SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF

COMPONENTS OF AT-RISK PROGRAMS

IN OKLAHOMA

By

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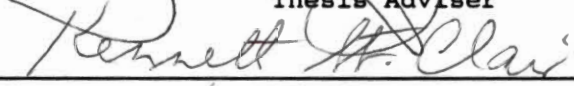Clarksville, Arkansas
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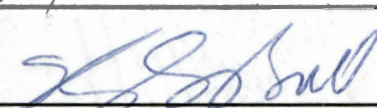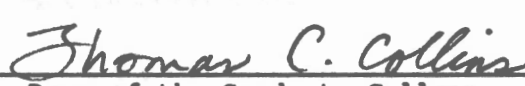
Master of Education
Northeastern Oklahoma State University
Tahlequah, Oklahoma
1972

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
July, 1992

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Our nation has become obsessed with the problem of school

dropouts. The American system of public education in the high

schools is designed with the expectations that students will

complete twelve grades, through age 17 or 18, and yet the law

requires schooling only until age 16 (Finn, 1989). However, many

students are not waiting until sixteen to dropout.

Why are dropout rates so high when schools have incorporated so

many special educational programs to meet the needs of the low

achieving students? Chall, Heron and Hilferty (1987), found that

most people view students' sociological and personal problems as the

major causes of dropping out. This way of thinking is due to

statistics showing that absenteeism and dropout rates increase with

poverty, minority status, and the degree of educational

impoverishment. DeBlois (1989), stated that the bulk of information

suggests that most dropouts are average or above in intelligence and

would not fit into the category of special education. These authors

have zeroed in on a number of causes which they believe to be

contributing to dropouts. These are: (1) ineffective programs,

(2) the lack of a positive educational environment, (3) the lack of

teaching skills of teachers, and (4) the lack of school

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administrators who understand what is really needed for the at-risk student. These combinations cause schools to be viewed as failures and the individual to be viewed as failing to obtain the basic requisites for future life.

To further compound the problem, according to LeCompte (1987a), a disproportionate number of these dropouts are from low socioeconomic families and are minorities. Thus, they are further handicapped without a high school diploma or the literacy skills it represents. On a more global perspective, dropouts place an increased burden on the social programs and the workforce, leading to problems in continuing our economic development. Efforts to raise academic standards, without other organizational and instructional changes, may add to the dropout rate and further complicate the problem for schools and future societies (LeCompte, 1987b).

Smith and Lincoln (1988), in a special report for the Charles Mott foundation, said research points to a dominant class of children who are economically, culturally, racially, and ethnically disadvantaged children of poverty. He put it this way:

> They have come to be called youth 'at-risk' because they
> are at risk of emerging from school unprepared for further
> education or the kind of work there is to do. Often they
> are ready only for lives of alienation and dependency
> (Smith and Lincoln, 1988, p. 2).

Research on dropping out and at-risk programs has mainly focused on characteristics of the individual, program, or institution that correlate with the students' decision to drop out. It appears that educators have identified all the characteristics of

the at-risk student. The questions are: do educators know what types of programs, staffs, and teaching methods to use to prevent dropouts and can they implement them with present day resources? While most states report having legislation bearing on the problems of one or more sub-groups of the at-risk population, most of the legislation is hit and miss in nature and typically supports a limited number of pilot programs (Conrath, 1988).

Funding is inadequate for most programs. This lack of support prevents many schools from assisting all segments of the at-risk population and in many cases they do not even attempt to initiate much needed programs (Hunter, 1990).

Administrators are caught in the middle, on the one extreme some are forced to develop hodge-podge at-risk programs, and on the other some are able to implement outstanding programs that are very successful in meeting the needs of most at-risk students. But how many have the luxury of proper funding, proper staff resources, and adequate time and space? Do administrators perceive their programs to be the saving grace for at-risk students? Or do they feel they are just prolonging their stay and sooner or later they will drop out? Are the programs keeping students in school and preparing them with literacy skills that are necessary for the future? Are they managing students with the same traditional schooling, with watered down curricula in order to meet the demand of reform?

We continue to see a plethora of reports describing intervention programs to prevent dropouts. These programs, for the most part, are based on good intentions. Too often programs are

begun before all aspects of funding, staffing, and curriculum design, have been carefully considered, or are based on an incomplete understanding of what exactly will make these programs successful (Finn, 1989). Conrath (1988), noted that at-risk programs should be designed to make sure there is a positive difference in the learning. At-risk programs should include not only what students need most but they should be taught by teachers who want to make a difference (Conrath 1988).

Recent research by Rumberger (1987) suggested there are four elements in developing a successful at-risk program. They are: (1) the right programs to deal with the specific needs, (2) programs that offer academics, counseling and close relationships with students, (3) recognizing the at-risk students early, and (4) programs that assist in early prevention. Reed and Sautter (1990) pointed out the need for parent involvement as a way to assist the at-risk students. Involving parents and providing parents with the opportunity to become literate might be the best way to improve student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

In 1988 Congress began making significant allocations for at-risk programs designed to prevent school dropouts. Oklahoma received $977,572 in 1988 and $811,000 in 1989. Oklahoma has consistently been one of the top six recipients of federal dollars for dropout prevention programs (Staff, 1991, April 15, B2). There have been many programs with different intervention strategies

implemented in Oklahoma to try to solve the dropout problems.
Because of the great variety of possible programs, it is conceivable
that the administrators, who will be called upon to implement these
programs, may not fully understand the ways in which these programs
should be implemented. Typically, this lack of understanding is
translated in terms of (1) lack of proper funding, (2) lack of
adequate staffing, (3) lack of appropriate administrative input or
involvement, (4) lack of appropriate curricula design, and (5) lack
of a research base insuring that the programs meet the needs of the
target population. The problem being addressed in this study was:
How do Oklahoma secondary school principals perceive the
effectiveness of at-risk programs in relation to curriculum design,
staffing, and funding.

Purpose

The need for this study was observed through the personal
experiences and interest of the author. In addition, there were
virtually no studies in existence pertaining to professional
opinions of secondary school principals concerning the many at-risk
programs in our schools. It was further believed by the author that
a study of this type would be of value to government officials,
school administrators, and teachers in their attempts to improve
schools and programs to meet the needs of the at-risk students.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the
Oklahoma secondary school principals in relation to curriculum
design, staffing, funding, and effectiveness of at-risk programs. A

secondary purpose of this study was to compare Oklahoma secondary school principals' perceptions according to years experience, grade level of school, socioeconomic status of the school as it relates to the percentage of school population on free lunches, size of school, and percentage of minorities enrolled in their schools.

The research dealt with the following questions concerning effectiveness of at-risk programs in curriculum design, staffing, funding, and effectiveness. All secondary programs were considered with the exception of vocational educational programs.

(1) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals perceive the curricula for at-risk programs to be properly designed to meet the diverse needs of students?

(2) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals perceive at-risk programs to be properly staffed?

(3) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals perceive at-risk programs to be properly funded?

Other questions answered by this research were directed toward the demographics of the principals surveyed. These questions were:

(1) Do Oklahoma secondary principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to their number of years of experience?

(2) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to grade level of the school?

(3) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to the socioeconomic status of the school?

(4) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to the size of school?

(5) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to the percentage of minorities enrolled in their school?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the .05 level of confidence.

H.O.1: There were no significant differences between secondary school principals' perceptions of how much was being done in at-risk programs pertaining to curriculum design, staffing, funding, and effectiveness based on the following demographic variables:

A.   Size of School

B.   Grade Level

C.   Socioeconomic Status of School

D.   Principals' Years of Experience

E.   Percentage Student Minorities

H.O.2: There were no significant differences between secondary principals perceptions as to the degree of importance in curriculum design, staffing, funding, and effectiveness based on the following demographic variables:

A. Size of School

B. Grade Level

C. Socioeconomic Status of the School

D. Principals' Years of Experience

E. Percentage of Student Minorities

Significance of the Study

It is apparent that dropout statistics indicate to educators something must be done to educate all of our youth. From the President to the parents of all children, educators are constantly being pressured to correct "our" educational system in order to prevent dropouts. School systems have reacted to these pressures with a plethora of diversified programs addressing the dropout problem. Recommendations have come from all levels of society, from governmental officials all the way down to the parents standing in the principal's office and are as varied as the person offering the solution. These include, but are not limited to, developmental pre-school, parent involvement, night classes, more structured classes, vocational offerings, remediation, additional standards, educational programs for day care centers, open transfers, incentive pay, more training for staff, awards for excellence, parent schooling, and even the suggestion to develop a "new breed" of educator to handle the new directions for education (Gage, 1990, Kunisawa, 1988, and Riley 1986).

Administrators are the persons most responsible for the development and implementation of the at-risk programs. They are

also the most likely persons to evaluate objectively the effectiveness of programs within the school. This study was designed to provide information regarding the perceptions of secondary school principals as they relate to the effectiveness of at-risk programs. The degree factor, as to the positive and negative attitudes relating to curriculum design, staffing, funding, and effectiveness of prevention, may contribute to present and future recommendations or modifications concerning the development and implementation of at-risk programs. Such findings could also enable governmental officials and educators to assist more effectively in the appropriate education of all students.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. The principals surveyed were, to some degree, familiar with at-risk students or at-risk programs.

2. The responses made by the participants of this study were accurate and sincere.

3. Those individuals selected in the sample were representative of Oklahoma secondary principals.

4. The survey instrument assessed the participants' true perceptions toward at-risk programs.

Limitations

This study was subject to the following limitations.

1.   This study was limited to a sample of secondary principals in Oklahoma taken from the roster published in the 1991-1992 Oklahoma Department of Education School Directory.

2.   This study was limited to principals currently holding positions at the school sites that were assigned during the 1991-92 school year.   The investigator had no control over the movement of principals that might be new to a situation and might not understand the full implications of the at-risk programs in their particular school.

3.   This study was limited as the instrument used in the data collection was developed specifically for this study.   While efforts were made to determine the validity and reliability of this instrument, its use has been limited to this study.

Definition of Terms

At-Risk Students are individuals whose present or predictable status (economic, social-cultural, academic, and/or health) indicates that they may fail to successfully complete their secondary education and acquire basic life skills necessary for higher education and/or employment.

Dropouts are students who have stopped attending school before they attained a diploma.

At-Risk Programs include preventive, early intervention, late intervention, and recovery methods in order to prevent students from

dropping out of school.

Secondary School Principals include principals who are

in school with any combination of grades 6 through 12.

Summary

Kenneth B. Clark stated in his introductory report to

the Charles S. Mott Foundation (Smith and Lincoln, 1988):

> It is difficult to understand how a society claims to
> be concerned with cost-effectiveness in its overall
> economy could, at the same time, continue to pay the
> high cost of producing increasing numbers of an
> unproductive underclass (Smith and Lincoln, 1988,
> p. ii).

The report concluded that federal and state spending must be

stepped up for those youth "at-risk" of emerging from school

unprepared for further education or the kind of work there is to do.

As chairman of the panel that presided over the study, Clark

condemned today's schools as "America's form of social concentration

camps without walls." The result, he says, is that "this most

precious of all resources, human beings, is being damaged and wasted

(Smith and Lincoln, 1988, p. ii).

Studies conducted for the U. S. Department of Education have

shown the relationship of dropping out to a variety of influences -

race, family background, economic conditions, the student's

performance in school, working while in school, and being pregnant

or married (Barro & Kolstad, 1987). Some authorities in sociology

and education feel that schooling, not the dropout population is at-

risk (LeCompte, 1987b). Still others suggest schools are limited as

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to what they can do about the underlying problems of dropouts due to race, poverty, and family environment (Finn, 1989). Yet, research by Conrath, (1988) and Gross (1990) has provided a good national overview of the dropout problem in regard to the many successful prevention and recovery programs.

The problem addressed in this study was how do Oklahoma secondary school principals perceive the effectiveness of at-risk programs in relation to curriculum design, staffing, and funding.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

History of the At-Risk Student

"At-risk" is a relatively new term used by American educators to identify students who have experienced difficulty or even failure in their careers as learners (Presseisen, 1990). These same populations have been called by other names: culturally deprived, low-income, dropout, alienated, marginal, disenfranchised, learning disabled, low-performancing, low-achievement, remedial, urban, ghetto, and language-impaired (Rumberger, 1987; Lehr and Harris, 1989; LeCompte, 1987b). Students in all these categories come from poverty-stricken economic backgrounds. They experience social and familial stress, feel a lack of control over their lives, have little hope for the future and have low self-esteem. These children are frequently members of a minority group (Rumberger, 1987).

"At-risk" is the expression that began to be used increasingly in the early on set of the current educational reform movement starting with the 1983 National Commission on Excellence in Education Report. This term "at-risk" seems to suggest a population of young people being threatened by an external danger, an infection, which if left unchecked will continue to negatively affect growing numbers for a longtime (McDill, Natriello, & Pallas,

1985). At the same time, at-risk denotes a positive side. It
implies that, with proper treatment and positive interventions, at-
risk students can improve; they can be successful. The problems are
imposed on the learner from the outside by the institutions that
serve him; it may even be society itself. Risk can be negated with
proper programs taught with knowledge and understanding. With
encouragement and guidance, these learners can participate in, and
actually generate the power for, solving their own problems.
Society must distinguish between what students do and what students
are. Teachers must alter their view of what their job is and their
view of these students if they are to advance educational excellence
(Presseisen, 1990).

At-risk students have always been with us. In early America,
students who were not successful in school quickly quit and found
gainful work on the farms. These jobs for the most part are gone.
Jobs in America today require more education and skill than ever
before (Sartain, 1989).

Characteristics of the At-Risk Student

The at-risk student has been pictured as a young person who
comes from a low socioeconomic background which may include any
number of family stresses or instabilities. If this young person is
constantly discouraged in school by academic failures, feels little
interest or caring from teachers and sees the discipline system as
indifferent and unfair, it is understandable when he is bound to be

uncommitted to getting a high school diploma (Wehlage, Rutter, &

Turnbaugh, 1987).

Strother (1986) gave us this description of the dropout.

The researchers found that a disproportionate number of
dropouts were male, older than average for their grade
level, and members of racial or ethnic minorities.
They were likely to attend urban public schools in the
South or West. They came from low-income, often single
parent families; many had mothers who worked outside
the home who lacked formal education, and who had low
educational expectations for their children. These
young people had few study aids available to them at
home, and their parents were not interested in monitoring
their school or nonschool activities. They had fewer
opportunities than their class-mates for learning outside
of school; their grades and test scores were lower; they
read less; did less homework; and reported having more
disciplinary problems in school. They tended not to take
part in extracurricular activities, and they said that
their jobs were more important to them than school (Strother,
1986, p. 326).

Finn's (1989) research found there to be a direct correlation

between poverty and all other characteristics of dropouts. He

further finds that poverty brings about alienation which leads to

low self-esteem and eventually causes withdrawal from school.

Further research yielded additional characteristics of the at-

risk students: lack of structure (disorganized), inattentiveness,

distractability, short attention span, low self-esteem, health

problems, excessive absenteeism, dependence, narrow range of

interest, inability to face pressure, fear of failure and lack of

motivation (Lehr & Harris, 1989). Rumberger (1987) and Bachman,

Green, & Wirtanen, (1971) all reported that dropouts are more likely

to come from families with: (1) many siblings; (2) a single

parent; and (3) few material possessions and reading materials in

the home.

The relationship between academic achievement and performance on intellectual tests and dropping out is consistent. Generally, students who leave school early perform poorly on tests of intelligence, reading, vocabulary, and mathematics. Bachman, Green & Wirtanen, (1971) studies found that approximately 40 percent of those who scored low on tests of reading dropped out of high school. The students who scored low in vocabulary dropped out at a rate of 35 percent to 38 percent. The youngster who drops out of school has lower test scores than those who graduate, a factor which remains constant as reported in studies by numerous researchers. It can be concluded that aptitude variables, such as reading and math aptitude, are more reliable predictors of school-leaving than that of family social class (Alexander, Eckland, & Griffin, 1986).

The ability to predict dropping out has been studied by Walters and Kranzler (1970). Their study was based on data collected on students at the time they entered ninth grade. Predictions based on I.Q., age, mathematics achievement test scores, and father's occupation correctly identified 91 percent of all students who dropped out before completing high school. Using a combination of variables including father's education, parents' marital status, third grade reading scores, third grade grade point average, third grade I.Q., and prior grade retention, Lloyd (1978), reported predictions of dropping out with 75 percent accuracy at the third grade level. It is not known if these predictive equations can be generalized to all populations (Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984). DeBlois' (1989) studies pointed out that I.Q. is not a factor in

dropping out, but low achievement in reading and mathematics, plus difficulty in retention play a major role in the decision to drop out.

Dropouts have more negative school experiences than those who graduate. They are more likely to have been held back, to have received lower grades and to have expressed dissatisfaction toward school (Bachman, Green, & Wirtanen, 1971). Finn (1989) described dropping out as a developmental process that may begin in the earliest grades. His research confirmed that dropping out, absenteeism and truancy, disruptive behavior in class, and delinquency are frequently exhibited concomitantly by the same individual. The behaviors are problems because they disrupt the school routine and they are outcomes of earlier patterns of withdrawal from the daily school routine.

Data gathered by Bull, Hyle, Salyer, and Montgomery, (1991) indicated that administrators believe that no hope of graduating is the highest priority cause of dropping out among special education students. This may stem from the perception that it reduces the administrator's control over the student.

A study by Hyle, Bull, Salyer, and Montgomery, (1990a) concluded that more education of administrators is needed if causes of dropping out which are school related and peer related are going to be addressed in public education. Most administrators agree that the major causes of dropping out reside in the home or in the child. Even so, additional education would improve superintendents' knowledge of where the research has been accomplished that should be

implemented. They found a nucleus of administrators who believe
that all causes of dropping out could be corrected if resources were
available and no further research is needed. Hyle, Bull, Salyer,
and Montgomery (1990b) found that for many, the dropout that draws
the most interest is the capable white male student.

Who is At-Risk of Dropping Out?

Rumberger (1987) pointed out that statistics from the U. S.
Bureau of Census of 1985 find a long term decline in the dropout
rates. From 1940 to 1980, the proportion of young people who have
failed to complete high school fell from 60 percent of all persons
25 to 29 years old in 1940 to less than 16 percent in 1980.
However, the short-term trend has remained steady and even
increased, particularly for some groups. Dropout rates have not
always been differentiated for black, Hispanics, and whites. This
provides a clearer picture of the trends. Between 1967 and 1976,
the dropout rate among black youth declined from roughly 25 percent
to slightly less than 20 percent; since 1976, the dropout rate among
blacks has risen to slightly less than 25 percent. Among Hispanics,
however, the dropout rate has risen steadily from approximately 30
percent in 1974 to 40 percent in 1979. In contrast to black
youngsters, the Hispanic youngsters drop out at a rate in excess of
the national average (Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984).

Estimates of dropout rates among American Indians vary widely.
Steinberg, Blinde, and Chan (1984) quoted the Washington State
Advisory Committee on Civil Rights of 1984 as estimating the

American Indian dropout rate to be somewhere between 38 percent and 60 percent. Other statistics reported by the Advisory Council on Indian Education of 1974, showed dropout rates among American Indians in Nome, Alaska, to have been close to 90 percent; in Minneapolis, 62 percent; and in parts of California, 70 percent.

There are two widely cited dropout statistics: the dropout rate computed from the U. S. Census data and the school attrition rate computed from state-level school enrollment data. These two methods of computing the dropout rate show widely differing rates and probably represent lower and upper limits to the true rate. There is no consensus definition of a high school dropout, nor is there a standard method for computing the dropout rate. As an example, figures reported from the U. S. Census Bureau in 1984 showed a dropout rate of 6.8 percent for persons 16 to 17 years old. The figures for the high school class of 1984 in the United States as based on the attrition data amount to 29 percent (Rumberger, 1987).

Necessity for At-Risk Programs

Economic Implications

The dropout crisis is being seen as a major problem by economists. As the disadvantaged grow and become a majority in the schools, the problem then will be a major concern to the advantaged. If problems of at-risk students are not confronted and programs developed to improve the quality and equality of the at-risk, economic decline will be the result (Orr, 1987).

Many experts see an impeding national crisis on the horizon of our educational future.

> The emergence of a dual society with a large and
> poorly educated underclass, massive disruption in
> higher education, reduced economic competitiveness
> of the nation as well as on individual states, and
> industries that are most heavily impacted by these
> populations (Levin, 1987a, p. 13).

The fear is that the at-risk students are a threat to democracy itself, that we are creating an untrained underclass who are unemployable, dependent on welfare, and plagued by crime. This population is without a vision of the American dream (Levin, 1987a).

There are several reasons for increased concern for the dropout: First there is the short term trend to the increased numbers of dropouts. A second reason is that minority populations, who have always had higher dropout rates than the white population, are increasing in public schools. The third reason for concern is that many states are passing legislation to raise academic standards. This will require a major effort to prevent more students in the high risk population from dropping out. A fourth reason is a widespread belief that educational requirements of work will increase in the future. A final reason is political. The U. S. Department of Education has begun to collect data used to compare state systems of education, including high school completion rates (Rumberger, 1987).

Dropouts generally have lower academic skills than high school graduates (Alexander, Eckland, and Griffin, 1986). They find it difficult to secure a job with adequate income. Dropouts from the 1981-82 school year had unemployment rates almost twice as high as

1982-83 high school graduates, 42 percent versus 23 percent. Over time the disadvantage becomes greater. The Census Bureau data, as cited by Alexander, Eckland, and Griffin, (1986), revealed that the difference in expected lifetime earnings from ages 18 to 64 between a male high school dropout and a high school graduate was more than $250, 000 in 1979 and it has increased since.

Dropouts are less likely to get a job and if they do succeed in getting one it is relatively unattractive and the pay is minimal. The diploma seems to be a credential used as an admission card for the world of work. Research by Bachman, Green, and Wirtanen, (1971) showed dropouts are less likely to have jobs. When they do, they receive poor pay and have a low status type of job in mostly unpleasant working conditions (Bachman, et al., 1971).

In an analysis of recent labor statistics, Markey (1988) said, "In a labor market demanding increasingly higher skill levels, school dropouts face declining employment opportunities" (p. 36). A male nongraduate is seldom employed and may experience long periods of nonemployment.

Gage (1990) stated that the effects on the individual who drops out are not just financial. They are less skilled in reading and have trouble finding well paid and steady jobs. It hurts the nation due to increases in health, wealth, and the achievement of the democratic way of life. It also lowers one's self-esteem making the person unhappy and often times ill.

Societal Implications

The high school dropout has long been viewed as a serious educational and social problem. By failing to complete high school, most dropouts experience serious educational deficiencies that severely limit their economic and social well-being throughout their adult lives (Rumberger, 1987). The cost to society, as a result of premature school-leaving, includes increased expenditures for government assistance to individuals and families, higher rates of crime, and special programs designed to train the dropout for employment (Steinberg, et al., 1984; & Levin, 1972). Catterall (1986) noted that the consequences of dropping out not only cost the individual lots of potential earnings, but because they suffer from reduced unemployment opportunities, they require more welfare, health care, and unemployment subsidies. They are also more involved in criminal activities thus, costing a great deal in judicial and penal service costs.

Banks, (1987) quoted Carrie Cheatham, consultant for Project Intervention from Corpus Christi, Texas, as suggesting the way to develop an appropriate at-risk program is to "educate the public and private sectors about the dollars now being wasted because of inadequate dropout programs" (p. 25). The message the public needs to understand is that for every dollar spent on intervention, nine dollars is saved by the decrease in demand for prisons, a decreased demand on the welfare system, the loss of tax revenues, and economic losses are decreased due to diminished productivity (Banks, 1987).

No doubt that leaving school without a diploma makes success
difficult. The Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1985 reported that 25
percent of high school dropouts age 16-24 were unemployed as
compared to only 10 percent of graduates. Dropouts earn lower
salaries and are more likely to hold semi-skilled and manual labor
jobs. The mean income for men and women 25 years and older who
did not finish high school was about one third that of those who
did. Dropouts are 6-10 times more likely to commit criminal acts
than are high school graduates (Wircenski, Sarkees, & West, 1990).

Today there are more entry-level jobs than there are people to
fill them and yet high-school dropouts are finding it increasingly
difficult to compete. Unemployment rates for male dropouts are
about twice as high as those for male high-school graduates. The
situation is not likely to improve, since a growing proportion of
jobs require higher levels of skills than in the past. More than
half of the new jobs created over the remainder of the century will
require some education beyond high school and almost one third will
be filled by college graduates. Compare this to the present, only
42 percent of jobs require post high school education, and only 22
percent require a college degree (Glazer, 1989).

Hunter (1990) made some alarming projections using a 40 member
class of the year 2000. Based on research, he asserted that two of
the 40 will give birth before graduation, eight will dropout, 11
will be unemployed, 15 will be living in poverty, 36 of the 40 will
have used alcohol, 17 will have used marijuana, eight will have
become cocaine users, six will have run away from home and one will

have committed suicide.

Literature on at-risk students leaves little doubt that
dropping out is a complex phenomenon. The many causes of dropping
out; family background conditions, personal problems, and school
practices, interact with one another. This makes intervention to
assist these at-risk students a formidable challenge for all
educators (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). Too
often studies have paid little attention to the role schools play in
contributing to dropouts. More research should be done to search
for school factors that contribute to marginal or at-risk students
dropping out. This way, schools can change conditions which are
under their control (Wehlage & Rutter, 1987).

However, the number one criterion for dropping out of school
appears to be poverty according to William Wilson, author of "The
Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public
Policies" (Wilson, 1987). In a longitudinal study from 1968 - 1972,
Datcher (1982) found that an increase of family income of $1000 or
10 percent, raised urban young black and white men's educational
attainment by a tenth of a school year.

There is a great deal of literature on determinants of
educational attainment. Parents' educational attainment, family
income, and father's occupational status are important factors
(Sewell, Hauser, and Wolf, 1980 & Jencks, and Peterson, 1991). A
study by Mayer (1991) used the premise that if the neighborhood's
socioeconomic and racial mix affects teenager's life chances, then
high school's social mix (socioeconomic and ethnic mix) will have as

much of an effect. She reasoned that school is an important focus of most teenager's social lives. Mayer found that tenth to twelfth grade students who attend high socioeconomic status (SES) schools are less likely to drop out of high school and that tenth to twelfth grade girls who attend high SES schools are less likely to get pregnant than those with the same family background who attend lower SES schools (Mayer, 1991). Bryk and Driscoll (1988) used data from 357 High School and Beyond schools and found that as the schools' mean SES fell, all tenth graders were more likely to dropout. Crane (1991) found that the mean SES of a neighborhood has substantial effects, and the effects are greater for blacks than whites. His findings suggest that improving neighborhoods might lower drop out rates and teenage childbearing. The question he poses and does not answer is: How do schools change social problems found in the living environment?

Society at large is affected by the dropout. The social consequences go beyond the economic and psychological impacts suffered by the individual high school dropouts. Levin (1972) identified seven social consequences of inadequate education which leads to dropping out of school: 1. Reduced national income; 2. Reduced tax revenues; 3. Increased demand for social services; 4. Increased crime; 5. Reduced political participation; 6. Reduced intergenerational mobility; and 7. Poorer level of health (Levin, 1972).

Legislative Implications

A proliferation of education reports from national studies and state commissions have recommended school reforms from "a" to "z". These reports lists hundreds of recommendations for teachers, principals, superintendents, and community members. They all believe they have the right directions for schools to meet society's demands. Often times their recommendations take the form of "legislated action" as the school is viewed as reluctant to act upon the varied suggestions. This external force causes school staffs to perceive these mandates as out of focus with the major problems of assisting at-risk students (Sinclair & Ghory, 1987).

Orlich (1989) noted that the nation has wasted billions of dollars on poorly conceived but politically popular reforms that have frustrated and worn out school personnel who have tried to implement unworthy and ineffective programs. Many of the recommendations for at-risk programs were contradictory because they were not research based, they were poorly implemented, and eventually they were abandoned when proven ineffective.

Paulo Freire, secretary of education in Sao Paulo, Brazil and author of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, wrote "kids do not dropout as educators would have you believe. Dropouts is an evasion, a 'sweet' concept meant to cover the system's failure" (Cox, 1990, p. 75). Freire looked upon dropouts as kids who have been expelled for not meeting the system's time table for learning and, thus , cannot compete due to constant failure. It is the system's way to expel. Freire saw this happening in his country as well as the United

States. Political ramifications make it feasible and convenient to blame the victims-the dropouts. He sees dropouts as being the minority without political or economic power and unwilling to buy into the world the way they are being taught.

Studies describing the correlations between high dropout rates and low-scoioeconomic background are plentiful but they fail to establish political and ideological linkages in their analysis. By not incorporating minority values and languages into the curriculum, the bureaucratic power structure continues to increase their power positions and subdue or oppress the minorities. To solve the educational problems, Freire asserted that the politicians must first see that education is directly related to power and it is politicians who must make decisions to solve the educational problems (Cox, 1990).

Educational leaders across the country have questioned the effects of school reform policies on at-risk students (Lehr and Harris, 1989). A potential dilemma for school reform is that of raising performance standards and the increased emphasis on an academic curriculum may benefit traditionally high achieving students while discouraging at-risk students. Fetler (1989) found to the contrary, higher achievement is associated with lower dropout rates. He concluded that the same factors that encourage higher achievement also encourage lower dropout rates. Hamilton (1986) asserted that if standards are raised for high school graduation, as reports on education recommend, the special needs of marginal students must be addressed in order to avoid a rise in the dropout

figures. The rising standards may have both positive and negative consequences for potential dropouts. On the positive side, it may encourage greater student effort and time expended on schoolwork, and lead to higher levels of achievement. On the negative side, higher standards may increase academic stratification in schools and cause more school failure (McDill, Natriello, & Pallas, 1985).

The National Commission on Excellence in Education-A Nation at Risk and other numerous reform groups, have recommended higher standards for graduation requirements. Most all states have responded with stricter standards (Orr, 1987). Although little research has been done to link dropouts to minimum competency testing (MCT) and higher graduation requirements, there seems to be a direct correlation between attrition rates and the existence of minimum competency tests. One obvious resource that gives us reason to believe reform through setting higher standards will cause the dropout rate to increase is the literature concerning minorities. It shows that race, language, and low-socioeconomic status are disproportionately represented in dropouts and failures in competency tests (Weis, Farrar, & Petrie, (1989). Recent figures from the Texas MCT show that nearly 50 percent of the bilingual students failed. Some studies have shown evidence that MCT causes at-risk students to leave school early. The reason appears to be that students have tendencies to drop out before the MCTs in order to prevent more failure (Kreitzer, Madaus, & Haney, 1989).

Riley (1986) observed that increasing standards will have a positive effect on students and their achievement but schools will

have to plan strategies and programs to help the at-risk students
meet the new standards. By offering pre-school, extra tutoring, pay
incentives, training for teachers, and new curriculum methods and
techniques, the schools can meet the diverse needs of the at-risk
student (Riley, 1986). Hamilton, (1986) contends that if standards
are raised for high school graduation without addressing the special
needs of marginal students, then fewer young people will graduate
from high school.

Cuban (1989) held that we are grasping at quick fix solutions
and not addressing the real problems. He asserted, "that we must
reexamine the institution of graded schools and determine the degree
to which it is the source of high rates of academic failure among
at-risk students" (p. 789). Schools can then focus on the changes
that will be effective. Cuban contended that the structure of
schools causes at-risk students to finally call it quits. Schools
are not flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of all students.
Within the structure of the school, the most inflexible
characteristic of a traditional school is the graded organization.
The assumption of students of the same age possessing equal mental
and physical capacities, having an equal amount of help from their
families and being taught by teachers with equal abilities,
expectations, and characteristics is unrealistic. The graded system
theory says all students learn at the same time, same rate, and will
learn the required amount to move on. Graded schools
unintentionally perpetuate the at-risk student by labeling them and
separating them from their class and programs. The public wants

school reform but it expects uniformity, efficiency, and
inexpensiveness in implementing reforms. The graded school, with
its legitimacy since the early 1900's contains uniformity,
efficiency, and inexpensive means of managing children. Thus it is
next to impossible to change the inner structures of schools with
the ideologies, funding, and programs that have gained legitimacy
over the years (Cuban, 1989).

Curriculum Designs

Identifying the Needs

At-risk students dropout via many different routes. Schools
must consider these different routes before they are able to assist
at-risk youth. Schools that have catch-all programs are likely to
be ineffective (Wehlage, et al., 1989). The first step in
preventing dropouts is identifying the program to be used (Orr,
1987).

In the past, most school programs have dealt with the late
intervention and recovery of dropouts. "The reasoning was simple:
these students were most obviously in need," said Robert DeBlois
(1989). Now programs are focusing on prevention and early
intervention. This is based on the evidence that success or failure
is most important in developing student attitudes throughout their
career (DeBlois, 1989).

Sinclair and Ghory (1987) gave information which showed how
school curriculum, instruction and the organization itself is
hindering learning for at-risk students. They considered school as

a place to contribute to the at-risk problem or to adjust and improve learning. Their recommendations to improve learning for the at-risk included such things as curriculum changes, teaching methods and techniques, and team work between educators and parents.

Schools are not working effectively with the traditional type of dropout and they are most ineffective on those students too young for vocational and remedial programs that are so characteristic of intervention programs. "I feel that schooling, not just the dropout population, is at risk," adds LeCompte (1987b, p. 231).

Hundreds of school systems now offer alternative schools that give at-risk students opportunities to continue, or resume, their education. Hahn (1987) pointed out that half of those going to alternative schools do not complete the necessary requirements for a high school diploma. He recommended that programs integrate academics with work experiences. Through his studies, these programs are judged most effective. Educators might believe these are provided by the typical vocational programs, but the vocational programs reviewed by Hahn did not focus on the at-risk type student and usually did not interrelate work experiences and classroom training. He also contended that, too often, at-risk programs are ill conceived and only reinforce the students' underlying sense of incompetence. The most vital lesson educators should recognize from studies on alternative programs is that conventional education and remediation are not by themselves effective for the at-risk population. Schools must change their curriculum and methods of

teaching in order to meet the needs of the at-risk students (Hahn, 1987).

Counseling Support Services

for the At-Risk

Another phase that must be of the highest priority when planning and implementing an at-risk program is in the area of counseling. It has already been established by Rumberger, (1987), Natriello, (1987), and Bachman, et al. (1971), that at-risk students are less likely to be involved in school activities, have low self-esteem and feel teachers do not care about them. It is not possible to determine the relationship these feelings have to the decision of dropping out, but one must implement a strong counseling program to demonstrate interest and concern to convince the at-risk student that they are worthy and can succeed.

A complete counseling program should include supportive counseling groups such as community agencies and business groups which expose students to the realities of work. By using them as part-time employees, these community groups can encourage students to complete school (Orr, 1987).

Studies have shown that community emotional support programs for at-risk youth are needed in order to attend to the more difficult task of fostering students' self-concept and providing them with the knowledge and personal skills required for the occupational environment. This would leave the teachers the task of teaching vital educational materials needed for graduation (Wehlage,

Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989).

The Buncombe County School System in North Carolina designed an at-risk program by getting various business groups in the community to assist with academic, social, and emotional needs of high at-risk students. Funds were raised by local civic organizations and then matched by the school district. Later businesses, clubs, and state crime prevention organizations were assisting with the funding. The program included academic support, parent training and involvement, community service, and social services. There was a coordinated effort between all involved to work for the benefit of the student. A high rate of success was achieved by this program due to the year-round assistance and support it offered to students while in and out of school (Arnold & Biggers, 1989).

Specific Program Components

for At-Risk Curricula

Many computer programs have been researched and have shown a significant amount of success in assisting the at-risk student. Gross (1990) reported that computer-assisted instruction is helping to solve the dropout problem in Pensacola, Florida. School personnel in Pensacola report that students are being highly motivated and are feeling success through their computer program designed for at-risk students. The program is designed to praise students' progress and meet them on their ability level so that they may progress at their own rate of speed. The program calls for a new way of interaction between students and teachers. Proponents of

the program say that students are seeing a relationship between effort and success. Through this computer-assisted program, students are gaining the necessary knowledge needed to enter the modernistic field of work (Gross, 1990).

Another computer program for at-risk students is called HOTS, (Higher Order Thinking Skills), assists slow learners in mastering basic thinking processes. HOTS was designed to create a new type of learning environment rather than a tool to drill or remediate, as traditional programs do. It provides students with work on their level and at their own rate of learning. Teachers have been trained to use open-ended questions, use processes to cause students to reason out creative solutions, and allow students the time needed to find solutions on their own, thus creating independence that makes the students feel good about themselves and enjoy learning because of the success they experienced. A key element of the success of HOTS is finding an outstanding teacher. Due to the Socratic dialogue designed into the program, the teacher must have exceptional skills in communications (Pogrow, 1988).

Programs that offer environments that are responsive to student needs are often recommended for potential dropouts (Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1985). Hamilton (1986) studied effective dropout prevention programs and found they shared some common features. One feature is the separation of potential dropouts from other students. The potential dropouts are then placed in programs that differ a great deal from ordinary high school experiences. Some programs even combine potential dropouts with actual dropouts.

Second, the programs have a strong vocational emphasis. Practical, often job-related skills are learned in school and academic learning is applied to real-life situations. The third shared characteristic is that learning often occurs outside the classroom, much of it in connection with paid employment. Finally, these programs have low student-teacher ratios, individualized instruction, strong counseling services, and are small in size (Hamilton, 1986).

If dropout programs are to succeed, they should insure that all capable students develop a minimum number of useful basic skills and they must attract and hold students by including components that meet students' economic needs and by providing activities that they find valuable and engaging. They also should serve small groups of students who support program goals, teachers should expect their students to succeed, the curriculum should focus on real-life problems and situations and should provide work experience in the community (Doss, 1983).

Weber and Sechler (1988) reviewed nine programs that link vocational education and related work experience that have been successful in combatting the dropout problem. These programs had several characteristics in common with other programs. The general organization allowed programs to be presented in a context different from traditional school and they function somewhat autonomously. There is a low teacher-pupil ratio, the approach is rather holistic and multifaceted, they use a combination of remedial basic skills, parental involvement, work experiences/job placement, counseling,

supportive services and vocational training. The programs focused on students who are in the beginning stages of their high school career. The teachers are specially selected as to their commitment to the program's philosophy and goals, their willingness to spend the extra time necessary to establish positive relationships with students. They must be extremely flexible in their teaching approach and must be able to stay on top of their students' needs. In the area of instruction, teachers devote about half of their efforts to addressing students' remediation needs, about one-fourth to addressing their personal needs and one-fourth to addressing their work related needs. They use pervasive motivational strategies, that is they tie school activities to the real world while building a sense of comradeship, enthusiasm, and loyalty. The instruction involves some degree of individualized teaching and learning (Weber & Sechler, 1988).

Research, along with developmental work with practitioners, has produced a general model for alternative programs of the school within-a-school or alternative school type. This model program is small, 25-100 students and 2-6 teachers, which allows a great deal of face-to-face communication that fosters the sense of caring, often missing in regular schools. This also enables the teachers to personalize and individualize their instructional efforts. The size facilitates communication and planning among the faculty. The teachers have authority to control admissions and dismissals from the program, set schedules for themselves and students, and create courses and educational experiences. This autonomy communicates the

system's commitment to the teachers and the program, promotes

ownership of the program, and accountability for the success both

students and the program (Wehlage, Rutter, and Turnbaugh, 1987).

The teacher in this model program deals with the "whole" child

and believes that the student deserves a chance for success. The

teachers develop, among themselves, a high degree of cooperation and

decision making. This model seeks, through the single complex of

facilities, to avoid the isolation of the teacher and promote

collegiality through frequent interaction, making teaching more

enjoyable, stimulating, and professionally rewarding. The program

is voluntary and students need to apply. They must be committed

to the programs. The students takes pride in the program and in

their accomplishments (Wehlage, et al., 1987). The curriculum and

teaching must be substantially different from regular high school:

individualization, clear objectives, prompt feedback, concrete

evidence of progress, and an active role for students. The model

must also include: sex education, parenting instruction, health care

and nutrition, and education and community social services. It also

relies heavily on experiential learning. In this manner students

develop responsibility, work ethic, and the ability to build

positive human relationships (Wehlage, Rutter, & Turnbaugh, 1987).

Summary

Educators must recognize early signs of at-risk syndrome. As

students move from level to level there must be information sharing

about students. Educators must be sensitive to the needs of each

student. High school staffs will continue to shoulder the major responsibility to salvage potential dropouts. At-risk youngsters are salvaged one student at a time. The school must provide programs and services that specifically address the needs of the at-risk population.

Wircenski, Sarkees, and West (1990) noted that a 1989 study, Characteristics of At-Risk Youths, listed features that successful programs generally possess. The report says these programs: (1) are small in size and local in scope, (2) are individualized around the needs of the school and its students, (3) are characterized by caring and attentive staff members who are attuned to the personal needs of students, (4) emphasize academic growth and deliver a relevant curriculum that includes both academic and vocational components, (5) include a faculty that establishes high expectations for its students and goals for student performances, (6) establish strong links between school and family, (7) often extend the traditional services provided by schools to meet the needs of the non-traditional family and the work schedules of adolescents, (8) develop strong links between schools and businesses, (9) develop a different climate from that which typifies many mainstream programs, and (10) give teachers autonomy over program planning, membership, and evaluation (Wircenski, et al., 1990).

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Design and Methodology

The investigative purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Oklahoma secondary school principals in relation to what is being done in and the importance of curriculum design, staffing, funding, and the overall effectiveness of at-risk programs. A secondary purpose of this study was to compare Oklahoma secondary school principals perceptions according to (1) the principals' years of experience, (2) grade level of school, (3) socioeconomic status of the school as it relates to the percentage of population on free lunches, (4) size of school, and (5) the percentage of minorities in the school.

Research questions that have focused the study were as follows:

(1) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals perceive the curricula for at-risk programs to be properly designed to meet the diverse needs of students?

(2) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals perceive at-risk programs to be properly staffed?

(3) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals perceive at-risk programs to be properly funded?

(4) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals perceive at-risk programs to be effective?

Other questions answered in this research were directed toward the demographics of the principals surveyed. These questions were:

(1) Do Oklahoma secondary principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to years of experience?

(2) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to grade level of school?

(3) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to socioeconomic status of the school?

(4) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to size of school?

(5) Do Oklahoma secondary school principals have different perceptions toward at-risk programs according to percentage of minorities enrolled in their school?

In order to collect data which could provide information relative to the purposes of this study, the sample population was determined and an instrument developed for data collection. Procedures were established for data collection and methods of data analysis were selected.

Population and Sample

In selecting the sample, the author used data from the 1991-92 Oklahoma Educational Directory (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1991). In order to provide greater representativeness in the sample of the population, a method of proportional grouping was

used and then a systematic approach was used in selecting the sample
(Gay, 1976). This approach was used because the high schools were
listed in the directory according to grade level and would have
caused an unequal distribution of principals. The schools were
counted according to grade level and a percentage of each grade
level was chosen for the sample in proportion to the actual size of
the group in the total population.

For convenience purposes, the following grade levels were
combined: schools with any combination of 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th
grades were listed as 9-12; schools with a combination of 7th, 8th,
or 9th were listed as 7-9; schools with a combination of 5th, 6th,
7th, or 8th were listed as 6-8; and responses stating 6-12 or 7-12
were listed as 7 - 12 (See Table I).

TABLE I

PERCENTAGE OF GRADE LEVELS USED IN STUDY

Grade Level	Total Schools Listed	Percent of Sample	Total Sample
7 - 12	69	9.0	23
7 - 9	119	15.7	42
6 - 8	151	20.0	53
9 - 12	329	55.3	147

The population of 758 secondary principals was then compiled in a list according to aforementioned grade levels. A systematic sample was then drawn beginning with number one and then every third interval until a proportional number of samples was reached in each grade level configuration (Gay, 1976).

Development of the Instrument

For this study, the necessary data were gathered through the use of a questionnaire (Appendix B). The survey instrument was designed by the author to examine the perceptions of Oklahoma secondary school principals toward at-risk programs. The instrument was developed specifically for this study. The first step in this development involved the identification, from the literature, of activities related to the at-risk students and at-risk programs. In an effort to ascertain the true perceptions toward at-risk programs, a three part questionnaire was designed and submitted to a team of doctoral committee members for their scrutiny of each item for clarity, possible bias, and double meaning. Faculty members and graduate students reviewed the questionnaire and their suggestions were incorporated to revise the instrument. The revised questionnaire was then pilot tested using 10 secondary principals who were not a part of the sample population in this study. These ten principals were asked to provide suggestions regarding the validity of the questions. The instrument was again revised and refined, and was then submitted to two doctoral committee members for final approval.

The first section of the questionnaire was of a demographic nature. It asked the participant to identify types of at-risk programs, school populations, grade levels, the percentage of population on free lunches, principals' years of experience, and the percentage of various ethnic groups.

The second section of the survey consisted of 14 questions concerning the perceptions of secondary principals regarding what is being done in the four areas of: curriculum design, staffing, funding, and the effectiveness of the at-risk programs.

The third part contained the same 14 questions as in the second part, but asked the principals for their perceptions of how important they considered the specific concerns in each of the four areas: curriculum design, staffing, funding, and effectiveness of at-risk programs.

Collection of Data

On March 4, 1992, 265 packets of material were mailed to each subject identified in the systematic representative sample. Included in this packet was a cover letter explaining the study and the instrument (Appendix A), the instrument itself (Appendix B), and a self-addressed stamped envelope for return of the instrument. Specific instructions were provided for the completion and prompt return of the instrument. Subjects were assured that their responses would be kept confidential.

After 10 days and limited response, subjects who had failed to respond were called at their respective schools. A message to

remind them that their responses would be deeply appreciated was
left with the secretary or with the principal personally. The phone
calls identified an unexpected problem. Most schools had Spring
Break during the month of March and many principals were out of
school and procrastinating until their return from Spring Break. On
March 20, 1992, having received only 101 completed questionnaires,
164 duplicate packets were mailed to those not responding. Included
in this packet was a hand written thank you note for their expected
participation.

TABLE II

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS RESPONSE PATTERNS

Dates Packets Mailed	N	Responses Received	Percent	Percent of Total
March 4, 1992	265	101	38.1	38.1
March 20, 1992	164	71	26.8	64.9

Data Analysis

Data analyses were conducted using SYSTAT Computer System
(Wilkinson, 1987). The data were collected and treated according to
the purpose, hypotheses, and requirements of the study. Due to the
nature of the data, the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was

utilized to determine if any significant differences existed between

(among) groups' perceptions on the two dimensions of how much is

being done in at-risk programs and how important it is.

The application of the ANOVA for this research is justified by

the literature. Gay, (1976) noted that:

> Simple, or one-way, analysis of variance (ANOVA) is
> used to determine whether there is a significant
> difference between two or more means at a selected
> probability level. In a study involving three groups,
> for example, the ANOVA is the appropriate analysis
> technique (p. 32).

The assumptions for ANOVA (Bartz, 1976) appear to have been

met. Post Hoc analysis was performed utilizing the Tukey HSD

procedure (Kirk, 1968) for pair wise comparisons of group means

whenever the ANOVA yielded a significant F value.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to obtain from secondary school
principals their perceptions toward at-risk programs. This was
accomplished by using a questionnaire designed to survey
administrators' perceptions concerning; (1) what is currently being
done, and (2) how important the selected areas are. Dependent
variables were defined as responses to specific items regarding
curriculum design (4 questions), staffing (4 questions), funding (4
questions), and effectiveness (2 questions) duplicated for currently
being done and importance, resulting in a total of 28 dependent
variables. Independent variables were defined for each of the
following: (1) school size, (2) grade level, (3) socioeconomic
status, (4) principals' years of experience, and (5) percentage of
student minorities.

Data for this study were collected from respondents using a
three part questionnaire specifically designed for this study. Of
the 265 administrators surveyed, 172, or 64.9 percent, responded.
Seven of the survey questionnaires were discarded because data were
missing from either the second or third section. Thus, 165
questionnaires, or 62.3 percent, of the sample were used in the

study. Of these 165, school size was absent one response, 16 had no response to percentage of students on free lunches, one had no response to years of experience, and four did not respond to percentage of student minority. Statistical analysis was accomplished by adjusting totals.

After data were secured through the previously outlined procedures and techniques, data were tabulated and analyzed with the SYSTAT Computer Program System to determine the nature and extent of findings. Since it is common statistical practice to accept hypotheses supported at the .05 level of significance, that level of confidence was adopted for this study.

Results

Part of the demographic information was to elicit responses concerning the following specific programs: (1) absenteeism, (2) self-esteem, (3) health, (4) poor home environment, (5) discipline, and (6) poverty. The demographic data reported by subjects revealed that of the six specific at-risk programs listed, 87 principals reported no programs in absenteeism, 89 principals had no programs dealing with self-esteem, 126 had no programs concerning health, 128 reported no programs to deal with poor home environments, 87 had no specific at-risk programs dealing with discipline problems, and 138 had no specific programs involving poverty. The number of principals reporting years of existence of specific at-risk programs are provided in Table III.

TABLE III

NUMBER OF PRINCIPALS REPORTING YEARS OF
EXISTENCE OF SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

| | Years in Effect | | | | |
Program	0	1-5	6-10	11 +	N
Absenteeism	87	61	11	6	165
Self-esteem	89	68	8	0	165
Health	126	27	8	4	165
Poor Home	128	31	3	3	165
Discipline	87	61	10	7	165
Proverty	138	20	2	5	165

Further investigation and analysis concerning the data on specific at-risk programs indicated that of the 165 participants, 54 listed no programs and 111 listed one to six at-risk programs according to the particular areas specified in the survey.

The basic response data by item are presented in Tables IV - XIV. These tables contain the items as presented in section two and section three of the survey as they relate to the demographic questions of school size, grade level, socioeconomic status, principals' years experience, and percentage of student minority. The first four questions in section two of the survey refer to how much principals perceive is being done in curriculum design. The

TABLE IV

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING
TO SCHOOL SIZE CONCERNING HOW MUCH IS BEING DONE

| | 0 - 300 | | 301 - 600 | | 601 - 900 | | 901 + | | | |
| | School Size | | | | | | | | | |
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
1. Designed by staff.	2.67	1.08	2.43	0.97	3.08	1.12	2.08	1.03	1.16	NS
2. Designed for specific needs.	2.64	1.05	2.50	0.98	3.15	0.90	2.81	1.05	1.51	NS
3. Additional counseling added.	2.81	1.19	2.46	1.00	3.23	1.09	2.94	1.00	2.32	NS
4. Includes parent input.	2.52	1.04	2.43	1.13	2.92	0.86	2.75	1.13	.94	NS
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personnel.	2.59	1.14	2.39	0.99	3.08	1.04	2.94	1.12	1.90	NS
2. Staff are specially trained.	2.48	1.13	2.11	0.92	2.69	1.11	2.44	0.89	1.61	NS
3. Innovative teaching is used.	2.48	1.11	2.18	0.97	2.92	0.95	2.69	1.01	2.12	NS
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	2.09	1.19	1.68	0.88	2.23	1.01	1.69	0.95	2.00	NS
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.18	1.04	2.09	0.94	2.85	1.14	2.75	1.13	3.21	.02
2. District funds are provided.	2.17	1.06	2.11	0.99	2.92	1.04	2.44	1.09	2.43	NS
3. State funds are provided.	2.12	0.98	2.00	0.96	2.46	1.13	2.25	1.13	.79	NS
4. Federal grants are provided.	2.22	1.03	2.07	0.90	2.46	0.88	2.63	1.03	1.49	NS
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	2.44	0.99	2.16	0.75	3.23	0.93	2.56	0.96	4.69	.00
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	2.53	1.02	2.16	0.81	3.39	0.96	2.81	0.83	6.31	.00

N   91   44   13   16   =   164

TABLE V

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING TO
SCHOOL SIZE CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF EACH COMPONENT

| | School Size | | | | | | | | | |
| | 0 - 300 | | 301 - 600 | | 601 - 900 | | 901 + | | | |
Item	$\overline{x}$	s	$\overline{x}$	s	$\overline{x}$	s	$\overline{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
1. Designed by staff.	3.30	1.16	3.48	1.25	3.85	0.90	4.25	0.93	3.62	.01
2. Designed for specific needs.	3.45	1.20	3.41	1.19	3.85	0.99	4.31	0.87	3.04	.03
3. Additional counseling added.	3.53	1.22	3.59	1.25	4.08	0.95	4.56	0.63	4.15	.00
4. Includes parent input.	3.45	1.23	3.61	1.26	3.85	0.90	4.06	0.93	1.46	NS
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personnel.	3.57	1.25	3.71	1.32	4.31	0.95	4.81	0.98	5.80	.00
2. Staff are specially trained.	3.55	1.29	3.66	1.29	4.08	1.04	4.56	0.63	3.50	.01
3. Innovative teaching is used.	3.56	1.26	3.52	1.25	4.00	1.08	4.38	0.89	2.59	NS
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	3.28	1.33	3.11	1.33	3.46	1.05	3.69	1.40	0.83	NS
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.64	1.30	2.57	1.13	3.39	1.26	3.50	1.32	3.58	.01
2. District funds are provided.	2.77	1.29	2.71	1.11	3.15	1.28	3.44	1.50	1.71	NS
3. State funds are provided.	3.14	1.29	2.73	1.23	3.39	1.33	3.63	1.36	2.42	NS
4. Federal grants are provided.	3.14	1.28	2.75	1.26	3.85	1.21	3.56	1.41	3.25	.02
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	3.17	1.18	2.91	3.17	3.69	0.63	3.94	1.12	3.67	.01
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	3.25	1.22	3.00	1.29	3.92	0.95	4.00	1.03	3.91	.01

N   91   44   13   16 = 164

TABLE VI

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING TO
GRADE LEVEL CONCERNING HOW MUCH IS BEING DONE

	Grade Level Configuragion										
	7-12		7-9		6-8		9-12			
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
1. Designed by staff.	2.74	1.06	2.59	1.33	2.82	1.02	2.58	1.01	.46	NS
2. Designed for specific needs.	2.67	1.06	2.53	1.07	2.75	0.97	2.66	1.04	.16	NS
3. Additional counseling added.	2.74	1.04	2.59	1.12	2.82	1.09	2.80	1.07	.21	NS
4. Incudes parent input.	2.54	1.09	2.29	1.05	2.61	1.20	2.61	1.00	.42	NS
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personnel.	2.67	1.21	2.53	1.28	2.57	1.07	2.64	1.04	.09	NS
2. Staff are specially trained.	2.50	1.11	2.06	0.97	2.61	1.10	2.34	1.02	1.17	NS
3. Innovative teaching is used.	2.61	1.22	2.06	0.97	2.50	1.14	2.46	1.04	1.11	NS
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	2.20	1.22	1.88	0.86	1.96	1.11	1.80	1.03	1.30	NS
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.26	1.12	2.35	1.00	2.28	1.05	2.26	1.05	.04	NS
2. District funds are provided.	2.28	1.17	2.18	1.07	2.46	1.07	2.16	0.99	.59	NS
3. State funds are provided.	2.17	1.10	2.24	1.03	2.39	0.99	1.96	0.93	1.45	NS
4. Federal grants are provided.	2.30	1.09	2.47	1.13	2.36	0.83	2.14	1.00	.73	NS
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	2.44	1.00	2.18	0.88	2.64	0.91	2.45	0.95	.85	NS
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	2.61	1.04	2.41	1.00	2.54	1.00	2.50	0.95	.20	NS
N	46		17		28		74	= 164		

TABLE VII

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING TO
GRADE LEVEL CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF EACH COMPONENT

| | Grade Level Configuragion | | | | | | | | | |
| | 7-12 | | 7-9 | | 6-8 | | 9-12 | | | |
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
1. Designed by staff.	3.11	1.06	3.71	1.31	3.61	1.23	3.62	1.16	2.27	NS
2. Designed for specific needs.	3.15	1.03	3.41	1.23	3.75	1.21	3.77	1.19	3.08	.02
3. Additional counseling added.	3.24	1.18	3.82	1.29	3.93	1.22	3.84	1.14	3.10	.02
4. Includes parent input.	3.22	1.15	3.59	1.33	3.89	1.23	3.70	1.14	2.37	NS
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personnel.	3.26	1.22	3.88	1.36	3.89	1.32	4.05	1.42	4.28	.00
2. Staff are specially trained.	3.30	1.21	3.53	1.28	3.82	1.31	3.97	1.21	2.98	.03
3. Innovative teaching is used.	3.28	1.21	3.41	1.28	3.68	1.28	3.96	1.15	3.29	.02
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	3.04	1.21	3.24	1.20	3.14	1.51	3.47	1.34	1.12	NS
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.48	1.13	2.71	1.05	3.11	1.37	2.84	1.37	1.54	NS
2. District funds are provided.	2.48	1.11	2.71	1.16	2.96	1.26	3.08	1.36	2.32	NS
3. State funds are provided.	2.74	1.08	2.88	1.22	3.25	1.38	3.28	1.37	2.00	NS
4. Federal grants are provided.	2.98	1.06	3.18	1.43	3.18	1.42	3.23	1.40	.36	NS
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	3.07	1.10	2.82	1.19	3.32	1.22	3.38	1.31	1.34	NS
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	3.11	1.08	3.00	1.12	3.39	1.20	3.47	1.34	1.25	NS

N   46   17   28   74   =   165

TABLE VIII

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING TO
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS CONCERNING HOW MUCH IS BEING DONE

| | Percent of Students on Free Lunches | | | | | | | | | |
| | 0-20 | | 21-40 | | 41-60 | | 61 + | | | |
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
1. Designed by staff.	2.60	1.17	2.53	1.04	2.81	0.90	2.74	1.02	.50	NS
2. Designed for specific needs.	2.60	1.15	2.57	0.97	2.85	0.93	2.71	0.94	.49	NS
3. Additional counseling added.	2.57	1.13	2.62	1.10	2.89	0.93	3.03	0.94	1.61	NS
4. Includes parent input.	2.48	1.22	2.26	1.01	2.85	1.01	2.91	0.93	3.29	.02
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personnel.	2.48	1.23	2.49	1.10	2.69	1.05	2.85	1.11	.94	NS
2. Staff are specially trained.	2.31	1.07	2.32	1.09	2.62	0.98	2.53	1.16	.68	NS
3. Innovative teaching is used.	2.31	1.12	2.43	1.16	2.73	0.96	2.50	0.99	.85	NS
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	1.93	1.20	2.00	1.10	2.15	1.16	1.82	0.94	.47	NS
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.24	1.23	2.23	0.96	2.39	1.02	2.32	1.09	.15	NS
2. DIstrict funds are provided.	1.95	1.08	2.34	1.07	2.46	0.99	2.32	1.07	1.62	NS
3. State funds are provided.	2.12	1.15	2.11	0.91	2.42	1.03	2.09	0.97	.70	NS
4. Federal grants are provided.	2.19	1.07	2.28	0.95	2.59	1.07	2.29	1.06	.79	NS
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	2.33	1.03	2.38	0.99	2.65	0.85	2.59	0.93	.89	NS
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	2.38	1.04	2.43	0.99	2.65	0.89	2.82	0.94	1.66	NS

N   42   47   26   34 = 149

TABLE IX

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING TO
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS CONCERNING THE
IMPORTANCE OF EACH COMPONENT

	Percent of Students on Free Lunches									
	0-20		21-40		41-60		61 +			
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
1. Designed by staff.	3.38	1.27	3.47	1.14	3.50	1.07	3.65	1.10	.34	NS
2. Designed for specific needs.	3.45	1.25	3.53	1.21	3.54	1.03	3.71	1.14	.30	NS
3. Additional counseling added.	3.55	1.31	3.75	1.17	3.46	1.14	4.00	1.13	1.30	NS
4. Includes parent input.	3.45	1.21	3.55	1.27	3.50	1.07	3.91	1.16	1.07	NS
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personel.	3.67	1.32	3.79	1.17	3.69	1.16	4.03	1.24	.61	NS
2. Staff are s pecially trained.	3.48	1.37	3.83	1.17	3.54	1.24	3.97	1.19	1.30	NS
3. Innovative teacing is used.	3.57	1.35	3.68	1.14	3.65	1.23	3.77	1.23	.16	NS
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	3.05	1.46	3.34	1.19	3.35	1.29	3.53	1.26	.90	NS
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.57	1.33	2.70	1.12	2.89	1.18	3.15	1.40	1.46	NS
2. District funds are provided.	2.64	1.28	2.70	1.16	3.08	1.16	3.27	1.36	2.13	NS
3. State funds are provided.	2.91	1.34	3.08	1.21	3.31	1.26	3.21	1.39	.62	NS
4. Federal grants are provided.	2.91	1.36	3.19	1.26	3.23	1.14	3.44	1.40	1.10	NS
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	3.00	1.25	3.23	1.34	3.31	1.26	3.53	1.13	1.22	NS
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	3.17	1.25	3.23	1.32	3.31	0.97	3.59	1.18	.85	NS

N   42   47   26   34   =   149

TABLE X

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING TO
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE CONCERNING HOW MUCH IS BEING DONE

	Years Experience									
	0-5		6-10		11-15		16 +			
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
l. Designed by staff.	2.51	1.01	2.67	1.11	2.71	1.03	2.96	1.11	1.00	NS
2. Designed for specific needs.	2.51	0.97	2.65	1.09	2.67	0.96	3.04	1.11	1.46	NS
3. Additional counseling added.	2.60	0.97	2.74	1.15	2.77	1.06	3.13	1.06	1.33	NS
4. Includes parent input.	2.45	0.97	2.43	1.08	2.59	1.12	2.96	1.07	1.53	NS
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personnel.	2.43	1.12	2.80	1.10	2.41	1.07	3.04	1.11	2.54	NS
2. Staff are specially trained.	2.19	0.96	2.53	1.10	2.31	1.08	2.74	1.10	1.86	NS
3. Innovative teaching is used.	2.40	1.04	2.39	1.06	2.46	1.10	2.78	1.13	.83	NS
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	1.79	0.95	2.16	1.25	1.74	0.97	2.22	1.17	1.96	NS
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.21	1.03	2.27	1.08	2.13	1.11	2.65	0.98	1.31	NS
2. District funds are provided.	2.19	0.96	2.27	1.22	2.00	1.00	2.74	0.92	2.47	NS
3. State funds are provided.	2.13	0.88	2.02	1.07	2.03	1.11	2.39	0.89	.84	NS
4. Federal grants are provided.	2.17	0.91	2.22	1.16	2.18	0.94	2.57	0.95	.94	NS
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	2.30	0.87	2.38	1.06	2.36	0.81	3.04	0.98	3.76	.01
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	2.49	0.99	2.41	1.06	2.44	0.85	3.00	0.95	2.18	NS
N	53		49		39		23	=	164	

TABLE XI

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING TO
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE CONCERNING THE
IMPORTANCE OF EACH COMPONENT

	Years Experience									
	0-5		6-10		11-15		16 +			
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
1. Designed by staff.	3.60	1.13	3.41	1.26	3.51	1.17	3.35	1.15	.36	NS
2. Designed for specific needs.	3.72	1.15	3.55	1.23	3.51	1.17	3.30	1.19	.69	NS
3. Additional counseling needs.	3.79	1.06	3.65	1.28	3.69	1.28	3.48	1.24	.38	NS
4. Includes parent input.	3.76	1.07	3.55	1.26	3.64	1.29	3.17	1.15	1.31	NS
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personnel.	3.83	1.12	3.74	1.30	3.92	1.15	3.57	1.34	.44	NS
2. Staff are specially trained.	3.85	1.17	3.67	1.27	3.80	1.32	3.35	1.34	.92	NS
3. Innovative teaching is used.	3.85	1.15	3.63	1.25	3.64	1.29	3.35	1.27	.92	NS
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	3.51	1.33	3.12	1.35	3.31	1.28	2.96	1.33	1.22	NS
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.85	1.34	2.69	1.26	2.87	1.32	2.57	1.20	.40	NS
2. District funds are provided.	2.93	1.27	2.86	1.32	3.00	1.36	2.44	1.04	1.05	NS
3. State funds are provided.	3.38	1.23	2.96	1.34	3.13	1.38	2.61	1.12	2.14	NS
4. Federal grants are provided.	3.26	1.38	3.00	1.32	3.39	1.29	2.78	1.17	1.36	NS
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	3.36	1.15	3.12	1.27	3.15	1.28	3.22	1.17	.37	NS
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	3.45	1.14	3.18	1.27	3.28	1.32	3.26	1.29	.42	NS

N   53   49   39   23 = 164

TABLE XII

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING TO
PERCENT OF MINORITY CONCERNING HOW MUCH IS BEING DONE

| | Percent Student Minority | | | | | | | | | |
| | 0-15 | | 16-30 | | 31-45 | | 46 + | | | |
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
1. Designed by staff.	2.67	1.07	2.35	1.03	2.84	1.04	3.00	0.95	2.54	NS
2. Designed for specific needs.	2.70	1.11	2.35	0.95	2.74	1.00	3.14	0.73	3.35	.02
3. Additional counseling added.	2.82	1.11	2.49	1.14	2.77	0.96	3.14	0.79	2.04	NS
4. Includes parent input.	2.53	1.07	2.33	1.14	2.58	1.06	3.10	0.77	2.61	NS
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personnel.	2.57	1.11	2.39	1.13	2.68	1.11	3.10	1.00	2.09	NS
2. Staff are specially trained.	2.42	1.06	2.22	1.05	2.36	1.11	2.81	1.03	1.51	NS
3. Innovative teaching is used.	2.48	1.10	2.22	1.05	2.48	1.12	2.91	0.89	2.04	NS
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	2.10	1.22	1.80	0.96	1.94	1.12	2.00	1.00	.70	NS
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.18	1.07	2.10	1.05	2.26	1.03	2.81	0.98	2.43	NS
2. District funds are provided.	2.15	1.10	2.02	0.95	2.23	1.06	3.00	1.00	4.67	.00
3. State funds are provided.	2.20	1.07	2.02	0.97	1.84	0.82	2.52	1.08	2.26	NS
4. Federal grants are provided.	2.28	0.99	2.08	0.93	2.16	1.07	2.67	1.16	1.74	NS
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	2.37	0.94	2.25	0.95	2.42	0.89	3.00	0.84	3.45	.02
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	2.47	0.89	2.31	1.00	2.48	1.06	3.10	0.83	3.43	.02
N	60		49		31		21	=	161	

TABLE XIII

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS ACCORDING TO
PERCENT OF MINORITY CONCERNING THE
IMPORTANCE OF EACH COMPONENT

	Percent Student Minority									
	0-15		16-30		31-45		46 +			
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	F	P
Curriculum Design										
1. Designed by staff.	3.45	1.24	3.08	1.21	3.77	0.99	3.95	0.92	3.84	.01
2. Designed for specific needs.	3.63	1.21	3.04	1.19	3.81	0.98	4.10	0.94	5.59	.00
3. Additional counseling added.	3.68	1.17	3.31	1.34	3.97	1.05	4.14	0.96	3.33	.02
4. Includes parent input.	3.55	1.23	3.22	1.33	3.97	0.95	4.10	0.89	3.97	.01
Staffing										
1. Has dedicated personnel.	3.63	1.24	3.37	1.35	4.16	1.04	4.48	0.87	5.65	.00
2. Staff are specially trained.	3.60	1.22	3.35	1.41	4.16	1.07	4.19	0.98	4.05	.01
3. Innovative teaching is used.	3.68	1.23	3.27	1.30	4.03	1.14	4.00	1.00	3.28	.02
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	3.22	1.38	2.82	1.32	3.74	1.09	3.81	1.12	4.74	.00
Funding										
1. High priority in district.	2.40	1.25	2.39	1.04	3.16	1.24	4.00	1.00	3.28	.00
2. District funds are provided.	2.52	1.27	2.51	1.10	3.32	1.22	3.91	1.00	10.24	.00
3. State funds are provided.	2.97	1.33	2.78	1.23	3.45	1.15	3.62	1.36	3.24	.02
4. Federal grants are provided.	2.98	1.33	2.78	1.23	3.65	1.14	3.81	1.37	5.21	.00
Effectiveness										
1. Diverse needs are being met.	3.12	1.20	2.80	1.15	3.48	3.53	4.10	0.89	6.91	.00
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	3.25	1.16	2.84	1.23	3.42	1.21	4.24	0.83	7.39	.00
N	60		49		31		21	=	161	

TABLE XIV

GROUP STATISTICS OF THE TOTAL MEAN AND STANDARD
DEVIATION OF ALL PRINCIPALS FOR
EACH COMPONENT

	Being Done		Importance	
Component	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s
Curriculum Design				
1. Designed by staff.	2.67	1.06	3.49	1.17
2. Designed for specific needs.	2.67	1.03	3.56	1.18
3. Additional counseling added.	2.76	1.06	3.69	1.20
4. Includes parent input.	2.56	1.06	3.59	1.19
Staffing				
1. Has dedicated personnel.	2.62	1.11	3.71	1.26
2. Staff are specially trained.	2.40	1.06	3.71	1.25
3. Innovative teaching is used.	2.47	1.07	3.66	1.23
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff.	1.95	1.09	3.27	1.32
Funding				
1. High priority in district.	2.27	1.06	2.77	1.28
2. District funds are provided.	2.25	1.06	2.86	1.28
3. State funds are provided.	2.12	1.01	3.06	1.29
4. Federal grants are provided.	2.26	1.01	3.15	1.31
Effectiveness				
1. Diverse needs are being met.	2.45	0.95	3.35	1.90
2. Programs prevent dropouts.	2.53	0.96	3.31	1.23

next four pertain to principals' perceptions of how much is being done in staffing of at-risk programs, then the next four concern principals' perceptions as to how much is being done in funding at-risk programs, and the last two of section two encompass how effective are the at-risk programs. Section three contains the same questions as section two, but asks for the principals' response as to how important is curriculum design, staffing, funding, and effectiveness.

Tables XV - XIX show the total mean and standard deviation of the total group, mean and standard deviation of each item for each group, the F value from the analysis of variance, and the probability level (P) of each item, if it fell beyond the .05 level of significance. Table XIV lists the group total of the mean and standard deviation.

For significant F values, Post Hoc analysis was accomplished utilizing the Tukey HSD. Post Hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD procedure is presented in Tables XV - XIX. Due to unequal group sizes, Tukey HSD was calculated using the harmonic mean as recommended by Kirk, (1968).

School Size

For the variable of school size, groups differed on 12 of the 28 items (Table XV). Analysis revealed that administrators of moderately large schools (601-900) rated funding (Funding 1) a higher priority in their school district than did administrators in medium size schools (301-600). The moderately larger schools (601-

TABLE XV

COMPARISONS OF PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ACCORDING TO SCHOOL SIZE

Item	School Size	Differences	School Size
Funding Being Done			
1. High priority in district	601-900	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
Effectiveness Being Done			
1. Diverse needs are being met	601-900	Rated significantly higher than	0-300
	601-900	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
	601-900	Rated significantly higher than	901-plus
2. Programs prevent dropouts	601-900	Rated significantly higher than	0-300
	601-900	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
Curriculum Design Importance			
1. Designed by staff	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	0-300
2. Designed for specific needs	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	0-300
	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
3. Additional counseling added	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	0-300
	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
Staffing Importance			
1. Has dedicated personnel	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	0-300
	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
2. Staff are specially trained	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	0-300
	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
Funding Importance			
1. High priority in district	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
4. Federal grants are provided	601-900	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
Effectiveness Importance			
1. Diverse needs are being met	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
2. Programs prevent dropouts	601-900	Rated significantly higher than	301-600
	901 - +	Rated significantly higher than	301-600

900) rated their at-risk programs as being more effective (Effectiveness 1) in meeting the needs of at-risk students than smaller schools (0-300 and 301-600) and the largest schools (900 +). The moderately larger schools also rated their at-risk programs as being more effective (Effectiveness 2) in preventing a significant number of dropouts than the two groups of smaller schools.

Concerning questions of importance according to school size, Table XV shows that large and moderately large schools rated the following items of higher importance than did small and average size schools: Curriculum Design 1 - The at-risk curriculum is designed by those staff members who are involved with at-risk students, Curriculum Design 2 - The at-risk curriculum is designed for specific needs of at-risk students on each campus. Curriculum Design 3 - The at-risk curriculum is designed to include additional counseling. Staffing Importance 1 - Staffing by dedicated personnel who desire to teach at-risk students. Staffing Importance 2 - Special training for staff to teach at-risk students. Funding Importance 1 - Funding for the at-risk programs is a high priority in our school district. Funding Importance 4 -Funding from federal grants is provided to implement needed at-risk programs. Effectiveness 1 - The effectiveness of our at-risk programs in meeting the diverse needs of at-risk students. Effectiveness 2 - The effectiveness of our at-risk programs in preventing a significant number of dropouts.

Grade Level Configuration

The ANOVA indicated groups differed with respect to grade level on five of the twenty eight items. These were: Curriculum Design Importance 2 - The at-risk curriculum is designed for specific needs or characteristics of at-risk students, Curriculum Design Importance 3 - The at-risk curriculum is designed to include additional counseling, Staffing Importance 1 - Staffing by dedicated personnel who desire to teach at-risk students, Staffing Importance 2 - Special training for staff to teach at-risk students, and Staffing Importance 3 - Innovative teaching methods and techniques are included in the program. However, when analyzed using the Tukey HSD, only one pair wise comparison was significant; principals in schools of grades 9-12 rated the importance of having dedicated personnel who desire to teach at-risk students higher than did principals in grades 7-12 (See Table XVI). The failure to find significant Tukey pairwise differences despite a significant F value for the ANOVA may be due to either or both of the following: The use of the harmonic mean (Kirk, 1968, p. 90) due to unequal group sizes may have obscured the statistical test; and/or the source of the significant F value may lie not in pairwise comparisons, but in multiple comparisons involving three or four of the group means.

Further analysis of data relating to grade level was done combining junior highs (7-9 & 6-8) and senior highs (7-12 & 9-12). The data analysis supported previous findings. According to F, there were no significant differences between the junior highs (7-9

TABLE XVI

COMPARISONS OF PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ACCORDING TO GRADE LEVEL

	Grade		
Item	Level	Differences	Grade Level
Curriculum Design Importance			
2. Designed for specific needs		(Tukey Post Hoc indicated no significant differences)	
3. Additional counseling added		(Tukey Post Hoc indicated not significant differences)	
Staffing Importance			
l. Has dedicated personnel	9-12	Rated significantly higehr than	7-12
2. Staff are specially trained		(Tukey Post Hoc indicated no significant differences)	
3. Innovative teaching is use		(Tukey Post Hoc indicated no significant differences)	

& 6-8) and high schools (7-12 & 9-12) on any of the 28 variables.

Socioeconomic Status

In group differences on items according to socioeconomic status, Table XVII, only one item was indicated as being significant. Principals with 61 and more percentage of students on free lunches rated parental involvement in curriculum design higher than did principals in schools with 21-40 percent on free lunches. It should be noted that, with 28 separate ANOVA's, slightly over one of the 28 F values would be expected to be significant at the .05 level by chance alone. Thus, interpretation of this potentially chance difference is tenuous.

Principals' Years of Experience

Group differences according to principals' years of experience revealed only one item of significance. Principals with sixteen or more years of experience rated their at-risk programs higher in effectively preventing a significant number of dropouts than did principals with less experience (Table XVIII). Again, it should be noted that, with 28 separate ANOVA's, slightly over one of the 28 F values would be expected to be significant at the .05 level by chance alone. Thus, interpretation of this potentially chance difference is tenuous.

TABLE XVII

COMPARISONS OF PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ACCORDING
TO SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Item	SES%	Differences	SES%
Curriculm Design Being Done 4. Includes parent input	61% +	Rated significantly higher than	21-40%

TABLE XVIII

COMPARISONS OF PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ACCORDING
TO PRINCIPALS' YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Item	Years Experience	Differences	Years Experience
Effectiveness Being Done 1. Diverse needs are being met	16 +	Rated significantly higher than	0 - 5
	16 +	Rated significantly higher than	6 - 10
	16 +	Rated significantly higher than	11 - 15

Percent Minority

Group differences were obtained on 18 of the 28 items when principals were grouped by the percent minority of their schools. For all 18 items, ratings were higher for schools with higher percentage of student minorities than for schools with lower percent minorities (See Table XIX).

Differences were obtained on four of the items pertaining to how much is being done; Curriculum Design 2 - curriculum is designed for specific needs of at-risk students, Funding Design 2 - district funding is provided in order to implement at-risk programs, Effectiveness 1 - programs are effective in meeting the diverse needs of at-risk students, and Effectiveness 2 - programs are effective in preventing a significant number of dropouts. Every item relating to the importance of curriculum design, staffing, funding, and effectiveness was rated higher by principals in schools with a higher percentage of minorities (See Table XIX).

TABLE XIX

COMPARISONS OF PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ACCORDING
TO PERCENT OF STUDENT MINORITY

Item	Percent	Differences	Percent
Curriculum Design Being Done			
1. Designed by staff	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
Funding Being Done			
2. District funds are provided	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	31-45%
Effectiveness Being Done			
1. Diverse needs are being met	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	31-45%
2. Programs prevent dropouts	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	31-45%
Curriculum Design Importance			
1. Designed by staff	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
2. Designed for specific needs	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
3. Additional counseling added	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
4. Includes parent input	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
Staffing Importance			
1. Has dedicated personnel	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
2. Staff are specially trained	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
3. Innovative teaching is used	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
4. Extra pay for at-risk staff	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%

TABLE XIX (Continued)

Item	Percent	Differences	Percent
Funding Importance			
1. High priority in district	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	31-45%
2. District funds are provided	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
3. State funds are provided	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
4. Federal grants are provided	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
Effectiveness Importance			
1. Diverse needs are being met	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	31-45%	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
2. Programs prevent dropouts	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	0-15%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	16-30%
	46% +	Rated significantly higher than	31-45%

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary

Problem

This study was undertaken to determine the perceptions of
secondary school principals with regards to at-risk programs.
Perceptions pertaining to curriculum design, staffing, funding, and
effectiveness were sought from principals according to school size,
grade level, socioeconomic status, principals' years of experience,
and percent of student minorities. One set of perceptions was
recorded from Oklahoma secondary school principals as to how much is
being done in their at-risk programs in the areas of curriculum,
staffing, funding, and program effectiveness. Another set of
perceptions was recorded for how important is curriculum, staffing,
funding, and effectiveness of at-risk programs. Concomitantly, the
study sought some of the current types of at-risk programs offered
and how many years they have been in existence.

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the
.05 level of confidence.

H.O.1: There were no significant differences between secondary
school principals' perceptions of how much was being done in at-risk
programs pertaining to curriculum design, staffing, funding, and

effectiveness based on the following demographic variables.

    A.   Size of School

    B.   Grade Level of School

    C.   Socioeconomic Status of School

    D.   Principals' Years of Experience

    E.   Percentage of Student Minorities

H.O.2: There were no significant differences between secondary school principals' perceptions as to the degree of importance in curriculum design, staffing, funding, and effectiveness based on the following demographic variables:

    A.   Size of School

    B.   Grade Level of School

    C.   Socioeconomic Status of School

    D.   Principals' Years of Experience

    E.   Percentage of Student Minorities

Methodology

The necessary data were gathered through the use of a questionnaire specifically designed by the author. This survey consisted of a three-part questionnaire: a demographics section, 14 questions referring to principals' perceptions as to how much was being done in at-risk programs, and the same 14 questions concerning principals' perceptions as to how important were these components of at-risk programs.

A proportional grouping was used and then a systematic sample was made of 265 participants. These 265 were selected from a

list of 758 secondary principals compiled from the 1991 Oklahoma
State Department of Education Directory.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to
determine differences among groups' perceptions. The Tukey HSD Post
Hoc analysis was performed when the ANOVA yielded a significant F
Value.

Results

According to the results of the data analysis, the null
hypotheses were rejected at the .05 level of significance. In each
hypothesis, there were items found to be significant using the One-
Way ANOVA. Post Hoc analysis, using the Tukey HSD, revealed
significant differences between some groups.

With regard to school size, the results showed a clear pattern
that principals from larger schools perceived that more was being
done and at-risk programs were more important than did principals
from smaller schools.

There was one difference between groups according to grade
level. This was between principals of schools with grades 9-12 as
compared to principals in schools of grades 7-12. Principals of
grades 9-12 rated their at-risk program significantly higher in the
area of having dedicated personnel desiring to teach at-risk
students.

Further analysis of data relating to grade level was done
comparing the combination of junior high grade levels 7-9 and 6-8

and senior high grade levels of 7-12 and 9-12. The results supported previous analysis that showed non-significant F's among principals' perceptions according to grade level.

Regarding group differences according to socioeconomic status, there was one significant item. Principals with schools of 61 percent or more students on free lunches rated themselves higher in parental involvement in the curriculum design being done category than did principals of schools with 31-45 percent students on free lunches.

Another item of significant difference was in the variable of principals' years of experience. In the area relating to effectiveness being done, principals with 16 or more years of experience saw their at-risk programs as meeting the diverse needs of at-risk students more than principals with less experience.

A pattern emerged in Table XIX pertaining to group differences according to percent minorities, perhaps the most interesting result of this research. Principals in schools with a large percent of minorities rated numerous items higher than principals with smaller percentage of minority students.

Four items in the category of how much is being done were within the .05 level of significance according to the Post Hoc HSD analysis. In designing a curriculum for the specific needs of at-risk students, the principals from schools with a large population of minorities rated it higher than did principals from the 16-30 percent range. Further responses indicated more district funds were

spent to implement needed programs in schools with a larger minority population than all other schools. One possibility is that principals in schools with a large percentage of minorities perceived their programs to be meeting the needs of their at-risk students and to be more effective in preventing dropouts.

The consistent pattern of schools with a higher percent of minority students versus schools with a low percent of minorities was amplified in the importance section of the survey. All 14 items pertaining to perceptions of importance had schools of 31 percent and higher rated each item significantly more important than schools with 0-30 percent minorities.

The analysis revealed a major concern in schools with a large percent of minorities. Regarding what is being done, there were four areas where principals of schools with a large percent of minorities perceived they were more effective than other schools. However, the principals of schools with a higher percentage of minorities were sending a strong message. They felt more emphasis needed to be placed on all areas of at-risk programs: curriculum design, staffing, funding, and program effectiveness.

Further comparisons of the category of school size and the category of percentage of student minority revealed a closeness in the number of items rejected according to the null hypothesis. Perceptions of principals from larger schools rated 12 items more significant than smaller schools. Eighteen of the 28 items were found to be significant in the schools with the largest percentage

of student minorities as compared to those schools with fewer
minorities.

The data from this research revealed only group differences
according to size, grade level, socioeconomic status, principals'
experience, and percentage of student minority. Although there were
group differences according to certain items, the overall results
indicated principals' perceptions fell into agreement, that very
little is being done and more importance needed to be given to at-
risk programs. Collectively, when grouping principals according to
size, grade level, socioeconomic status, experience, and percentage
of student minority, they again rated each category; curriculum
design, staffing, funding, and program effectiveness, as being
unacceptable and more effort was needed to improve them.

An additional data analysis was computed concerning the
specific at-risk programs that were designated in the demographics
of the questionnaire. This analysis compared principals who had
listed some type of specific at-risk program to those principals
listing no specific at-risk programs. Of the 165 respondents, 54
listed no specific programs and 111 listed one to six specific at-
risk programs. Further results revealed that of the 54 schools with
no specific programs listed, 44 were from schools with a student
population of less than 300, seven were schools of 301-600, one was
a school of 601-900 students, and two were schools of 900 plus
students.

When principals' perceptions were compared as to those listing
programs versus those not listing programs, the following was found.

Principals with specific at-risk programs in their schools rated the following items significantly higher in the area of what is being done than principals with no specific at-risk programs:

Curriculum Design Items -

1. Designed by staff.

2. Designed for specific needs.

3. Additional counseling added.

4. Includes parent input.

Staffing Items -

1. Has dedicated personnel.

2. Staff are specially trained.

3. Innovative teaching methods used.

Funding Items -

1. High priority in district.

2. District funds are provided.

4. Federal grants are provided.

Effectiveness -

1. Diverse needs are being met.

2. Programs prevent dropouts.

There were seven of the 14 items of importance rated significantly higher by principals with specific programs as compared to principals without specific programs. These were:

Curriculum Design Items -

1. Designed by staff.

2. Designed for specific needs.

4. Includes parent input.

Funding Items -

    1. High priority in district.

    2. District funds are provided.

Effectiveness Items -

    1. Diverse needs are being met.

    2. Programs prevent dropouts.

There were no significant differences in the importance of staffing. This agreement would indicate that principals believe the teacher to be vital to the success of an at-risk program.

Conclusions

School Size

This research clearly showed that larger schools have more at-risk programs than smaller schools.

The data results indicated a clear pattern that principals from larger schools perceived more was being done and more importance needed to be given at-risk components than did smaller schools (Tables IV-V). This could be attributed to the fact that larger schools are usually located close to urban areas and problems are amplified due to inner city characteristics. Also, larger schools are usually located in urban areas where a greater percentage of minorities are present in the student population. According to research by Hodgkinson (1986), "each of the nation's 24 largest city school systems has a minority majority" (p. 6). These facts considered, the explanation for this pattern could be that larger

schools have more at-risk students and are therefore more involved and can see a greater need for at-risk programs. If so, principals from larger schools could be seeing success in their programs, thus, perceiving at-risk programs as more important. One should also consider that in small schools there is a closer working relation between school personnel and students. Parents and students are also more apt to know and socialize with school personnel (Gage, 1990). These two rural school characteristics could help the at-risk student to get the attention and assistance needed.

Grade Level of School

Grade level of schools generally did not effect significant differences between principals. Only one difference was found comparing principals' perceptions according to grade level of the school. Principals of grades 9-12 rated their at-risk programs higher in relation to dedicated staff who desire to teach at-risk students. This could reflect the fact that many small schools are combined with 7-12 and are in rural Oklahoma, where the problem of at-risk students may be less noticeable than in larger metropolitan schools. Some reasons, according to Bull and Garrett (1989), for rural schools not recognizing at-risk programs as being important is that of an undefined at-risk concept due to the lack of money, few common victims or low incidence, and some insularity. It should be noted that, with 28 separate ANOVA's, slightly over one of the 28 F values would be expected to be significant at the .05 level by

chance alone. Thus, interpretation of this potentially chance difference is tenuous.

Further analysis relating to grade level was done comparing junior high grade levels (7-9 & 6-8) to senior high grade levels (7-12 & 9-12). The analysis found none of the items to be significant. This would provide impetus to the belief that principals at all grade levels perceive at-risk programs in basically the same manner.

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

According to findings in this study, socioeconomic status based on percentage of students on free lunches was virtually insignificant. Principals' perceptions in this study did not support research of Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollach, and Rock, (1986) which found socioeconomic status as one of the most significant factors relating to dropping out. Steinberg, Blinde, and Chan, (1984) confirmed numerous research data that concluded students from the lower socioeconomic strata dropped out 6-to-1 over students from the top strata. Principals in this study agreed that very little is being done and more needs to be done but there were no group differences among principals' perceptions according to the percentage of socioeconomic status of the school. This overwhelming agreement could indicate that administrators have an indepth understanding of this at-risk characteristic. One significant finding showed principals of schools with a minority percentage of 61 percent or higher had more parental involvement. One can surmise that principals with a high percentage of students from low

socioeconomic environments stress parental involvement as a means to prevent dropping out.

What these results indicate, is that all principals are aware of the relationship of poverty to the dropout rate. Poverty, and all of its ramifications, in America is the one factor that has the most profound effect on the school dropout problem. The education system, alone, cannot eliminate it nor can the school overcome the devastating effects of poverty on learning. The school is a single entity in a social system that has failed and continues to fail to meet the needs of our most helpless group - the children. We can no longer, as in years gone by, tolerate "throw away" children. We live in a high tech society and even the entry level job requires a substantial education. We must think not only about keeping the students we now have in school, but we must also begin to prevent the educational problems that bring these students to the point of dropping out. Both of these efforts will be costly.

It should be noted that, with 28 separate ANOVA's, slightly over one of the 28 F values would be expected to be significant at the .05 level by chance alone.

Principals' Years of Experience

Principals' perceptions were affected by their years of experience. Principals with 16 years or more of experience felt their at-risk programs were meeting the diverse needs of students more than principals with less experience. The explanation could be that experienced principals remember the years when there were no

specific programs designed to assist the at-risk students and now they perceive their at-risk programs to be meeting the diverse needs of this population. Also, experienced principals may be able to identify the student who will drop out more easily than principals with fewer years of experience, thus he channels the services to at-risk students.

Percentage of Student Minorities

There was a consistent pattern of principals from schools with a higher percentage of minority students versus principals from schools with a low percentage of minorities. Table XIX shows the 18 items of difference concerning percentage of student minorities.

In the review of literature, America's Shame, America's Hope: Twelve Million Youth At Risk by Smith and Lincoln, 1988, found minority youth to make up the preponderance of this group of at-risk youth. Hodgkinson (1991), pointed out that the largest percentage of student minorities are located in the inner cities environments that offer little or no escape. Hodgkinson stated,

> America's inner-city schools, where the highest
> percentage of 'at-risk' students can be found;
> where classes are large, where health care, housing,
> transportation, personal security, and community
> stability are inadequate; where it is very hard to
> recruit and retain high-quality teachers and
> administrators; and where racial segregation still
> exists to an appalling degree, despite our best
> efforts (p. 13).

Is Hodgkinson trying to tell us it is society's fault? Hodgkinson (1991) observed that America has the resources to reduce

the proportion of at-risk children to less than 5 percent. What Americans lack is the will.

Research by Fetler (1989) and Cuban (1989), supported the position that minorities poverty status and home environment cause a social and cultural problem within the schools. Many of the minority children are language impaired, culturally deprived, come from low ability parents, and a large percent are from a one parent family. These characteristics cause low self-esteem, health problems, lack of social skills, fear of failure and lack of motivation (Lehr and Harris, 1989).

Principals with Programs Versus
Principals with No Program

Principals with at-risk programs were adamantly more supportive than those without at-risk programs. The comparisons of principals with programs versus those without specific at-risk programs, showed 19 at-risk components were rated significantly higher by those principals having specific programs. This difference seems to make sense. If you have at-risk programs, you have a mind set supporting the components that assist in the implementation of successful and much needed at-risk programs. These findings would indicate that principals of schools with at-risk programs place a higher priority on at-risk programs and support them to ensure their success. The components of staffing were non significant and would suggest that principals generally believe the teacher to be vital to the success of an at-risk program.

Implication and Significance

of the Study

The data from this study and previous research concerning at-risk students are as chilling as the sound of a siren blasting to pull over a speeding motorist.

Schools are under increasing pressure to serve at-risk youth and educate society's most difficult young people. Principals spend an inordinate amount of time dealing with students who appear not to want an education. The data clearly indicated principals believe at-risk programs are weak and much more effort must be expended to meet the needs of the at-risk youth. The results in Table III, indicating the lack of specific programs to cover some of the most needed areas for at-risk students, and the response showing the overall need for more emphasis on at-risk programs, should speak loudly to the educational communities in this state and especially to the legislative leaders in Oklahoma. Society seems to be knowledgeable about the problems of at-risk students, but few are working toward the solutions of these problems. Political leaders will tell you that human beings, our young people, are our most valuable resource. Yet, we see a continued effort made to respond to the at-risk problems using traditional methods and techniques which served only to maintain our quota of dropouts. Is society consciously or unconsciously perpetuating a caste system?

The government is quick to criticize the educational system for problems in society but, they are slow to provide any meaningful

support to correct the problems. Everyone acknowledges the enormous cost of incarceration of prisoners as compared to the education of our children. Prevention is by far cheaper than remediation. How can we continue to ignore these studies? Educators cannot "fix" the problems of education because dealing with the root causes of poverty involve health care, housing, transportation, job-training, and social welfare bureaucracies. Hodgkinson (1991) asserted that schools will not improve until and unless society answers these questions: (1) What can educators do that is not already being done to reduce the number of "at-risk" children in America, and (2) How can educators work with other agencies to provide services to these clients?

Principals continue to be given more duties and responsibilities via legislative mandates with few or no resources for proper implementation assuring the at-risk students and programs will continue to be set aside. There is no great pressure to assist at-risk students because those who are at-risk do not have the power structure and resources available to demand action.

This study has pointed out that secondary principals in Oklahoma do not believe the at-risk programs currently in their schools are meeting the diverse needs of their students. There is definitely a lack of adequate curriculum design, professional staffing, proper funding, and the programs are ineffective in preventing dropouts.

Recommendations

Practical Application

Schools must take a close look at themselves and determine if they want to successfully teach all children. Effective school research tells us that in schools where principals, teachers, students, and parents agree on goals, methods, and content of education, there is a positive effect on all students (Tyler, 1984).

To start, the principal, who is considered to be the most influential person as to the success of at-risk students, must be perceived as the instructional leader by the teachers. The principal must create an encouraging, supportive atmosphere for both teachers, students, and parents. Principals must develop community support for the schools and use a participatory management style that will encourage the teaching/learning process as a cooperative alliance. This process is as important as the product. It will open up parents, students, and teachers to let them feel able, valuable, and capable of self-direction which is a necessity for the fulfillment of life.

Teachers must accept and develop a close bond with at-risk students. All successful programs have teachers who not only helped develop the curriculum but who believe in the programs and believe they can make a difference in the lives of the at-risk student. The teacher must have high expectations, be innovative in designing progressive and interesting activities, and use a positive

discipline method. They must use counseling strategies designed to help students increase self-esteem.

Parents must take an active role with their at-risk child. The attitude the parents display concerning the importance of education is a major variable as to how the child responds to learning. Schools must recognize that the home environment and parent expectations are as much to blame for students dropping out as any other single factor. Families of at-risk students are often so dysfunctional that they need more assistance than their children do. Schools must develop parenting programs that educate and assist parents in helping their children. Virtually every effective program for at-risk students contains innovative components of parent involvement.

Finally, communities must help schools by offering work programs, financial assistance, and moral support of the at-risk program.

There is no single answer to solving the problems of at-risk students. There is no model program that schools can purchase and put into place. We know that any successful program must start with an attitude of caring. This caring attitude must be reflected by the total staff toward every student and his or her family.

In practice, it is a difficult job to bring school, staff, parents, students, and community together, but it must be done to fully develop successful at-risk programs.

President Bush and the state governors have announced six national goals to be reached by the year 2000. If there is to be

substantial progress toward achieving these goals, it will require a national commitment from business and industry, social agencies, all levels of government, parents, the general public as well as educators. Until this nation makes children and their well-being a real priority, these goals will remain unattainable.

Further Reseach

Based upon the results of this study, the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. Since there were many significant differences in the area of percentage of minorities, further investigations of at-risk programs should be done with schools of moderately high or higher percentage of minority students. Possible avenues of investigation are: (1) the perceptions of administrators as to the constraints to developing at-risk programs and (2) perceptions of at-risk students and parents of at-risk students concerning needs in the area of curriculum design, staffing, and funding.

2. Further research to explore the match between actual dollar expenditures and perceptions.

3. Further research comparing at-risk dollar expenditures and dropout rates and achievement scores.

4. Eighty-two percent of principals listing no specific programs were from small schools (0-300). The demographics of the Oklahoma Educational Directory showed a large majority of small schools are located in rural areas. A study designed to investigate reasons and criteria used in developing particular at-risk programs

might open up many differences between urban and rural schools. A
study of this type might reveal the specific needs in different type
of settings or communities.

5. A study that would prioritize principals' perceptions as to
the importance of all school programs might give us a better
understanding of where the commitments, concerns, pressures or
interests lie within that community or school system.

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APPENDIX A

LETTERS

Gary Coots
510 Oak Ridge Dr.
Sand Springs, OK
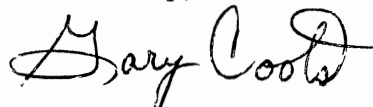March 4, 1992

Dear Principal,

In an effort to finalize a doctoral degree, I am in the midst
of completing my dissertation. I need, and would appreciate, your
assistance.

In order to ascertain a better understanding of at-risk
programs, I am asking you to take a few minutes to complete the
following survey and return by March 13, 1992.

I hope with your help this study can make a difference in
future decisions of our political leaders and school administrators
when it comes to at-risk students and programs.

Your help in this endeavor would be most appreciated.

                              Sincerely,

                              Gary Coots

                              Gary Coots, Principal
                              Central Junior High
                              Sand Springs, OK

kp

Gary Coots
510 Oak Ridge Dr.
Sand Springs, OK
March 18, 1992

Dear Principal,

I recently sent you a questionnaire to complete concerning at-
risk programs. I realize how busy you are and how hectic school
life can be so I understand how things can be postponed or
misplaced.

I am sending you another copy of the questionnaire in hopes
that you can find time to respond. I would deeply appreciate your
input.

Thank you for your time and help in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Gary Coots

Gary Coots

kp

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is being conducted to examine the perception of Oklahoma secondary school principals concerning programs designed to prevent the at-risk student from dropping out of school. By cooperating, you will help Oklahoma school personnel and governmental officials better understand the needs of at-risk students. CONFIDENTIALITY is guaranteed; neither your name nor school will be associated with your answers in any public or private report of the results. The survey is designed for tracking responses only to ensure adequate sample returns. Thank you for your participation.

----

1. Please check yes or no whether you have specific at-risk programs to assist students in the following areas. Then for each area marked yes, please list the number of years the program has been in effect.

YES	NO	PROGRAM	NUMBER OF YEARS
_____	_____	Excessive Absenteeism	_____
_____	_____	Low Self-esteem	_____
_____	_____	Health Problems	_____
_____	_____	Poor Home Environment	_____
_____	_____	Discipline Problems	_____
_____	_____	Poverty	_____

2. What is the student population in your school? _____

3. What is the grade level of your school? (Ex: 9-12)_____

4. What percent of the student population is on free lunches?

   _____

5. How many years have you been a principal? _____

6. What percent of the student population is:

   Black _____

   American Indian _____

   Hispanic _____

   Caucasian _____

Total   100%

PLEASE MARK THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS AS THEY APPLY TO YOUR EXPERIENCES. PLACE A CIRCLE AROUND THE MOST APPROPRIATE NUMBER AS TO HOW MUCH YOU FEEL "IS" BEING DONE IN THE AT-RISK PROGRAMS. FOR EXAMPLE: IF ONE BELIEVED A STATEMENT IS BEING ADEQUATELY MET, THEY SHOULD CIRCLE THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER 4 ON THE SCALE.

WHEN THE RESULTS ARE EXAMINED, I WILL INTERPRET YOUR STATEMENTS IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER:

1 - NOTHING BEING DONE means: I believe that programs necessary to meet this need are not being offered.

2 - VERY LITTLE IS BEING DONE means: I believe programs designed to meet this need are weak. I believe that much more effort must be made.

3 - FAIR BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE means: I believe present programs are acceptable, but I would like to see more importance attached to this need. I would rate the program in this area as only fair; more effort is needed as far as I am concerned.

4 - LEAVE AS IS means: I believe the school is doing a good job in meeting this need. I am satisfied with the present programs which are designed to meet this need.

5 - TOO MUCH IS BEING DONE means: I believe we go to the extreme and too much is being provided in this area.

NOTHING BEING DONE BEING	VERY LITTLE DONE	FAIR BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE	LEAVE AS IS	TOO MUCH IS BEING DONE
1	2	3	4	5

Concerning the At-Risk Curriculum Design:

1. The at-risk curriculum is designed by those staff members who are involved with at-risk students.   1 2 3 4 5

2. The at-risk curriculum is designed for specific needs or characteristics of at-risk students on each campus. 1 2 3 4 5

3. The at-risk curriculum is designed to include additional counseling.   1 2 3 4 5

4. The at-risk curriculum is designed to include additional parental input.   1 2 3 4 5

Concerning Staffing for At-Risk Programs:

5. Staffing by dedicated personnel who desire to teach at-risk students.   1 2 3 4 5

6. Special training for staff to teach at-risk students. 1 2 3 4 5

7. Innovative teaching methods and techniques are
   included in the program.   1 2 3 4 5

8. Adequate supplemental compensation is given to
   teachers of at-risk students.   1 2 3 4 5

NOTHING BEING DONE	VERY LITTLE BEING DONE	FAIR BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE	LEAVE AS IS	TO MUCH IS BEING DONE
1	2	3	4	5

Concerning Funding of At-Risk Programs:

9. Funding for the at-risk programs is a high priority
   in our school district.   1 2 3 4 5

10. District funding is provided in order to implement
    needed at-risk programs.   1 2 3 4 5

11. State funding is provided in order to implement
    needed at-risk programs.   1 2 3 4 5

12. Funding from federal grants is provided to implement
    needed at-risk programs.   1 2 3 4 5

Concerning the Effectiveness of At-Risk Programs:

13. The effectiveness of our at-risk programs in meeting
    the diverse needs of at-risk students.   1 2 3 4 5

14. The effectiveness of our at-risk programs in
    preventing a significant number of dropouts.   1 2 3 4 5

PLEASE MARK THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ACCORDING TO YOUR PERCEPTION AS
TO HOW MUCH IMPORTANCE SHOULD BE PLACED ON EACH ONE AS IT PERTAINS
TO AT-RISK PROGRAMS. ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, ONE BEING NOT IMPORTANT
AND FIVE BEING VERY IMPORTANT, PLACE A CIRCLE AROUND THE MOST
APPROPRIATE NUMBER AS TO HOW MUCH IMPORTANCE YOU PLACE ON EACH
STATEMENT.

NOTHING BEING DONE	VERY LITTLE BEING DONE	FAIR BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE	LEAVE AS IS	TO MUCH IS BEING DONE
1	2	3	4	5

Concerning the At-Risk Curriculum Design:

1. The at-risk curriculum is designed by those staff
   members who are involved with at-risk students.   1 2 3 4 5

2. The at-risk curriculum is designed for specific needs
   or characteristics of at-risk students on each campus. 1 2 3 4 5

3. The at-risk curriculum is designed to include
   additional counseling.   1 2 3 4 5

4. The at-risk curriculum is designed to include
   additional parental input.   1 2 3 4 5

Concerning Staffing for At-Risk Programs:

5. Staffing by dedicated personnel who desire to teach
   at-risk students.   1 2 3 4 5

6. Special training for staff to teach at-risk
   students.   1 2 3 4 5

7. Innovative teaching methods and techniques are
   included in the program.   1 2 3 4 5

8. Adequate supplemental compensation is given to
   teachers of at-risk students.   1 2 3 4 5

NOTHING BEING DONE	VERY LITTLE BEING DONE	FAIR BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE	LEAVE AS IS	TO MUCH IS BEING DONE
1	2	3	4	5

Concerning Funding of At-Risk Programs:

9. Funding for the at-risk programs is a high priority
   in our school district.   1 2 3 4 5

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12. Funding from federal grants is provided to implement
    needed at-risk programs.   1 2 3 4 5

Concerning the Effectiveness of At-Risk Programs:

13. The effectiveness of our at-risk program in meeting
    the diverse needs of at-risk students.   1 2 3 4 5

14. The effectiveness of our at-risk programs in
    preventing a significant number of dropouts.   1 2 3 4 5

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION. PLEASE RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
IN THE SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE.

VITA

Gary Alan Coots

Candidate for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Thesis: SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF COMPONENTS OF AT-RISK PROGRAMS IN OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Searcy, Arkansas, January 12, 1946, the son of I. J. and Tressie Coots.

Education: Graduated from Judsonia High School in 1964, received Bachelor of Science degree from the College of the Ozarks, Clarksville, Arkansas, 1968; completed requirements for the Master of Education degree at Northeastern Oklahoma State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, 1972; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 1992.

Professional Experience: 1988-Present, Principal, Central Junior High School, Sand Springs, Oklahoma; 1985-1988, Principal, Celcia Clinton Elementary School, Tulsa, Oklahoma; 1981-1985, Principal, Limestone Elementary School, Sand Springs, Oklahoma; 1980-1981, Principal, L. E. Radar High School Center for Incorrigible Youth, Sand Springs, Oklahoma; 1978-1980; Teacher, Park Elementary School, Tulsa, Oklahoma; 1975-1978, Teacher, Penn Elementary School, Tulsa, Oklahoma; 1969-1975, Teacher, Ross Elementary School, Tulsa, Oklahoma; 1968-1969, Teacher, Concord High School, Concord, Arkansas.