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ABSTRACT

This guidebook is part of a series of program materials for a school-based intervention process to help at-risk students stay in school. It is intended for participating adults and begins by giving them a quick look at the extent of the dropout problem nationwide. The booklet goes on to provide a discussion of the basic steps of the helping process, insights into the important roles and skills the participating adults need to make the helping process work, information about some successful model programs that use the helping process, and leads to additional resources that may be useful. (YLB)

The Helping Process Overview Guidebook

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THE HELPING PROCESS OVERVIEW GUIDEBOOK

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FOREWORD

The number of young people leaving secondary school before graduation is staggering Estimates of about 1 million dropouts per year carry implications of great personal loss. Costs to society in terms of lost opportunity for employment and increased burdens on state and national welfare systems are great.

The school's role in the dropout problem is complex and multi-faceted. Families and other agencies also share a responsibility in helping youth complete high school All must examine the pushes and pulls that move students in an effort to find ways to hold them on a constructive course.

The National Center's project on dropout prevention seeks to provide a connection between research and practice in the critical area of retention of potential dropouts. To move toward the goal of increasing the holding power of schools, the National Center has developed a package of materials to help educators plan expanded school programs that will act as a magnet in retaining students through high school graduation. Some of the elements with magnetic attraction are characteristic of vocational education, such as experiential learning and a work orientation, which can be strengthened in vocational programs and expanded into other aspects of schooling

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Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is imperative that secondary students stay in school to graduate. With about one million students dropping out each year, the costs are tremendous. The costs to students in employment and wages are great The costs to society are equally great. There are increased burdens on state and national welfare and penal systems. There is lost opportunity for employment. As the demand for unskilled workers decreases and the demand for academically and vocationally trained workers increases, the growing pool of unskilled people will become an even greater drain on society.

The "helping process" is based on the belief that dropping out of high school can be prevented or remedied. Research on the dropout problem and on remedies for it has yielded information that can be applied to structure and to improve dropout prevention/school retention programs No matter what form a dropout prevention program takes—a districtwide model, an alternative school, a school-within-a-school program, or a do-it-yourself one-on-one approach—certain components seem to be necessary to make the program work. these components are the following:

- Strategies that monitor student attendance and other important factors so that at-risk students can be identified and brought into the dropout prevention program soon enough to make a difference

- Restructure of curricula, instruction, and administrative policies and practices to improve the students' opportunities to catch up, succeed in school, and relate what they learn to the real world

- Coordination with and referral of at-risk students to counseling, social services, and health services in the school and/or community to meet the noncurricular needs that contribute to their likelihood of dropping out

- Linkage with employment to provide students with ongoing access to the mainstream economy (may include work-study, cooperative education, part-time jobs, and the like)

- A personal approach through counseling and/or mentoring that provides emotional support by pairing potential dropouts with caring adults

The **Helping Process** series provides program materials for a school-based intervention process for helping individual at-risk students stay in school. The development of this process has been informed by the aforementioned research on what measures are successful in dropout prevention and by discussion with many of those working in the field.

THE HELPING PROCESS SERIES

The Helping Process series is based on the belief that dropping out of high school can be prevented or remedied. No matter what the details of your particular dropout program may be, The Helping Process series will help you do a better job with it. Here's how to use the series:

1. Participating adults should read *The Helping Process Overview Guidebook* (the book you now hold in your hands). It will give you—

   - a quick look at the extent of the dropout problem nationwide,
   - a grasp of the basic steps of the helping process, insights into the important roles and skills you need to make the helping process work,
   - information about some successful model programs that use the helping process, and
   - leads to additional resources you may find useful.

2. After reading the guidebook, determine what your primary role will be in the helping process, then read the booklet(s) most closely related to your role. The booklets offer important information, suggestions, and options to assist you in making the helping process work not only for your at-risk students, but for you as well. Here are the major roles addressed by the booklets.

   - **Administrator/planner** for the overall model program
   - **Coordinator** of the program activities in your school

- **Team member** (e.g., instructor, counselor, employer, parent, social worker, health care specialist, truant officer, and so forth) who helps carry out the program for a particular student or students

- **Mentor** to a particular student or students

- **Student** at whom the helping process is aimed

Making the helping process work will not be easy, no matter what form (i.e., model) it takes in your district or school. However, in doing so you will experience the deep sense of fulfillment, a boost to your self-esteem, and the professional and personal rejuvenation that come from stretching yourself beyond your routine boundaries to help turn young lives around.

THE DROPOUT PROBLEM

- One in four high school students does not graduate. In inner cities the dropout rate is as high as 50 percent. For urban Hispanics its 70-80 percent and for Native Americans it's 85 percent (Institute for Educational Leadership 1986).

- Dropouts find it harder to get a job, hold jobs for shorter times, and generally end up in unskilled, dead-end positions. Dropouts under 25 years of age earn about a third less than those who graduate (Natriello, Pallas, and McDill 1987).

- Over half of all families on Aid to Families with Dependent Child-ren (AFDC) are headed by a high school dropout (Halm,-Danzberger, and Lefkowitz 1987).

- The majority of inmates—white and minority—in local jails lack ahigh school diploma (Institute for Educational Leadership 1986).

- Conservative estimates of the societal costs of dropping out of school are $71 billion in lost tax revenues, $3 billion for welfare and unemployment, and $3 billion for crime prevention (Ibid.).

- Race does not predict the likelihood of dropping out. The major risk factors are low socioeconomic status, poor academic performance, grade retention, repeated detentions and suspensions, adolescent pregnancy, learning disabilities and related stress, language difficulties, home responsibilities, and/or the attractions of work (Halm, Danzberger, and Lefkowitz 1987).

- Ev· y student drops out for his or her own reasons. The most common reasons students give are (1) meaningless school experiences, (2) family conditions that conflict with the requirements of school, (3) feelings of inadequacy about meeting the challenges of school, (4) work/economic factors, and (5) hostile school environments, including being "pushed out" of school because the school discharged, ignored, or discouraged them (Fine 1986; Institute for Educational Leadership 1986).

SUCCESSFUL DROPOUT PREVENTION

No matter what form your dropout prevention program takes—a districtwide model, an alternative school, a school-within-a-school program, or a do-it-yourself one-on-one approach—certain components seem to be necessary to make the program work. These components are the following:

- Strategies that monitor student attendance and other important factors so that at-risk students can be identified and brought into the dropout prevention program soon enough to make a difference

- Restructure of curricula, instruction, and administrative policies and practices to improve the students' opportunities to catch up, succeed in school, and relate what they learn to the real world

- Coordination with and referral of at-risk students to counseling, social services, and health services in the school and/or community to meet the noncurricular needs that contribute to their likelihood of dropping out

- Linkage with employment to provide students with ongoing access to the mainstream economy (may include work-study, cooperative education, part-time jobs, and the like)

- A personal approach through counseling and/or mentoring that provides emotional support by pairing potential dropouts with caring adults

How the Helping Process Helps

Once your program has these crucial components in place, you can start working with your at-risk students. There's a lot you'll need to do. For example, you'll need to—

- identify the potential dropouts,
- determine their individual needs (no two dropout-prone students are really alike!),
- place them in appropriate education and training courses and provide them with whatever extra educational help (e.g., tutoring) they require,
- make sure that they get the emotional support and social and health services they need to help them work out personal or family problems and stay in school,
- support their need or desire to hold jobs, and monitor and ensure that they are doing well and that the education and support provided are on target.

The helping process outlined in this guidebook is a method for performing all of the tasks needed to make a dropout prevention program work. It is based on the case management approach used with much success in New York City schools where they are fighting a major dropout problem, and elsewhere. However, the helping process is the same regardless of what kind of dropout prevention program you have, whether you're part of an extensive, comprehensive program, a small in-school team, or on your own trying to help a particular at-risk student. In essence, the helping process takes you through a series of necessary steps to make sure that the students you target get all the help they need to make it through school to graduation

The steps of the helping process are shown in figure 1 As you can see, some of the steps circle back to earlier ones in a feedback loop that continually refines the assistance you and the program offer to the students.

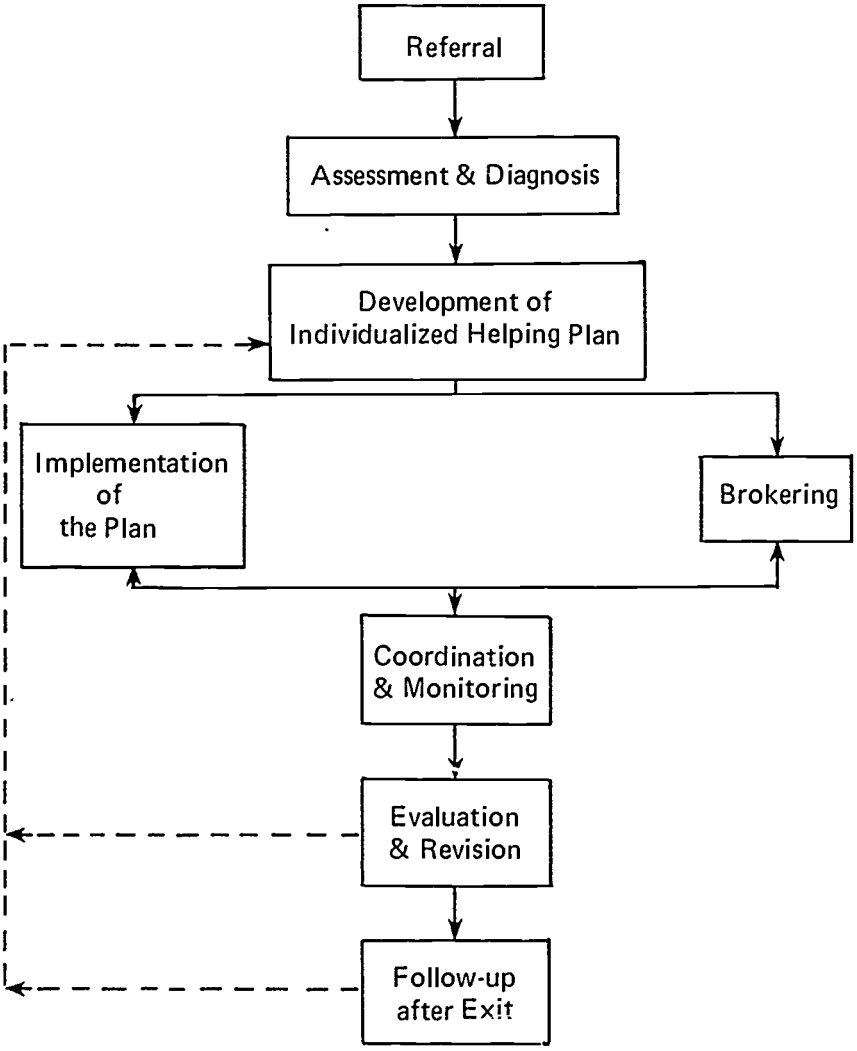

Figure 1. The helping process

The next pages will explain each of the helping process steps. Later, this guidebook will talk about your roles and those of others and the attitudes and skills that are needed in the Helping Process. You need to read these sections because they will give you a grasp of the overall process and how other people may fit into it. Only after you understand the helping process steps, roles, and skills will you be ready to read the booklet(s) that relate to your role(s).

The Helping Process Steps

Step 1. Referral

Every faculty or staff person in a school should be aware of the early warning signs that suggest that a student may be at risk of dropping out. Every faculty or staff person should be able to refer such students to a dropout prevention program.

If such a program does not exist in your school or district, you need to consider your responsibility to help the student personally This guidebook and the team member and mentor booklets, in particular, offer many practical suggestions for how you, as a teacher, counselor, paraprofessional, or administrator, can work directly with dropout-prone students to help them stay and succeed in school

Students leave school for many different reasons, and it is impossible to predict which students will actually drop out. There are certain factors, though, that seem—especially in combination—to hint at trouble to come.

Here are some of the **important early warning signals** of dropping out of school:

- **Poor basic skills**—students whose reading, math, and/or written skills are significantly below grade level.

- **Underachievement**—students whose basic skills are close to or at grade level but whose tested achievement consistently ranks 7-12 percent higher than their grades and who frequently fail to do all or most of their homework.

- **Grade retention**—students who have been "kept back a grade" at least once in their school career and are thus probably older than their classmates. They may have changed schools more often than other students and lack a sense of belonging.

- **Truancy**—those who show a pattern of poor attendance.

- **Adult family responsibilities**—students who are pregnant, are parents (single or married), are providing child care or financial support for their own parents or siblings, are living alone and supporting themselves, or the like.

- **Disruptive and/or antisocial behavior**—students who exhibit behavioral and adjustment problems both in and outside of the school. Many will have a history of probations and suspensions. They may have brushes with the law, be involved in substance abuse (personally or in the home), been runaways, belong to a youth gang, and so forth.

- **Emotional withdrawal**—students who exhibit serious depression, acute introversion, or other signs of inward-directed alienation from school and life. Some may withdraw via substance abuse.

- **Language difficulties**—students for whom English is a second language and for whom bilingual education and/or English-as-a-second-language programs are either not available or are not resulting in substantial educational progress.

- **Negative attitude toward school**—students who express (verbally or otherwise) alienation, hostility, distrust, and/or lack of confidence in the school system, school administrators and/or faculty, course work, homework, and the value of education in general. Many claim to find school boring, frustrating, and/or "a turnoff."

- **Low educational aspirations**—students who do not expect to succeed as students (often due to a long history of academic failure and frustration) and who often receive little or no support at home for educational attainment.

- **Lack of involvement in the school**—students who avoid enrichment activities.

A few other factors also figure into the dropout pattern, but are not distinctive in themselves, as follows:

- Other than Asian/Americans, students from **minority racial or ethic backgrounds** are more likely to be candidates for dropping out.

- Students with **low socioeconomic status** are also at increased risk.

- Those who attend a **school with an established high dropout level** are in greater danger of becoming another dropout statistic than those who attend schools that traditionally have low dropout rates.

Be aware that none of these "symptoms" alone means that a student is a likely candidate to drop out! No one factor is a proven predictor. It is the combination of a number of these factors that suggests that a particular student may be at risk.

Step 2. Assessment and Diagnosis

Once a student has been referred to your dropout prevention program, a person or persons (often the program coordinator and/or guidance counselors working with the program) will undertake an assessment and diagnosis process.

As an assessor, you have five major tasks:

- Determine the student's needs.

- Decide whether those needs can be helped by the dropout program. (Remember.The purpose of the assessment is to screen students into rather than out of programs!)

- Recommend for each potential dropout the best mix of educational, social, health, employment, emotional, and other support services for that student, based on what your program offers.

TABLE 1

SAMPLE SERVICE AND SUPPORT ELEMENTS IN DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Education, Guidance, and Other In-School Elements

- "Motivational" activities, such as awareness workshops on the consequences of dropping out and how the dropout prevention program can help
- Application of learning to the practical
- Early entry to vocational training (e.g., ninth grade)
- Competency-based, individualized curricula and testing
- Integration of basic skills in curricular content
- Computerized remedial learning
- Bilingual or English-as-a second-language courses
- Experiential learning*
- Tutoring*
- Study skills training
- Specific training in problem-solving and decision-making skills*
- Career guidance
- Individual and group counseling for self-esteem, interpersonal, behavioral problems, and the like*
- Mentoring*
- Family planning/health education*

*This kind of assistance may be offered in a different setting (e.g., a public agency instead of the school)

TABLE 1—*continued*

- Child care services for students with children*
- Frequent meetings between student and helping process team members
- Attendance outreach (e.g., truant officer house calls, wake-up calls, and other reminders)
- School structural changes to accommodate student needs, such as low teacher-student ratios, expanded or alternative schedules, flexhours, etc.
- Recreational activities to promote a sense of interdependency, group support, and cooperation skills*
- Preemployment training in job-seeking skills (e.g., resume writing, interview skills, filling out job applications)
- Job placement assistance*

Public Health and Social Services

- Family counseling/intervention and individual counseling*
- Substance abuse counseling and treatment/family support*
- Public assistance (e.g., welfare)
- Housing assistance
- Advocacy (e.g., in court, with parole board, with the educational system, and so forth)*
- Prenatal care for pregnant teens

- Identify, contact, and gain the assistance of the people who will deliver the recommended services. they will become the student's helping process team.

- Refer those students whose needs are not appropriate to or can't be met by the dropout program to other programs or services that may help them.

Step 3. Development of the Individualized Helping Plan

In the helping process, each at-risk student receives an Individualized Helping Plan (IHP) that specifies the particular services and support needed to increase the probability that that student will graduate from school. The IHP is developed by the student and the student's helping process team, which may consist of adults inside the school, in collaborating agencies or organizations, and in the community (including, whenever possible, the student's parents).

When planning the IHP, the team and the student take into consideration the recommendations of the assessment personnel. Components of an IHP may include:

- education and/or training programs and support,

- health and/or social services (public),

- employment linkages, and

- family and community support.

Figure 2 shows a typical model of program components from which the planning group may draw when developing an IHP. Table 1 lists some of the services and support that may make up these components.

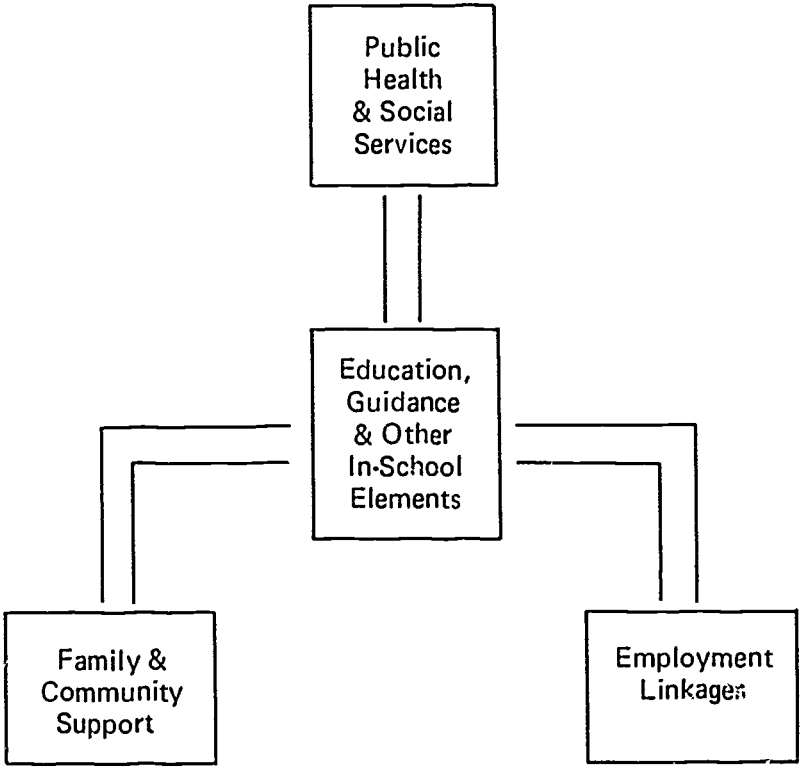

Figure 2. Components of an effective dropout prevention program.

TABLE 1—*continued*

- Parent education and support programs for teen parents*
- Follow-up after student has graduated*

Family and Community Support

- Life coping skills training*
- English-as-a-second-language education
- Junior Achievement and other entrepreneurship experience

Employment Linkages

- Cooperative education and work-study jobs (paid)
- Internships (paid and volunteer)
- Provision of part-time jobs with flexible hours to enable students to attend school

Here are some pointers for developing an effective Individualized Helping Plan:

- Always involve the student as much as possible—for example, in generating ideas for the IHP and making decisions about its content, and the membership of the helping process team. This will help the student "buy into" the plan.

- Include vocational education whereve, possible, this element has shown great holding power for students.

- Include both short-term and long-term goals and services

- Focus on meeting the salient needs of the particular student, not on what is easy or convenient to do or is stereotypical of services to of the student's racial or other group.

- Encourage parents or guardians to take an active part in the planning process and future helping process team meetings.

- Be sure to identfy a mentor (e.g., an instructor, counselor, employer, adult friend) who is willing and able to develop a personal, one-on-one friendship (and surrogate parenting role, if needed) with the student both within and beyond the helping process, perhaps someone who already has a positive relationship with the student.

- Remember to review the IHP periodically with the helping process team members and the students to make any revisions that may b' needed.

Figure 3 is an example of a completed IHP. You may wish to use this format to develop IHPs for your at-risk students.

INDIVIDUALIZED HELPING PLAN FOR Alice Rae Roth (Vasquez) Date: 9/25/88

Student: 4500 Nadir Ave Apt 315
Address: Yourcity, OH 44434

Home Phone: 555-2134 Work Phone: 555-5678
Employer: Marathon Service Station, W 5th & King Ave
Position: gas station attendant
Current Grade: 10th Birthdate: 7/3/71
Parent/Guardian/Spouse: Martin Roth (husband)
Parent Phone: (h) (w) 555-9001 (husband)

School: John Dewey High School
Prog. Coordinator: Richard Miguel (counselor)
Helping Team Leader: Tina Lankard (H.R. teacher)
Mentor: Frank Pratzner (auto shop teacher)
Mentor's Phone: 555-2813
Other Team: Juliet Miller (Remed. Math teacher)
Members: Bob Gordon (ESL teacher)
Juanita Gutierrez (Pub. Health Nurse)

Program/Service	Provider	Short-Term Goal & Date	Long Term Goal & Date	Achieved?
Auto Shop II	J.D. H.S. – Frank Pratzner teaching	C or better grade in course by end of semester	Vocational prep.; use of basic skills; end H.S.	
ESL	J.D.H.S. – Bob Gordon teaching	Grade 10-level verbal & reading fluency/end sem.	Fluency adequate for work & learning/end H.S.	
Remedial Math 002, 003, 004	J.D.H.S. – Juliet Miller teaching	Grade 6 ability by end of semester	Grade 10 ability by end H.S.	
Family planning inform. & service	County Publ. Health Board–Gutierrez	Informed choice re: family planning	Support for choice thru birth control or prenatal care	
Career guidance	J.D.H.S. – R. Miguel counseling	Informed choice re: career & coursework/end semester	Vocational preparation & employment in chosen area	
Part-time employment and mentoring	Marathon Service Station – Pratzner	Needed income/ongoing	Experimental learning, mentored job entry/end H.S.	

Figure 3. Example of a completed Individualized Helping Plan (IHP)

Step 4. Implementation of the Plan

Steps 4, 5, and 6 actually should all happen at the same time and are ongoing throughout the rest of the helping process. They are the real substance of the process, where the helping process team and the student work together to attack the student's problem areas directly and create the continuing support and commitment needed to help the student succeed in and graduate from school.

Step 4 puts the IHP to work. Every member of the helping process team, as well as the student, have individual responsibilities to fulfill to make the plan work. For example, involved instructors now welcome the student into the prescribed learning situation and do everything in their power to help the student buy into and be successful in it. They take a holistic approach, acting not only as teacher, but also as enabler, helper, role model, advocate, mediator, broker, and friend.

General information about these roles appears later in this guidebook, the particulars of working effectively in various specific roles (i.e., administrator, coordinator, team member, mentor, or student) appear in the individual role booklets. For now, here are some overall pointers for implementing the IHP:

- Work to provide active behavioral support through your own interactions with the student, regardless of your specific responsibilities prescribed in the IHP. Behavioral support means modeling, facilitating, leading, motivating, advising, listening, planning, nurturing, expecting, doing, organizing, maintaining, and evaluating.

- Work to provide the student with a positive motivating climate that offers trust, support, cooperation, high expectations, goal consensus, good communication, and shared decision making.

- Remember the importance of taking a holistic approach to the student and his or her difficulties. Try to avoid stereotyping students with difficulties and applying the easiest or most "tried-and-true" approaches or solutions when others may be more productive.

- Downplay as much as possible the emphasis on winning or losing that seems to permeate our country and our educational system. Instead, emphasize the importance of **personal excellence,** in which the student competes only with him- or herself, rather than using others' performance as a measure of success.

- Communicate, brainstorm, and cooperate frequently with the student and other Helping Process team members to be sure that all aspects of the students' needs are being met in timely and effective ways.

- Act as an advocate for the student with other school faculty or staff, other team members, parents, outside agencies, and the like. Often other important actors in the student's life will resist making important accommodations or allowances for a student's individual needs, preferring instead to follow established policy or practice ("the way we've always done it"). In such cases, the student needs an adult who will speak on his or her behalf and who has the student's best interests at heart.

- Do not hesitate to ask other team members or the coordinator for help if for any reason you feel that your part of the IHP is not working as well as it should, cannot be implemented properly, or is more than you can handle.

Step 5. Brokering for Other Needed Assistance

Because at-risk students have such divergent problems affecting their education, you may need to reach beyond the resources of your dropout prevention program to obtain for students the help they need. When this happens (and it will happen often), you should act as a broker to steer the student to existing services elsewhere (e.g., Department of Welfare Assistance, a family counseling service, substance abuse program).

Services of this kind will normally be listed on the student's IHP, and the program coordinator, helping process team leader, or other team member will make the initial arrangements for service. There will

be times, though, when a student's needs change very quickly or do not become apparent until after the IHP has been drafted. For this reason, all team members should be prepared to act as brokers at any time.

Effective brokering involves the following:

- Becoming informed about where to look for the needed service (e g . who offers it, what are the criteria for eligibility, what are the costs if any, and so forth).

- Making the initial contacts and/or referrals to the outside service provider.

- Informing the student about the services and motivating the student to make use of them.

- Helping the student arrange for the needed services and going with the student, if necessary, to the outside agency or organization to make the initial personal contact.

- Supporting the student in using the services. This may mean providing emotional, advocacy, transportation, or other support the student may need to make effective use of the services. It may also mean helping the student find other service providers if the first agency or organization does not meet the student's needs adequately.

Step 6. Service Coordination and Monitoring

It's important for one person to have the designated responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the IHP effort for each student. This could be either the program coordinator or the Helping Process team leader When no one assumes this responsibility, it is all too easy for team members to lose their enthusiasm or touch with each other, for components of the IHP to "slip through the cracks," or for the IHP effort to fall apart completely.

Here are the important tasks the service coordinator and/or monitor needs to do:

- Communicate frequently and informally with all IHP actors—school faculty and staff, the student, team members outside the school, and service providers from outside organizations—to track the progress of IHP implementation.

- Conduct some kind of formal, cyclic monitoring activities (such as student testing, monthly team member reports) to track the progress of the IHP.

- Gather the helping process team and the student together on a regular basis for a progress meeting and exchange of opinions, feelings, insights, and suggestions.

- Facilitate the coordination of IHP components so that all parts of the IHP are delivered when they are needed and are effective for the student.

- Watch for signs that suggest potential problems or hidden obstacles, and use these cues to call the team members and student together to meet and resolve the problems before they become serious stumbling blocks to the student's progress.

- Encourage ongoing, open communication among all team members, and facilitate smooth, friendly cooperation among the different actors even though they may operate in different arenas (e.g., a workplace versus the school or an agency).

- Act as a broker, advocate, or mediator for the student during helping process team meetings and in other situations that may arise.

- Be sensitive to the student's changing needs (not just those that require emergency attention), and determine if and when revisions to the IHP may be desirable or necessary.

Step 7. Evaluation and Revision of the Plan

The IHP should probably be reviewed and brought up to date once or twice a year by the helping process team and the student. Such reviews work best when they are based on a combination of both empirical data and personal input.

Empirical data can be drawn from a variety of sources, including the student's course grades, scores on recent achievement or aptitude tests, written reports from outside service providers (e.g., a church-run ESL program), and so forth. Personal input will include the comments and opinions of the student, the team members, and any others who have become significantly involved in the student's IHP.

Here are some suggested steps for evaluating and revising an IHP.

- Near the end of the current quarter but well before the beginning of the next one, the coordinator or helping process team leader should arrange for the IHP review meeting. If the coordinator has sensed the possible need for new or different services for the student, any potential new team members should also be invited to attend.

- Prior to the actual meeting, all members of the team, including the student, should read the current IHP and form specific opinions on it and how it should be modified. (A sample form to simplify this process appears as figure 4.

- At the meeting, discussion with the student should focus on which IHP objectives have been successfully reached, which have not, and why this happened. Reasons for success are just as important as excuses for failure.

- If revisions are needed, the team should build on positive factors as the entire group works together to revise the IHP for the coming quarter or semester. The outcome of the meeting will be the revised (or revalidated) IHP that will go into effect as soon as feasible.

SUGGESTED CHANGES TO THE INDIVIDUALIZED HELPING PLAN (IHP)

FOR _____
(student's name)

REMINDER: The Helping Process team and _____ will meet to review the IHP on
(student)

_____ at _____ . Please read the current
(date) (meeting location)
IHP, complete this form, and bring it with you to the meeting!

IHP Program/Service	Achieved? (Yes or No)	Need Revisions? (Yes or No)	Change Short-Term Goals to —	Change Long-Term Goals to —

List any new programs/services you think are needed now:

Figure 4. IHP review and revision form

Step 8. Follow-Up after Exit from School

Many dropout prevention programs depend on allocations from the school operating budget, state or local grants, or other sources of funding that require periodic programmatic evaluation. The ultimate criterion for the effectiveness of a program, of course, is the success or lack of success of program participants **once they go out into the real world.** For this reason, follow-up of these students after they leave the school is vital.

In addition, if a program fails to follow up on the students once they leave school, dropout prevention teams will lose invaluable information for improving their program and personal efforts. This is true whether the students graduate from school or drop out. Furthermore, some of these students provide a potential resource for current students, either as role models or mentors.

Follow-up can take many forms. It may involve personal or telephone surveys of former program participants, usually after an appropriate amount of time (e.g., 6 months, 1-2 years) has passed. You could use a mail survey, although this approach tends to reap low feedback and is not recommended. You may also wish to conduct interviews or surveys of parents, spouses, employers, or any former Helping Process team members or agency personnel who continue to interact with the former students.

All of the feedback you collect should be used to evaluate the overall success of the program on these young lives. It can also help you form a very clear picture of your program's particular strengths and weaknesses. This information can suggest important program improvements.

Finally, follow-up of those students who dropped out despite participation in your dropout prevention program may suggest ways to attract these young people back to school, perhaps for evening or weekend education classes, in order to help them earn a G.E.D.

Final Ingredients for Success

Whether the helping process is carried out by a team of people or by a single individual, any involved person may be called upon to play a number of roles. Obviously, if you are trying to help a student in a one-on-one situation, you may have a big job ahead of you, but it can be done—other adults have proven it with their at-risk students!

A quick glance at the eight steps of the helping process gives an idea of the kinds of roles you or your fellow team members will need to fill at some point or another to do a good job of helping the student make it through school to graduation:

- Referror
- Assessor
- Counselor/advisor
- Planner
- Instructor and/or other service provider
- Broker
- Coordinator
- Advocate or Mentor
- Evaluator
- Surrogate parent/adult friend

Some of these roles may seem to fit a particular kind of helping process team member, but in fact, **most team members will probably wear more than one hat.** For example, the adult who takes on the role of mentor may also be the student's instructor for a subject. Another student's prenatal care nurse may need to act as a broker to help connect the student to welfare assistance, day care, or perhaps a substance abuse program. A volunteer tutor from the community may find a student confiding his or her problems, and thus be asked in effect to extend the tutoring (service provider) role to include friend, or perhaps even advocate.

It's clear that the more structured your dropout prevention program is, the more important it becomes for the helping process team members to articulate their roles. In other words, it becomes extremely important—for the sake of the student—that all of the team members cooperate closely and communicate openly not only with the student but with each other.

For convenience, this series on the helping process offers role booklets for a number of the major actors in a dropout prevention program:

- **Administrator/planner**—an administrator, school principal, or supervisor who is responsible for the overall dropout prevention program and who works with others (often a task force of other public and private sector representatives)to design, administer, and supervise the overall effort at the system or school level.

- **Coordinator**—a school faculty or staff member who is responsible for making sure the program runs correctly in the school, who works with other faculty or staff to bring students into the program, who may appoint some or all of a student's helping process team, and who works closely with the teams to make sure that the group efforts are going smoothly and properly. The coordinator also usually has responsibility for evaluating the program at the school level, including performing follow-up of students that leave the program for any reason.

- **Mentor**—a school faculty or staff member or adult from the community (e.g., an employer, member from the student's church, scoutmaster, and so forth) who has already established or is in a

- **Willingness to expand your roles.** This works hand-in-hand with the other attitudes for positive change. To truly help a student, you need to become sensitive to helping opportunities and be willing to take them—even when that means going beyond your usual or assigned role. When you commit yourself to becoming part of the helping process for a student, you no longer work only as a counselor, nurse, teacher, employer, tutor, or other assigned role, now you become (at least potentially) all of those other things we mentioned earlier: planner, broker, advisor, advocate, assessor, coordinator, evaluator—and perhaps most important of all—friend.

  Taking on these extra roles does require more energy, and it will mean putting in time above and beyond your usual work hours. However, most people who invested themselves in helping at-risk youth say that turning these young lives around is worth it.

Skills for Positive Change

In addition to positive attitudes, there are a number of skills you will need to develop or sharpen to make the helping process a success. The role booklets go into some of these in detail, but here are the most important skills for positive change:

- **Acute observation.** Try to become alert to youth who may be dropout-prone in order to refer them to a dropout prevention program as soon as possible. It is always easier to help students succeed and stay in school if the obstacles to their success are detected and attacked early.

  You will also need to observe and be sensitive to changes in behavior or attitudes of youth who are already involved in the helping process. Being aware of positive changes may signal opportunities for you or other helping process team members to build on or accelerate growth experiences for the student. On the other hand, many times a problem will evolve or emerge in a student's life about which he or she will not volunteer information. If you are not the most appropriate person to confront the student about the problem, you should discuss your observations with the helping process team member who is.

- **Maintenance of openness.** This is crucial for working with any young people, whether they are at risk or not, but it is especially important for dropout-prone students because so often their relationships with adults have been disappointing or even destructive. Being open means being approachable—making sure that a student knows that your time and your attention are readily available. It means offering this time or attention even when a student does not actively seek it—this is especially important for new or shy students.

- Being open also means avoiding **labeling students.** For instance, being learning disabled does not mean being retarded, or incapable, or unmotivated. Being black or Hispanic in an inner city does not mean being a juvenile delinquent or drug addict or pusher. And being a substance abuser does not mean being a doomed loser. Resist the tendency to stereotype and you may be surprised at the depth of human resiliency in your at-risk students.

- **Relationship building.** Once a student senses that you are approachable, it is possible to begin building a personal relationship with the student. Caring expressed by adults is probably one of the most common factors missing in at-risk students' lives. Building a relationship with a student means listening actively, expressing care and concern, and providing the student with individual attention. For a few students, it may mean becoming a mentor—a surrogate parent. For most, it should at least mean becoming, at some level, a friend—a person the student can talk to, work with comfortably, and trust.

- **Problem sensing.** This skill ties in with acute observation, but goes beyond it. It means not only recognizing that a problem may exist, but finding ways—through more observation, through talking with the student's family or friends, or through talking directly with the student—to gain a sense of the scope of the problem. All helping process team members need this skill, but no one more so than the student's mentor, counselor, or health care provider.

- **Problem solving.** Having sensed a problem and grasped its scope, helping process team members need to find ways to solve it before it undermines the helping process. Problem solving

good position to establish a surrogate parent relationship with the student. This person has the responsibility of being the student's closest friend and major liaison with other team members in the helping process.

- Team member—persons who provide educational or other services stipulated on the IHP that are crucial to the student's chances of staying and succeeding in school. Team members may come from many places inside or outside the school.an instructor, one or both parents, an employer, a truant officer, a guidance counselor, a tutor, a family planning counselor, a prenatal nurse, a family counselor, a social worker, a minister or rabbi, an adult friend, an older sibling, and the list goes on. In some way, all of these people perform a vital service to help the at-risk student.

- Student—the young man or woman for whom the helping process is offered and whose chances of "making or breaking it" depend not only on the efforts and caring of the helping process team members and the dropout prevention program, but on his or her own ability and willingness to have hope, try some new things, and put in the time and energy it will take to get a diploma.

To make the helping process work, every team member needs attitudes and skills that work for positive change, as well as good teamwork skills to make the most of their combination of talents and energy.

Attitudes for Positive Change

As a facilitator in the helping process, you may need to modify or broaden some of the attitudes you have had up until now about your usual roles and responsibilities, about at-risk students, and about solving the dropout problem. In cultivating these attitudes for positive change, you should try to reinforce them in your everyday actions as well as in those of fellow helping process actors and the at-risk students with whom you work.

Here are some of the most important attitudes you will need to cultivate:

- **Affirmation of the solvability of the problem.** You need to believe—and convince the student and others—that even at-risk students with seemingly overwhelming odds against them can be helped to stay in school, can experience success there, and can earn a diploma.

  Obviously, there will always be some losses, some students who do not make it, but many programs around the country are having astonishing success reducing the dropout rate in their schools. If you have trouble believing it, contact some of the program people at the model programs discussed later in this guidebook. Remember that old saying. You may not be able to save the whole world, but you can do something for your own corner of it.

- **Assumption of the responsibility to intervene.** If a student needs help and you don't provide it—or at least find out who else will—chances are the student won't get it. That may mean another young person joins the dead-end ranks of the dropouts. Assuming responsibility to intervene does not mean that you have to solve personally every one of your at-risk student's problems . . . only that you need to see to it that some appropriate person or agency does. Realize, though, that there may be situations where the only "somebody" who will go that extra mile for the student will be you.

- **A holistic approach to education.** This means reorienting your notion of education to encompass the "whole child"—not merely the student's intellectual and vocational growth, but also the cultivation of his or her emotional, social, physical, and spiritual health. When dropout prevention efforts try to compartmentalize a student's personhood, or address only the student's academic and vocational needs, they do little more than slap a bandaid on the problem. The student's situation must be understood holistically, across all areas of his or her life, before any program—or concerned adult—can realistically hope to improve it.

often means matching the problem to the resource (e.g., individual, agency, organization) most qualified to deal with it. If no match exists, then it is up to the helping process team and the student to work together creatively to devise a solution and try it out. Be prepared in these cases to take some innovative and nonbureaucratic approaches, if that's what it takes to get the job done.

- **Promoting student self-esteem.** Low self-esteem is so common among at-risk students that it's almost an epidemic. Two of the best ways to help students improve their self-esteem are to (1) increase their feelings of belonging and (2) provide opportunities where they can experience success.

  Alienation—from school, from adults, from society—plagues many dropout-prone students, preventing them from investing much belief in their own self-worth or replaces it with a fragile egocentricity that shows itself as hostility, arrogance, or indifference. Try to involve the students in rewarding activities with you, their peers, and/or other adults in the environment to develop their sense of belonging. This will also help them to develop appropriate socialization skills.

  Repeated failure—in school work, the home environment, the work world, or in peer relationships—is another major cause of low self-esteem and despair among at-risk youth. For many, the pattern started in grade school, when the student moved a great deal, was kept at home by parents, and/or was kept back a grade. These young people respond very well to activities that you design specifically to help them experience success instead of failure. For teachers and employers, that does not mean lowering your standards, it does mean understanding that, for at-risk students, meeting your standards may take more steps, more time, more individualized attention, and most important, constant reinforcement of small successes to build toward larger ones.

- **Motivating the student.** Along with building a relationship with an at-risk student and promoting the student's self-esteem, you need to motivate the student to "buy into" and "stick with" the helping process and IHP. To do this, you first have to confront the student with the reality of the problem.that is, dropping out of

school means a dead-end lifestyle, and that he or she is probably going to drop out without help. You then must infuse the student with hope by "selling" him or her on the helping process.

A very effective strategy is to have peer speakers come in to talk to the at-risk student(s). These speakers should be a few years older at most and should have indeed dropped out and regret it, or they should have used a dropout prevention program to graduate and are now living productive lifestyles. Motivating the student will never be a one-time activity, you, as part of the helping process team, will need to reinforce continually the student's hope and commitment in the program.

- **Brokering skills.** Brokering was discussed earlier in this guidebook, but the specific skills involved are—

  —keeping current with the resources and services available through your program's network,

  —matching those resources to the student's needs,

  —making the contact and arrangements to connect the student with the service provider,

  —preparing the student (and parents or others) for the first meeting,

  —providing whatever support (e g., your companionship to at least the first meeting, transportation, ongoing listening and emotional support, and so forth) the student needs to make effective use of the service,

  —encouraging the support and, or participation of parents and significant others in helping the student get and make use of the service,

  —communicating frequently with the service provider to check progress and ensure that the service is being provided appropriately, and

—discussing the progress to the helping process team and acting appropriately on their insights and suggestions about the service.

- **Advocacy skills.** Being an advocate for an at-risk student means developing the abilities within yourself to speak up for and represent the student and his or her best interests, even when this results in discord with other adults. Successful advocacy involves being able to grasp the student's needs, discussing with the student and others what his or her best interests are in the situation, communicating those clearly to others, mediating between the student and others where possible, and refusing to back down when others inappropriately insist on superseding the real student's needs or rights. This may occur with parents, teachers, school administration, parole officers, health care providers, or others. The student's needs may not always come first but as an advocate you should never let them come second without very sound reasons.

Teamwork Skills for Positive Change

As a team member in the helping process, you can expect to work with at least the student and probably other adults in a teamwork situation. It's very easy for team members to become bogged down in differences of opinion, turf problems ("That's my department, not yours"), power plays, aggression, or passing the buck. There are two very important things to remember when working in a helping process team situation:

1. Never lose sight of the true purpose for your teamwork, that is to **help the student.**

2. Whatever the team does or decides to do, make sure that everyone benefits, you must have a **"win-win"** outcome to make the teamwork work.

Here are some of the crucial skills you'll need to do a good job as a Helping Process team member:[1]

[1] This skill list is adapted from B. R Compton and B. Galaway, Social Work Processes. Homewood, IL:The Dorsey Press, 1984, pp. 516-541.

- **Initiating**—sharing ideas, defining problems, suggesting solutions, proposing team objectives or tasks

- **Elaborating and clarifying**—exploring and interpreting ideas, proposing alternatives clarifying confusion

- **Coordinating**—putting together ideas and concepts, making sure you and your other team members know when and how you will work together on specific tasks

- **Summarizing**—focusing attention on specific ideas or decisions, stipulating precisely what the team needs to agree on, proposing a decision or conclusion for the team to accept or reject

- **Technical and recording**—arranging the physical setting for the meeting, recording the work of the team, actually writing or revising the IHP based on group consensus, recording progress and other data for program evaluation purposes

- **Giving and seeking information**—offering facts and asking for clarification, requesting more information about specific issues or experiences from other team members

- **Giving and receiving opinions**—stating your opinion when appropriate, sensing expressions of feeling from other team members

- **Compromising**—finding solutions to conflicts among the team members so that all "win" something from the decision

- **Encouraging and supporting**—praising members—including the student- for their contributions and commitment

- **Harmonizing**—mediating differences peacefully, relieving tension among the group in positive ways

- **Gatekeeping**—making sure that all team members—including the student—have ample opportunities to express their opinions and ideas, keeping communication channels open among all team members

- **Process observing**—sharing feedback with the group on how you feel the team is working together

- **Following**—giving your acceptance to the ideas of other team members, showing your acceptance with nonverbal behavior

- **Objective setting**—helping to set certain objectives and goals for the team, reminding the team of those objectives when appropriate

There will be times when a helping process team will need to meet without the student, but the student should be included in as many meetings as possible. A critical element of any helping process is how much the student invests in it. If the student feels that she or he has no say in the helping process or the IHP, it will not work and you are wasting your time. The student **must be treated as an equal partner in team meetings and decisions.**

MODELS THAT PUT THE HELPING PROCESS TO WORK

Hundreds of different dropout prevention programs exist around the country, many of them using some form of what we have called the helping process. This section of the guidebook takes a brief look at four very successful programs (models) that use the helping process. These will give you an idea of the kinds of options that are available when designing or revamping your own dropout prevention program.

Be aware that although a program model may incorporate a wide range of educational and support services, you will probably need to adapt the program somewhat to each individual student you serve. Naturally, every student will not need every service. Some students will need many kinds of help and others may do quite well with only a few. There may also be situations in which a student needs help in an area for which the program does not provide. This is where your personal and helping process team's ingenuity and creativity come in! The models described in the following pages should give you a good starting place for planning or expanding your own program, whether you are an administrator starting a program from scratch, a coordinator or team member looking for new ideas to adapt, or a concerned adult trying to help a dropout-prone student on your own.

Project COFFEE

Overview: Project COFFEE (Cooperative Federation for Educational Experiences) is a regional comprehensive dropout prevention/reconnection program. It began in 1979 with three participating high schools, today, 18 high schools participate, involving 120 students. The program links industry, business, and private and governmental human service agencies. A linkage with Digital Equipment Corporation's Educational Services division provides curriculum materials, staff training, consultation, and job training experiences for students.

Population Served: At-risk high school students and recent dropouts.

Program Components: Project COFFEE uses an alternative school to which local high schools refer dropout-prone students or dropouts. The model uses a low student-teacher ratio, modifies the school day, and implements hands-on activities to deliver the following program components:

- Academic basic skills instruction that is individualized, self-paced, and enriched with computer-assisted instruction
- Experiential learning through internships, shadowing experiences, and work study in business, industry, and labor settings that provide real work environment training for entry-level positions
- Guidance counseling, both individual and group, for support and crisis intervention, as well as family therapist coordination of a pregnant and parenting teen program

- Life-coping skills preparation, including emphasis on decision-making, conflict resolution, communication, and interpersonal skills
- Preemployment training in job search techniques, resume writing, and interview skills
- Adaptive physical education, including recreational activities that help students develop a sense of accomplishment and group cooperation

Effects: Participating students increase their school attendance and make significant gains in reading and math. About 85 percent of these students graduate, 70 percent become employed, and 49 percent find work related to their occupational training.

Costs: The reported cost is about $3,500 per student. The program was developed and operates on a development/demonstration grant from the National Diffusion Network, a system established by the U.S. Department of Education.

Materials and/or Assistance: Schools wishing to replicate Project COFFEE can contact the program, which offers awareness materials, a videotape about the program, assistance with tailoring the program to meet site needs, a 2-day on-site training workshop, and follow-up technical assistance. Training materials include a survival skills manual, basic skills curriculum guide, occupational skills curriculum guides (seven), policy and processes manual, industry/education procedures manual, competency-based assessment manual, interagency collaboration manual, needs assessment survey manual, and program evaluation manual.

Contacts:

Robert W. Richardson, Director
Jan McTiernan, Coordinator
French River Education Center
Project COFFEE
P. O. Box 476
North Oxford, MA 01537
(617) 987-1626 or 987-1627

Cities in Schools

Overview:

The Cities in Schools model was initiated in Atlanta and Indianapolis in 1974. The model enables coordination of public and private support services right in the schools, often in a "school within a school" program or alternative school. It puts counseling, education, health, recreation, financial, legal, and employment resources to work in the school setting itself. Together, these services identify, support, encourage, and assist students to finish school and find worthwhile employment. The model has been successfully replicated in Houston, New York City, Los Angeles, and a number of other cities around the country.

Population Served:

At-risk high school students and recent dropouts.

Program Components:

Partnerships among the schools, agencies, community organizations, and employers bring to bear the interest, talents and resources needed to counteract the problems that make students vulnerable to dropping out or staying out of school. The model may be concentrated in an alternative school (e.g., Rich's Academy of the Atlanta Public Schools)or

may be implemented within local comprehensive or vocational schools. Here are the important model components:

- Coursework in basic academic skills
- On-the-job training experiences through arrangements with local employers
- Tutoring assistance
- Counseling and monitoring of students, including referrals to financial and legal aid, health care and housing assistance, drug rehabilitation, employment opportunity information, and so forth, all right within the school whenever possible
- Recreational and extracurricular activities (such as a performing arts program)
- Community involvement through the use of business and other volunteers to teach basic and occupational skills (e.g., balancing a checkbook, filling out a job application) and to provide students with employment opportunities
- National coordination of programs by Cities in Schools, Inc., a private, nonprofit organization

Effects: The program has "consistently demonstrated its ability to keep potential dropouts in school, to bring current dropouts back to school, to improve attendance, and to increase academic achievement." For example, in Houston, students referred to the program as juvenile offenders or truancy cases improved their attendance from 57 to 88 percent. In Atlanta, where over half of the program participants had been dropouts, attendance rates rose to 82 percent.

So a

Costs: The only funding required is provided by the private sector to support a small facilitation team needed to coordinate and communicate among involved agencies and organizations. Whenever possible, agency and institution personnel who are repositioned into the schools continue to be employed by and accountable to their home agencies.

Materials and/ or Assistance: Advice and assistance for replication is available through Cities in Schools, Inc.

Contacts:
Cities in Schools, Inc
1023 15th Street, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 861-0230

The PLEB Program

Overview: The PLEB (Practical Learning Experience Block) program at Westland High School in Galloway, Ohio, provides special instructional and support services to 9th and 10th graders who are dropout prone. Middle school students enter the PLEB program in ninth grade through middle school staff recommendation, counselor interview, and their own desire to be part of the program. As a result of participation in PLEB's early dropout prevention program, students are better prepared to survive and succeed in the high school setting.

Population Served: 9th and 10th graders who are dropout prone.

Program Components:

All aspects of the PLEB program are delivered in a "warm, consistent manner that tends to negate some of the defeating experiences these children have had in school." Specific components of the program are as follows:

- The program is completely voluntary, students must want to participate and must undergo a counselor interview and reading testing.
- Ninth graders take modified courses in English (reading skills), Life Science, and Geography/-Planning Your Future (social studies).
- Tenth graders take modified courses in English (more reading skills), U.S. History, and Basic Math. Generally, about half of the 9th graders opt for and are selected into 10th grade PLEB, and during this year "the most dramatic gains are made in maturation, cooperation, and reading level."
- Students receive orientations to high school expectations and regulations.
- Student progress is scanned via computerized feedback from instructors.
- Group size and instruction are structured to cultivate positive interpersonal relations among students and teachers.
- The program coordinator acts, where appropriate, as parent surrogate.
- Group and individual counseling sessions are scheduled on a regular basis to allow students to discuss their concerns with a minimum of negative risk.

- Course materials have high interest and easy readability to stimulate student learning and success.
- Tutoring is provided for those in need.
- Students are regrouped every 12-18 weeks according to achievement or need.
- Teachers and counselors coordinate planning and implementation of an interdisciplinary approach to student learning, with flexibility and individualization of class assignments provided as much as possible or necessary.

Effects: About 80-85 percent of PLEB students finish high school. The program has been in operation for 13 years.

Costs: Staff support funding is needed.

Contacts:
Dan Grondin,
Coordinator/Vocational Counselor
Corinne Wile, Counselor
Westland High School
146 Galloway Road
Galloway, OH 43119
(614) 878-7217

The "Adopt-a-Student" Approach

Overview: The entire helping process can be implemented, if necessary, by one concerned instructor, counselor, or other concerned adult who "adopts" a dropout-prone student and provides a one-to-one, caring relationship. Obviously, where such an adult can gather a team of other adults in the school and/or community to assist the student, the burden on the adopting adult is lighter, and that approach is

always recommended. But where no dropout prevention program exists or a team cannot be gathered, it is possible—and has happened spontaneously at many schools—for one caring adult to make the difference.

Population Served: Any student, or perhaps even a recent dropout, who needs your help.

Program Components: *The Helping Process Overview Guidebook* and the role booklets (especially the Mentor Booklet) suggest many approaches that can be used by any adult, inside or outside a school, to help a young person succeed in high school or a dropout to earn a G.E.D. But the main elements of the helping process are (1) caring about the student and providing the guidance and emotional support he or she needs to get through his or her education, and (2) brokering for any critical services or support that you cannot provide yourself, remembering always that you need to consider all aspects of the student's life—educational, employment, family, health, emotional, and so forth.

Effects: There are no guarantees in the helping process, but it has been used by many individual instructors, counselors, employers, and other caring adults to help at-risk students—one at a time—finish their education and find worthwhile employment.

Costs: Most costs of the "adopt-a-student" approach are in the helping adult's time and energy. In instances where services must be brokered, most publicly funded agencies provide services free of charge. Where needed services are not free, you may wish to look into the possibility of the student paying for services on a sliding scale through part-time employment or of seeking financial assistance through a church group or other charitable group.

Materials and/ or Assistance:

Educational materials may be available through your school system or perhaps by loan from a local community college (many of which offer basic skills remediation or bilingual educational courses for their own students). You may also be able to locate and find inexpensive training and other relevant materials through the Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) system. Finally, do not hesitate to seek the advice and assistance of professionals in the school or community, who may be willing to work with you to form a helping process team to work with your at-risk student(s).

SELECTED RESOURCES

Informative Materials on the Dropout Problem

Institute for Educational Leadership. *Dropouts in America. Enough is Known for Action.* Washington, DC: IEL, 1987.

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