

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 595

TM 850 072

TITLE The School/Community Guidance Programs: Alternatives for At-Risk Students, 1983-84. Final Report.

INSTITUTION Austin Independent School District, Tex. Office of Research and Evaluation.

REPORT NO AISD-ORE-83.73

PUB DATE 84

NOTE 12p.

AVAILABLE FROM Office of Research and Evaluation, AISD, 6100 Guadalupe, Box 79, Austin, TX 78752 (\$1.00, plus \$1.00 postage).

PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Behavior Disorders; Correctional Education; *Counseling Services; Counselors; *Delinquency; *Delinquent Rehabilitation; Dropouts; High Risk Students; *Police School Relationship; *School Community Relationship; Secondary Education; State Programs; Student Characteristics

IDENTIFIERS *Austin Independent School District TX

ABSTRACT

The School/Community Guidance Program in the Austin Independent School District is a state authorized program providing services to delinquent students to decrease both their disruptive behavior and their contact with the criminal justice system. Assigned to reduce factors contributing to truancy, academic failure, dropping out, and delinquency, core services include instruction, counseling and home/school liason. This evaluation summary reports findings on the 1983-84 program in two junior high schools, two senior high schools, and the juvenile detention center. The five project specialists served 53 students in the school component and 171 young persons at the court facility. Major findings show that: (1) absenteeism and discipline referrals went down and grades went up after six weeks in the program; (2) of the 17 students exiting the program, 13 are in school, three are suspended, and only one dropped out of school; (3) only 3 of the 53 program students have dropped out of school; and (4) project specialists would like inservice training expanded to provide more interaction with community people/professionals who also work with these high risk students.

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WHAT IS THE SCHOOL/COMMUNITY GUIDANCE PROGRAM (SCGP)?

The 67th Texas Legislature in 1981 authorized School/Community Guidance Centers for school districts located in a number of large and small cities across the state. Built on the success of a four-year pilot project conducted in six districts, the School/Community Guidance Center concept has expanded into a wide range of schools throughout Texas. The centers are designed to work closely with truant officers, police departments, and juvenile probation units to help students with severe behavior problems or character disorders. The objective is to provide enough coordination to bring assistance to troubled students and their parents.

In 1983, the emphasis of the program was changed by the 68th Texas Legislature. First priority for services was given to students who were found by a court to have engaged in delinquent conduct, or who were determined to be in need of supervision. The purpose of these centers is to decrease the incidence of student disruptive behavior and decrease contact with the criminal justice system.

The services and activities provided are designed to reduce the factors that contribute to truancy, academic failure, dropping out, and delinquency. The basic core of services includes instruction, counseling, and home/school liaison.

There are many types of School/Community Guidance Center models which have been developed to meet the specific needs of school districts, so no two programs are exactly alike. Austin has chosen to have a School/Community Guidance Program rather than a Center. While the goals and program objectives are the same, the students generally are not pulled out of school. Students visit with the project specialist as often as needed. Generally, the specialist and student meet during the student's regularly scheduled advisory class or study period. The students enter and exit the program at different rates, and students are maintained in the program as long as their individual needs persist. Each student's case is handled individually.

The Court Component:

In addition, AISD has a court component to its School/Community Guidance Program. The Project Specialist has an office in the juvenile detention center and provides pertinent information to the schools, parents, juveniles, and other concerned parties about the juvenile justice system.

FINAL REPORT

Project Title: School/Community Guidance Program (SCGP)

Contact Persons: Douglas M. Butler, Jonathan J. Curtis

Major Positive Findings:

1. There was a reduction in the average number of days absent after six weeks in the program, a decrease in the number of discipline referrals, and an increase in students' grades after six weeks in the program.
2. Seventeen students exited the program before the year ended. Of these, 13 are in school, three have been long-term suspended, but only one dropped out of school.
3. Students report the program has been at least marginally instrumental in keeping them from dropping out of school. Only three of the 53 students enrolled in the program dropped out of school.

Major Finding Requiring Action:

1. All project specialists stated that while inservice training was helpful this year, it can be more beneficial to them. Inservice training should be expanded to include more interaction with people/professionals in the community who work or come in contact with the high-risk students the SCGP serves.

Evaluation Summary

This summary will be discussed in four parts:

- Project specialist characteristics,
- Student characteristics,
- What happened to the students while in the program, and
- What happened to those students who exited the program before the school year ended.

PROJECT SPECIALIST CHARACTERISTICS:

Hiring

There were five project specialists - two at two junior high schools, two at two senior high schools, and one at the juvenile detention center. The school campuses were: LBJ, Crockett, Pearce and Bedichek. When the program was implemented, great effort was made on the part of the director to hire staff who would best fit the needs of the schools in which they would work.

Four of the project specialists were certified counselors and one was certified as a psychological associate. Of the five project specialists, four had master's degrees and one a doctoral degree.

Program Implementation

Because of the late (October, 1983) release of State funds and the search for adequate staff, the program started late (November, 1983). The staff was hired and began work during the month of November, 1983. The initial enrollment goal for this pilot program was 60 students (15 students per school-based project specialist). During the months of November and December most of the project specialists' time was spent introducing themselves to school personnel and learning about resources both in school and the community. Only 11 students had been formally enrolled in the program (six in high school and five in junior high school) by the end of December. The project specialists received many referrals, worked informally with many students, and assisted other school personnel, such as counselors, with their duties.

The problems the project specialists faced during the initial period of the program concerned defining their role and limiting school administrators' requests. This problem was usually solved by presenting a brief orientation discussing the pertinent issues.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Students were considered officially enrolled in the program if they remained in the program for three weeks or more. Seven students were dropped or left the program in less than three weeks. Fifty-three students were officially enrolled in the program for the 1983-84 academic

year. Of the 53 students enrolled, 20 were Black, 18 were Hispanic, and 15 were Anglo (see Figure 1 for percentages). Figure 2 shows a breakdown of students by sex (34 male and 19 female).

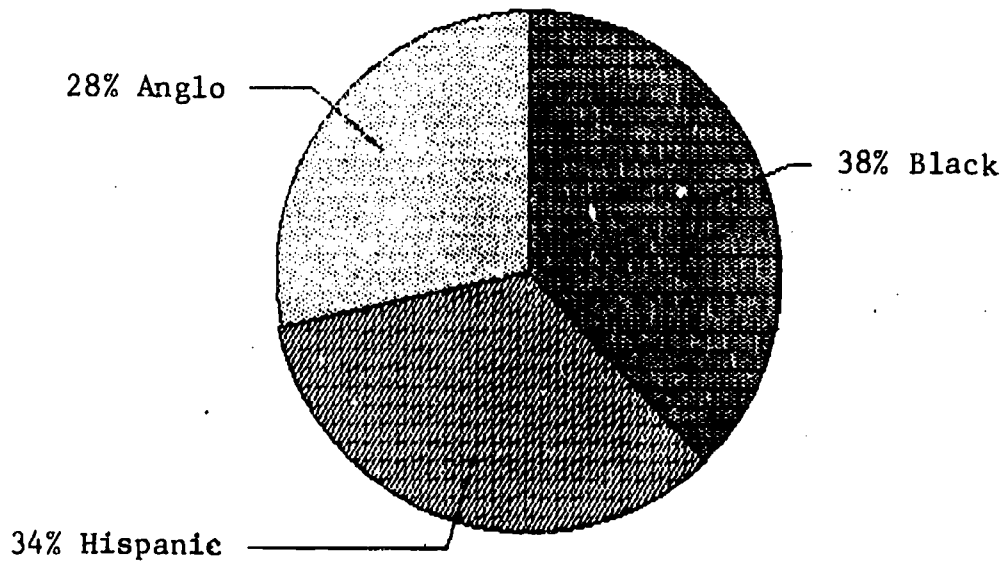


Figure 1. BREAKDOWN BY ETHNICITY FOR SCGP STUDENTS.

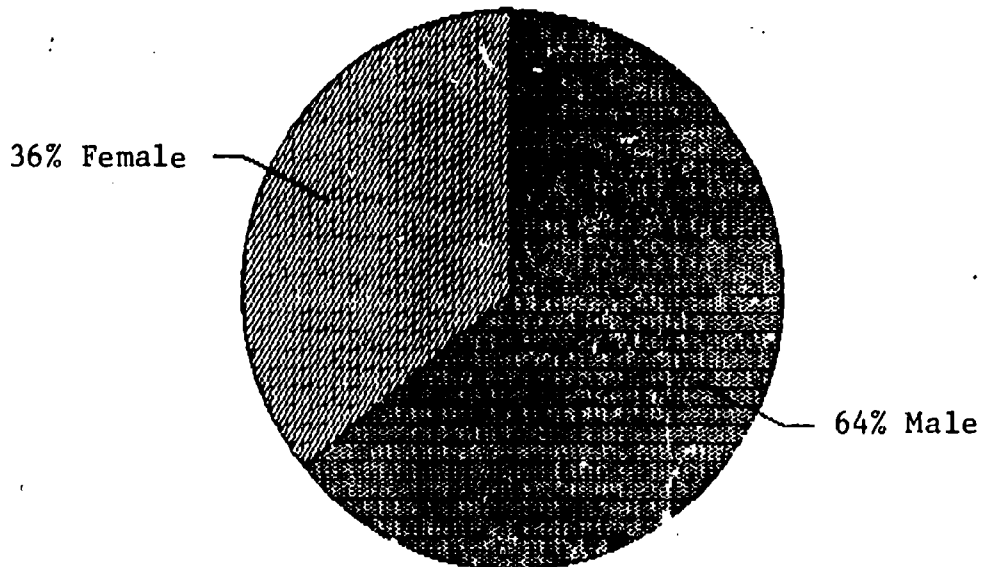


Figure 2. BREAKDOWN BY SEX FOR SCGP STUDENTS.

The students served by the program had committed these offenses before referral:

<u>Offense</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Cheating	1
Detention, missed or excessive	13
Excessive tardiness	7
Fighting	5
Gambling	0
Hazing	3
Insubordination	14
Obscene language	6
Possession of fireworks	0
Possession of weapons	1
Possession of liquor	0
Smoking	5
Theft	5
Truancy	33
Vandalism	1
Violation of drug abuse policy	9
*Other	29

*Other: Failing grades, possible drug use, possession of marijuana, family problems, adjudicated youth, parole from Texas Youth Council, runaway, expressed desire to quite school, contact with the Criminal Justice System, probated suspension, excessive number of suspensions.

Figure 3. OFFENSE CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCIES FOR SCGP STUDENTS.

Who were the Juveniles Served by the Court Component

At the court facility, the project specialist encountered 171 children during the course of the academic year. Of these, 130 (76%) were male and 41 (24%) were female. Fifty-nine (34%) were Anglo, 56 (33%) were Black, and 56 (33%) were Hispanic. The students ranged in age from 11 to 17 years and only 69 were enrolled in school (AISD) during their time in the juvenile detention center. Figure 4 shows the offenses of the children served in the court facility.

<u>Offense Categories</u>	<u>Frequency*</u>
Parole violation	38
Runaway	33
Burglary	23
Theft	19
Assault	14
Auto theft	10
Criminal trespass	5
Robbery	5
Courtesy supervision/directive to apprehend	4
Probation violation	4
Rape	4
Disturbance on campus	3
Possession of marijuana	3
Paint sniffing	3
Criminal mischief	2
Public intoxication	2
Minor in possession	2
Homicide	2
DWI	1
Unconcealed weapon	1
Sexual abuse	1

*Nineteen of the juveniles were repeat offenders and offense information was not available for some students.

Figure 4. FREQUENCIES BY OFFENSE CATEGORIES

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE STUDENTS WHILE IN THE PROGRAM?

For the school component, the students met with a project specialist individually and/or in small groups as often as needed. Figure 5 indicates some of the activities engaged in by the students with the project specialist or an activity engaged in by the project specialist on behalf of an enrolled student or his/her family.

<u>Program Activities</u>	
Field trips	
Tutoring	
Counseling:	Group
	Individual
Home visits by the project specialist	
Teacher visits/conference by the project specialist	
Juvenile Court visits by the project specialist	
Citizenship skills development	
Monitoring attendance	
Monitoring grades	
Monitoring student discipline referrals	

Figure 5. LIST OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES ENGAGED IN BY THE STUDENT OR IN THE STUDENT'S BEHALF BY THE PROJECT SPECIALIST.

Gains or Losses?

Figure 6 indicates that by the time the program ended, 32 (60%) of the students in the program were in school while three (6%) dropped out of school. Nine (17%) were suspended while two (4%) moved from the district, 11% (6) were committed to another institution, and one (2%) withdrew from school for unknown reasons.

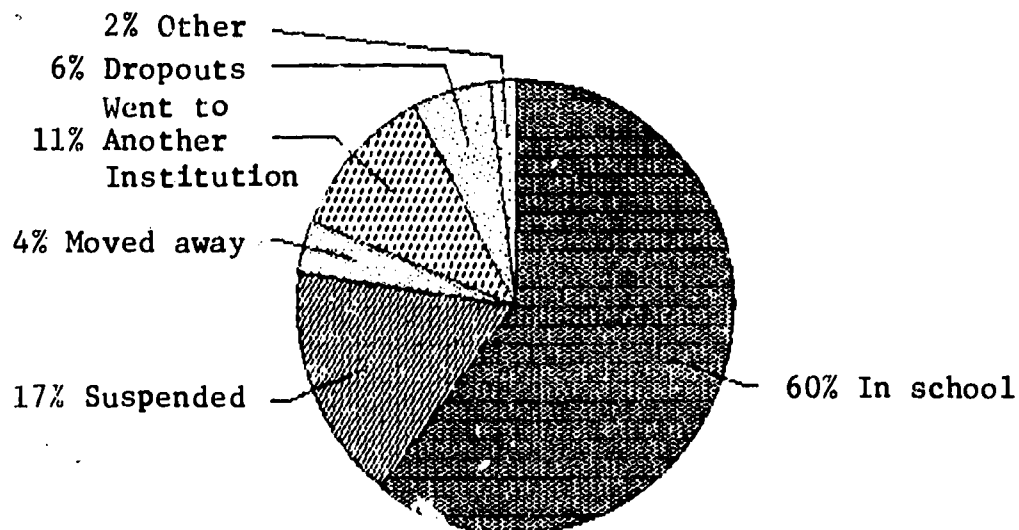


Figure 6. DISPOSITION OF CASES FOR SCGP STUDENTS AT THE END OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1983-84.

A series of correlated t-tests was performed on the attendance, discipline referral, and grade data.

Attendance

While there was a significant drop in the number of days absent after six weeks in the program, 12 weeks after being in the program the average number of absences was still lower but not statistically significantly different from the number at program entry (see Figure 7).

	<u>Upon Entry</u>	<u>1st Six Weeks</u>	<u>2nd Six Weeks</u>
*Number of students	35	35	35
Average number of days absent	11.17	5.20	7.06

*Only students for whom there was attendance data for all three periods were included. Other students either had dropped out or some data were not available.

Figure 7. ATTENDANCE RECORDS FOR SCGP STUDENTS AT THREE DIFFERENT TIME PERIODS. T-tests were conducted for entry by 1st six weeks and then entry by 2nd six weeks. Entry by 1st six weeks was significant at $\alpha = .01$ with 34 df.

Discipline Referrals

There was a significant reduction in the number of discipline referrals for students in the program (see Figure 8).

	<u>Upon Entry</u>	<u>1st Six Weeks</u>	<u>2nd Six Weeks</u>
Number of students	37	37	37
Average number of discipline referrals	9.19	2.70	2.91

Figure 8. MEAN NUMBER OF DISCIPLINE REFERRALS FOR SCGP STUDENTS OVER THREE TIME PERIODS. T-tests were conducted: Upon entry by 1st six weeks then upon entry by 2nd six weeks. Both tests were significant at $\alpha = .01$ with 36 df.

Grades

After six weeks in the program there was an increase in grades over the entry grades. However, the average grades on the 2nd six-weeks report card were not significantly different from the upon-entry grades (see Figure 9).

	<u>Upon Entry</u>	<u>1st Six Weeks</u>	<u>2nd Six Weeks</u>
Number of students	37	37	37
Average Grades	66.27	70.84	68.14

Figure 9. REPORT CARD GRADES FOR SCGP STUDENTS OVER THREE REPORTING PERIODS. Two t-tests were performed: Upon entry by 1st six weeks and upon entry by 2nd six weeks. The upon entry by 1st six weeks t was significant at $\alpha = .01$ with 36 df.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE STUDENTS WHO EXITED THE PROGRAM BEFORE THE SCHOOL YEAR ENDED?

Seventeen students exited the program prior to the end of the school year. These students have been out of the program for an average of five weeks with a range from two to eight weeks. Of these 17 students, 13 are in school and only one has dropped out of school. Three were suspended (see Figure 10).

<u>Weeks out of Program</u>	<u>Number in School</u>	<u>Long-Term Suspensions</u>	<u>Dropouts</u>
2	2	-	-
3	2	1	-
4	3	2	1
5	2	-	-
6	1	-	-
8	<u>3</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total	13	3	1

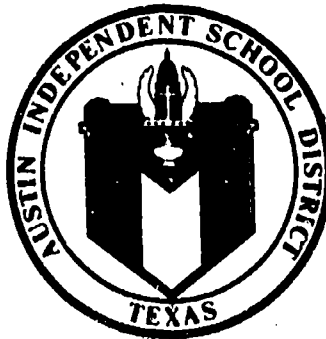
Figure 10. STATUS AFTER PROGRAM EXIT.

DISCUSSION

Once the program director hired staff and the staff clarified role and responsibility issues at their sites, the program seems to have had a positive impact on school personnel, parents, and students. The students enrolled are those who should be receiving the services. There is not enough information to determine what happened between the first six weeks' grades and the second report card grades. The gains made during that first six weeks after entering the program do not seem to have been sustained through the next report card. Perhaps more attention should be paid to that period with even closer monitoring and visiting with the teachers by the project specialist, but this area would be difficult to impact, because of lifelong patterns of not doing school work that some of the S.C.G.P. students have. Similar arguments could be put forth for the attendance data and perhaps it is too soon to determine how the attendance pattern will continue without follow-up data.

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Publication Number 83.73

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