed close working relationships with social service agencies and local schools during its more than 20-year history. In other cases, such as the Cities in Schools (CIS) venture with the Miami schools, a local affiliate of a national organization functioned in a similar fashion, cooperating closely with school officials to define the role it would play in developing the district's two SDDAP initiatives, mustering corporate support, and providing staff for specialized roles. The partnership between the Chicago Teachers' Center and three local high schools, which grew out of a joint study on how to serve at-risk Hispanic youths, involved university staff closely in the design and coordination of project activities.

Some partnerships were less successful, in part because the partner institutions were less locally focused or less attuned to the needs perceived by the school districts. For example, in San Antonio, the grantee's national office rather than a local affiliate spearheaded the effort to win SDDAP funding. The motivational curriculum that constituted the project intervention was selected because the grantee was offering it nationwide as a way to address the dropout problem, rather than because any thorough study of local school problems had identified a particular need for it. Despite several years of joint work developing the motivational SUCCESS curriculum in Atlanta, district officials and CIS staff had sharply diverging views about project direction. This divergence led to a unilateral district decision to shift from the in-school SUCCESS classes to a separate academy for middle school students retained in grade.

Although every partnership has a unique history, and prospects for success are determined by local factors, the experiences described here suggest some challenges for school districts and their potential partners. School districts should be cautious about getting involved in collaborative ventures. Institutions that propose solutions developed or supposedly proved elsewhere might not be prepared for the lengthy process of defining local needs, which is often a necessary first step if local schools and their staff will be asked to commit their energies to making an intervention work. Similarly, schools that adopt dropout prevention strategies proposed by outside institutions and developed without substantial school input run several risks. Lack of support from district or school staff may undermine implementation. Plans adopted without serious local deliberations may mobilize school staff's energy and resources around efforts that are not well focused and may reduce the chances of mustering efforts in the future that are more attuned to local capabilities and needs. It is also important for partners such as community-based organizations, universities, and other nonprofit groups to recognize that their partnerships with school districts must begin with joint planning. Joint planning will reduce the risk that the district's decisions after grant award will be guided by other competing interests, rather than the program design proposed by the partner.

Sometimes, an outside partner needs to provide the stimulus for interest in and support for reform within a school district. The energy of an outside partner can be the driving force behind reform, because teachers and other school personnel might be tired of pushing for change internally. District leaders who are unable to get internal support for special interventions geared toward at-risk students or for broader reform may be drawn to alliances in which a community-based organization or university provides the greater initiative or commitment.

In the long run, however, sustained program implementation or school change is likely to require a more central, creative role from within schools. This point is perhaps best demonstrated by the diverging experiences in the schools involved in the Chicago Teachers' Center SDDAP project. Wells Academy staff became an energetic and creative force behind the school-within-a-school concept, and signs of instructional innovation and student enthusiasm for the program were evident. In another school, however, Teachers' Center staff remained in effect an outside party and continually tried to coax reluctant school leadership toward the program model. If school leadership is resistant to change or if teachers have been burned out by demands for their involvement in one innovative reform after another in the past, an outside stimulus is unlikely to drive reform.

2. Controlling Staff Resources Is Important to Program Success

The experiences of SDDAP projects highlight the importance of getting and keeping appropriately qualified and motivated staff in programs that differ from regular school programs. Project leaders in some sites managed to gain and maintain the freedom to recruit and attract teachers who were interested in working with at-risk youths, willing and able to devote time and energy to developing challenging curriculum, and committed and skilled enough to make serious teaching their main classroom activity. In other sites, a combination of project designs and bureaucratic obstacles left innovative programs staffed largely on the basis of teacher seniority or administrative convenience. The quality of classroom instruction was clearly affected by the degree to which teaching staff could be chosen to suit the job.

The advantages of ensuring some degree of control over teacher selection were evident, for example, in the Seattle Middle College High School and Newark ACCEL programs. In Seattle, the school's principal managed to retain considerable authority over teacher selection and working conditions. Teachers' resulting energy, imagination, and serious devotion to their job were evident in the classroom. ACCEL recruited motivated teachers who volunteered to work in the program and were allowed to make substantial contributions to its design. Although the program was based on standard district curricula, teachers' motivation and commitment were evident in the serious, efficient use of instructional time in the classrooms and students' positive views about the program's academic content.

In other targeted projects, teacher assignments were less clearly based on teacher qualifications or interest. The contrast was clearest in several sites where teachers' seniority or need for classroom assignments to fill their work schedules were major factors in determining who taught SDDAP students. In these sites, we found shining but isolated examples of energetic, serious teaching. At least as often, however, we found classes in which little teaching or learning activity seemed to occur at all, and some cases in which disorder prevailed. Some students valued the personal attention and acceptance they found in these classes, but they also recognized the absence of academic purpose or content that we observed.

The issue of teacher selection was just as important in restructuring project sites, where full realization of the stated objectives would require substantial long-term changes in the practices of entire school faculties. One tenet of ED's demonstration design was that principals and teachers should have autonomy to determine curriculum and instructional strategies. At several sites, schools were at least partially empowered to do so by school-based decision-making policies. In no site, however, did building-level autonomy extend to staffing policies, which were tightly controlled by district or union rules, or both. Unlike some other experiments with school restructuring (Wohlstetter 1995), the SDDAP restructuring schools could not encourage the departure of teachers resistant to change or seek out teachers who supported the reform model.

The importance of maintaining program control over teacher selection can create serious challenges. Some districts allow alternative programs or reform initiatives to be created only if personnel policies that prevent program-level discretion from being exercised are maintained. Even when a small alternative program is given leeway to control its own staffing for some interim period, this control can become hard to preserve if the program's popularity begins to rankle other administrators who must live with less independence. A program conceived as a demonstration project with special funding may be granted unusual control over staffing, but efforts to institutionalize the project as part of the regular school program and ongoing local educational budget may trigger greater objections to project-level control over staffing decisions.

3. Alternative Programs Are Most Likely to Be Sustainable if They Benefit Regular Schools

Administrators of regular district schools often view alternative educational programs as a threat. To the extent that alternative programs reach out to students still formally enrolled but barely attending regular schools, regular school administrators may be concerned that their enrollments and related budgets will suffer as a result. The greater the publicity given to alternative programs, the more such administrators may feel that their own lack of success in retaining students is highlighted. If alternative programs have special control over staffing or other resources, regular school administrators may feel unfairly deprived. To varying degrees, these concerns were reported by several SDDAP sites.

To lessen these concerns, alternative programs can be established in ways that provide clear benefits to regular schools, in the form of useful services or financial advantages. For example, the Tulsa STAR program staff served youths who had dropped out or who were about to drop out in 14 area districts. Program staff consulted with regular school counselors before admitting any student who was still formally enrolled, to minimize sensitivities about STAR recruiting. More importantly, STAR staff provided testing and diagnostic services to area schools to help them determine how best to serve students who were having trouble. In addition, students who enrolled at the STAR program were formally enrolled in their previous

home high school, even though they attended no classes at the home school during their nine-week STAR tenure. Home high schools, as a result, continued to receive state aid for these students.

The Sweetwater Transitions Learning Centers in Chula Vista, California, are a unique example of how alternative programs can be structured to win support from regular high school administrators. The administrator responsible for the learning centers and other alternative programs instituted a plan that shared a portion of the state aid received by the centers with the regular high schools to which the centers were attached. This structure created an incentive for regular school administrators to support the learning centers generally and to favor equipping them well and staffing them with strong teachers.

C. SCHOOL INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS: AFFECT AND ACADEMICS

Most of the SDDAP project objectives involved two changes in the interactions between schools and students. The SDDAP projects were trying to (1) change the affective school environment for students, and (2) improve the quality and appropriateness of the academic curriculum and instruction students received. The SDDAP projects often succeeded in the former objective, but the challenges in achieving the latter were substantial.

1. Reducing School Scale Was Critical in Improving the Affective Environment

The comprehensive model ED envisioned in its specifications for the SDDAP recognized the importance of strengthening the basic environment for learning. ED called for efforts to create a "positive school climate" and to ensure that students attended regularly--a precondition for academic progress. Concern for students' affective response to the school environment was also clear in the emphasis ED placed on improving supportive services and counseling, and on coordinating existing services to students.

In the projects we observed, the single most important step to enhance the learning environment was reducing its size. The biggest difference between the 12 targeted project interventions and regular school programs was their size. Some of these targeted programs were alternative high schools offering

comprehensive secondary programs on a much smaller scale than the schools students had left. Others offered GED, re-entry, or enriched middle school programs in settings separate from and much smaller than students' former schools. In three targeted interventions--the Miami COMET program, Project ACCEL in Newark, and the Chicago Wells Academy school-within-a-school--scale was reduced by clustering students in smaller classes within the physical setting of the larger school. In restructuring project middle schools and high schools, the most common reform reorganized faculty and students into small, stable learning units to reduce the anonymity students felt and the typically impersonal nature of students' relationships with teachers and other students in large schools.

In focus groups, the SDDAP students clearly felt that they had been treated differently in the new program environment than they had been in the past. Students reported that project staff treated them as individuals and cared about them as people; in contrast, they complained that they had been treated as "just numbers" in the larger schools they had attended in the past. Students found greater acceptance from staff and more harmonious relations among students in the SDDAP projects. These differences no doubt result not only from the smaller scale of the school environment but also in some cases from the selection of caring and motivated staff. Furthermore, some projects carefully selected students who would be most likely to benefit from and appreciate a small-scale program.

Small scale seemed to drive other positive changes in school climate. In a smaller setting, teachers generally had more time to get to know their students and, as a result, may have been able to behave more caringly. The logistics of school life--policing hallways, clarifying classroom and other assignments, communicating with administrators and students--were generally simpler, perhaps leaving staff more time to devote to interactions with individual students. In a more personal and less anonymous setting, students appear to have felt more secure and less exposed to conflict than in some of the larger schools they had attended.

The benefits of reduced scale do not necessarily, however, include significant change in academic content or instruction. In an alternative program with the authority to recruit and select skilled and energetic teachers, their strengths may be well applied and perhaps even more evident in a small setting, with fewer administrative and discipline demands on their time. The SDDAP projects made it clear, however, that reducing the scale of the school setting does not necessarily enhance curriculum or instruction. Nevertheless, even in SDDAP projects that offered classroom instruction falling short of the goal of being challenging and interesting, the school environment remained supportive, accepting, and personal. These attributes are clearly among the more attainable elements of the comprehensive ED model.

2. Consistent Enhancement of Academic Instruction and Curriculum Is a Continuing Challenge

The emphasis on improving classroom instruction, and the apparent successes achieved, varied widely in the SDDAP projects. Four types of actions or, in some cases, fortuitous conditions, had the potential to promote changes in teaching and curriculum:

1. ***Assigning Strong Teachers.*** Many SDDAP projects included some extraordinary teachers. In the Griffin-Spalding Academy, we observed an English teacher engaging at-risk students in reading Shakespeare, and students spontaneously praised her for the demands she made on them. We saw a Dallas teacher make grammar lessons lively and engaging. In Seattle, we saw students emotionally and intellectually engaged in carefully prepared classes on civil rights movements in American history. A Newark teacher skillfully guided students as they worked on their own on a project about the solar system. Some projects took active steps to attract strong teachers; others simply benefited from existing teacher assignments.

2. ***Changing the Conditions for Teaching.*** Reducing the size of the learning environment changed affective conditions, as described earlier, and also changed teaching conditions in ways that allowed teachers to exercise their skills more fully. Block scheduling, which is often tied to small student groupings, gave teachers a chance to develop classroom plans more freely in Seattle Middle College High School, Central High School in Phoenix, and Grand Rapids (for some ninth-graders). Clustering students together for some or most of their classes, as in the Chicago project, created greater class cohesiveness and responsiveness. Creating teacher teams--as in Seattle, Santa Ana, and Chicago--increased the intellectual stimulation teachers got in the course of their work and perhaps affected their teaching approaches. Programs in which students worked individually with their teachers, such as the Sweetwater Transitions Learning Centers, removed the burden of classroom management and allowed teachers to concentrate on finding an instructional approach to suit each student. Reducing class size, as in the Miami COMET program, similarly lessened the demands on

teachers. In Newark, teachers had more time to plan their classes, in the form of reduced teaching schedules or paid summer planning time.

3. ***Changing Curriculum.*** In conjunction with changes in teaching conditions, some projects took steps to change curriculum for middle school or high school classes. Teachers developed interdisciplinary or thematic curricula in the targeted projects in Flint, Seattle, and Boston, and San Antonio adopted a motivational class curriculum. In the Miami COMET program, an innovative curriculum developed earlier, focusing on hands-on technology exercises, was adopted in the fifth-grade SDDAP classes. In parts of the restructuring project clusters in Santa Ana, Grand Rapids, and McCormick, teachers worked on developing cross-cutting, thematic curricula.

4. ***Developing Teaching Skills.*** Professional development activities in several restructuring projects focused on teaching methods. Grand Rapids teachers participated in sessions to help them develop alternative strategies for teaching the same material until students mastered the skills in question. Teacher teams in Santa Ana middle schools worked on creating interdisciplinary curricula to promote critical thinking and familiarity with technology, in the process working out new instructional strategies. In Phoenix, teachers were trained to lead "Socratic dialogues," in which students took active roles in framing issues and debating them. In San Juan County, Utah, experienced teachers served as peer coaches to help other teachers be more effective in the classroom. In Philadelphia, teachers worked with consultants to develop new instructional approaches and skills.

Some SDDAP projects clearly benefited from having effective teachers; others made changes that gave these teachers opportunities to plan and apply new teaching approaches. In general, however, the classes we observed fell short of the goal of being "interesting and challenging." Changing teaching conditions and adopting new curricula, or giving teachers a mandate to develop curricula on their own, seem to have benefited talented, energetic teachers and their students. These practices did not necessarily affect the academic aspect of the classroom experience with any consistency, however.

This observation, of course, reflects the complexity of teaching more than the level of effort and commitment project staff devoted to making their schools serve students better. Reorganizing school schedules, reducing class sizes, adopting new curricula, and finding ways to attract teachers to special programs require extraordinary efforts, persistence, and belief in the possibility of making a difference for students. In fact, some of these changes do have important effects on school climate and may strengthen students' sense of community and attachment to school. Yet, the SDDAP experience underscores how

daunting a challenge it is to promote effective teaching, particularly within the resource and time limits of a demonstration project.

Promoting effective teaching is clearly a larger challenge. Responding to this challenge successfully will probably require changing the undergraduate and graduate teacher-training systems, incentives for talented youths to enter the teaching profession, the general conditions and incentives for teaching at-risk students, and the resources their teachers have to work with in the classroom.

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APPENDIX A

PROFILES OF TARGETED AND RESTRUCTURING PROJECTS

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Project Succeed

GRANTEE NAME: Youth Development, Inc.

LOCATION: Albuquerque, New Mexico

SERVICE AREA: Four high schools and four middle schools in the Albuquerque Public School District

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: The Middle School Leadership Program

MODEL TYPE: Middle School Enrichment

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Project Succeed is operated by a non-profit organization, Youth Development, Inc. (YDI), with the Albuquerque Public Schools. YDI has provided a variety of community services in Albuquerque for over 20 years. The project includes two major components--the Stay-in-School (SIS) Program in four high schools, and the Middle School Leadership Program (MSLP) in four middle schools. Both were observed in field visits, but the impact analysis focused only on a sample of students entering the MSLP. High school principals did not believe there were enough candidates for the SIS Program to allow formation of a randomly assigned control group.

The original project design anticipated a program of parenting workshops and a program of elementary school tutoring by high school students. These two components, however, were not fully implemented. Parenting workshops were attempted but elicited little response, and budget problems constrained efforts to initiate the tutoring component.

Middle School Leadership (MSLP) Program

In each of four middle schools, at-risk eighth-graders attend a leadership workshop once every other week in place of one of their regular classes. In these workshops, students discuss trust, values, self-esteem, decision-making, and personal expectations. The purpose of these workshops is to improve students' communication skills, prepare students for the transition from middle school to high school, and encourage students' engagement in education. About 75 percent of the MSLP participants are Hispanic, about 15 percent white, and 9 percent African-American, Asian, Native American, and other.

Originally, it was expected that graduates of the middle school program would participate in the High School Stay-in-School Program, and be given preference for its slots if they were in short supply. However, MSLP students have not consistently been placed in the SIS program, largely because of frequent conflicts between the schedule of available SIS classes and individual students' other class scheduling constraints or wishes.

High School Stay-in-School Program

As part of its effort to address dropout risks at all grade levels, Project Succeed also includes a High School Stay-in-School (SIS) Program--actually the larger of the two project components. About 100 at-risk students at each of four Albuquerque high schools can participate in the Stay-in-School Program. The program offers special math and English classes, life skills workshops, counseling, and a work experience program.

The central feature of the SIS program is specially staffed, reduced-size ***classes in math and English*** just for program participants. In each school, most of the classes are taught by specially trained SIS teachers. The classes have about 15 students, and feature individualized and small group instruction. Classes are offered in grades 9-12, but most are taken by students in ninth and tenth grades. Students may take SIS classes in math or English or both, depending on where they have been having the most academic problems. SIS students attend all of their other classes with non-program students. SIS students in the SIS program also participate in ***monthly life skills workshops***. Students are pulled from their regular (non-SIS) academic classes to attend these workshops.

SIS students get ***increased counseling services***. They are assigned to their school's SIS counselor in addition to their regular school counselor. SIS counselors have caseloads of 100, compared with 400 for regular school counselors. SIS counselors determine service needs and locate agencies that provide needed services. YDI runs over 20 other social service programs for local at-risk youth--such as programs for substance and alcohol abuse, pregnant teenagers, residential treatment for violent youth, and gang intervention. Counselors are familiar with these YDI programs as well as other community resources, and can steer students to appropriate help.

The ***work experience*** option is the third part of the SIS program. Supported by the area's Private Industry Council (PIC) and JTPA, YDI provides jobs for 12 SIS students from each high school each semester. Students work 10-20 hours per week at a minimum wage job for one or two semesters. Following an orientation, students are placed at a work site. To keep their jobs, students must maintain a good attendance record at school. In addition to working, students are paid their regular hourly wage to attend four workshops during the semester designed to improve their general employability skills. The workshops cover topics such as work ethics, employment goals, values, attitudes, and general tips on how to succeed in the work place.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

About 45 percent of the 1992-93 funding for the SIS and MSLP Programs came from the $293,426 federal grant. Funding is provided by JTPA to fund students' work experience wages. Other resources are primarily in-kind. The Albuquerque Public School System provides classroom space and educational equipment as well as two of the program's eight teachers. In addition, several local businesses have supplied in-kind gifts that serve as incentives for students.

Before receiving the dropout demonstration grant, the program consisted of two teachers and a counselor whose time was split between two high schools. After receiving the SDDAP grant, the program expanded to include eight teachers and four counselors in four high schools. Grant funding also allowed YDI and the district to broaden the program design, adding the middle school component. Expansion of dropout prevention efforts to the elementary school level is still planned.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Youth Experiencing Success

GRANTEE NAME: Anne Arundel County Public Schools

LOCATION: Anne Arundel County, Maryland

SERVICE AREA: Anne Arundel County

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Not included in the impact analysis

MODEL TYPE: High school enrichment

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Youth Experiencing Success (YES) Program provides courses in English and mathematics to students who are behind in their high school credits. The classes are offered to students who already attend a secondary vocational program at the Center for Applied Technology North--one of the county's two vocational centers. Students are recruited into the program by a counselor, who identifies appropriate students by scanning student records. The program also receives referrals from parents, administrators, vocational and regular school counselors, as well as by student self-referral. Most of the students who attend are white males, with some small representation of white females and African-Americans.

Basic Program Design

Although the YES program has gone through considerable evolution, it has focused continuously on providing students with specially staffed academic classes and counseling. The program offers instruction in English and mathematics to vocational students who need to make up credit. Students needing English credit can take Applied Communications, English Literature, or American Literature. The two literature classes do not differ from the classes offered in the students' home schools, but the Applied Communications class is designed specifically to complement their vocational programs. Students behind in math credits can take an applied mathematics class, which teaches math as it relates to the vocational programs. The curriculum of each YES course is somewhat fluid, so students can use each class to obtain different course credits depending on what they are lacking. In the 1993 fall semester, 53 students were enrolled in at least one of the YES classes.

The YES program also provides students with support beyond academic instruction. A program counselor has an office on site, and works with students individually and in groups. YES staff monitor students' performance, home school discipline records, and attendance, and follow up on absences with telephone calls to students' homes. The YES staff also take students on field trips in an effort to increase career awareness and motivation--for example to a sailing class, an environmental park, and a museum of industry and technology.

The extensive parent outreach originally planned has taken more modest forms. The project director mails monthly newsletters to all parents of YES students, with articles on issues of potential interest such as stress management, home learning environments, youth depression, and positive discipline. Program staff also contact parents if students are misbehaving or are absent from class, and organize a back-to-school night and family picnics.

Changes in the Program

In 1989, the YES program began at one of the vocational schools in Anne Arundel county as a demonstration site for a project funded by the National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC). The original design stressed career experience. When the project was funded as YES by the SDDAP, the program expanded to the second of the two vocational schools in the county and changed its focus to academic instruction. The project discontinued its association with NDPC after the first SDDAP grant year. After the second SDDAP program year (1992-93), the program was terminated at its original location at the Center for Applied Technology South, because of conflicts between project staff and school administrators over program objectives and support.

Changes have also been made in the academic offerings. At the beginning of the grant, only an Applied Communications course and work-experience component for academic credit were to be offered. Currently, the program also offers instruction in English, mathematics, and U.S. history to vocational students who need to make up credit, but there is no longer a work-experience component. Interest in the math class has not been great--one class had only two students--so the course will be offered in future years as individual tutoring.

Although the program has been operating and enrolling students in classes, it has been mired in conflict. The people critical to the success of the program--program staff and teachers, and vocational school staff--have had difficulty working together to implement the program. There have been disagreements over project goals and staffing and governance of the project. These difficulties have affected the cohesiveness of the program.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In 1992-93, the federal grant covered 72 percent of the total budget of $349,000. (The federal grant was reduced in the next school year, because the program was restricted to one of the vocational centers.) The project staff consists of five employees: a project director, project counselor, data specialist, and two part-time teachers. The grant paid for salaries and benefits for these staff, as well as supplies and miscellaneous expenses.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Turning Kids Around

GRANTEE NAME: Georgia Cities in Schools

LOCATION: Five Georgia Counties

SERVICE AREA: Five Public School Districts: Burke County, Griffin-Spalding, Hancock County, LaGrange City, and McDuffie County

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy

MODEL TYPE: Alternative Middle School Program

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Cities in Schools (CIS) initiative encompasses activities in five school districts, but given their varied activities, the in-depth evaluation focused entirely on the Griffin-Spalding District. This district undertook a middle school project for retained seventh- and eighth-graders and a project for ninth- and tenth-graders who are behind in credits required to graduate. Together, the two projects make up the Griffin Spalding Academy; they are housed together in a church building and share faculty and principal. The middle school program accepts up to 25 students from each of the district's three middle schools and the upper-grade program enrolls approximately 40 from the junior high and high school. About two-thirds of students in the two programs are African-American, and the rest white. About 75 percent of the middle school students are African-American. Both programs attempt to accelerate students' progress so they can "skip" a grade and rejoin their age peers.

The CIS Griffin-Spalding initiative is a partnership. The educational programs are administered by the school district and all teachers are district employees. The local CIS Executive Director is a former school district employee. Social and support services are provided by district personnel and by the Division of Family and Child Services (DFCS). The district staff work with CIS to design and carry out the programs at the Academy.

Background of the Griffin-Spalding Middle School Academy

The Griffin-Spalding Project has evolved over time. Initially, CIS and district staff implemented the CIS SUCCESS Seminar (the core of CIS programs) as a 45-minute exploratory/elective class for at-risk students in each of the three middle schools. A teacher from each school was trained in the curriculum, which focuses on self-esteem and decision-making skills. In 1989-90, the SUCCESS curriculum was implemented in the three middle schools.

The state requires schools to offer electives in middle school, and principals thought that an entire alternative program would be better for at-risk students than a single elective class. This view led the

district to decide, for 1992-93, to drop the SUCCESS classes at the middle schools and instead create an Academy for seventh and eighth grade students who were two or more years behind.

Design of the Academy

The Middle School Academy was to be similar to the High School Academy, which began operation in 1991 as a part-day program, but when the Middle School Academy opened, both programs became full-day programs. They offer the academic courses required by the state, and a few electives. Students receive most instruction at the Academy, but go to their home school for extra-curricular activities and some electives. Social and health services are provided at the Academy. Academy teachers are expected to follow state curriculum guidelines and district attendance and discipline policies, but have substantial discretion over teaching methods. Academy staff generally espouse instruction that emphasizes "hands-on" learning and downplays traditional lecture methods.

The Middle School Academy is designed to "leap frog" students into the ninth grade to rejoin their age peers. Courses are consolidated and staff seek to teach the subject content of two grades in one academic year. Teachers--who work with both middle school and high school academy students--either volunteer or are assigned by the district; several were former SUCCESS teachers.

Continuing Evolution of the Academy Program

Several programmatic changes have been made. During its first year, the SUCCESS curriculum was woven into social studies. Beginning in 1993-94, in response to a request by CIS, staff began teaching SUCCESS several days each week as a separate class. Due to discipline problems, Academy students are no longer grouped by their home school. Because Chapter 1 services are offered at one middle school, they have been extended to the Academy. The Academy also added a part-time counselor from the Personal Growth Center to work with students and their families.

Other changes affected electives and entry/exit policies. Students at the High School Academy initially took a vocational course and home economics as electives. These have been replaced by speech, chorus, and ROTC--taught at the high school for all Academy students. Concern about some middle school students failing when they entered junior high school led to a decision in spring 1993 to allow some students to remain in the Academy, taking middle school courses in the areas they had failed and other classes with the ninth grade Academy students. A similar concern about catching at-risk ninth graders before they dropped out of school resulted in a decision to allow students to enter the Academy at semester break in January as well as in the fall.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

The grant to Georgia Cities in Schools for the 1992-93 program year was $374,452, of which $41,099 was allocated to the Griffin-Spalding initiative. The rest was allocated to the other four school districts and to the Georgia CIS office.

More than 85 percent of Griffin-Spalding's portion of the federal grant was used to pay for salaries and benefits of Academy staff. The remainder paid for staff training and travel, equipment, supplies, and contract services. Academy staff included two administrators, seven teachers and one learning disabilities specialist, and a family/agency coordinator. The federal grant paid for only 10 percent of all staff costs; the balance was paid from local school district funds.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Boston Alternative School Consortium (BASC)

GRANTEE NAME: Jobs for Youth-Boston, Inc.

LOCATION: Boston, Massachusetts

SERVICE AREA: Boston Public School District

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: JFY High School and the Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) University School

MODEL TYPE: Alternative High School

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

This project consists of alternative high schools affiliated with two community-based organizations in the Boston area--Jobs for Youth, Inc. (JFY) and Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). Students at these schools attend classes at the downtown offices of these organizations and are co-enrolled at Boston Public School District (BPS) high schools. For a short time, JFY also operated another alternative high school located at the Roxbury Boys & Girls Club, but this program was shut down because of under-enrollment and the withdrawal of teachers who had been provided by BPS. JFY and ABCD are two of very few alternative schooling options in BPS, an urban district serving a highly disadvantaged population. Most students at the schools are African-American.

JFY High and the ABCD University School serve an average of about 50 students each in their alternative programs, which operate from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm Monday through Friday. The teachers at the ABCD University School are BPS teachers, while JFY High hires teachers independently of the district (although the Boys & Girls Club used BPS teachers while it operated). Some students are recruited from BPS schools, often referred by BPS teachers or counselors, while others have already dropped out of district schools. Originally, students were to have been admitted only if they had already earned a specified minimum number of credits towards graduation in their BPS school--as a surrogate measure of ability to succeed in the programs. However, the programs found that students' ability to complete work was largely unrelated to the number of credits earned prior to entry. Therefore, the programs do not currently use students' accumulated credits as an admission criterion. In general, the schools accept any motivated student who has dropped out or who has emotional or attendance problems at their BPS school that make it likely that they will soon drop out or be expelled.

The basic service provided to students is an ***alternative educational curriculum***. At both JFY High and the ABCD University School, science and math classes use a competency-based curriculum. In these classes, students work at their own pace and earn credits based on the amount of work they complete rather than on the amount of time they spend in the classroom. In a few of these classes, a portfolio approach is emphasized; students complete different "projects" from a list of projects received at the beginning of the semester. To some degree, the curricula in certain classes incorporate an interdisciplinary approach.

Students can earn credit in either English or Social Studies in the Humanities class, and can earn credit in either Social Studies or an elective in the American Studies class.

Another part of these programs is their ***social services component***. Both JFY High and the ABCD University School employ a full-time case manager, who provides students counseling and referrals to social service agencies. Students may also see their BPS counselor, though not many use this option.

Finally the programs provide ***employment-related services***. Each Friday, JFY students attend a "World of Work" workshop. In addition, both JFY High and the ABCD University School have a job developer on staff. Students may also earn credit by working.

There are two major differences between the design of the program and the implemented model. First, in the initial program design, a three-part curriculum was proposed, with alternative curricula for students based on their ability and progress towards graduation. These were to have been a competency-based curriculum, a fully developed portfolio-based curriculum, and a basic skills curriculum. However, only one part of this approach--the competency based curriculum--has been implemented. In part, this is because the initial design did not include fully specified curricular models and the resources and personnel necessary to develop the curricula have been limited. Thus, the teachers at JFY High and the University School have been left in a somewhat difficult position--they have been given the freedom to implement innovative curricular approaches in their classrooms but they have also been given the responsibility of fully developing this curriculum. This is a task for which very few of them have been trained.

The second difference is that JFY was unable to maintain an alternative program located at a community-based site. A program was opened at the Roxbury Boys & Girls Club during the 1992-93 school year, but was forced to close after less than a year when BPS removed their teachers from the program, because they felt that attendance was too low to justify the expense of the teachers.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

The total grant amount for the 1992-93 school year was $186,093. Approximately two-thirds of the grant went to JFY for JFY High and the program at the Boys and Girls Club, accounting for about a third of the overall budget for these two programs, which was just over $400,000. The remainder of their budget came from other government grants, corporate and foundation donations, and contributions from BPS. BPS contributed three teachers to JFY for the 1992-93 school year who taught at the Boys and Girls Club site (since closed). The remaining funds were used to pay for the teachers and other staff at JFY High, materials and supplies, and building rent at JFY.

ABCD received the remaining third of the federal demonstration grant for its University School. This constituted about a quarter of the University School's overall 1992-93 budget of $254,000. The major other source of funding was BPS's contribution of funding for 3 1/2 teachers, which constituted 65 percent of the overall budget (these teachers are still at ABCD). ABCD also received a City of Boston grant to help with the running of the University School. The federal and city grants combined to cover all non-instructional expenses of the program.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Northeastern Illinois University Dropout Prevention Educational Partnership Program

GRANTEE NAME: Chicago Teachers' Center/Chicago Public Schools

LOCATION: Chicago, Illinois

SERVICE AREA: Three Chicago high schools (Lakeview, Juarez, Wells Academy)

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: School-within-a-School at Wells Academy

MODEL TYPE: High School Enrichment

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The dropout prevention project of the Chicago Teachers' Center and Northeastern Illinois University is a partnership with Chicago Public Schools, three businesses, and six community-based organizations. The project emerged from a study, funded by a Hispanic Policy Development grant, to develop a program to address the needs of at-risk high school students.

The project includes one or more of five components at each of three high schools--curriculum emphasizing higher order thinking skills and opportunities for accelerated learning; attendance monitoring and outreach; family outreach and training; counseling and social services; and career awareness and preparation. The high schools use blocked scheduling--keeping students together in a group for particular classes--to deliver specialized services, promote a community of support for group members, and encourage at-risk students to be more engaged in school. The model was implemented in different ways and degrees in the three schools--Lake View High School, Wells Community Academy, and Benito Juarez High School. Although all three high schools were observed in site visits, only the Wells Academy program was included in the impact analysis; at the other schools, implementing the random assignment design accurately proved impossible.

Wells Academy: School-Within-a-School Program

The program at Wells Academy groups selected students--about 85 percent of whom are Hispanic--in freshmen year for English, life science, algebra, art, and home room. As sophomores, the students are grouped for English, geometry, and home room. Juniors attend a common English class and home room. When the program was first implemented, participating seniors took the same creative writing class, but this component and life science for freshmen have been eliminated due to budget cuts. The blocked scheduling arrangements allow a core of teachers to monitor and get to know particular students and give students a chance to form close bonds with each other.

The goal of the program is to provide students with a feeling of school membership and to engage them academically through innovative projects and curriculum. Membership is promoted through formal

team training, home room discussions, field trips and assemblies, and special classroom projects such as desktop publishing. Other features include small class size and extra resources, such as links with social service agencies, additional counseling, and tutoring.

Lakeview High School: Freshmen Curriculum Project

At-risk students identified for the Freshman Curriculum Project and limited English proficient (LEP) program are scheduled in blocks for home room, English, math, science, and social studies. Freshmen participate for one year and limited English proficient students continue in the program until teachers feel they have the skills necessary to succeed in the regular classroom. Teachers may recommend that some other students continue in the program as sophomores--block-scheduled together for U.S. history, geometry, English, architectural drafting, and home room. The blocked program was developed to enable freshmen teachers to work together to help incoming students make the transition into high school and improve their academic success. The blocked scheduling system emphasizes close peer and student-teacher relationships and enables teacher teams to work together on curriculum and individual students' problems.

Benito Juarez High School

The program at Benito Juarez High School was designed to replicate the School-Within-a-School model at Wells Community Academy. However, due to budget cuts, the academic features of the project have been modified, and it now consists of in-class tutoring in two English classes and an algebra class. Students selected for the program are blocked together for the English class.

Other Components

The Chicago project also supports other programs, including a summer school; a career awareness program for juniors and seniors; gang intervention; parent conferences; a social service network involving community agency partners; student mentoring; and the Dropout Retrieval Program, which organizes community outreach to refer dropouts to appropriate programs. The project works with feeder elementary schools to offer orientation and transition programs for at-risk eighth graders and their parents. A key element is Project SOAR, a summer orientation program offering activities to ease the transition to high school, including orientation sessions, field trips, practical learning experiences, computer education, and creative writing.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In the 1992-93 school year, the dropout prevention project had a budget of $460,406. The federal grant provided for the project director, a facilitator and an attendance coordinator at each one of the project schools, part-time in-school coordinators at each school, and one computer specialist and one curriculum specialist shared among the schools.

The program at Wells Community Academy accounted for 31 percent of the total project budget. In addition to the staff positions, project funds paid for materials, substitute teachers, miscellaneous expenses, and summer programs.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Clark Academy/Merry Middle School Academy

GRANTEE NAME: Cincinnati Public Schools

LOCATION: Cincinnati, Ohio

SERVICE AREA: Cincinnati Public School District

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Not Included in Impact Analysis

MODEL TYPE: Alternative High School

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Cincinnati project originally included two main components, Clark Academy, and Merry Middle School Academy, which closed at the end of the 1992-93 school year. Currently, in addition to Clark Academy, the project operates an off-site day care center serving Clark Academy students. Clark Academy's student body is about 70 percent African-American, 12 percent white, and the remainder Hispanic. It was originally to have been included in the impact analysis, but was dropped because too few applications were received to provide an acceptable basis for random assignment or an adequate sample size.

Clark Academy

Clark Academy is a highly structured alternative high school with a strong emphasis on academics. It draws its target population of dropouts and near dropouts who are judged to have a reasonable chance of benefitting from the program from all secondary schools in the district. A key element of the program is the strong psychological bonds among the students and staff that develop in the school's warm and supportive atmosphere and small setting; the Academy's total enrollment is generally about 200. Staff work together as a team and develop a family-like concern for individual students. The lack of distractions near the school's somewhat isolated campus helps to alleviate discipline problems by encouraging students to focus on school.

Clark Academy tries to offer the range of academic courses typical of a small, comprehensive high school. As in a regular high school, students' programs are developed by a counselor and vice principal based on students' course requests and a review of their records. Supported by a site-based curriculum restructuring committee, the program is moving toward outcome-based education in all subject areas. Curriculum is somewhat limited by size and budget. For example, chemistry is offered, but the laboratory work is severely limited due to a lack of facilities. Subjects like math and English are easier because they are inherently less expensive to present.

A key element of the academic program at Clark is Strategies and Techniques for the Advancement of Reading (STAR), which doubles the amount of time devoted to reading and language for certain

students. Students who are at least two years behind their grade level in reading and language are grouped in STAR classes. With 15 students, STAR classes are smaller than other Academy classes, which generally have about 20 students.

In addition to STAR, supplementary programs at Clark Academy include mentoring and tutoring services provided by employees of a major national accounting firm and other businesses under the Partners in Education Program. Mentoring may involve taking students to social, cultural, or sporting events. In addition, a student may shadow his or her mentor for a few hours at work. Clark also schedules some group activities for mentors and students. Tutoring involves a less intense relationship than mentoring. Tutors go to Clark one day each week on a regular schedule to assist students with basic skills, to provide help with homework, and to help with the state proficiency tests.

The dropout demonstration grant also funds a day care center which provides informal parenting education for teen parents who attend Clark and day care services for the children of Clark students. Center staff also coordinate needed social services for families who use the day care. A school bus transports students between the center and Clark Academy.

Merry Middle School Academy

The connection between Clark and Merry Middle School Academy is that Merry was intended to provide early intervention and lay a foundation with younger children so that the need for programs such as Clark would not be so great. However, Merry Middle School closed at the end of the 1992-93 school year and the middle school academy program was transferred to Schwab Middle School.

The primary intervention of Merry Middle School Academy was a STAR Program which operated within the regular middle school. As at Clark, students who were more than two years below grade level in reading and language participated in STAR. In addition to offering the STAR Program, Merry Middle School tried to meet student needs with flexible scheduling. For example, non-core subjects like music and PE were scheduled first thing in the morning so that students who came to school late would not miss out on basics. These interventions have been transferred to Schwab.

Apart from the STAR Program, the dropout demonstration grant supported a Parent Center at Merry Middle School. Parent Center staff made home visits, phoned parents, referred families to needed services, conducted parenting and computer education classes for parents, and organized social events for families. Services provided by Parent Center at Merry Middle School are now provided at Schwab Middle School as a part of the general school support program.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In the 1992-93 school year, the federal grant of $539,746 covered about 70 percent of the project's total budget; the remainder was covered by a U.S. Department of Labor grant. About 98 percent of the Department of Education grant was used for salaries and fringe benefits, and the remainder for supplies. The project staff consisted of 22 employees--an administrator, six teachers, and 15 aides.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: The Spruce Cluster Project

GRANTEE NAME: Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas

LOCATION: Dallas, Texas

SERVICE AREA: Spruce High School, Comstock Middle School, Florence Middle School, and 11 elementary schools

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Spruce High School and Comstock Middle School

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

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 (DISD). The project cluster consists of Spruce High School, its two feeder middle schools, and 11 feeder elementary schools in a geographically isolated area of the city. It serves an ethnically more diverse population than is the norm for Dallas neighborhoods.

School-Based Management

Initially, restructuring in the Spruce Cluster was focused around a DISD initiative called School-Centered Education (SCE), an adaptation of the Comer Process developed at Yale University. The district intended to phase SCE into all schools. The district hired staff from Yale to train administrators, teachers, and parents, who would gradually assume responsibility for governance, management, and decisionmaking at the school level. Training has consisted of one annual meeting with Dr. Comer and his staff, and weekly sessions for principals and counselors. The dropout grant supported other aspects of SCE, such as hiring extra counselors and social workers for the Assistance and Consultation Teams that are part of the Comer process. In 1993-94, DISD's new superintendent has backed away somewhat from the Comer replication, although not from school-based decisionmaking, which is mandated by the state.

School Restructuring

The autonomy inherent in school-based decision-making means that the restructuring process looks different in each cluster school, although common strategies are emerging. Five schools have adopted the Accelerated Schools model, which advocates accelerating, not remediating, unmotivated students. Several others have broken down their large schools into smaller groupings of teacher and students to facilitate interdisciplinary teaching and healthy student-teacher relations. Each school has a unique building improvement plan that must be approved by the DISD Board of Education.

Cluster schools receive some support from the dropout grant activities related to their individual building improvement plans. At the high school, the grant supports a head teacher for a school-within-the-school serving the most at-risk students. Many of the middle and elementary schools have received funds for training events related to their school improvement strategies. Parents of pre-schoolers who will enter

one elementary school have access to HIPPY, a program to teach parents how to enjoy books with their children.

Health and Social Services

Because of its geographical isolation, the Spruce Cluster area has had poor access to medical and other kinds of services. The dropout prevention grant supports a four-day-per-week school-based clinic staffed by Parkland Hospital. The heavily-used clinic operates two days per week in the high school and one day per week in each of the two participating middle schools. It provides physical examinations, pregnancy testing, and medical counseling. Staff prescribe but do not dispense methods of birth control, and offer family planning counseling.

Day care is provided for about 25 teen mothers at Spruce High School. Mothers must attend an afterschool parenting class. As required by the Comer model, every cluster school has an Assistance and Consultation Team (ACT) composed of school counselors, mental health professionals, and teachers. These teams develop strategies to improve school climate and intervene with students whose behavior interferes with their performance in school.

Improved School Climate

Although much of the restructuring activity in the Spruce Cluster is school-based, the grant has also supported strategies to increase communication within and among schools and between schools and community. A community parade has been held to kick off the school year. All schools were provided with fax machines and automated telephone equipment for follow-up on absentees, homework hotlines, and encouraging parent attendance at PTA meetings. The project also sponsors the Diverse Intercultural Awareness Leaders (DIAL) program, an effort to build understanding among students of different races and ethnicities. Juniors and seniors with strong leadership qualities attend a summer retreat where they learn to appreciate cultural diversity by working and living with students of different backgrounds. During the following school year, these students visit ninth grade classrooms to lead discussions about prejudice and racism with younger students.

Professional Development

The university's facilities are used for summer retreats for teachers, administrators, and parents from each of the cluster schools. Participants in these activities live in dormitories on the campus for several days, and have developed action plans for school restructuring and improvement.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

Southwest Texas State University reported that the dropout grant of $1,074,370 in 1992-93 covered 100 percent of project costs. However, this does not take into account the district's contribution of Comer-based training. About 62 percent of the total grant funding was committed to staff salaries, fringe benefits, and administrative costs. Funding for daycare services (16 percent) and the health clinic (14 percent) were the second and third largest spending categories in that year.

Staff supported largely or entirely by the grant include: a university-based coordinator; a site-based program coordinator, secretary, and evaluation assistant; part-time counselors and social workers in all of the schools. The grant covered 100 percent of the costs for these individuals.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Accelerated Academics Academy

GRANTEE NAME: Flint Community Schools

LOCATION: Flint, Michigan

SERVICE AREA: Flint Community Schools District

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Accelerated Academics Academy

MODEL TYPE: Alternative Middle School Program

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Accelerated Academics Academy (AAA) provides a self-contained, innovative instructional program to middle school students who are two or more years below grade level, to help them catch up to their age peers and make the transition to high school. It is designed to link the district's 23 well-established dropout prevention programs at the elementary and secondary levels. Students who are two or more years older than their classmates are identified from the fifth grade population in the district each spring. From this group, Academy students are selected based on assessments of their skills, and interviews with school officials, parents, and the students themselves. About 70 percent of the students served are African-American, and the remainder mostly white.

The Academy features a variety of personal and social support, the use of integrated/thematic instruction, academic counseling, and reduced class sizes and reduced student-teacher ratio. Students receive additional academic and social support through daily "family" group sessions.

Personal/Social Support

Students bring to the Academy a spectrum of unmet personal and social needs associated with economic disadvantage and dislocation--physical, sexual, or psychological abuse; substance abuse; delinquent and/or violent behavior; and a disrupted or dysfunctional family environment. The AAA is a self-contained program, occupying an entire floor of a former middle school. It offers smaller classes, individual education plans, and individual in-school and after-school tutoring to build positive self-esteem in a caring, supportive, and safe atmosphere. Interpersonal difficulties or conflicts are identified and addressed by instructional staff and a full time counselor and family services manager.

Integrated/Thematic Instruction

The five basic courses offered at the Academy are English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and art. Academy teachers in all subject areas utilize non-traditional instructional approaches, which include the use of cooperative learning groups, instructional technology, collaborative teaching, and

peer tutoring. The curriculum is flexible, and not driven by textbook content. Throughout the academic program, priority is placed on addressing student self-esteem and individual needs. Two paraprofessional staff members, called student advocates, assist teachers in classes and provide one-on-one tutoring for students.

The academic program offers alternatives to traditional, textbook-based instruction. Instruction in the various subject areas often centers on current issues and events. For example, when Hurricane Andrew struck in the Southeastern U.S. in the fall of 1992, several days of instruction focused on studying the geographic location and surrounding environment, understanding the dynamics of the storm from a scientific point of view, assessing the incredible financial cost of the storm's destruction, and writing stories and articles about its aftermath. In 1993, "The Family" was designated as a thematic unit. The long-range assignment was to purchase, furnish, and maintain an apartment for a family of four. Students applied mathematical skills toward budgeting, communication skills in dealing with conflicts over decisions needing to be made in the home, and artistic skills in decorating the home.

"Family" Sessions

A critical component of the Academy is the daily "family" session. During these sessions, groups of ten students and one project staff member meet for discussions, silent reading, cooperative learning, and other activities. In the "family" groups, issues of concern to the students, such as violence in the community, substance abuse, and family relationships, are discussed with no hierarchy of authority--an approach intended to communicate mutual respect and support.

Parent Involvement

Efforts are made to involve parents in the program from the beginning, including the selection process that brings their child to AAA. Although getting parents involved is challenging, AAA is meeting with some success in involving parents through a series of special academic and social events each year, as well as the ongoing attendance monitoring process. When a student is not present in school, parents are notified immediately and engaged in correcting the attendance problem.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In 1992-93, the federal grant covered about 60 percent of the overall project budget. Approximately 90 percent of the $421,136 federal grant went to staff salaries and fringe benefits. The remaining 10 percent went to travel, equipment, and supplies.

Project staff include a full-time coordinator (principal of the Academy), five full-time teachers, a full-time social worker, a full-time family service coordinator, and two student advocates (paraprofessionals). Apart from three teachers who are supported by other district funds, the federal grant pays all staff costs.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Flowers with Care Youth Services

GRANTEE NAME: Flowers with Care Youth Services

LOCATION: Queens, New York

SERVICE AREA: Area within commuting distance of program facility

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Flowers with Care Program

MODEL TYPE: Supported GED Program

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Flowers with Care Youth Services was founded in the 1970s as a floral industry job training program for ex-offenders. Flowers has evolved over time and now primarily considers itself to be a social service agency. It serves youth between the ages of 15 and 21, about 100 at a time, who can enter the program at any time throughout the year when openings are available. Applicants are referred to the program by word-of-mouth, the juvenile justice system, or by the New York City school system and various social service agencies. Applicants are screened out if they are severely emotionally disturbed, violent, or drug dependent, and are accepted only if they are willing to stay for at least a year. The program addresses objectives relating to personal development, academic progress, and job skills. The students served in the program are about one-third African-American, one-third Hispanic, and the remainder mostly white.

Program Objectives and Services

The primary objective of the program is to help youth become developmentally and emotionally mature enough to handle the rigors of "real" life. Staff seek to help participants become focused on life goals and disciplined enough to hold a job, behave responsibly, and become useful members of society. This objective is addressed by individual and group counseling sessions, adherence to a reasonably strict policy on attendance in the program's academic classes, and a clear requirement for respectful behavior on the agency premises.

The second objective is to provide participants with an educational credential--in the form of a GED. Although the counseling and education components are heavily intertwined, Flowers does not consider the attainment of a GED to be its participants' primary goal. The pursuit of a GED provides a framework for teaching participants about structure, discipline and goal setting. Although the counseling and teaching staffs have at times had diverging priorities, they have worked through their philosophical differences to provide an integrated education and social skills program. Potential applicants who are interested in achieving a GED in the shortest amount of time possible are discouraged from attending Flowers. Staff seek to impress on applicants the need to commit a substantial period to the program, and many attend for a year or more. This practice was developed because many youth need that much time to acquire the necessary social skills to function capably when they leave the protective atmosphere of Flowers.

The third objective is to provide clients with job training. Flowers with Care is developing a training program focusing on desktop publishing. This program was inaugurated in September 1993, as a tool to teach technical and business skills and further reinforce life skills.

The final objective of the program is to provide a sense of normalcy for the clients, many of whom have grown up too quickly in a tough urban environment. The program strives to incorporate games, clubs, and other activities like preparing for the SATs. Although classes are finished by 1:00 PM, participants are required to remain for lunch and an afternoon recreation period until 2:00 PM, and can continue to use the recreation facilities for clubs and other informal activities until 5:00 PM, a practice designed to keep them occupied, safe, and off the streets.

Additional adjunct services include serving the clients a nutritious lunch to help compensate for dietary deficiencies which may affect their energy levels and ability to learn, and access to health care through the weekly visits of a physician.

Implementation Challenges

The Flowers with Care grant application proposed to expand the program to serve 600 dropouts per year. This has not happened--in part because random assignment has diverted some applicants to the control group--but more importantly due to other types of enrollment problems. Although Flowers recruits aggressively during periods of the year when many students leave school-using local radio announcements--it remains quite dependent on its referral sources, which have not always supplied enough students to fill program slots. In the fall of 1993, for example, the opening of all New York City schools was delayed several weeks due to an asbestos crisis. The usual flow of disaffected students to Flowers with Care in the fall was sharply curtailed as a result.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In the 1992-93 year, the federal grant covered 80 percent of the total project budget. About 77 percent of the $435,922 federal grant went to staff salaries and fringe benefits. The remainder was budgeted for contract services, facilities and overhead costs, and supplies.

The project staff consists of 13 employees: an executive director, a program director, four teachers, four counselors, and three clerical staff. The 20 percent of the salaries and benefits that was not paid for by the federal grant came from special state and private project funds.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Grand Rapids Restructuring Project

GRANTEE NAME: Grand Rapids Public Schools

LOCATION: Grand Rapids, Michigan

SERVICE AREA: Ottawa High School, Iroquois Middle School, and 8 elementary schools

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Ottawa High School and Iroquois Middle School

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The restructuring project in Grand Rapids serves Ottawa High School, Iroquois Middle School, and eight elementary schools. These schools used to constitute a feeder cluster, but the district converted all middle schools to magnets, eliminating feeder patterns throughout the city. The project serves as the pilot site for a districtwide shift to outcomes-based curriculum and instruction. The primary restructuring strategy is extensive staff development. In addition, the grant supports staff who assist the cluster schools in achieving greater academic success with more students.

Curriculum and Instruction (OBDM)

Grand Rapids chose the Outcomes-Based Decisionmaking model (OBDM)--designed, field tested, and now being disseminated by an educational consultant. Three days per month, this consultant conducts staff development workshops and troubleshooting. The district's Staff Development Center also provides complementary workshops.

The OBDM model involves teaching for mastery. The first step is to define what students need to know and be able to do. Grand Rapids began with mathematics, convening a committee of teachers and administrators to prioritize desired outcomes by grade level. In 1993-94, cluster elementary schools and the middle school began implementing OBDM for math. Other subject areas are to follow. The cluster high school is, so far, not participating in OBDM.

OBDM is a process. All teachers at a grade level in a school agree to introduce instruction leading to a particular outcome at the same time. After a set period, students are assessed. Those who achieve mastery are regrouped into enrichment classes; those who don't are retaught using different instructional strategies and assessed again. No one fails in this system; grades are A, B, C, or In Progress.

Staff Development

A full-time staff development specialist from the district's Staff Development Center works with the cluster schools, organizing OBDM-related workshops and technical assistance, and arranging for other kinds of workshops that support implementation of the OBDM concept. Recent workshop topics have included interdisciplinary thematic instruction and cooperative learning groups. Teachers in the cluster

schools have the right of first refusal when workshops are offered; empty slots may be filled with staff from outside the cluster.

Integrated Services

The demonstration grant supports specialists who act as resources to cluster schools, teachers, students, and parents--a social worker, a student behavior specialist, a speech pathologist, and a substance abuse specialist. The specialists work with individuals and groups or, occasionally, a whole school on issues such as discipline policies, classroom behavior, and communication skills. The substance abuse specialist conducts workshops for PTA groups and students, and designed and implemented an elementary school-to-middle school summer transition program called Jump Start.

Attendance Monitoring

Eight attendance specialists serve the ten cluster schools. They are not truant officers; the district employs others for this purpose. The attendance specialists have come to play the role of advocate for students with serious attendance problems. They work with the family, the student, and the school to resolve the problems that cause chronic absenteeism. Some have taken on other responsibilities to improve school climate. At the middle school, the attendance specialist leads the after-school homework club staffed by volunteers; she has also been trained in conflict resolution/peer mediation and acts as a resource in this area for the entire cluster.

Restructuring Initiatives at the High School

The high school is involved with the dropout demonstration grant in two ways. A ninth grade program, involving about half of the freshman class and three teachers, began in 1992-93 and grew slightly in 1993-94. The program creates "family groups," employs block scheduling, and organizes instruction around cross-disciplinary themes. The second high school initiative is a mentoring program, originally limited to African-American male students, but now expanded to include any student who might benefit. The program is coordinated by the school's attendance specialist, who recruits mentors and matches them with students. The district intends for this program, now serving about 50-60 students, to become a model for other high schools.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In 1992-93, the dropout demonstration grant of $904,245 covered about 72 percent of the cost of the restructuring effort. Other support came from regular state and local sources, mainly in-kind contributions. About 82 percent of the total grant funding was committed to staff salaries. Staff training (11 percent) was the second largest expenditure category.

Staff supported largely or entirely by the grant include: project director, staff development specialist, social worker, behavior specialist, speech pathologist, substance abuse specialist, mentoring coordinator, and eight attendance specialists. The federal grant covered 72 percent of staffing costs.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Up With Literacy

GRANTEE NAME: Long Beach Unified School District

LOCATION: Long Beach, California

SERVICE AREA: Three elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Franklin Middle School Program

MODEL TYPE: Middle School Enrichment

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Up With Literacy emerged from concerns about a lack of organized after-school activities and the relatively unsafe neighborhood surrounding a particular Long Beach elementary school. The program began as a one site, drop-in after-school homework program at that elementary school and a neighboring recreational facility. During the early days of the project, tutors from Long Beach Community College and California State University at Long Beach worked with students on basic skills and helped with homework. Both the tutors and the students participated on a voluntary basis.

Favorable response from students, parents, and teachers led project organizers to seek grants to expand the program. With the prospect of the federal grant, local businesses and agencies donated money and the district agreed to make in-kind contributions to formalize and expand the program. Initial grant money was spent on Instructional Assistants to supervise tutors. With additional resources, the program expanded to include paid tutors ("College Aides") and to serve more schools.

Up with Literacy is a collaborative effort of several partners--the Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach Community College, California State University at Long Beach, and the Long Beach Department of Parks and Recreation. The program provides comprehensive dropout intervention services for high-risk students in three elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. By linking feeder schools from elementary to high school, the program is able to provide continuous attention to students as they progress from one level to the next.

All project schools were visited for the in-depth evaluation, but the impact analysis focuses on the middle school component. The high school component was less stably defined and had a less distinct "entry point" for random assignment. Franklin Middle School was judged able to recruit an adequate evaluation sample. Students served are over 60 percent Hispanic, about 10-15 percent African-American, 7 percent white, and about 18 percent Asian, Native American, and other groups.

Up With Literacy is primarily an academic "add-on" program. Students receive tutoring in basic skills during the last two periods of the school day and after school from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The program operates two to four days per week at the each of the schools. A summer career guidance and awareness program is also offered. The program's components are intended to give students the help they need to catch up with their age peers in their academic courses.

In-Class Tutoring/After-School Homework Program

The Up With Literacy Program provides in-class and after-school basic skills tutoring. An Instructional Assistant in each project school works with students and teachers to coordinate instruction of Up With Literacy students with the instruction given in their regular classrooms. College Aides--paid students from local colleges--provide individual and small group tutoring to program participants in their afternoon classes and after school. The Project Director oversees the coordination and organization of all project activities, and provides training for Instructional Assistants, who in turn train College Aides.

The after-school component includes tutoring as well as enrichment activities. The primary emphasis is on helping students with their homework assignments in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. The after-school sessions also include enrichment activities such as educational videos, guest speakers, computer keyboarding and word-processing instruction and practice, improvisational drama, strategic board games, and conflict management training. Whenever possible, the activities are planned around a monthly theme which supports a comprehensive unit, such as health issues or Black History Month. The after-school program also provides, in a separate tutorial setting, some assistance to students with limited English proficiency.

Students' social and health needs are recognized and attended to by a variety of individuals. Instructional Aides, College Aides, a Counselor Aide, and Community Liaison Workers try to recognize and meet both academic and non-academic needs of students. Project staff strive to create a supportive and caring environment where students form attachments with other students and adults, learn that it is acceptable to ask for assistance, and develop stronger self-esteem.

Summer Program

The summer program for middle and high school students operates from 8:00 a.m. to noon three days per week during the six weeks of summer session. The summer program centers on career awareness and guidance activities. Students take interest inventories; research job information; play career-oriented games; practice requesting and completing job applications; participate in videotaped mock job interviews; practice decision-making skills; discuss attitudes, values, and social relationships as they relate to jobs; and participate in activities to improve their self-esteem. Participating students also tour community businesses and industries and learn about the types of jobs available.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In the 1992-93 school year, the federal grant covered 75 percent of the total budget of $819,013. About 89 percent of the $614,260 grant went to salaries and fringe benefits, and the remainder to contract services, staff travels, equipment, and supplies.

The staff includes a project director, four part-time instructional assistants, two fulltime community liaisons, 63 part-time college aides, and clerical support. Additional district staff and school teachers also devote time to the project. The federal grant covered 94 percent of staff salaries and benefits. The remainder came from regular state and local funds and other federal project funds.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Horizon Project

GRANTEE NAME: Clark County School District

LOCATION: Las Vegas, Nevada

SERVICE AREA: Clark County School District

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Horizon High Schools (Four Campuses)

MODEL TYPE: Alternative High School

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Las Vegas dropout prevention project consists of two major components: the Horizon High Schools and COSTAR, a centralized student identification, diagnosis, counseling, assignment, and record-keeping system. Horizon High Schools operate on four campuses. The South Campus opened in the 1990-91 school year, and the North Campus the following year. Both are housed in portable classroom facilities and serve 200-300 students each. The newly constructed East and West Campuses opened in the fall of 1993 with a capacity of 310 students each. The sample for the evaluation impact analysis was drawn in school year 1992-93 from the North and South Campuses, and from all four campuses in school year 1993-94. The overall population of students enrolled is about 64 percent white, 16 percent Hispanic, 11 percent African-American, and the remainder Asian, Native American, or other groups.

COSTAR coordinates intake for all Horizon sites and other Clark County alternative programs. Students may go through the COSTAR intake process at any time of year, and can enter a Horizon High School at six-week intervals throughout the year. The overall services provided have continued to evolve. For example, in an effort to offer more comprehensive services to students, the project has refined its linkages with the adult education program and Sunset High School, an afternoon/evening alternative school. The project also coordinates with the three Opportunity Schools, a "time-out" program for students with severe behavior problems, in placing its students once they are released.

Horizon High Schools

The Horizon high schools offer students an alternative route to a high school diploma, as well as support services. Although the four Horizon High Schools vary somewhat in their implementation, each campus provides the same basic program of required district curriculum and electives, as well as support services, and on-site day-care for the children of teen parents who attend the schools. The Horizon schools operate from 7 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. daily, with extended days available to some students until 4:00 PM. A school success monitor is available at each campus to oversee student attendance, and on-site social workers are available to connect students with needed services.

Horizon High Schools clearly differ from the Clark County School District's regular high schools in their class schedule. Horizon schools lengthen each class from 50 minutes to 75 minutes and reduce the number of courses each student takes at one time from six to four. Classes are completed in six-week cycles; students earn quarter credits in six weeks instead of half credits in eighteen. Horizon students thus earn credits toward graduation even if they can only attend consistently for six weeks. This schedule is called an "accelerated curriculum."

Horizon High Schools also emphasize different instructional methods and flexible enrollment options. Horizon teachers describe their approach as emphasizing cooperative learning, small-group instruction, and hands-on experiences. The Horizon Schools also give students opportunities for independent study and vocational/technical courses provided through cooperative arrangements with area vocational high schools.

Differences in age, size, location, and leadership are reflected in some differences in program implementation across the four campuses. All four campuses offer classes for limited-English students, and all except North provide some special education services. However, the campuses offer various vocational courses, including culinary arts and marine mechanics at South, building maintenance and office skills at East, carpentry at North, and graphic arts at West. In addition, the East and West campuses house the Sunset High School, which operates from 3:00 to 9:30 PM.

COSTAR

COSTAR refers students to alternative education programs in the Clark County School District, including the Horizon High Schools. Students may be referred to COSTAR by a variety of sources, including school counselors or principals at regular high schools, the staff of other alternative programs, and probation officers. They may also hear about the program by word-of-mouth and come to the program through self-referral. Students meet with a COSTAR counselor for an academic assessment and referral. Students with behavioral problems may be referred to an administrative specialist for school success, or a special education facilitator.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In the 1992-93 school year, the federal grant covered only 21 percent of the total budget for the Horizon High Schools. About 30 percent of the $682,754 federal grant went to COSTAR, including salaries for two administrative specialists, three clerical staff, and equipment. District funds paid for the three COSTAR counselors. The remainder of the grant went to the Horizon sites for daycare staff, administrative specialists for family relations, clerical staff, equipment, and supplies. In all, the grant paid for 18 percent of staff salaries and benefits, with the remaining 82 percent paid for through regular district resources.

The Horizon staff consisted in 1992-93 of 55.5 full-time equivalent employees--4 administrators, 23.5 teachers, 2 school success monitors, 7 counselors, 4 specialists, 4 daycare aides, and 11 clerical staff. These staff served an average student population of 640 students. Project staff grew in the 1993-94 school year to 102 full-time equivalent employees, serving an average population of 990 students, as enrollment at the newer East and West Campuses increased.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: New Visions

GRANTEE NAME: McCormick County School District

LOCATION: McCormick, South Carolina

SERVICE AREA: The elementary, middle, and high schools of the McCormick district

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Not included in impact analysis

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

New Visions provides an overarching structure for a variety of integrated, systemic improvement efforts intended to reverse a history of educational failure in this small, rural district. All three of the district's schools and virtually every aspect of its educational program are involved in New Visions. Project efforts generally involve changes in school governance, curricular and instructional reform, and activities focusing on parent involvement and enrichment.

School Governance

New Visions has grouped all teachers into two types of teams--by grade level and by curricular area. The teams are responsible for reviewing their past procedures and assumptions and then designing and implementing changes that will improve students' learning of both basic and advanced skills. The central office works with the teams to obtain the training and other resources that each team decides it needs to plan and then to implement needed educational changes.

To permit the teams to function effectively and to improve their capacity to work with their principal and central office, the district has adopted a strategy of participatory management. Monsanto Corporation, which has a large plant nearby that recently instituted participatory management, is providing intensive two-day training sessions for all of the district's administrators, teachers, and aides.

Curricular and Instructional Reform

The instructional teams are developing curricular frameworks that are expected to promote greater integration across subject areas, in large part through the use of cross-cutting thematic units. Subject-area specialists from nearby colleges and universities work with team leaders and review drafts of the frameworks and curriculum products.

In a major effort to infuse technology throughout the curriculum, each school now operates at least three computer labs. Used so far mainly for drill and practice exercises, the computers are popular with students and parents, who can borrow computers to use at home with their children. In addition, the district has used state funds to purchase technical equipment for its applied science and math classes.

Efforts undertaken with the support of this grant are complemented at the high school level by the district's work on developing a Tech-Prep program in collaboration with a nearby technical college. Supported by investments in new equipment, high school teachers have adopted several new applied courses, including Applied Physics, that are especially popular with students.

Parent Involvement and Enrichment Activities

A Mother-Child-Home program uses a cadre of home visitors to promote effective parenting and preschooler language development. This effort is coordinated with an Even Start/Head Start collaborative project. These activities have fostered greater coordination between Head Start and the elementary school.

In addition, the project has initiated nonacademic support services for disadvantaged students in middle school and high school. These services include activities intended to develop girls' self-esteem and prevent teenage pregnancies.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In 1992-93, the dropout demonstration grant of $262,127 covered 30 percent of the total cost of McCormick's restructuring project. Regular state and local education funds accounted for more than half of the total cost of the project. About 33 percent of the grant was applied toward staff salaries and benefits, and 30 percent went toward the purchase of new equipment, primarily computer hardware and software.

Staff supported entirely or in part with grant funds include the project director, a Director of Instruction, and three home visitors for the Mother-Child-Home program. The federal grant covered just 15 percent of the project's personnel costs.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Public/Private Partnership to Benefit Youth At Risk of Dropping Out

GRANTEE NAME: Cities in Schools of Miami

LOCATION: Dade County, Florida

SERVICE AREA: Dade County Public School District

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: The COMET Program in seven elementary schools, and the Corporate Academy

MODEL TYPE: Elementary School Enrichment Program, and Alternative High School

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

There are two components of the Cities in Schools (CIS) project--the Corporate Academy and Project COMET. The Corporate Academy is an alternative high school for at-risk students in the northern half of Dade County, founded jointly in 1989 by the Dade County Public Schools (DCPS), Burger King Corporation, and Cities in Schools of Miami. Project COMET--Career Opportunities Motivated Through Educational Technology--is an enrichment program for fifth graders that emphasizes hands-on activities by students in a career lab. The student population in both programs is multicultural, with African-American, Hispanic, and white students heavily represented. Two COMET schools also have substantial Haitian populations.

The Corporate Academy

The Corporate Academy features small class size, a family-like atmosphere, and opportunities for work experience. The ***academic program*** at the Corporate Academy is similar to academic programs at other DCPS schools, except that classes are smaller (10-15 students per class instead of 30). The curriculum includes career counseling and employment preparation. There is also a ***work experience component***; about 25 percent of students participate, attending school for only five out of six periods, and then going to an after-school job for which they receive credit.

The Corporate Academy serves about 120-140 students who have met at least two of the eight state "at-risk" criteria. They must be motivated and have no significant behavioral problems. The school is accommodated in part of a synagogue, where facilities are somewhat limited in comparison with regular DCPS schools; there are no lab facilities, the library is just being developed, and there is no permanent space for fine arts teachers.

The COMET Program

The COMET program features an in-class career lab, a low student/teacher ratio, and a social services component. The full COMET Program operates in ten DCPS elementary schools, though there are

COMET programs with the social services component in an additional 67 schools and similar career labs alone in another 32 schools in Dade County.

At each COMET school, there is a single COMET classroom serving 16 fifth-grade students. Students have regular classwork in the morning, but on three or four afternoons a week (for a total of 120 minutes a week), students perform hands-on work in a career lab located in the classroom, working their way (over the course of the school year) through various lab stations, where they perform simple tasks associated with different occupations such as cosmetology, optometry, typesetting, and dentistry. The program stresses an ***affective approach to discipline***, based on the analogy of students as employees. Students must apply for their "jobs," punch in on a time clock, be respectful of their employer (teacher) and fellow workers (students), and can be "fired" for inappropriate behavior (returned to the academic side of the classroom for a certain period).

DCPS uses an unusual method to raise funds for project COMET. The DCPS Career Awareness Lab Programs Office sells the COMET program to school districts in other areas. For $5000, customers receive training, the lab stations' "learning activity packets," and a list of equipment and materials and vendors. For each sale, the Career Awareness Lab Programs Office receives enough money to support its portion of COMET startup costs at one DCPS school.

Common Program Features in COMET and Corporate Academy: Social Services and Mentoring

At both the Corporate Academy and Project COMET sites, the program includes two additional components. As part of the ***social services component***, CIS provides five part-time case workers and one full-time case worker coordinator. They visit each school several times a week to provide counseling, coordinate outside services, and communicate with parents of students. CIS also coordinates a ***mentoring component***. Two full-time mentoring coordinators recruit, train, and supervise mentors for students at both the Corporate Academy and Project COMET schools.

The programs in Miami have been implemented very closely to the way they were originally designed. In fact, services have expanded. A second Corporate Academy was opened at Homestead High School in the fall of 1993 to serve at-risk students in the southern half of Dade County, and a third is scheduled to open in the fall of 1994 in central Miami.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In 1992-93, the federal grant covered 50 percent of the CIS budget for the Corporate Academy and Project COMET in ten schools. Funds were used for an extra caseworker, curriculum development, incentives and special events, and general CIS staffing, and to leverage additional money for the program from local groups and individuals. In-kind contributions included the time of tutors, speakers, and mentors, and donated equipment and training on its use.

The CIS budget (and in-kind contributions) covered only selected aspects of the overall program. The other major contributor to the program is DCPS, which provided teachers and materials to the Corporate Academy and a full range of educational services to Project COMET classrooms, since they are part of regular DCPS schools. CIS paid for the social services and mentoring components, and provided extra services and benefits to students such as incentive awards, field trips, and in-kind donations to schools from corporations and other outside sources.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Project ACCEL

GRANTEE NAME: Newark Board of Education

LOCATION: Newark, New Jersey

SERVICE AREA: Newark Public School District

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Project ACCEL in five elementary and middle schools

MODEL TYPE: On-Site Alternative Middle School Program

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of Project ACCEL is to allow students in the sixth and seventh grades who have been retained in grade once or twice to accelerate their studies and be promoted to their age-appropriate grade. Sixth-graders may stay in the program for two years to do three years of work, while seventh-graders do two years in one.

Project ACCEL was implemented in two schools in school year 1989-90 before the demonstration grant was received. With grant support, it covered four schools in 1990-91 and five schools in 1991-92. All five schools--some organized as K-8 elementary schools and some as grade 5-8 middle schools--are included in the in-depth evaluation impact analysis. Students are referred to the programs not only from within these five center schools but from about 20 other elementary and middle schools in the district. The students served are about 80 percent African-American, 15 percent Hispanic; of the remainder most are Asian or other minority groups and very few are white.

Key features of ACCEL are the approach to selecting students, the creation of a "mini-school" with small classes and a team of teachers, and intensive collaboration among team members on instructional as well as program management matters.

Student Selection

Project ACCEL students are selected by fairly stringent screening criteria, because program staff wish to spend resources on students who are likely to succeed in the brisk instructional tempo required to accelerate their studies. In the late spring, letters are sent to parents of eligible fifth- and sixth-graders in the 25 feeder schools for the five ACCEL programs. Interested parents must complete an application for the child. The child must have an interview with an ACCEL teacher and a guidance counselor to see if the child has the maturity and social skills to be successful, and the child's current teacher must submit a written recommendation.

Parents and students must sign contracts agreeing to clear conditions for continued participation. Both students and their parents must indicate that they will abide by program rules. Parents must agree to sign

homework, attend at least three school meetings per year, and try to create a home setting conducive to school work. Students must abide by a stricter than usual attendance policy.

Creation of a "Mini-School"

In each of the five ACCEL schools, a team of four teachers is collectively responsible for the 50 participating students. Class size is thus cut to about 12. Unlike the standard Newark "elementary school model," students rotate among the four team teachers. Each teacher teaches his or her specialty--English, math, science and social studies, or basic skills. This arrangement is preferred by the team teachers because it allows them to capitalize on their strengths. A team guidance counselor dedicates one-fifth time to working with the group of 50 students, and works closely with the team teachers.

Teachers collaborate to link their subject matter thematically. For example, if the students are learning about the solar system, they may write about the solar system in English class and in the computer lab. In math class, they would work on calculating the dimensions of planets, distances between planets, or how much something weighs on the planets. In science class, they might construct a model of the solar system.

Teachers collaborate as well on program operation decisions. The team in each school has authority to spend a small discretionary budget each year for equipment and other resources. Decisions on student admission and student termination from the program are made collectively by the teachers and the team counselor.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

The 1992-93 federal grant of $296,065 was used to support ACCEL personnel costs and other activities. The project staff consisted of one coordinator and 20 teachers (four at each of five schools) who are dedicated exclusively to ACCEL. The project also used extra guidance counselor services and some of the district's Operations Director's time. Discretionary funds for each school and school materials were also included in the project budget.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Gratz Connection

GRANTEE NAME: School District of Philadelphia

LOCATION: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

SERVICE AREA: Gratz High School and its feeder schools

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Gratz High School and Gillespie Middle School

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Gratz Connection consists of Gratz High School and all of its feeder schools--three middle schools and 13 elementary schools. The overall objective of the Gratz Connection is to stimulate school restructuring and inter-school communication, with the ultimate aim of increasing the number of students who make successful transitions from one level of schooling to the next and who complete high school. In addressing these objectives, the project is also intended to make Gratz High School an attractive secondary school option for high-performing middle school students, many of whom opt for Philadelphia's magnet high school programs. The major components of the Gratz Connection include school-based shared decision-making by Gratz Connection Councils, a variety of staff development opportunities, the Parent Corps, and mini-grants to schools to support enrichment activities.

Shared Decision-Making

Every school in the Gratz Connection has its own council to coordinate restructuring activities for the school. Membership on the councils varies from school to school, but most have several teachers, the principal, and other interested staff members. The authority of the councils is somewhat limited, because the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers opposes giving schools authority over hiring, and the district does not favor site-based budgeting. As a result, the councils have been most concerned with fostering parent involvement, improving school climate, and redesigning their curricula within the district's frameworks. Some councils have begun communicating with other schools in the cluster to investigate how inter-school collaboration can help smooth students' transition from one school level to the next. One middle school council has led a movement toward block scheduling and thematic instruction. Another is developing a science focus, and the third is creating a new charter based on the Quality School concept. Consultants have been working with each council to help them in their restructuring efforts.

Staff Development

Staff development in support of restructuring activities is provided through several different channels. First, the project has designated a core team of teachers, called Gratz Connectors, from every school in the cluster (three from each elementary school, five from each middle school, and eight from the high school). The Connectors attend bi-monthly staff development activities, are expected to conduct "turnaround

training" for the rest of the staff at their school, and serve as resources to their colleagues. Staff development sessions occur during school hours and typically last an entire day. One permanent substitute teacher and two retired teachers funded by the project cover the Connectors' classes while they attend staff development activities. When they are not filling in for Connectors, the additional staff members provide support or coverage for other teachers and serve in other capacities such as attendance monitoring.

Two consultants have conducted many of the bi-monthly staff development activities for the Connectors and meet with each Gratz Council four times each year. The consultants specialize in training on team building, improving intra-school communication and climate, and restructuring schools to support new approaches to instruction. They introduce staff to theories of teaching and learning and challenge teachers to question standard practices in all areas of schooling. They also sponsored Project TEACH, a three-week summer program for students that allowed Gratz Connection teachers to experiment with alternative teaching strategies in a non-threatening environment. In addition, the Gratz Connection has sponsored staff development led by other private training organizations and by the central office. During the first three years of the project, most of the staff development has focused on strategies for improving school climate, establishing effective shared decision-making in each school, and training strategies.

Parent Involvement

The Parent Corps is the Gratz Connection's primary vehicle for fostering parental involvement in the cluster's schools. The Corps consists of one parent in each Gratz Connection school who serves as an attendance monitor in the mornings and attends adult education classes in the afternoons. Since parents cannot earn a regular wage or stipend from the project without jeopardizing AFDC or Medicaid eligibility, the project pays them each just $10 a day to cover their baby-sitting, food, and transportation expenses. Participating parents come to the school each morning and telephone the home of every absent child to notify parents. Each afternoon, they travel to Gratz High School to attend GED preparation or job skill classes intended to help them find jobs after they finish their one-semester session in the Corps.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In 1992-93, the dropout demonstration grant of $1,210,645 covered about 71 percent of the total cost of Philadelphia's Gratz Connection. Slightly more than half (55 percent) of the project's budget was dedicated to salaries and stipends for Gratz Connection staff; more than one-third (36 percent) paid for staff development providers.

Staff supported by the grant include the project director, permanent substitutes, and retired teachers. Grant funds were also used for mental health counselors who provided limited amounts of services to each school. The project also paid small stipends to Gratz Connectors. The federal grant covered 98 percent of staff costs.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Phoenix Restructuring Grant

GRANTEE NAME: Phoenix Union High School District

LOCATION: Phoenix, Arizona

SERVICE AREA: Two elementary schools, one junior high, and one high school

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Phoenix Preparatory Academy and Central High School

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Phoenix restructuring effort involves activities at Central High School, Phoenix Preparatory Academy, and Bethune and Heard elementary schools. A number of community-based agencies contribute to the effort. The initiative includes school restructuring, counseling, and promotion of community participation.

School Restructuring

The grant supports restructuring activities at Central High and Phoenix Prep. At Central, grant funding provides additional teachers who enable the school's ninth-grade "enclave" to offer smaller class sizes and an extra academic period. The enclave, which enrolls all freshmen, consists of block scheduling, smaller class sizes, an additional seventh academic period to help students earn more credits toward graduation, and thematic instruction. Instead of attending courses in traditional subject areas, freshmen receive some of their instruction in blocks (e.g., social studies and language arts are a two-hour "humanities" course). Enclave teachers attended professional development sessions during the first summer on Socratic dialogue, interdisciplinary instruction, and block scheduling to help them implement the model.

At Phoenix Prep, 1,400 students are divided into nine families, each with its own teachers, guidance counselor, and assigned administrator. Teachers in each family work in teams; each staff member has two planning periods--one for individual planning and one to plan curriculum and discuss individual students with their team members.

Counseling

Three transitional counselors are funded by the grant at the Phoenix Preparatory Academy, which opened in the fall of 1992. Including these as well as district-funded counselors, the school has one for each team of approximately 150 students. One of the counselors follows students to the high school each year, and then cycles back to the middle school when that class finishes freshman year. Counselors were given special training during the first summer of the grant period. The "outcomes-based counseling" approach used by the counselors entails something similar to an IEP for each student in three areas:

educational goals, career goals, and personal/social goals. Counselors work on these "competencies" in the classrooms with the teachers; in this way, they hope to monitor the whole student, using a proactive approach rather than responding to referrals.

Community Participation

Friendly House, a Latino CBO, serves students from the elementary schools and from Phoenix Prep after school, providing tutoring and help with homework. The Phoenix Urban League runs a program for parents at Phoenix Prep.

Arizona Call-A-Teen runs a transitional program for students who have dropped out of Central High School. Students receive instruction four hours a day, with an emphasis on individual attention and computer-assisted instruction. They are taught by certified teachers, and receive regular district credit for ninth grade once they demonstrate mastery. They can then return to Central to continue their education.

Chicanos por la Causa sponsors workshops, career fairs, and presentations at Phoenix Prep to complement the outcomes-based counseling program. They bring in prominent members of the community to speak on topics such as drug abuse, sexuality, and gang awareness.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In 1992-93, the dropout demonstration grant of $878,571 was used to supplement other resources used in the overall restructuring effort. Project staff estimated that the grant paid for about 58 percent of the total restructuring effort. Forty-one percent of the grant funds were used to help support the ninth-grade "enclave" at Central High School, paying for about 43 percent of the special costs associated with the enclave. The grant was also used to pay for three additional counselors at Central High, three transitional counselors at Phoenix Prep, extra ninth-grade teachers for Central High's enclave; and a project coordinator.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Early Identification/Intervention Project

GRANTEE NAME: Rockford Public Schools

LOCATION: Rockford, Illinois

SERVICE AREA: Four middle schools in the Rockford Public School District

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Resource classes in four middle schools

MODEL TYPE: Middle School Enrichment

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Rockford Early Identification/Intervention Project expands the district's program for at-risk elementary students to the four middle schools. The project focuses on providing small group services to at-risk students, including help with homework and career awareness activities, as well as instruction in ways to improve self-esteem, solve problems, and resolve conflict. The dropout prevention project operates in the context of other district reforms affecting middle schools. Most notably, middle school teachers and students are now grouped together into teams for instruction, to promote collaboration and camaraderie among teachers.

The original project plan called for services to two groups of at-risk middle school students. For students who were thought to need intensive services, the district proposed the full-day PRIDE program, in which ten students from each of the four middle schools would be assembled at one of the schools for a full-day program emphasizing accelerated learning strategies and an integrated core curriculum. This program, however, was eliminated when grant funds were reduced. For students with less severe needs, the district proposed and implemented a less intensive approach. The implemented program integrates students with their peers for most of the day and delivers specialized academic and non-academic services to them in a resource room during one period each school day. The project also provides a counselor in each middle school to monitor attendance, contact parents, counsel students, act as a school-family-community resource liaison, and help link elementary, middle, and high school programs.

A multidisciplinary team at each school selects students for the program based on recommendations from teachers, parents, counselors, and interested community agencies. The team considers at-risk factors such as non-attendance or truancy, low achievement scores, retention, and coming from a dysfunctional family when choosing students for the program. First priority is given to incoming seventh graders. The students selected for the program during the evaluation period--in all four middle schools--were about 40 percent African-American, 40 percent white, 12 percent Hispanic, and the remainder other groups.

Selected students attend a daily general studies class taught by a regularly employed teacher from the middle school staff. The general studies teacher focuses attention on remediating academic skills, and providing opportunities for students to enhance self-concept, interact with peers, and practice coping skills and decisionmaking skills. The teachers develop their own lesson plans, trying to focus each day on

activities with a particular objective, such as learning and practicing study skills, or building self-esteem. Some part of each class is dedicated to homework assignments and general discussion of how students are doing.

Project students receive additional support from their school's grant counselor. Grant counselors work directly with the general studies teachers in each school and develop materials to use in the program. They meet with the general studies teachers to discuss program issues and to address the needs of specific students. The grant counselors are also responsible for linking students with appropriate services, providing group and individual counseling, monitoring student attendance, making contact with parents and conducting home visits when necessary. The specific responsibilities of the grant counselor vary from school to school. At three of the four schools, the grant counselor supplements the efforts of the project students' other counselors. At one school, the grant counselor is the only counselor for project students, so her responsibilities include those of a general counselor as well as the specialized duties of an at-risk counselor.

With the exception of the decision to delete the PRIDE Program, there have been very few structural changes in the Rockford program. However, there have been several staffing changes which have been detrimental to the project. Each year, some of the grant counselors and resource teachers have left their positions. In several of the middle schools, each school year has brought a new cadre of project personnel. This has resulted in breaks in continuity and coordination between project staff and teachers in the middle school teams.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In the 1992-93 school year, the federal grant covered 74 percent of the total budget. About 88 percent of the $456,347 federal grant went to salaries and fringe benefits. The remainder was budgeted for instructional materials and general administration.

The project staff consists of 20 employees, most of whom are grant counselors and teachers. The federal grant covered 78 percent of staff salaries and fringe benefits. The remaining 12 percent of salaries and benefits was paid for by district funds.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Work, Achievement, and Values in Education (WAVE)

GRANTEE NAME: San Antonio 70001, Inc.

LOCATION: San Antonio, Texas

SERVICE AREA: Edgewood and Harlandale Independent School Districts

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Not included in impact analysis

MODEL TYPE: High School Enrichment

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

WAVE is a curriculum designed to build self-esteem and pre-employment skills and to help students explore career fields. The curriculum is developed by WAVE, Inc., a national non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. The project in San Antonio is an attempt to implement this curriculum through a community-based organization, San Antonio 70001, Inc., in two local school districts in San Antonio.

The WAVE curriculum was implemented at two largely Hispanic high schools in two separate school districts in low income, high-crime areas, where virtually the entire school population is considered at risk--McCollum High School in Harlandale Independent School District and Memorial High School in Edgewood Independent School District. The WAVE class is offered as a regular 55-minute elective class for credit to ninth and tenth grade students, who can choose WAVE from a wide range of elective subjects. The Texas Department of Education has approved the WAVE curriculum as fulfilling the career exploration component of vocational education programs in the state.

Originally, the plan called for a middle school WAVE curriculum to be implemented in grade eight in two middle schools; students would take Phase I of the curriculum in grade nine and Phase II in grade ten. However, the middle school WAVE curriculum had not been completed at the beginning of the grant period, and only one middle school--not a feeder school for either of the participating high schools--elected to participate in the program.

The WAVE curriculum focuses on the basics of finding and getting a job. The classes are intended to be highly interactive and involve substantial writing. However, there is a great deal of discretion left to teachers to determine what academic content is emphasized and how class time is allocated. Teachers draw heavily on their own supplementary materials such as newspapers and magazines, in addition to the WAVE workbook and teacher's guide, to engage students. Teachers bring in guest speakers and take students on field trips to give them opportunities to interact with professionals in workplaces. Teacher training for regular classroom teachers from Harlandale and Edgewood Independent School Districts is provided in intensive summer sessions by the national WAVE office. Additionally, technical assistance can be provided at the request of the local office or teachers.

The San Antonio WAVE program was dropped from the impact analysis component of the in-depth evaluation. Protracted negotiations over the implementation of random assignment prevented the start of sample enrollment in the 1992-93 school year. Agreement was eventually reached on the approach to identifying and assigning students to the evaluation sample in both high schools for the fall of 1993. However, the number of students volunteering for the class fell short of projections, and admission of students to the WAVE classes deviated from the random assignment results. These problems made it unlikely that meaningful impact analysis results could be obtained from this project.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

Staff salaries accounted for most of the project's budget. Staff included time of the WAVE director and the educational coordinator, and two part-time instructors. The remainder of the budget was allocated for staff training and travel, contract services, supplies and incentive payments to students. The federal grant accounted for more than half of the overall project budget.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Paradigm Shift

GRANTEE NAME: San Juan County School District

LOCATION: Monticello, Utah

SERVICE AREA: Three of the district's four school clusters

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Not included in impact analysis

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The San Juan County School District serves a small student population in a very large geographic area in the southeast quadrant of Utah. There are four clusters of schools, two on the Navajo Reservation. Three clusters are participating in activities sponsored by the dropout grant; the fourth is restructuring in similar ways with a state grant.

San Juan County's restructuring effort, called Paradigm Shift, emphasizes three basic areas of reform--the instructional process, school climate, and student assessment. The Paradigm Shift initiative grew out of previous district efforts to move toward school-based management and research-based instructional reform. It sets broad goals at the district level but leaves the definition of specific strategies for achieving them up to individual schools, which face different problems and serve quite different populations.

Staff Development

Staff development receives the greatest emphasis. In each participating school, one or two peer coaches have been identified by self-nomination and peer selection. Peer coaches received training from district administrators to act as facilitators in their schools. The general role of facilitator involves working individually with teachers in their classrooms--observing, giving feedback, and demonstrating innovative instructional techniques. In individual schools, the coaches may work with all teachers or only with teachers who ask for assistance.

A one-time, five-week summer training event in 1992 has been the most intensive staff development effort by the project. This session was planned and organized by the peer coaches in conjunction with district administrators and a consultant from the University of Utah. Building-level administrators and teachers worked on plans for improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and on strategies for improving school climate. The university consultant circulated among the schools over the five-week period. Individual schools also brought in other consultants to help them with particular kinds of strategies such as cooperative learning, higher order thinking skills, and uses of technology in the school and classroom.

Technology

Although the emphasis on creative uses of technology in the San Juan County schools (particularly the secondary schools) predates the dropout demonstration grant and is funded only partially through the grant, it is an important piece of the restructuring effort in the district. All of the high schools are at varying stages in developing new, well-equipped technology centers that will become centerpieces of the schools' programs. Elementary schools are involved as well, but with fewer resources and less elaborate plans.

Individual secondary schools have designed their technology centers in different ways. At one school, where the center opened in the winter of 1993, the center is designed to encourage interdisciplinary teaching. Another high school, on the Navajo Reservation, combined dropout grant funds, Chapter 1 funds, and other resources to construct an elaborate technology center around which the entire school program will revolve. It will focus on career awareness and will be organized around 11 competencies ranging from Navajo culture and human relations to more traditional content areas. Students will work together across disciplines to plan and execute projects designed to orient them to different professions. Architecturally, the center is designed to function like a business, with a reception area for orchestrating the flow of traffic and communications. "Shops" within the center will include a business office, video production and editing, radio broadcasting, communications, construction and manufacturing, transportation, and Navajo-inspired decor and architecture.

The project's plan is to have all schools and the limited number of higher education institutions in the area linked through interactive television in order to increase course offerings and the general flow of information to the remote rural areas of the district.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In 1992-93, the demonstration grant of $856,629 covered 65 percent of the total cost of San Juan County's restructuring project, with regular state and local funds accounting for the rest. Almost 82 percent of the grant was applied toward staff salaries and benefits. Other project expenses paid by the grant included restructuring consultants and professional development.

The project has a grant-paid project director and a support person. The bulk of grant funds are devoted to staff development activities. They cover the salaries of peer coaches, teacher overtime to participate in training, and substitute teachers to release teachers for ongoing staff development activities (each teacher is allotted five days of release time). The federal grant accounted for 95 percent of the project's personnel costs.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Santa Ana 2000

GRANTEE NAME: Santa Ana Unified School District

LOCATION: Santa Ana, California

SERVICE AREA: Five project schools in the Santa Ana District (1 high school, 3 intermediate, 1 elementary)

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Four of the project schools (1 high school, 3 intermediate)

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Santa Ana 2000 project is intended to change the educational experience of students by means of staff development, certain restructuring measures, added social and supportive services, and efforts to increase parental involvement.

Staff Development

Staff development to improve instruction is the primary intervention. Six full-time staff oversee this aspect of the grant (each of the five grant schools has a resident program specialist, and a sixth coordinates all of their activities). These specialists lead workshops, work with teachers in the classroom, and generally help teachers make the shift from traditional to alternative teaching styles. At all project schools there is a push toward thematic instruction and interdisciplinary teaming; program specialists help teachers make these transitions.

Grant staff from all schools meet weekly to discuss problems and concerns with the program. In addition, all project staff and school administrators hold quarterly meetings to address common issues, present timelines for activities and progress reports, and jointly plan staff development priorities.

School Restructuring

Each project school has made a variety of additional changes to enhance learning. At the elementary level, the changes include early intervention for language development and reduction in class size in language arts (to 15:1) through the use of additional teachers. Changes at the intermediate level include a year-round calendar for two of the three schools and one-on-one tutoring for at-risk students. Changes at the high school include one-on-one tutoring and a shift to block scheduling.

Social Services

The grant has supported counseling services and assistance from an outreach specialist and a nurse who conducts a variety of services at all five schools--health fairs put on with help from agencies like the Red Cross; preparation of health materials and a video library in a mobile van for parents (in collaboration with a CBO called Healthy Tomorrow); parent education in collaboration with school site nurses; and coordination of a traveling "show" called Color Me Healthy. All of these activities are available in Spanish and some in Khmer. These staff also coordinate a "parent empowerment day" each year; in the spring of 1993, 40 community agencies and over 2,000 parents participated in the all-day affair.

Parent Involvement

A project outreach consultant makes contact with parents at all the sites. She visits homes, coordinates a self-esteem program (with an outside consultant) called "Go For It!", and works with the parent advisory councils at each school. The half-time psychologist leads workshops for staff on development and learning stages, counsels students and families at project schools; and supervises three family counseling interns (one at each intermediate school).

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

The federal grant of $1,300,942 in 1992-93 paid for 100 percent of the salaries of the project director, the six program specialists, the outreach counselor, the nurse, the half-time psychologist, and the counseling interns. Beyond this, approximately $50,000 is allotted to each school for staff development activities, substitute teacher salaries, and travel.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Middle College High School (MCHS)

GRANTEE NAME: Seattle Public Schools

LOCATION: Seattle, Washington

SERVICE AREA: Seattle, Washington

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Middle College High School

MODEL TYPE: Alternative High School

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Middle College High School (MCHS), operated by Seattle Public Schools in cooperation with Seattle Central Community College, helps dropouts and at-risk students between the ages of 16 and 20 graduate from high school and get some college credits. Located on the community college campus, MCHS enrolls about 85-90 new students each quarter, and had average total enrollment of about 200 students in 1992-93. As part of the admissions process, a panel including current and former MCHS students and a counselor interviews applicants. The students selected for the program are about 49 percent African-American, 17 percent white, 6 percent Hispanic, and 28 percent other groups, largely Asian.

Important features of MCHS are a theme-based curriculum, alternative teaching strategies, use of technology in the educational program, counseling, parent and community involvement, an internship program, and linkages with various support services.

Curriculum and Instruction

MCHS emphasizes thematic curricula in two core modules, math/science and humanities. Teachers develop curriculum around a unifying theme each quarter. In math/science, themes have included human perception, genetics, and alternative energy. A sample theme in humanities is "rights and responsibilities." The humanities program seeks to promote critical thinking and skills in evaluation, essay writing, note-taking, and reading. Instructional materials come from various sources, including primary sources. Staff try to provide many opportunities for hands-on, experiential learning.

Team teaching and individual attention are key features of the MCHS program. Two teachers generally work with each class of 25-30 students, and are assisted in the classroom by paid tutors (often students from the community college). Within the team-taught classes, students frequently participate in cooperative learning groups. Instructional planning is highly individualized, and students can receive individual help during the school's afternoon advisory period.

Use of Technology in the Educational Program

MCHS makes substantial use of computer-based technology. For two years, mchs obtained broadcast video services via EDUNET, and downloaded courseware from satellites. The school also relied heavily on software from the Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) to support students' regular mathematics instruction, and used computer-assisted instruction to help some students with limited English proficiency. These experiences with remote network-based instructional services and reliance on CCC software were not entirely successful. The network contracts were terminated, and MCHS has restructured its use of computer technology, moving away from large, prepackaged learning systems in favor of free-standing PCs and a variety of commercially-available software.

Parent and Community Involvement

MCHS involves parents and the community through its Parent Scholars Program and a community mentoring program. The Parent Scholars Program offers paid five-hour a week positions to parents of MCHS students. Parents earn $5.00 an hour doing tasks such as working in the office and monitoring the school's halls and grounds. Some parents provide direct instruction--for example, teaching typing, lecturing on AIDS, or teaching CPR. The mentoring program, in 1992-93, involved up to 45 adults from a variety of professions; it links students with volunteers from the community who meet with students one-on-one for tutoring and working through personal issues.

Internship Program

MCHS offers a career exploration and internship program as a credit-bearing elective. Following an orientation class, students are placed for one semester in private firms and government agencies, where they work four hours per day, four days per week, and are paid $5.20 per hour. The fifth day they attend a career awareness and employability skills class. In 1992-93, the program developed 120 internship opportunities. Students were placed in business offices, hospitals, law offices, doctors' offices and clinics, software firms, and government offices.

Other Services

MCHS offers a variety of support services--a group counseling program as an elective course, a drug and alcohol prevention program, and AIDS education. Program linkages help students obtain health services, including prenatal and neonatal care, and child care services.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In 1992-93, the federal grant of $639,254 covered about 53 percent of the MCHS budget. About 72 percent of the budget was spent on salaries and fringe benefits, and the remainder on staff travel, child care, supplies, training, tuition for college classes, and other services.

MCHS staff includes 40 employees--an administrator, nine teachers, a counselor, three specialists, three aides, two consultants, three clerks, and 18 tutors. The federal grant covered 70 percent of staff costs (for MCHS staff and contract services), with the remainder paid for through regular state and local funds.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Metropolitan Youth Academy

GRANTEE NAME: Human Development Corporation of Metropolitan St. Louis

LOCATION: St. Louis, Missouri

SERVICE AREA: St. Louis and Wellston School Districts

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: Metropolitan Youth Academy

MODEL TYPE: Supported GED Program

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Metropolitan Youth Academy (MYA), a program of the Human Development Corporation (HDC) of Metropolitan St. Louis, provides GED preparation to youth 15-18 years old who have dropped out of the St. Louis or Wellston public schools and meet a low-income criterion. Students attending MYA also receive additional support services. MYA started serving students in 1990 with a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Demonstration Partnership Program, and used the SDDAP grant from the Department of Education to continue operations. During the last three years, the program has emphasized GED preparation, and has dropped its earlier intention to promote school re-entry, because of students' clear disinclinations to return to the public schools. The students selected for the program during the evaluation period were 91 percent African-American and 9 percent white.

Students are recruited in a variety of ways, and can enter MYA at almost any time. The program advertises in the summer for the next school year, but most applicants hear about the program through word of mouth. At the start of the 1993-94 school year, total enrollment was about 73. Despite ongoing enrollment, substantial attrition occurs during the year--due to dropping out or successful GED completion. Enrollment about mid-way through the 1993-94 year was about 55. Students enter the program at any time during the school year (up until a cut off date in the spring) and remain until they pass the GED or to the end of the school year. Students who do not pass the GED exams during the school year are generally not allowed back the next school year, and are referred to other GED-preparation programs, particularly HDC's Voluntary Improvement Program for adults.

Entering students are assessed and grouped based on their skills. New students take the TABE test, a practice GED test, and a test on PLATO, a computer-assisted instructional system. Based on their performance, students are grouped according to their weakest skills for small-group instruction. Students are allowed to work at their own pace within the small groups, and may be reassigned to a different group as their skill levels become clearer. Students rotate from the GED preparation classes into a computer lab to sharpen basic skills.

MYA operates on a half-day schedule. Classes are held for four hours per day for ten months. (MYA changed to a ten-month schedule from a six-month schedule to coordinate with the public schools' schedule.)

Classroom instruction is affected by open entry and by the way that instructors are recruited. Curriculum is defined largely by the GED exams and the GED preparation books. The nature of the instruction also changes with the number of teachers, who are provided by the St. Louis Public Schools Division of Adult/Basic Education (ABE). During the last two years, ABE has provided two to four part-time teachers, depending on the number of students enrolled--one teacher for every 15 students. When MYA had four teachers, each taught a particular subject area--mathematics, basics/language arts, science/social studies, or reading. With two or three teachers, instructors are more likely to focus their help on the areas of the GED exams in which each student is weakest.

MYA staff provide life-skills workshops throughout the school year to supplement the GED instruction. Representatives from local agencies make presentations to students on issues such as drug abuse prevention, AIDS, and self-esteem. A staff member from HDC's Job Preparation program also provides workshop on pre-employment skills.

Despite difficulties encountered before the start of the SDDAP grant, MYA has continued to offer work-experience. Before the SDDAP grant, MYA staff had placed students in part-time jobs with area businesses and agencies, supported by JTPA funding. However, the JTPA standards for job retention could not be met, and some employers were dissatisfied with students' work behavior. MYA obtained a grant continuation from DHHS, and continues its placement efforts; about 30 students were placed in 1992-93, mostly within HDC itself and other community agencies.

MYA provides counseling to supplement GED instruction. Two on-site counselors work with students individually and in groups. Counselors spend most of their time monitoring attendance and trying to get students to attend classes consistently. The counselors also help maintain order in the classrooms.

Project staff have tried to implement a parent involvement component. In the first two years of the project, parent support groups were held for the parents of MYA students. A lot of staff time was required to organize the meetings and to recruit parents to attend. In the end, few parents attended. Through additional funds received in 1993, program staff plan to renew efforts to involve parents in the program.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In the 1992-93 year, the federal grant covered 68 percent of the total project budget. About 67 percent of the $169,853 federal grant went to staff salaries and fringe benefits. The remainder was budgeted for staff travel, equipment and supplies, transportation vouchers for students, and other miscellaneous expenses.

The permanent MYA staff consists of: a project director, 1.5 FTE counselors, .5 FTE secretary, 1 FTE teacher. These staff positions were paid for out of the federal grant. HDC's Director of Adult/Youth Services devotes about one-half of her time to the program. The teachers are in-kind contributions of Adult Basic Education. Depending on the program's enrollment, there are two to four half-time teachers assigned to the program. The ABE teachers accounted for 19 percent of total staff costs.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: TRANSITIONS

GRANTEE NAME: Sweetwater Union High School District

LOCATION: Chula Vista, California

SERVICE AREA: Sweetwater Union High School District

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: The Twelve Together Program in nine middle schools

MODEL TYPE: Middle School Enrichment

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The dropout prevention project in the Sweetwater Union High School District serves approximately 1,600 dropouts and near-dropouts at the middle and high school levels. Although the project includes a variety of components, its two primary parts are learning centers for high school age students and Twelve Together, a guidance program for seventh graders. Although both components were observed in the in-depth evaluation, the impact analysis focused only on the Twelve Together Program, because it had a clear entry point and appeared able to generate adequate referrals for creating both program and control groups. The learning centers were well established and known community resources with apparent capacity to serve all appropriate students, so random assignment of applicants to the centers was not locally acceptable.

Twelve Together

Twelve Together offers support and guidance to at-risk seventh-graders. The students selected for the program during the evaluation period were about 57 percent Hispanic, 11 percent white, 7 percent African-American, and 26 percent other groups, largely Asian. The students are placed in peer counseling groups of about twelve students. The group works together on a variety of tasks throughout the year. Trained adult volunteers facilitate weekly group meetings which are the basic activity of the program. Guidance activities, such as visits to college campuses and social events with parents, supplement the group meetings.

An important part of Twelve Together is a weekend retreat early in the school year to a mountain camp where participants and volunteers meet, become acquainted, begin to bond as a group, and lay out plans for dealing with group-defined projects throughout the year. The mountain camp retreat is designed to foster group cohesion and to develop commitment to program goals for students. The retreat culminates with a Saturday night candlelight ceremony where participants pledge to support each other, do school work, attend regularly, and generally behave as good citizens.

Learning Centers

Sweetwater's nine learning centers provide high school graduation programs for dropouts and students on the verge of dropping out. Students participate in teacher-assisted independent study and computer-assisted instruction using NOVANET, a distance learning system with a host computer at the University of Illinois. Students also work with software on the centers' Macintosh computers. The textbooks for the regular academic program are generally the same as the textbooks used in regular schools with the addition of some high-interest, basic reading materials for some students.

The basic strategy of the learning centers is to move students rapidly through the high school curriculum. Students spend two hours a day at the centers, at any time from early morning to late evening. In addition, students contract for 15 hours a week of homework, which teachers discuss and check with them once a week. The learning centers also connect high school students with other services, such as child care and job training opportunities. Although the learning centers are based on a general model, each of the nine learning centers is continually evolving in its own direction.

All learning centers except one are located on or adjacent to high school campuses. Students can combine courses at the learning centers with academic or vocational courses at the host high school, JTPA training courses, or occupational courses at a Regional Occupational Center.

The approach to funding the learning centers provides incentives for both the centers and the host high schools to attract or refer students to the centers and promote their retention once there. Funding comes primarily from state ADA monies collected on learning center students who otherwise would not be in school. These funds cover costs at the centers and provide a small surplus which is paid back to the host high schools for their own use on dropout prevention activities.

Other Components

The project supports eight other. ***Explorers*** provides career exploration for eighth graders who participated in Twelve Together. ***Discovery*** supports self-contained classrooms for high-risk middle school students. ***REACH*** supports early identification of at-risk sixth-graders, and guides them into a one-week mini-school to help in the transition to junior high. Huck Fin is a fishing-based counseling and ecology education program that draws students into contact with adults. JTPA Work Experience offers employment opportunities for high school students. Other components include child care for teen mothers; a shelter program for students returning to school after traumatic experiences; and the 2+2 Program, a linkage to postsecondary education and occupational training.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In the 1992-93 school year, the grant covered 20 percent of the total budget. About 57 percent of the $613,850 grant went to salaries and fringe benefits, primarily at the Learning Centers. The remainder was budgeted for contract services, staff travel, and supplies. The most significant contract service was $144,000 to the June Burnett Institute to run the Twelve Together program.

There were 12 project staff--an administrator, five teachers, two specialists, a counselor, and three clerks. The federal grant covered 52 percent of staff salaries and fringe benefits, with the remainder paid by regular state and local funds. In addition to regular funded positions, about $44,000 was allocated to hourly extra duty payments to other teachers.

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT NAME: Student Training and Re-Entry (STAR)

GRANTEE NAME: Tulsa County Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 18

LOCATION: Tulsa, Oklahoma

SERVICE AREA: Tulsa City School District and 13 surrounding districts

FOCUS OF IMPACT ANALYSIS: STAR Program

MODEL TYPE: Secondary Re-Entry Transition Program

PROJECT FEATURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The primary component of the Student Training and Re-Entry (STAR) project is the STAR Recovery Program, a transitional program to help high school dropouts reintegrate into an educational setting, sharpen their skills, and make choices about their further education. The project includes four other components--the NOVA Program; Mediation Training; ad hoc consultation; and the Network Club. In these components, staff have created linkages with area schools, the community, and the Tulsa Technology Center (TTC)--the vocational education school system serving the Tulsa area. The evaluation impact analysis focuses on the STAR Recovery Program, because it is the only component that enrolls students in large numbers and has unmet demand.

STAR Recovery Program

The recovery program gives returning students nine weeks of instruction and counseling, on an open entry schedule. Applicants must be from Tulsa or the surrounding 13 districts, have dropped out of school or be on the verge of dropping out, and between the ages of 14 and 21. Referrals come from a variety of sources--school counselors, teachers, and superintendents, and the juvenile justice system--but most applicants hear of the program by word of mouth. The students selected for the program during the evaluation period were about 74 percent white, 13 percent African-American, 3 percent Hispanic, and 11 percent other groups, including Native American and Asian.

Interested youth attend an initial individual interview with an intake counselor, who tries to determine if STAR is an appropriate choice for the student, as opposed to remaining in or returning to regular high school or considering another alternative program. If appropriate for STAR, the student returns for tests to provide the counselor and instructor with additional information on the applicant's academic proficiencies and career interests and aptitudes. Finally, the counselor meets with the applicant to make a final assessment of suitability and motivation. If the student is accepted and space is available, the student can enter immediately.

The program offers morning, afternoon and evening sessions. Each session accommodates 17 students, so maximum total enrollment is approximately 50. The day classes meet for three hours, five

days a week, and the evening session for three hours, two days a week. For half of the class period, students work on BASE, a computer-assisted instructional and assessment system. The second half is devoted to life-skills training, based on a curriculum developed by the instructor.

The STAR counselor has three regular contacts with students: at the initial interview, at the student's mid-term, and at program exit. The counselor will also meet with a student as needed, if the instructor feels that it is warranted or if a student requests an appointment. Staff help identify needs for private counseling, child care, transportation, food stamps, and other income support, and link students with source agencies when necessary.

The program emphasizes career planning. This emphasis begins with the intake process, which includes assessment of students' occupational interests and career aptitudes. The counselor talks to students about their interests and what steps are necessary to enter their fields of interest. Life-skills sessions emphasize employability skills. Classroom procedures are supposed to instruct students in the responsibility of work; students punch in their time cards when they come to class. The strict attendance policy--students are dropped after five absences--is also supposed to teach responsibility on the job. Finally, students are given the opportunity to explore vocational programs offered by the Technology Center that they might enter after completing STAR.

The program has several outcome paths. Students may return to their comprehensive high school. (If they complete the nine-week program, students earn one high school credit, which may encourage students who are close to finishing to return to school.) STAR students, if recommended and accepted, can enroll at no cost in a vocational program at the Tulsa Technology Center without simultaneously attending academic high school--a waiver of normal rules. Third, students who have sharpened their skills in STAR may choose to take the GED exam; those who succeed may be encouraged to pursue postsecondary education, and are helped to obtain financial assistance.

Other Components

There have been four other project components. In the summer **NOVA program** for seventh-graders, students work on basic skills using the BASE software, and participate in life-skills workshops. At first, STAR staff ran the program, but then a middle school took responsibility for running it as a summer school option. **Mediation training** is offered by STAR to all schools in its service area. STAR staff train teachers and students in peer-mediation techniques. These teachers then train additional students in their schools. STAR staff provides **ad hoc consultation** to any school within its service area that requests help. The STAR staff also organizes **Network Clubs** that bring together teachers, counselors, and superintendents for training in topics relevant to at-risk students.

USES OF THE FEDERAL GRANT

In the 1992-93 year, the federal grant covered 85 percent of the total project budget. About 91 percent of the $291,463 federal grant went to staff salaries and fringe benefits. The remainder was budgeted for contract services, staff travel, and supplies.

Staff consists of 7 employees: a project director, counselor, instructor, intake counselor, data person, secretary, and part-time clerk. The federal grant covered 89 percent of staff salaries and fringe benefits. The remaining 10 percent was paid for through regular state and local funds.