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ABSTRACT

The School Development Program (SDP) Model is a potentially useful alternative means of addressing the ills that plague public schools. Containing elements of the adjustment and social action models, it is an example of the ecological approach to prevention, which views behavior as a function of person and environment. After a background outline of school reform movements, this report describes SDP's major components: (1) governance and management groups, (2) mental health services, (3) parent participation program, and (4) curriculum and staff development. Then it compares SDP to other approaches to school improvement. The rest of the paper reports on observed changes in school achievment levels and school climate variables in the Benton Harbor, Michigan school system where SDP was implemented from 1982-83 to 1985-86. A measureable positive impact was observed in both areas. Appendices provide graphs and tables of data upon which evaluations are based. A 42-item reference list concludes the document. (LHW)

ACADEMIC AND AFFECTIVE GAINS FROM THE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: A MODEL FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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Public schools in America have been the subject of much criticism in recent years. West (1983), reported on the results of a 1982 Gallup poll in which a national sample of citizens were asked their opinions on the state of public schools. Whereas in 1974, 48% of individuals interviewed rated public schools A or B, in 1982 only 37% gave public schools an A or B rating. Furthermore, 7 in 10 individuals said that discipline was a serious problem in schools. West (1983) also cited data from the U.S. Law Enforcement Administration's national crime survey of public schools which indicated that 68 percent of robberies and 50 percent of assaults against young people occur in schools. A National Institute of Education report (1977) indicated that students in public schools had fairly high probability of being robbed and attacked. Thus, within the past ten years a lack of discipline, vandalism and violence have been identified as serious problems which plague public schools.

The academic standing of public schools has also been severely criticized. The Coleman Report (1982) stated that Catholic schools had significantly higher achievement levels than public schools and that the private schools were better able than public schools to narrow the gap in achievement among children of different socioeconomic backgrounds. The report attributed the superiority of Catholic schools to higher academic demands and greater discipline in those schools. A report by the Center for Public Resources (CPR) (1983) indicated serious differences in basic skills among high school graduates.

Between 1963 and 1980, there was a continuous decline in mathematics

and verbal scores on the Scholastic Apitutde Test. Scores leveled off in 1980 and for the first time, rose in 1981-1982. The average Verbal SAT score fell from 460 in 1970 to 424 in 1980. The average Math score fell from 488 to 466 over the same period. (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1982). The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) issued a scathing report on American schools. It found that 13% of all 17 year olds, and 40% of minority youth were functionally illiterate. Furthermore, the report indicated that on 19 achievement tests among 21 nations, American students never finished first or second and were last seven times. The Commission summarized its perception of the current state of American education as follows:

> The tendency of succeeding generations to improve educationally over their predecessors appears to be at an end. For the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach those of their parents (p. 11).

The reported decline in social conditions and achievement in American schools was occurring while total annual expenditures for education was increasing. West (1983) reported that toal annual expenditures of regular educational institutions (in 1980-81 dollars) rose from 174.2 billion in 1970-71 to 188.3 billion in 1980-81. This represents a growth of 8 percent over the last 10 years.

Several leading experts on American education criticized the negative reports of American schools as being too pessimistic and unbalanced. President Ernest Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching faulted the National Commission on Excellence in Education for

not reporting that reading and math scores had improved since the 1970's. He accused the Commission of oversimplifying the data and presenting too grim a picture (Parker, 1983). Ben J. Wattenberg chastised the Commission for omitting significant information. He indicated that preschool attendance rose from 37% to 57% between 1970 and 1983. High school dropouts fell from 39% to 14% between 1960 and 1983. The percentage of young people graduating from college doubled in 20 years (Parker, 1983). Patricia Graham, Dean of Harvard's School of Education, attributed the reported declines in American schools to the fact that educators were being asked to perform too many nonacademic tasks. Myron Atkin, Dean of the Stanford University School of Education, reminded critics of the considerable amount of leveling up which has taken place in American education (Parker, 1983).

Despite the recognized gains made by American schools in recent years, no one really argues that public schools still need considerable improvement, both in terms of academic achievement and social climate. In fact, the insidious and perfidous threat being posed by widespread drug use and escalating incidents of adolescent pregnancy, especially in innercity schools, has created a new urgency for school reform.

School Reform

Many attempts at reforming American schools have been made over the past 25 years. Bruce (1980) identified the following reform movements:

1. Academic Reform Movement (early 1960's). This movement gained impetus after the Russians' success with sputnik in space. Concerned citizens wanted to know "why Johnny could not read" while Ivan could. The result was the development of new curriculas such as new physics

and new math.

2. School Reorganization Movement (early 1960's). Contemporaneously with academic reform was an attempt to reorganize schools. It was suggested that schools were centers of inquiry. Teachers were encouraged to experiment continuously with their teaching. Inservice education was emphasized and team teaching was a major feature. With team teaching came the idea of the clinical study of teaching which gave rise to what is known today as clinical supervision.

3. New School Designs Movement (mid 1960's). Schools were built around definite philosophies of teaching. For example, some schools were built around concepts of multimedia storage and retrieval systems with flexible learning spaces built throughout their environments. Other school designs stressed the learning center concept which could be reoriented as philosophies changed.

4. Social Reform Movement (mid 1960's to early 1970's). Multi-cultural education emphasized. The major purpose was to help all students understand theirs and other cultures.

There are two other school improvement movements which Bruce (1980) did not identify. These are the compensatory education movement and the effective schools movement. A discussion of each of these movements is presented below:

Compensatory Education: Compensatory education strategies were based on specific assumptions regarding the causes of chronic underachievement among minority children. Three of the most significant and well-known programs initiated were Head Start, Follow Through and Title 1 of ESEA.

Critique of Compensatory Education

Many educators and psychologists felt that compensatory educational programs were not responsive to the demand for successful and meaningful education of large numbers of school children (Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1965; Gordon, 1965). Programs for enrichment, remedial reading, ungraded classrooms, team teaching, and special education teachers were barely denting the lumbering, laboring bureaucracy of the educational system. Their effectiveness was usually dependent upon the ethos of the school community into which they were introduced. Preschool programs, while perhaps themselves useful, frequently had debatable longitudinal effects. Insofar as they often focused upon limited parental involvement, they may have served to reduce the alienation of parents from their children's educational experience. Unfortunately, however, too many compensatory programs of this nature had totally unrealistic plans with which to meet their own expectations for parental involvement; too many participants in such programs were unfamiliar with the communities in which they chose to serve.

Specific innovations such as programmed learning also had limited benefits. Teachers were frequently freed from rote-learning approaches to teaching tasks, but the more basic issues of concept formation and positive personality development were not being answered within such a context.

Finally, limited consultant services also proved to have spurious effects. The consultant was frequently not an integral part of the school's functioning, and thus rarely had the opportunity to evaluate his or her own effectiveness from the vantage point of the educational system.

Furthermore, the consultant's effectiveness with a few teachers was often visiated by the progress of the child or children involved in an new classroom setting and climate the following year. The diversity of teaching methods used, and the teacher's recurrent ignorance of the child's educational history often combined to negate any gains made earlier.

It was believed that most inner-city students' educational experience was segmented, routinized, gratuitously given, and frequently devoid of personal meaning. Theories of learning or personality development had little relevance within this context. Most important, basic behavioral science research findings and methods were typically not usable within the context of a highly structured, legalistically-oriented bureaucratic structure such as the public school. It is the author's belief that the school was not meeting the human needs of its children, nor probably, those of the educators involved.

Effective School Movement

The most recent thrust in school reform is the growing call for effective schools. Proponents of effective schools identify exemplary schools they believe to be effective based on criteria they establish and describe the characteristics of the schools which make them effective.

Edmonds (1981) defined effective schools as those which are "sufficiently powerful to raise otherwise mediocre pupils to levels of instructional effectiveness they might not ordinarily have thought they could aspire to" (p. 25). In his study of 1,300 public schools in New York he classified those schools as effective schools which demonstrated for at least three consecutive years their ability to deliver basic school

skills to all students regardless of race or socio-economic status. A needs assessment of each school was done to identify its strengths and weaknesses with respect to five characteristics and technical assistance was offered to make schools effective. The five charateristics of effective schools identified by Edmonds relate to the following:

1. Style of leadership in school.
2. Instructional emphasis.
3. Climate of school.
4. Implied expectations derived from teacher.
5. Presence and use of and response to standardized instruments for increasing pupil progress.

Bossert el al (1982) identified essentially the same characteristics as Edmonds (1981) of effective schools. Bossert listed the following:

1. School climate conducive to learning, free of disciplinary problems and vandalism.
2. A school-wide emphasis on basic skills instruction.
3. Expectations among teachers that all students can achieve and
4. Clear instructional objectives for monitoring and assessing students' performance.

For both Edmonds and Bossert, a positive school climate, an emphasis on the achievement of basic skills, high expectations for students and clear instructional objectives with efficient mechanisms for monitoring student progress distinguish effective schools from other schools. Coleman (1985) noted that a consensus appears to be emerging that effective shools differ from other schools in significant ways which are reliably associated with student achievement. One of the key differences

between schools identified as effective and other schools, discussed in the literature, is school climate (Ruffer et al, 1979; McDill, Rigsby and Meyers, 1977; and Brookover et al, 1979). Effective schools are seen as having environments which foster academic success on the part of students.

A significant element of the effective school movement is the limited value attached to parental involvement in their children's schools. School administrators and teachers are primarily responsible for creating the environment conducive to achievement while the role of parents is minimized.

Achilles (1982) provided a thorough review and summary of the effective school literature. He identified school climate and administrator and teacher behaviors which correlated significantly with school outcomes. These climate and behavior variables include: coordinated instructional programs, emphasis on basic skills achievement, frequent evaluations of pupil progress, orderly learning environments, specific instructional stategies, high expectations for students, task oriented classrooms, structured direct instruction, use of a variety of reward sytems, involvement of administrators and teachers in curriculum planning and preventive rather than punitive discipline (Weber, 1971; Wollisch, 1978; Edmonds, 1979; Brookover, 1982; Rutter, 1979; Goodland, 1979; Clark et al, 1980; Venezky et al, 1979).

Critique of Effective School Movement

The literature on effective schools has developed, as it were, a laundry list of positive characteristics which make schools effective. The approach has been to establish certain criteria for effectivenes, identify schools which meet these criteria and then observe the processes

within these schools to demonstrate in a qualitative way what an effective school is. The consideration given to climate is really only superficial in the sense that only such surface operations as discipline and rules are emphasized but not deeper and more basic concerns such as school organization, decision sharing and parential involvement.

Purkey and Smith (1983) faulted the effective schools literature on the following grounds: (1) research on effective schools utilized small and narrow samples which severely limited their generalizability (2) only one study (Rutter et al, 1979) was longitudinal. This prevented conclusions concerning the staying power of effective schools over time; (3) the studies are mostly correlational, thus they beg the question on cause and effect, a problem exacerbated by their lack of a theoretical model; (4) the definition of effective schools masks the fact that most of the innercity schools, identified as effective, still have lower mean scores than wealthier schools within the same district; (5) there is a tendency for studies in effective schools to compare exceptionally bad schools (negative outliers) with exceptionally good schools (positive outliers). This risks missing those characteristics which differentiate the majority of average schools for both extremes.

Thus, Purkey and Smith (1983) viewed research on effective schools as being weak and simplistic. They suggested that research into educational innovation should look more at school organization and school culture, as did studies by Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; Meyer and Rowan, 1978; Miles, 1981; Sarason, 1971; and Weick, 1976. Indeed, the work of O'Toole (1981) on workplace culture is seen as having provided a useful framework for examining the effectiveness of schools. Selby (1983) noted that the

"ethos" of a school or any learning environment has significant influence on the quality and quantity of learning that takes place in that school or learning environment.

The School Development Program (SDP)

A Model for Meaningful Change

The School Development Program (SDP) Model is not new. It was developed by Dr. James P. Comer, the senior author, in the 1960's and was introduced into the New Haven Public Schools in 1968. The model went through a period of refinement from 1968 to 1975. Since 1975 the effectiveness of the model in the New Haven Public Schools has been evaluated and documented (Comer, 1980). The documentation of the success of the model in the New Haven Public Schools has led to its adoption by a number of other school systems around the country. The Benton Harbor School District adopted the model in 1982-83.

The model is not being presented as a panacea for the ills that plague public schools. No such panacea exists. It is being offered as a potentially useful alternative which may have the positive results experienced in New Haven and in the Benton Harbor Area Schools. This paper describes the success of the model's implementation in the Benton Harbor School District.

The School Development Program (SDP) was not derived from a specific theory or model. However, it contains critical elements of several theoretical frameworks which were articulated concurrent with or after its inception. These include the population adjustment model (Becker, Wylan & McCourt, 1971; Hartman, 1979), and the social action model (Reiff, 1966). With regard to the adjustment model, the SDP contains components which

apply intervention strategies to groups who may be identified as having psycho-educational problems. Further, it seeks the best possible adaptation of children to the school environment.

The SDP resembles a social action model in that it attempts to serve children through social change. More specifically, it seeks to open social structures to a variety of inputs, build parent involvement and empower a community. While the intervention contains elements and resembles the adjustment and social action models, it is best conceptualized as an example of the ecological approach to prevention (Kelly, 1966).

In the broadest sense, the ecological approach to intervention may be seen as a restatement of Lewin's (1936) model of social psychology: "Behavior is a function of person and environment." The refinement of the statement for use among clinical psychologists and psychiatrists with an early intervention orientation has resulted in a set of concerete principles of "the environment." The adoption of the ecological approach in intervention and research programs has been urged by many mental health profesionals (e.g., Weinstein & Frankel, 1974; Wilkinson & O'Connor, 1982).

Model Components

1. Governance and Management Groups

An essential characteristic of the model is to move the school from a bureaucratic method of management to a system of democratic participation. The purpose of this group is to establish within each school a representative body to address the governance and management issues of the building.

Staff and Structure: The governance and management group is representative of all the adults involved in the school. It includes the school principal, two teachers selected by all the building teachers, three parents selected by the parent organization, and a mental health team member from the school. This group meets on a weekly basis.

Function: The function of the governance and mangement group is to establish policy guidelines to address the curriculum, social climate and staff development aspects of the school program b) carry out systematic school planning, resource assessment and mobilization, program implementation, evaluation and modification in the curriculum, social climate and staff development areas; c) coordinate the activities of all individuals, groups and programs in the school; and d) work with the parent group to plan an annual social (activity) calendar. The governance and management group systematically structures and coordinates these activities to improve the climate of the school.

2. Mental Health Services

Four major services are provided to children in intervention schools:

A. Discovery Room

Staff: The Discovery Room program is designed and directed by a resource teacher/research assistant.

Function: The Discovery Room is created to meet the needs of children who have difficulty in adjusting to school. Their adjustment difficulties frequently stem from shyness, withdrawal, acting out or low self-esteem. These children tend to be of normal intelligence and exhibit no serious learning problems, y : are not able to cope with the demands of the classroom.

Children are referred to the Discovery Room teacher by the mental health team and by their classroom teacher. The standard referral procedure is through the classroom teacher. Referrals made by other members of the core mental health team are via the school's internal Pupil Personnel Services. Small groups of three or four children spend two or three hours per week in the Discovery Room throughout the acadmeic year.

Structure: The Discovery Room is designed to be an attractive setting that will draw children out of their defensive postures (negative ways of handling fears and anxieties. The materials and the teaching methods are all individididualized to help children establish more positive ways of thinking about themselves as learners and behaving in school. Activities are structured so as to allow the Discovery Room teacher and the children to discover their interests and strengths. Within the small groups, the behavior of children is directed toward positive social interaction and their attitudes influenced in the direction of learning.

B. Transfer Orientation: Essentially the transfer orientation program is designed to decrease the anxiety and acting out behavior often associated with transfer.

Function: The transfer orientation program is stimulated by the transfer into the intervention school of a particular student. The intervention mechanisms already in place permit the review process and subsequent preventive program to facilitate the transfer process.

All students transferring out of the intervention school are prepared for the leave by their teachers and the mental health team member. Students transferring into the school are assigned a person who takes the student around the school and introduces him or her to every aspect of the

school and are instructed on what to do if they have an academic or social problem. Placement testing is conducted in mathematics and reading so that children are not frustrated or understimulated in the classroom. Teachers develop a classroom introduction. New students are assigned to one of the most successful students in the class for guidance during the initial weeks.

C. Mental Health Team

Staff: A classroom teacher, the special education teacher and the social worker and a parent assistant are the Mental Health Team/Pupil Personnel Service Staff in the school. A psychologist is also a member of the team as a consultant.

Function: The social worker provides input to the work of the governance and management body, integrating mental health principles with the functioning of all school activities. The Team also serves individual teachers by suggesting in-classroom ways to manage early and potential problem behavior. It trains school personnel in providing a variety of child development and mental health sensitive services.

Structure: The Mental Health Team meets on a weekly basis to respond to referrals from classroom teachers. The referrals are presented and managed like a clinical case conference. The Mental Health Team's responses to the referrals include a variety of services including immediate consultation with the classroom teacher; observations and extensive consultations and direct counseling to students. An alternative in some cases is that children are referred to the Discovery Room.

The activities of the Mental Health Team sometimes suggest school policy and practice changes which are communicated to the governance and

management group, reviewed and implemented if approved (e.g., the Discovery Room).

3. Parent Participation Program

Structure: This intervention component consists of three sequential levels of parent participation. The first level is concerned with structuring broad-based activities for a large number of parents. At the second level, approximately one parent per professional staff member works in the school as a classroom assistant, tutor, or aide. At the third level, a few highly involved parents participate in school governance. The project provides consultation and material resources to operationalize parent participation at all three levels.

Level I: Broad-Based Participation. This level of broad-based participation is designed to include most or all of the parent body. The school can thus build a cultural bridge into the community through the formation of a parent-staff organization. Activities include general meetings, potluck suppers, gospel music nights, children' pageants, report card conferences, school newsletters, fundraising events, and other functions culturally compatible with the community.

Level II: Parent Participation in Day-to-Day School Affairs - The Parent Stipend Program. At the second level of participation, parents become active in the ongoing life of school and classroom. A range of parent education activities are offered, about both parenting skills and teaching methods. The key component at this level is the parent stipend program. About 15 parents from each school are employed as classroom assistants, tutors, and clerical and cafeteria aides. Parents are paid the equivalent of minimum wage for about 15 hours per week. In addition,

parents volunteer an average of five hours per parent per month in addition to the time for which they were paid.

Level III: Parents in School Governance. The third, or most sophisticated level of the parent program is the participation of parents in school governance. In this intervention model, parent-staff collaboration is stressed and therefore parents tend to participate in the school's regular governance body rather than in a separate parent advisory group. Training in participatory skill is provided by the intervention staff, principal, and parent coordinator on an issue-by-issue basis. Techniques for letter writing, telephoning, follow-up with the central office, and mobilizing the larger parent-staff community are taught as needed to solve a particular problem at hand. For example, in 1979, in a New Haven elementary school, Brennan, parents were assisted in completing a community survey which formed the basis of their recommendations to the Superintendent of Schools for a change in the physical plan. Similarly, they documented a high level of community and school support for the parent stipend program. This was reflected in a successful application to the school system to utilize Title I funds to continue the stipend program after this project ended. Finally, Brennan parents joined with staff to initiate a selection procedure for a new building principal.

4. Curriculum and Staff Development

Function: This component provides instruction, direction and support to teachers in order to enhance the quality of education received by children. The aims of this component are carried out in curriculum planning which integrated a mental health approach into curriculum activities and in the provision of resources to teachers to enhance their

effectiveness in the classroom.

Structure: Teachers review achievement data, determine needs for each grade level and bring in curriculum specialists on a consultation basis.

Monthly seminars are based on building level objectives. Consultants are selected by the teachers and instructed to address areas where they felt they needed skill development. This differs from traditional in-service in which central office curriculum specialists impose district staff development activities on school staff whether they are relevant for each school or not.

Curriculum development takes two forms. First, teachers are encouraged to submit individual or group "social skills curriculum" proposals. Social skills projects incorporate both social and academic skills in a series of "units" designed to improve self-concept and enable children to more successfully negotiate mainstream American society. The second area of curriculum change is in the organization of basic skill instruction.

A. The Social Skills Units

Function and Structure: Social skills curriculum units are innovative teaching strategies designed to fuse social and academic skills development as an integral part of the regular curriculum. Social skills include relating to others in a mutually acceptable caring way, developing social amenities, and learning the skills necessary to deal successfully with social institutions such as banks, the political process, employment, and so forth. The process of engaging teachers in the development of the units (i.e., identifying curriculum needs, utilizing consultants and resources, and developing appropriate teaching programs) is stressed.

B. Basic Skill Instruction

Function: The approach to skill instruction is usually in response to teacher requests for help with learning disabled students. A reading-learning disabilities consultant works with teachers around these specific requests, and is increasingly utilized to assist the staff with the organization of the reading program for all students.

Intervention staff and consultants meet to prepare individual programs for each child classified as high risk, based on the results of diagnostic tests. Areas of strengths and weaknesses in both reading and math are identified and individualized programs are prepared. In order to facilitate administration of individual programs, subgroups (by domain aras) of the high risk children are formed. These groups include Verbal Ability, Perceptual Performance, Quantitative Ability and Motor Coordination. "Stations" or centers are set up around the classroom, each one designed to aid children in a particular area. Each station contains educational materials which are chosen collectively by consultants and school personnel. Additional materials which encourage acquisition of reading skills are made available to the class as a whole. Parent aides are trained to teach at different stations and work closely with the children. According to a preorganized schedule, each child is rotated among the stations most relevant to his or her needs.

Comparisons Between SDP and Other Approaches to School Improvement

Numerous school improvement strategies were developed during the 1960s to address to problems of inner-city students (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Grey, 1966; Reissman, 1966; Willie, 1964). Each strategy or program was based on specific assumptions regarding the causes of the widespread

academic underachievement of these children. This period in American education generated some of the most controversial ideas and policies concerning inner-city education and some of the most innovative solutions. Three of the most significant and well-known programs initiated during this period were Head Start, Follow Through and Title I of ESEA. Each of these was somewhat similar to the School Development Program--especially in the broad goal of improving academic achievement of young inner-city children. However, the SDP was unique among these programs in many respects, especially in its mental health approach regarding the elimination and prevention of the school problems. A brief description of each of the three programs mentioned will provide a general comparison with the SDP.

Project Head Start, which began in 1965 as a component of the Federal Government's "war on poverty", was founded on the assumption that educational success for low-income childrne could be achieved by providing these children with intensive pre-kindergarten experiences in child development center (Office of Economic Opportunity, 1965; Osborn, 1968). Similar to the School Development Program, Head Start attempted to provide experiences which could prepare young children for both the academic and social demands of public schooling--experiences which were often not provided by parents or community services. In both programs' goals the parent-child relationship was an important element.

Unlike Head Start, however, the SDP chose to operate at the elementary school level. It was decided that by improving the public schools, more children could be affected and the educational system as a whole could be made more responsive to the millions of inner-city children who were a

part of that system but not being adequately education.

Although the two other innovative educational programs mentioned were also elementary school-based, they both differed from the SDP in fundamental ways. The Follow Through Program grew out of Head Start in 1968 and established a wide variety of efforts to sustain the momentum and benefits of Head Start exeriences throughout the early elementary school years (Abelson, 1974; Office of Education, 1969). Similarly, Title I of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act attempted to provide extra resources and special programs for chidlren of low-income families in order to compensate for an assumed lack of home-learning experiences which could prepare a child cognitively or socially for school (McLaughlin, 1975).

The School Development Program, unlike these two programs, was based on an assumption that educational improvement could be achieved primarily at an institutional level, less successfully at an individual level. The entire school must be the focus of attention. All aspects of school functioning must be part of an ecological approach to educational improvement, curriculum planning, social and psychological services, extra-curricular activities, classroom management, and the myriad of personal interactions which take place between and among staff, parents and students on a day-to-day basis.

The effective school movement, like the SDP, emphasized the importance of school climate but in a less profound sense. The effective school literature defined climate more in terms of rules, discipline and teacher expectations. The SDP model defines climate in terms of an 'ethos', a profound organizational structure in which groups of individuals engage in

collaborative decision making. While the effective-schools approach minimized the role of parents, the SDP model emphasizes the importance and essential nature of parental involvement. The parents program is a key element of the model.

The Present Study

The present study is a report on the observed changes in (1) school achievement levels; and (2) school climate variables in the Benton Harbor, Michigan School System during the period of implementation (1982-83 to 1985-86).

Background Information on the Benton Harbor School District

The city of Benton Harbor is located in Berrien County, Michigan. Berrien County is located in the southwestern corner of Michigan. It is bounded by the Indiana border on the south and by Lake Michigan on the west. In 1981, the county's population was approximately 172,000. Twenty-five percent of the population in Berrien County at that time lived in the three principal cities of Benton Harbor, St. Joseph and Niles. Benton Harbor is the largest city. It is 100 miles from Chicago and 33 miles from South Bend, Indiana. In 1981 Benton Harbor had a population of 15,000; most recent figures (1986) indicate that the population is now approximately 7,095. The city is economically depressed. In 1981, over 90% of the stores in the downtown area had closed. Unemployment was up 700% since the 1960's. The situation in 1986 is very much the same.

The Benton Harbor Area School District (BHAD) is the largest school district in Berrien County. In 1981, the year Judge Hillman ordered that the SDP be adopted in Benton Harbor schools, the student population was 9,100. The black student population comprised 77%, up from 37.3% in 1966

and 73.1% in 1976. Recent figures (1986) indicate that the black student population is now over 80%.

The rapid shifts in the racial complexion of the city as a whole and the school system in particular eloquently tells the story of the racial segregation and subsequent "white flight" that existed in Benton Harbor when Judge Hillman issued his order in 1981. A major concern was the achievement levels and the climate of schools. Eleven of the 21 elementary schools and all three inner high schools were classified as "high need" schools on the basis of test results in reading and mathematics as well as on the basis of suspension and absenteeism rates in those schools. Many of the schools were below the national standards at all grade levels on the California Achievement Test (CAT).

Program Implementation

In the Spring of 1981, Judge Douglas Hillman ordered that the School Development Model (SDP), developed by Dr. James P.Comer of the Yale University Child Study Center, be implemented in the Benton Harbor Area Schools as part of a remedy to improve the academic and climate conditions that existed in schools. This model was phased into the school system in six major steps.

1. Change Agent Selection and Training

Step one of implementation was the selection of a change agent--an administrator to coordinate and direct the implementation of the School Development Model in the Benton Harbor Area Schools. The selected administrator spent the 1981-82 academic year in the Yale Child Study Center Fellowship Program in New Haven, Connecticut.

The Yale Child Study Center, in cooperation with the New Haven School

system, developed the Fellowship Program to transfer mental health knowledge and skills to a change agent who could then, in turn, work with other school personnel to apply mental health sensitivity, knowledge and skill to their particular school program.

The Fellowship Program consisted of: (1) seminars in the principles of mental health and child development, applied school intervetnion and education policy; (2) a practicum experience which allowed the Fellow to work in the New Haven School system, with support of the Child Study staff, in applying mental health principles, knowledge and skills to a system in a way to bring about school improvement; and (3) a project or study was completed by the Fellow relevant to his/her school system.

District Planning for implementation took place during the 1981-82 school year. During this time, Dr. Comer presented an overview of the model to district administrators and the change agent visited the district and maintained communication in preparation for implementation at the beginning of the 1982-83 school year.

2. Establishment of An Urban Academy

The second step in implementation was the establishment of an Urban Academy. The Urban Academy provides the necessary strucutre to implement the School Development Model. The Academy consists of: (I) a Steering Committee, (II) a Tier I Component and (III) a Tier II Component.

(I) The Urban Academy Steering Committee

The Urban Academy Steering Committee is a representative governance and management body at the district level. The Committee is composed of administrators, teachers and parents. The Committee has the responsibility to make program decisions, set program goals, monitor and

evaluate the program and provide support to the Tier I and Tier II components.

(II) The Tier I Component

The Tier I Component is a staff development process designed to upgrade the leadership and management skills of administrators and to prepare principals for participation in the model program.

(III) The Tier II Component

The Tier II Component is made up of those schools participating in the School Development program and is designed to provide a coordinated support system to the program schools and to assist them in implementing the baisc components of the model.

Urban Academy Steering Committee

An Urban Academy Steering Committee composed of the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, 4 Management Team members, 2 subject area coordinators, 1 Berrien County Intermediate School District representative, social worker representative, 2 principal representatives, 2 teacher representatives and 2 parent representatives was established in May, 1982.

Steering Committee members received an orientation of the model including the role and responsibilities of the committee, detailed outline of the model and a copy of "Steps for Implementation" prepared for implementation of the model in Benton Harbor.

3. Tier II School Selection

Step three of implementation was school selection. Four elementary schools were selected by the Steering Committee to participate in the first phasing in of the model in the Benton Harbor Area schools. The

following criteria were used by the Steering Committee in selecting schools: (1) principal interest in the program, (2) low level of student achievement, and (3) high rate of student behavior problems. Calvin Britain, Fairplain East, Hull and Morton schools were selected to implement the School Development Model at the beginning of the 1982-83 school year.

The principals of each of the selected schools agreed to implement the program. However, due to the need for change in principal assignments, two of the four principals, who volunteered to participate in the program were given new assignments for the 1982-83 school year. A meeting was held with the two newly assigned principals of the selected schools to discuss their interest in and receptiveness of the model in their schools. Both of these principals verbalized a desire to participate in the model.

Two of the four selected schools were located within the Benton Harbor city limits and two were located in Benton Township. Population of the schools ranged from 341 studetns to 864 students. Based on Chapter I data, pupil population of all four schools was considered low-income, and ethnic composition ranged from 76% to 94% black. In terms of academic achievement, as tested by the California Achievement Test, students enrolled in three of the four schools were functioning below national standards at all grade levels.

4. Tier I Component

Step four of the implementation was the initiation of the administrative development component--Tier I. The Tier I Component of the model was designed to provide a training program for administrators to upgrade leadership and management skills and to assist administrators in

gaining the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to successfully implement the School Development Model. Topic areas to be addressed were: child development in the preschool years; child development and how it relates to academic and social behavior in the school; shared governance and management; social development and achievement development. A minimum of four sessions were scheduled for the 1982-83 school year.

5. Program Orientation

Step five of implementation was to provide a program orientation for school and community members. During the months of July, August and September 1982, several meetings were scheduled for the purpose of familiarizing school and community members with the concept and major components of the School Development Model. Dr. James Comer conducted model orientation sessions for the Board of Education, district administrators and support personnel, staff members of the selected schools, and parents and community members including a presentation to area business leaders.

Principals of the four selected schools, in cooperation with the change agent, conducted initial staff orientation meetings for his or her entire building personnel. The model rationale, goals and step-by-step process of the entire model were reviewed with school personnel. Copies of the "Model", "Flow Chart" and the "Steps for Implementation", describing each component, were distributed to all school personnel. A number of copies of Dr. Comer's book School Power were provided, for reference, to all four schools.

In addition, the change agent provided a program orientation for the

Staff Development and Reading Departments, State and Federal Program personnel, Community Education Council and was on the agenda of several school Staff Meetings to answer questions and provide model clarification.

rogram Components

With the establishment of an Urban Academy to provide the needed structure and support, the four schools selcted during the 1982-83 school year (Phase I) and the three selected during the 1984-85 school year (Phase II) started implementation of the major elements of the change process, step six of implementation.

6. Utilization of Model Components

All major components of the SDP model described under the section entitled The School Development Program (SDP): A Model for Change (Pages 12-20), were implemented during the period under consideration (1982-83 to 1985-86). These components are again identified below:

1. Governance and Management Group
2. Mental Health Services
3. Parent Participation Program
4. Curriculum and Staff Development

The reader is directed to pages 12-20 for a detailed description of each of the four components and specific program elements subsumed under each component.

Study Design and Analysis

Data on achievement and climate indicators (suspensions, attendance, corporal punishment) were analyzed for the four original schools which were selected during Phase I (1982-83) and the three schools which were selected during Phase II (1984-85).

The purpose of the analysis was to determine what, if any, changes

occured in achievement and climate from the first year of program (1982-86) implementation to the 1985-86 school year.

A true experimental or quasi-experimental design with control or comparison schools was not feasible. The schools that were selected were the lowest achieving schools in the district with the highest rates of suspensions, absenteeism and corporal punishments. The expressed intent of Judge Hillman in ordering the implementation of the SDP was to improve the academic achievement and climate of these schools.

Attempts to compare the performance of these seven schools with the performance of control or comparison schools would have essentially distorted the intent of the program and belie the true conditions which led to the program's implementation. In addition, a ripple effect was noted to occur throughout the school system, in that, schools in which the program was not formally implemented appeared sufficiently impressed with the progress of the program schools that they voluntarily began to adopt various aspects of the model.

The data presented in the results section which follows will, therefore, address the following questions: (1) Has the implementation of the SDP model in the selected schools resulted in measurable changes in academic achievement and climate indicators (suspensions, attendance, corporal punishments)? (2) If changes have occured, what are the size and direction of these changes.

In order to provide a framework for meaningful discussion of the performance of program schools, data on national and district averages on the performance measures are also be provided. The district averages include the performance data for program schools and are therefore not

intended toserve as control or comparison group data.

The results are presented first for academic achievement, and then for the climate indicators. The academic achievement data consist of the California Achievement Test (CAT) Reading, Mathematics and Total Battery scores in grade equivalent units. These data are discussed for grade levels 1-6. Achievement data also include percentages of students achieving 75% or greater the Objective on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP). The climate data are aggregated at the school level and are not broken down by grade level. These data consist of suspension days, number of corporal punishments and absent days.

Only narrative presentations are given in the results section. Tables and graphs are included in the appendix and are referred to in the narrative.

Results

I. Achievement

A. California Achievement Test (CAT)

Program schools, like all schools in the district, experienced gains in Reading, Mathematics and the Total Battery on the CAT. The average gains at each grade level for the four year period 1982-83 and 1985-86 are presented in Table A-1 (see appendix A). In Reading, the average gain for program schools equaled that of the district as a whole at the second grade level and exceeded the district gains at the fifth and sixth grade levels. In Mathematics, the average gain for program schools exceeded that of the district at the second and fourth grade levels.

Tables B-2 through D-4 and figures G-1 through I-3 (see appendix B through I)summarize the performance of program schools on CAT Reading,

Mathematics and Total Battery for each of the four years and presents the national and district averages for purpose of comparison. The data indicate that program schools, over the four years and at each grade level experienced substantial increases from the baseline performance.

The data also indicate that for each of the four years, the district average equaled or exceeded the national average at different grade levels in reading and math. More importantly, the data indicate that for each of the four years, the average performance of program schools equaled or exceeded the district and national averages. Instances in which the averge of program school equaled or exceeded the district average are marked on the table with one asterisk (*). Instances in which the average of program schools equaled or exceeded the national average are marked with two asterisks (**).

For some of the four years analyzed, all program schools were found to be at grade level in Mathematics at all grade levels. In Reading the number of program schools in Reading ranged from none out of four to three out of six.

B. Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)

The data in Table E-5 indicate that the percentage of students in program schools achieving at least 75% of the objectives in Mathematics ranged from 45 per cent in 1982 (baseline year) to 78% in 1985; in Reading the percentage of students in program schools achieving at least 75% of the objectives ranged from 37% in 1982 (baseline year) to 49% in 1985. In 1983 and 1985 the increases in the percentage of students achieving at least 75% of the objectives in Mathematics were larger in program schools than in the district as a whole. Program schools also experienced a

larger increase than the district as a whole among students attaining at least 75% of the objectives in Reading (see figures J-4 and K-5 in appendix J and K).

II. Climate

A. Suspensions

The data presented in Table F-6 (see appendix F) indicate that the number of suspension days for program schools declined steadily between 1982-83 (baseline year) and 1984-85. In 1983-84 there was an 8% decrease and in 1984-85 a 19% decrease. The district as a whole experienced a 34% increase in suspensions in 1984-85.

B. Absenteeism

The data presented in table F-6 indicate that between 1982-83 and 1983-84 the per cent of days absent among program school declined by 18%. Both program schools and the district as a whole experienced no change in absent days between 1983-84 and 1984-85.

C. Corporal Punishments

The data in Table F-6 indicate that corporal punishments in program schools declined by 80% in 1983-84 and 100% in 1984-85. The district as a whole experienced 23% decline in corporal punishments in 1983-84 and 36% in 1984-85. It is important to note the drop in corporal punishments among program schools from 134 during 1982-83 (baseline year) to 0 in 1984-85. This compares with a drop from 69 to 34 in the district as whole during the same period.

Summary

The School Development Program (SDP) was introduced into the Benton Harbor Areas School District (BHSD) as the result of a court order handed

down by Judge Hillman in 1981. The expressed purpose of the court order was to improve the academic standing and climate of schools in the district.

The four lowest achieving schools with the most negative climate indicators were selected for program implementation in 1982-83 (phase I). Three other schools were added during 1984-85 (phase II).

Due to the nature of the program and its expressed purpose, the design of the present study could not be experimental or even quasi-experimental. Rather, the progress of the program schools was followed over a four year period (1982-83 to 1985-86) and where useful comparisons made with performance for the district as a whole and with national averages.

The results indicate that the SDP has had measurable positive impact on achievement and climate in the BHSD. Program schools have been on grade level in Mathematics and Reading at different grade levels for each of the four years. In some instances, program schools have equaled or exceeded district and national averages. The percentage of students in program schools attaining at least 75% of the objectives on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) has also increased over the four year period.

In terms of climate, suspension rates, absent days and corporal punishments have declined between 1982-83 and 1984-85. The rate of decline in these areas appears to be greater for program schools than for the district as a whole.

However, the SDP is not a panacea. It is not purported to cure all ills that exist in the BHSD. Although suspensions, absenteeism and

corporal punishments have declined, their continued presence indicate that there is considerable work left to be done. Generally, however, and in most instances, the SDP appears to have had a positive impact.

Finally, the SDP is an adjustable, adaptable model. It can be replicated with modifications to fit idiosyncratic conditions of different schools. However, there are basic procedures which should be followed and essential components which should be maintained.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

Table 1
Four Year Average Gains on the CAT

	Grade Levels					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Program Schools						
Reading	9.3	9.8*	7.5	7.0	7.5**	11.0**
Mathematics	12.5	10.5**	11.5	9.5**	7.8	10.5
Total Battery	11.0	9.8	10.3	7.5	7.5	9.8
District						
Reading	11.0	9.8	8.5	7.5	6.0	10.0
Mathematics	13.3	9.3	12.0	9.0	11.5	11.5
Total Battery	11.5	10.0	11.5	9.0	9.0	13.3

* Equals District Gain
** Exceeds District Gain

Appendix B

Table 2
Four Year Performance on the California Achievement Test
CAT (Reading)

	Grade Levels					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
National Average	1.7	2.7	3.7	4.7	5.7	6.7
District Average						
1982-83	1.8	2.6	3.6	4.5	5.2	6.3
1983-84	1.8	2.8	3.5	4.5	5.4	6.2
1984-85	1.8	2.8	3.7	4.3	5.4	6.4
1985-86	1.7	2.7	3.5	4.4	5.1	6.3
Program Schools Average						
Baseline	.8	1.6	2.7	3.1	3.8	4.4
1982-83	1.8***	2.6*	3.5	4.1	4.8	5.6
n/N	(1/4)	(1/4)	(0/4)	(0/4)	(0/1)	(0/1)
1983-84	1.6	2.8***	3.2	4.1	4.8	5.4
n/N	(1/4)	(1/4)	(0/4)	(0/4)	(0/1)	(0/1)
1984-85	1.7**	2.7**	3.5	4.0	4.8	5.8
n/N	(3/6)	(3/6)	(2/6)	(0/6)	(0/2)	(0/2)
1985-86	1.6	2.4	3.3	4.0	5.8***	4.5
n/N	(2/6)	(1/6)	(1/6)	(1/6)	(0/2)	(0/2)

N Number of program schools in sample
n Number of program schools at or above grade level
* Equals or exceeds district average
** Equals or exceeds national average
*** Equals or exceeds both district and national averages

Appendix C

Table 3
Four Year Performance on the California Achievement Test (CAT) Mathematics

	Grade Levels					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
National Average						
1982-1983 to 1985-1986	1.7	2.7	3.7	4.7	5.7	6.7
District Average						
1982-83	2.0	2.8	4.0	5.0	5.8	6.9
1983-84	1.8	2.9	3.9	4.8	5.8	6.6
1984-85	1.9	2.9	4.1	4.7	6.1	7.3
1985-86	1.9	3.0	4.2	5.0	6.0	7.3
Program Schools Average						
Baseline	.6	1.8	2.8	3.7	4.4	5.0
1982-83	1.9**	2.8***	3.9**	4.8**	5.6	5.9
n/N	(4/4)	(4/4)	(4/4)	(3/4)	(0/1)	(0/1)
1983-84	1.8***	3.0***	3.9***	4.7**	5.3	6.4
n/N	(4/4)	(4/4)	(4/4)	(3/4)	(0/1)	(0/1)
1984-85	1.9***	2.8**	4.0**	4.6	5.5	6.9
n/N	(6/6)	(4/6)	(5/6)	(2/6)	(0/2)	(2/2)
1985-86	1.8**	2.9**	4.6***	4.7**	5.4	7.0**
n/N	(6/6)	(4/6)	(5/6)	(4/6)	(0/2)	(2/2)

N Number of program schools in sample
n Number of program schools at or above grade level
* Equals or exceeds district average
** Equals or exceeds national average
*** Equals or exceeds both district and national averages

Appendix D

Table 4
Four Year Performance on the California Achievement Test (CAT)
Total Battery

	Grade Levels					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
National Average 1982-83 to 1985-86	1.7	2.7	3.7	4.7	5.7	6.7
District Average						
1982-83	1.8	2.6	3.9	4.8	5.5	6.6
1983-84	2.0	3.0	4.1	5.0	6.1	7.1
1984-85	1.8	2.8	4.0	4.5	5.8	6.9
1985-86	1.8	2.8	3.8	4.8	5.6	6.9
Program Schools Average						
Baseline	.6	1.7	2.7	3.4	4.1	4.7
1982-83	1.8***	2.6*	3.8**	4.5	5.1	5.6
n/N	(3/4)	(2/4)	(4/4)	(2/4)	(0/1)	(0/1)
1983-84	1.7**	2.8**	3.6	4.4	5.1	5.8
n/N	(2/4)	(2/4)	(2/4)	(0/4)	(0/1)	(0/1)
1984-85	1.7**	2.7**	3.8**	4.3	5.1	6.3
n/N	(3/6)	(3/6)	(3/6)	(1/6)	(0/2)	(0/2)
1985-86	1.6	2.6	3.7**	4.4	5.0	6.4
n/N	(3/6)	(2/6)	(4/6)	(0/6)	(0/2)	(0/2)

N Number of program schools in sample
n Number of program schools at or above grade level
* Equals or exceeds district average
** Equals or exceeds national average
*** Equals or exceeds both district and national averages

Appendix E

Table 5
Percentage of Students Obtaining 75% and Above of the Objectives on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program

	Baseline		1982		1983		1984	
	M	R	M	R	M	R	M	R
Program Schools	45	37	70	40	69	40	78	49
% Change			+25	+5	-1	0	+9	+9
District	51	58	82	70	82	65	84	63
% Change			+21	+12	0	-5	+2	+2

+: Increase -: Decrease
M: Mathematics R: Reading

Appendix F

Table 6
Percentage of Objectives Attained by Kindergarten Children on the Test of Basic Experiences (TOBE)

	Mathematics			Language		
	Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	Gain
Program Schools						
1982-83	34	90	56*	40	90	50
1983-84	41	80	39*	35	75	40*
1984-85	42	81	42*	46	88	42*
1985-86	40	80	40*	45	86	41*
District Schools						
1982-83	44	92	48	42	94	52
1983-84	21	54	33	21	53	32
1984-85	25	57	32	25	53	28
1985-86	25	57	32	25	53	28

*Exceeds District Gain

Appendix G

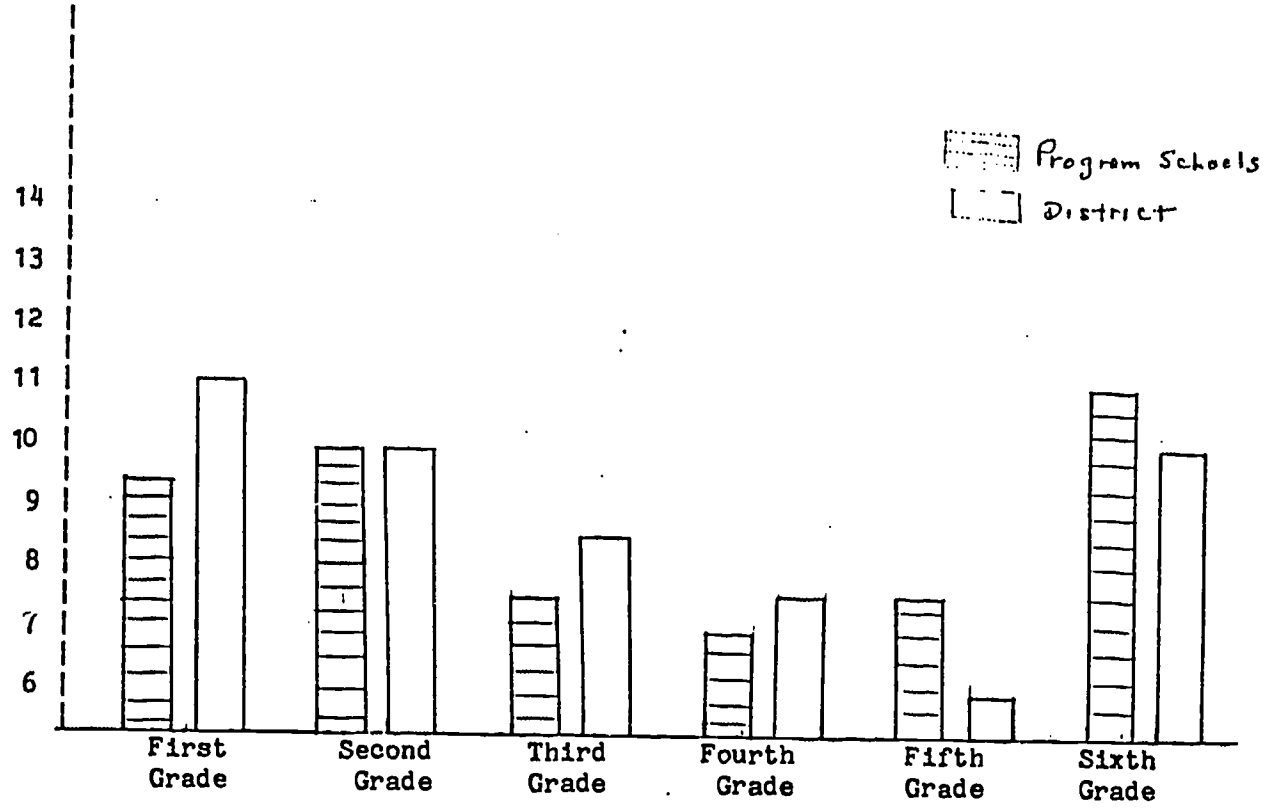
Table 7
Average Rates for Suspensions, Absenteeism and Corporal Punishments

	Baseline 1982-1983	1983-1984	1984-1985
Program Schools			
Suspension Days	39	36	29
% Change		-8	-19
% Days Absent	11	9	9
% Change		-18	0
Corporal Punishments	134	27	0
% Change		-80	-100
District Schools			
Suspension Days	*	29	39
% Change			+34
% Days Absent	*	8	8
% Change		*	0
Corporal Punishments	69	53	34
% Change		-23	-36

+: Increase -: Decrease
* Data not available

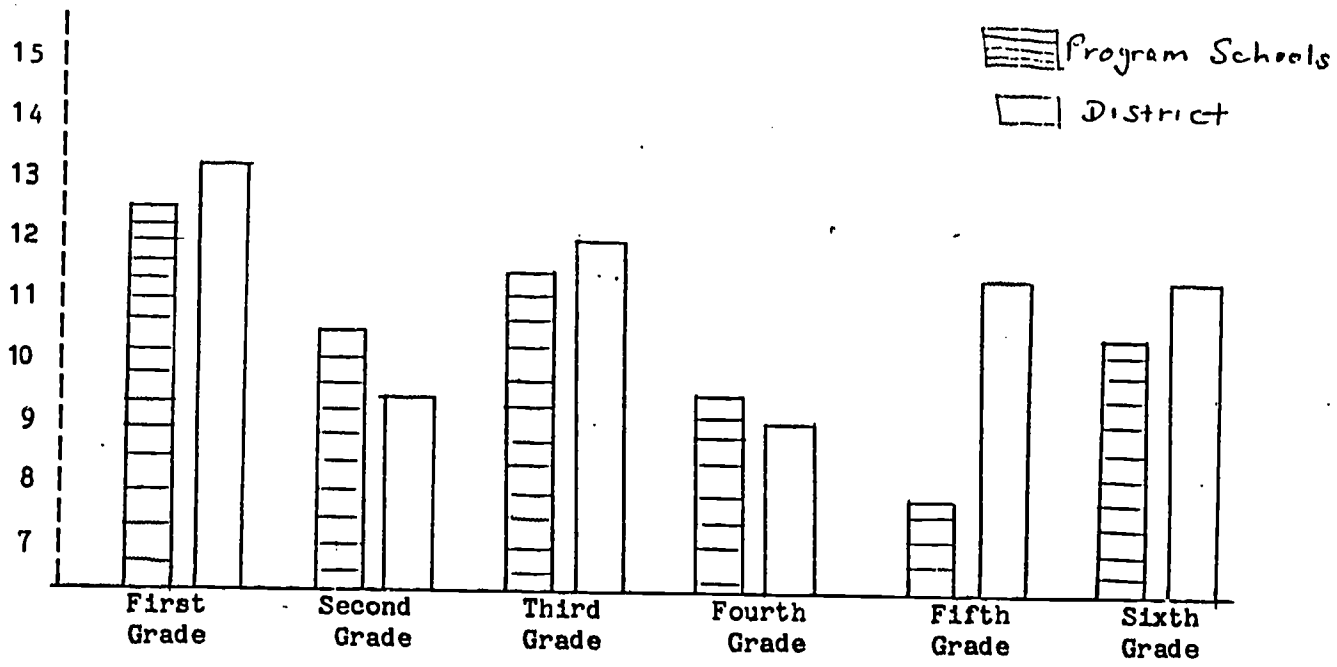
Appendix H

Figure 1
Four Year Average Gain on CAT Reading



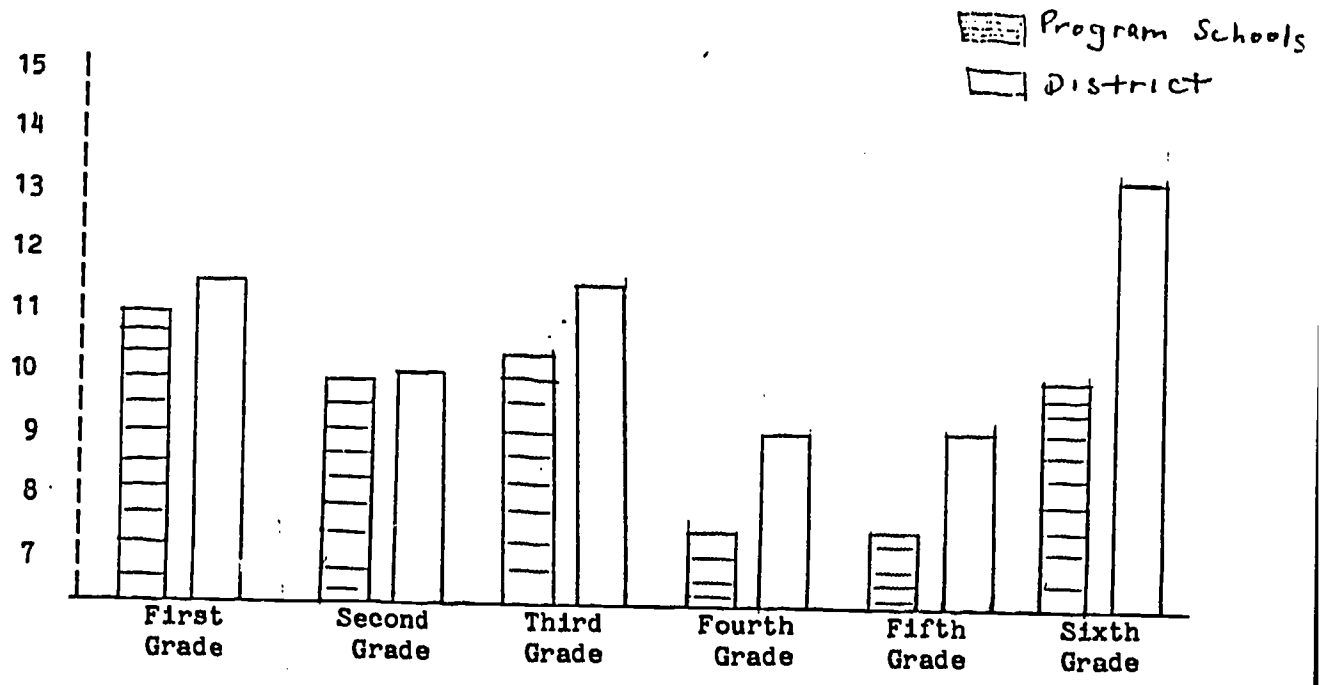
Appendix I

Figure 2
Four Year Average Gain on CAT Mathematics



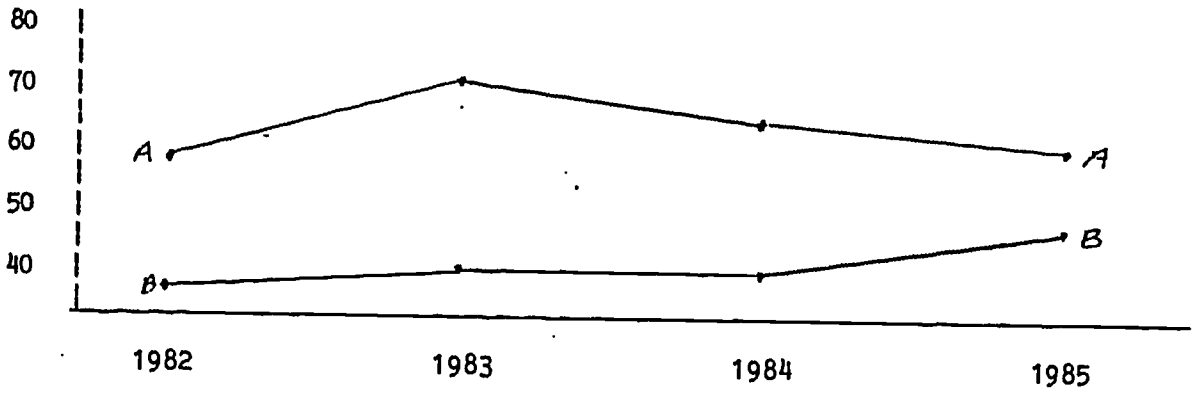
Appendix J

Figure 3
Four Year Average Gain on CAT Total Battery



Appendix K

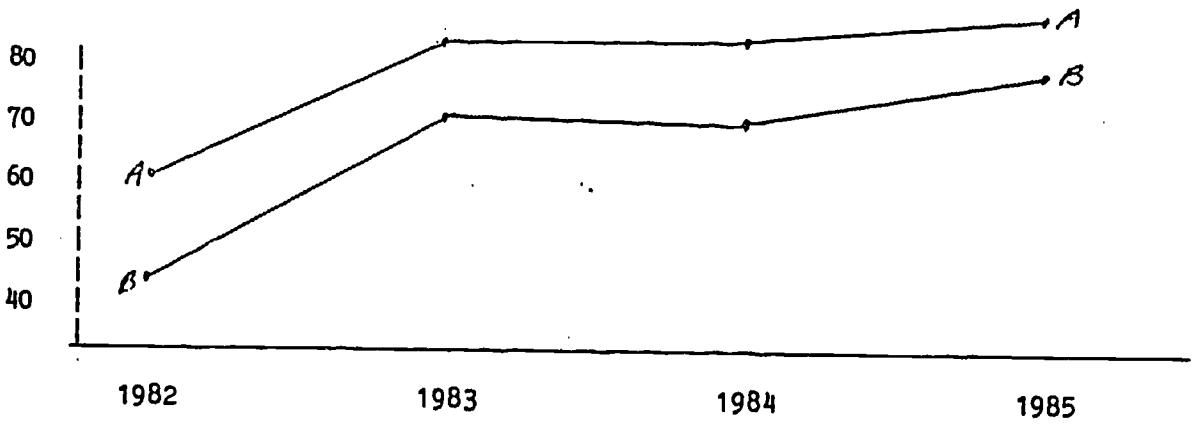
Figure 4
Percentage of Students Obtaining 75% and More of the Objectives on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) Reading



NOTE: A = District
B = Program Schools

Appendix L

Figure 5
Percentage of Students Obtaining 75% and More of the Objectives on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) Mathematics



NOTE: A = District
B = Program Schools

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