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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to identify new points of intervention into the education and social development of economically and educationally disadvantaged youth considered at risk of dropping out of school and never successfully participating in the labor market. The demographic characteristics of the target population were studied, as well as past and current federally-assisted employment, education, and training programs. Case studies of current community programs were commissioned. The following are among the findings reported: (1) young people (most of them poor, Hispanic, and/or Black) who lack basic skills and who have failed to graduate from high school have the most difficulty in entering the labor market; (2) approximately 2.5 to 3.5 million of the 18 million students who are aged 9-15 are at risk; (3) at-risk students are overwhelmingly urban; (4) few past or current programs have targeted this age group; (5) the Job Training Partnership Act authorizes two current programs that serve 14- and 15-year-olds, including a summer youth employment program that is showing positive results in terms of school retention and improved learning retention; and (6) all of the case studies indicate the need to involve employers in the dropout prevention activities. (The document concludes with a two-page bibliography and executive summaries of five case studies.) (CML)

Another Ounce of Prevention Education and Employment Interventions for 9 to 15 Year Olds

Report No. 23

March 1988

NCEP
National Commission for Employment Policy
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Foreword

The labor market difficulties of economically and educationally disadvantaged youth historically have been matters of concern to the National Commission for Employment Policy and its predecessor, the National Commission for Manpower Policy. The present study represents the culmination of more than a year's work to identify potential new points of intervention into the education and social development of disadvantaged young people.

Over time, programmatic and policy attention has focused on early childhood development and second chance programs for those who have failed to make it in the educational system. During the past few years, however, new research and demonstration activity directed toward dropout prevention has begun to give attention to junior high school age students with some apparent success. This activity gave rise to questions about the efficacy of more general interventions involving preadolescents and youth in the immediate postadolescent period. A further question was whether there was a useful role for employment and training, given the fact that so many of youth's labor market problems are related to a lack of basic skills.

This report and the volumes of sponsored research prepared as part of the project are the result of that effort. The Commission views this effort as the beginning of a process, not its completion. The report makes several recomendations as to next steps that should be taken to learn more about the issue and to develop strategies for responding to it. It does not make recomendations for new programs or major new expenditures.

This report was written by Everett Crawford. It is based on research conducted and/or supervised by him and JoAnn P. Bitney. Carol Romero and Sara Toye contributed to the project's initial formulation. The authors are grateful to Kay Albright, Stephen Baldwin, Nancy Grenier, and Carol Romero for both editorial and substantive comments and criticisms.

In addition to this Commission Report, four volumes of sponsored research are being published separately as Commmission Research Reports. The studies and the authors are listed in the Table of Contents.

BARBARA McQUOWN
Director

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Edward C. Lorenz, Partnerships to Improve the Education of Disadvantaged Youth in the Baltimore Schools.

R.N. Funkhouser and D.M. Gandia-Fabian, Evaluation of the Bridge and Club-COOP Educational Assistance Programs in Hartford, Connecticut.

MDC Inc., Oakland Case Report - Options for At-Risk Youth -- Age 9-15.

MDC Inc., Education and Employment Services for Nine to 15-Year Old Youth "At Risk" in Philadelphia

Preface

Since it was organized in 1974-75, the National Commission for Employment Policy has issued a number of reports on the youth labor market problem. Youth employment issues have been the subject of a number of recommendations in the Commission's annual reports. The Commission has reached conclusions and made recommendations that most knowledgeable persons would find reasonable.

-- It has called attention to the fact that many disadvantaged young people have difficulty entering the labor market because they lack occupational skills.

-- It has called attention to the fact that such young people have difficulty acquiring occupational skills because they lack basic academic skills.

-- The Commission has pointed out that dropping out of high school and the failure to get a diploma, or its equivalent, hampers disadvantaged young persons in their efforts to establish themselves in the labor market.

-- The Commission has in the past maintained that much of the problem of youth employment was dependent on the overall level of economic activity and overall levels of employment.

-- It has noted that discrimination based on race and sex plays a role in the difficulties of disadvantaged young people in getting a foothold in the labor market.

This is only a partial list of the youth policy positions taken and recommendations made by the Commission. The recommendations concerned with basic skills and occupational skills deal with the supply side of the supply-demand equation; those concerned with overall levels of employment deal with the demand side. Most of the Commission's work in the youth area has been concerned with the supply side, and this is fitting since NCEP's mission is closely bound to training.

Thus, in taking its positions, the Commission's analysis has been part of a mainstream diagnosis of the youth labor market problem and it has made prescriptive recommendations in mainstream ways. (See **Second Annual Report**, 1976; **Fifth Annual Report**, 1979; and **An Employment Policy for America's Future**, 1983.)

NCEP has been one of many voices speaking out on youth employment policy questions. There have been voices in government at all levels, in education, in business, and in the voluntary sector including national and local foundations. Basically, the voices have been delivering the same message: youth need to acquire basic skills and they need to get a high school diploma (or the equivalent). Governments and foundations have been funding programs to help disadvantaged youth to achieve these goals. The programs have been conducted in regular public schools and in alternative school settings.

With the increasing role of new technologies in the workplace, the continuing shift from a goods producing economy to a service economy, and the change to information processing activities in urban economies, the importance of basic skills in the workforce has grown. For the past few years, attention has been focused on the need for "literacy."

Powerful voices have been raised in both the government and the private sector calling attention to the need for improved and increased literacy in the population. The Committee for Economic Development, representing many of the leading corporations of the nation, issued a policy statement in 1987 stressing the need for greater mastery of the basic skills in the workforce and pointing to the need for assistance for disadvantaged youth from the preschool years throughout their educational careers. The broadcast media, led by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the American Broadcasting Company, establishing PLUS -- Project Literacy U.S. -- have taken a leading role in this effort. In government, the former Secretary of Labor, William Brock, gave high departmental priority to increasing literacy in the workforce; this emphasis has been continued by the new Secretary, Ann McLaughlin. The Department of Education is leading the government's Adult Literacy Initiative, a major effort to increase literacy among adult Americans. New research, notably that published recently by the National Assessment of Educational Progress has helped increase understanding of the illiteracy problem and its components.

In light of all the activities just recently completed or underway, the question of what the National Commission for Employment Policy could usefully do in the area of youth labor market problems became an issue of some significance. There would be little new to say about youth needing basic skills or even the need for literacy that would not be merely restating what had been said many times before. However, in attempting to answer this question, the Commissioners and staff became aware of new efforts to assist middle school students, ages 13 to 15 primarily. These efforts were largely dropout prevention activities -- programs that were working with students at an earlier age than the "second chance" programs targeted on older teenagers and young adults that have been a staple of employment and training.

The education and employment and training literature about children and youth in some ways is like a bar bell. That is, there is a considerable amount of research and writing about preschool and elementary school children and a lot about teenage dropouts, but very little about those in the middle, the preadolescents and those just making the transition to adolescence. Additional reading about the demonstrations and some sampling of education literature suggested that it might be useful for the Commission to undertake a broader inquiry into the topic of earlier interventions to reduce dropouts and promote increased learning. Would earlier interventions be useful and, if so, at what ages? These questions involve largely educational issues. Would there be an appropriate role for employment and training to play?

Based on the preliminary study, the Commission decided to focus on the 9 to 15 year age group. This is an age group that is somewhat neglected programmatically, i.e., in terms of both employment and training assistance and in terms of assistance to the educationally disadvantaged. To be sure, there is some overlap in the sense that employment and training programs for youth provide services to 14 and 15 year olds and some services are provided to fourth graders in education programs (normally 9 year olds). But the age range is not the principal focus of any program.

This report summarizes the Commission's attempt to answer these questions. The report should be viewed as the beginning rather than the completion of the work in this area. Many more questions are raised than answers provided. But the Commission believes that the direction is correct. True preventive activity may be more effective in the longer run than second chance remedial activities, though second chance remediation will continue to be needed for some time to come.

If we follow the dictum "don't wait until they fail," more of the youth with whom the Commission is concerned will have an opportunity to be better prepared for the labor market or for postsecondary education and training. The report that follows explores some of the issues involved in providing preventive treatments and reducing the need for remediation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Reducing the rate of youth unemployment has been high on the Nation's agenda for a generation. Many believe, however, that the problem is worse now than it was 20 to 25 years ago. Despite two decades of anti-poverty and employment and training programs, the unemployment problem for certain groups of disadvantaged youth -- especially minorities concentrated in urban areas -- continued to get worse rather than better. (Kasarda, 1985; Wilson, 1987.) In many ways the problem is the same now as it was a generation ago, except that the context in which the problem is occurring has changed. A continuing shift away from a goods-producing economy to an information processing economy has made the problem more complicated and more acute.

The current economy demands greater mastery of the basic skills and the ability to apply these skills in varying contexts than a generation ago. Some youth experience difficulties in the labor market because of personal deficiencies. Some young people have deficiencies in basic skills, some lack employability skills, and others have inappropriate attitudes toward work. Many of those having difficulty do not possess a basic credential -- the high school diploma -- for entry into the work place.

The Commission believes that young people need to acquire basic skills, employability skills, and have appropriate attitudes toward themselves and the world around them, including the world of work, in order to lead balanced and successful adult lives. Youth who do not acquire these skills and attitudes are "at-risk" of being unable to compete for employment in the labor market. Failure to acquire a high school diploma may preclude many from even applying for employment.

In focusing on the need for these skills, attitudes, and credentials, there is a need to remember that students acquire these assets while they are growing up. Ignoring the needs of at-risk youth when they are young severely limits their potential to acquire these skills and their potential for successful entrance into the labor market. Most young people acquire these skills and attitudes through life experiences in the home, school, and community, and most of them are able to make the transition from youth to adulthood successfully. Increasingly, however, these institutions are either not present or not functional in providing the needed kinds of life experiences that disadvantaged youth need in order to make the transition to adulthood; this is especially true in major urban areas.

Numerous studies have examined the feasibility of assisting disadvantaged youth to improve basic skills. Billions of dollars have been spent in efforts to assist youth (at-risk of not achieving in school and

of failure in the labor market) in acquiring the skills necessary to participate successfully. Most of these efforts have emphasized the needs of the very young -- preschool age children, the needs of those in the early primary grades of schooling, ages 5 to 8, the needs of high school age children in vocational education or job training programs, and the needs of those who have dropped out of school, age 16 and older. Few studies have undertaken a comprehensive analysis of disadvantaged youth in the middle school years -- between the ages 9 to 15.

The Target Group

Students at the lower end of the 9 to 15 year age range are moving into the fourth grade. This normally marks a transition from emphasis on acquiring the basic skills to the beginning of the use of abstract reasoning where the application of basic skills becomes imperative for success. Literacy skills are necessary for further pursuit of academic and occupational interests from middle school through senior high school and the earning of a diploma, without which the young person cannot reasonably expect to pursue either postsecondary education or satisfactory employment. A child who enters the fourth grade without literacy skills has no real access to subject matter, and unless remedial measures are taken quickly, the greater the gap between his or her potential and the actual level of achievement will widen.

The Basis for this Study

As stated earlier, the National Commission for Employment Policy has been interested in the youth labor market question from both a supply side perspective and a demand side perspective. Many disadvantaged young people simply do not meet the qualifications required by employers and therefore are unable to compete in the labor market. However, an increasing number of local labor markets are beginning to experience labor shortages as the national recovery continues as there are fewer young people. The next few years may offer an opportunity to find ways to bring into the labor force young persons who might otherwise have been left behind.

This situation offered the Commission a chance to review its previous work on youth issues in order to determine whether it wished to take any new policy positions or make any new recommendations with respect to youth.

While the writ of employment policy is broad, covering many areas of intellectual inquiry, employment and training has been somewhat narrower. It has focused on more immediate labor market issues using the tools of labor economics, program analysis and evaluation, and public administration. To begin to come to grips with some of the major questions involved in why so many economically and educationally disadvantaged youth fail to "make it" in the labor market requires a wide investigation that goes beyond those fields of inquiry usually addressed in the employment and training literature.

The issues involve questions of family and family structure, questions of community, and questions of education. In discussions of economically and educationally disadvantaged youth, issues of race and class are never far beneath the surface. Issues of values -- personal and institutional -- also come into play in any inquiry of this nature.

The Commission decided that it would be useful to undertake a beginning inquiry into the question of new approaches to the youth labor market problem. This was done with the recognition that the activity would open up a topic rather than close one with definitive answers.

It was decided that the key questions for the study were:

1) Are there new approaches that can be taken to assist economically and disadvantaged youth make the transition from school to work or from youth to adulthood?

2) Given that the acquisition of basic skills is critical to the transition, can the problem be attacked more effectively if work with the youth begins at an earlier age than most present programs?

3) If work with the youth is to begin at an earlier age, is there a role for employment and training in these earlier interventions?

Components of the Study

To begin to get some answers to these questions has required a broad ranging, multifaceted effort involving staff work and contracted research to secure information on:

1) The demographic characteristics of the at-risk population -- a combination of staff and contracted research was employed.

2) Past federally assisted employment and training programs -- gathered through staff research.

3) Past federally assisted education and related programs -- gathered through contracted research.

4) Current efforts -- federally assisted and local programs, including questions about coordination and partnerships -- gathered through contracted research.

The contractors were Charles Bruckerhoff, Cleveland State University; Richard Funkhouser, University of Connecticut; Richard Lacey, Hearth Management Group; Edward Lorenz, State of Maryland; MDC, Inc., North

Carolina; and Karen Winters and Raymond Winters, Pennsylvania State University.*

Report Outline

Chapter II of this report discusses the at-risk population, its characteristics and estimated numbers, and the question of early interventions. Chapter III discusses principal finding of the study; examines past experiences, current efforts including demonstrations underway, and it examines the experiences of several case studies. Chapter IV summarizes the project, presents its conclusions and recommendations, and discusses its policy implications.

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* Affiliations are shown for identification only.

II. THE TARGET POPULATION: AT-RISK YOUTH

General

This report is about youth at risk of failure in school and their longer term prospects in the labor market. While the report is concerned ultimately about young people who have difficulty in securing or keeping gainful employment -- or who opt out of the regular economic system -- it is the premise of the report that these young people's difficulties begin to emerge at an early stage in life and certainly at an earlier period in their school careers than the time when current second chance programs come into play.

The Underclass

The persons with which this report is concerned are economically and educationally disadvantaged children and youth -- the children of the underclass, a population that tends to be concentrated in inner cities. The concept of the underclass is one that has received considerable attention in recent years from sociologists and in popular literature. That an underclass, or something like one, exists generally is not debated. But there is debate among liberal and conservative scholars and writers about the causes and what potential treatments might be. There is, however, agreement that a pervasive isolation separates underclass individuals and families from the world of employment. (Billingsly, 1987; Glasgow, 1987; Lemann, 1986; Mead, 1986; Murray, 1984; and Wilson, 1987.)

The urban ghettos and barrios in which the underclass is concentrated are characterized by: a) family instability, b) a high degree of joblessness among both males and females, and 3) a high degree of welfare dependency among the women. Among the several explanations advanced as to causes of this situation are:

-- Structural changes in urban economies and the accompanying loss of jobs.

-- Abandonment of the inner cities by the middle class and the resultant loss of community support institutions that once helped to transmit to succeeding generations the generally accepted societal values, including the work ethic.

-- Social policy, especially the growth in welfare programs -- notably Aid for Families with Dependent Children, has helped to promote idleness and dependency.

-- A reduction in public attention and resources that has exacerbated, if not caused, these problems.

This brief discussion of the underclass and underclass communities is presented not simply as an academic exercise, but to provide a bit of the

flavor of the atmosphere in which at-risk youth are growing. Sometimes, the act of dropping out of school is characterized as a voluntary act. Is it an illogical act when the student sees little value or potential payoff to hard work in school?

Obviously, recognition of the problems of poor children and youth is not new. We have had federally-assisted programs (in addition to AFDC) to aid them since the mid 1960s. As already mentioned, these programs have tended to concentrate on the very young children and on the older youth who have already failed in the system. This project is concentrating on a middle group, students age 9 to 15, those students who are making important transitions in their educational lives and in their personal development.

It is a truism that a child's education normally is a combination of experiences that occur in the home, the community, and the school. Schooling for the middle class child provides only a part of his or her education. For the underclass child, the "truly disadvantaged" child, however, the school may be the only institution in which education, including orientation toward the world of employment, can occur.

At-risk Youth, Age 9 to 15

Age 9 to 15 covers a range that includes preadolescence and early adolescence. Recent data from the Center for Education Statistics indicate that there are about 18 million 9 to 15 year old students enrolled in grades four through nine. These students constitute about 46 percent of the total public school enrollment. (Bruckerhoff, 1987.) Using the 18 million figure as a base, our estimate is that two and one-half to three and one-half million of these students can be classified as economically and educationally disadvantaged.

Young people in this age group are experiencing turmoil because of changes in their physical and psychological make up that are matched by the changes taking place in their educational development. At the lower end of this age group when children are moving through grade four, they are in the process of leaving a stage of learning that focuses on the acquisition of basis skills and entering a stage in which use of abstract reasoning and application of the skills previously developed becomes imperative. Literacy skills are necessary for further pursuit of academic and occupational interest from middle school through junior and senior high school toward the award of a high school diploma and gainful and satisfactory employment. A child who enters grade four and has yet to acquire the rudiments of the basic skills has a reduced chance of success in the higher grade curriculum. Consequently, if remedial and corrective measures are delayed, the gap then widens between a child's potential and his or her actual level of achievement.

Several factors contribute to undermine the potential success or failure experienced by youth, age 9 to 15. A background of poverty;

immigrant status and those whose English is limited; low academic achievement in the lower elementary grades; sporadic school attendance; truancy and discipline problems; and chronic health problems are a few of the factors which when experienced by youth early on often place them at-risk by age nine. Most of these factors are directly related to economic and/or educational disadvantages -- factors which significantly undermine the educational potential of this target population.

At-risk Youth are at an Educational Disadvantage

School programs assume that that all youth have acquired basic skills in the primary elementary grades (K through 3). Beginning in the fourth grade, students are required to then apply these skills and master complex application of these skills as called for in varied learning tasks.

At-risk youth enter the transitional years of schooling, grades 4 through 9, ill-equipped with the basic skills. They often are unable to read and understand simple reading passages. They may experience great difficulty with writing tasks. They may be unable to successfully complete basic math computation problems. It is often found that they lack a background of experiences, commonly found among more advantaged youth, which contributes to their limited understanding of the world around them, and a limited view of the options available to them. This lack of a sound foundation of basic skills and general knowledge negatively affects their school experiences, from grade four through grade nine, and limits their ability to interpret the world around them.

As the at-risk factors -- unsuccessful experiences in school; in families that live in poverty; and in communities that offer little support -- continue to acumulate, at-risk youth often enter the final stage of their public school experience with disincentives to complete high school. They are likely to drop out. Clearly, evidence exists which strongly indicates that this accumulation of unsuccessful experiences contributes to the dropout problem.

Groups At-risk

In addition to the general review of the literature on the underclass at-risk population, recent work has been undertaken to determine whether there are significant differences among specific racial and ethnic groups with respect to educational disadvantage. Staff analyst Carol Romero (NCEP, 1987) undertook a review of some of this literature. Her review covered a number of factors relating to educational deficiencies and subsequent labor market experiences and is consistent with the thesis being advanced here that the seeds for failing to achieve in school are planted early.

Reading proficiency is widely recognized as an important indicator of the possession of basic skills. Romero's review and analysis of recent literature on this topic suggests that there is a wide gap among whites, blacks, and Hispanics in below grade level reading proficiency. The National Assessment of Educational Progress in 1986 published an analysis of 21 to 24 year-olds which showed 15 percent of white students reading below grade level in the eighth grade, 29 percent of Hispanics, and 47 percent of blacks. In the 11th grade 32 percent of whites were reading below grade level, 48 percent of Hispanics, and 69 percent of blacks.

Another measure of reading proficiency -- reading at the intermediate level -- shows that reading at this level for both black and Hispanic students seems to improve over time. When reading at the intermediate level was measured over a 10 year span, the reading levels improved between age 9 and 17 for blacks and Hispanics, but remained essentially unchanged for white students.
(NCEP, 1987)

Dropout rates are a key measure of educational attainment. As Romero indicates in her analysis, it is not clear what the receipt of a high school diploma means, but the lack of a diploma seems to be a clear signal to employers that something is amiss and applicants without a diploma generally do not go far in the application process. The dropout rate nationally is in the 25 percent range, but there are substantial differences among groups. Dropout rates for young adult blacks fell sharply between 1974 and 1986 while rates for whites increased slightly during the latter half of the 1970s and leveled off during the first half of the 1980s. The dropout rate for Hispanics remained steady at about 40 percent. Dropout rates for blacks in 1986 were slightly higher than the national average, but rates for Hispanics were much higher than the rates for blacks or whites.* New research suggests that while the dropout rate for blacks has been falling since the 1960s, it may have started to climb again in very recent years. (Robinson, 1987.)

Interventions at Earlier Ages

As later sections of the report will show, the idea of interventions to provide assistance to youth who are disadvantaged in the labor market is an idea with a fairly long history. The nation has sponsored programs to assist unemployed disadvantaged youth since the mid 1960s and the situation in many ways is worse than when the programs began.

By and large, those programs have attempted to work with youth after their difficulties with school have become almost insurmountable. Some

* According to Carol Romero, some very recent research has become available indicating the dropout phenomenon becomes pronounced among Hispanics at age 14, a younger age than for either whites or blacks.

programs have given emphasis to providing services to dropouts. Other initiatives have given some attention to dropout prevention by youth already of high school age. At the other end of the age scale we have had the Head Start program for pre-school children and programs of assistance to schools in poor neighborhoods serving the elementary grades.

In recent years, however, attention in education research and to some extent in the employment and training community has been focused increasingly on the middle age-range of students, those in the 9 to 15 year age group. Special attention is being given to middle school students, because the signs of problems and potential failure in high school begin to manifest themselves quite early in students' educational careers. These signs include, among other things, below level academic performance, behavioral problems in school, and excessive absences. It should come as no surprise that the youngsters manifesting these signs disproportionately are poor black and Hispanic students concentrated in urban areas.

There is evidence of increasing interest in this group of students as well as a growth of activities designed to get them more interested in education and learning. Some examples:

-- The Corporation for Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), an organization that concentrates on the nexus between education and employment, is involved in two national demonstrations that are focusing on junior high school students. These demonstrations are discussed in the next Chapter.

-- In Indiana, the Lilly Endowment has committed a significant portion of its resources to a program to improve the educational process in middle schools. For the current school year (1987-88), the Endowment is making planning grants to school systems (for development of middle grades improvement programs) in the State's eight largest population centers. It has earmarked funds amounting to almost $3 million for three-year grant awards to as many as 19 school systems for program implementation. The goal of the Endowment's initiative is to increase the numbers of students who graduate from high school and enroll in college. (Lilly Endowment, 1986.)

-- A number of leading public and private colleges have begun working with black and Hispanic elementary and junior high school students in an antidropout effort. The eventual goal is to encourage enrollment in college, thus the need to encourage greater achievement in basic academic subjects. It is said that during the early to mid 1990s minorities will constitute a larger percentage of the college age population, and the colleges want to do their part to insure that the pool of qualified applicants does not shrink substantially. (Wall Street Journal, June 1987.)

-- The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has recently begun an initiative to increase the numbers of women and minorities in science and engineering. In this effort, the AAAS has found it useful to begin work with students in the fourth grade and through the high school grades.

Both education researchers and local communities are giving attention to this younger age group as a potential target for heading off some of the problems that manifest themselves in high school. Research papers by Chorales Bruckerhoff and Richard Lacey commissioned for this project provide information and insights into these developments. Bruckerhoff's paper reviews work going on in the educational community and Lacey's paper reviews some of this research but relates it more directly to policy initiatives being undertaken in States and localities; this paper also discusses ways in which Job Training Partnership Act programs can be linked into such efforts.

The apparent need for interventions at an earlier age than provided by most present programs seems clear, as does the need for different kinds of interventions. Certainly the students will need tutoring in basic school subjects, but beyond that they will need the kind of help that will assist them in understanding the importance of education to their ability to function in the world of employment. This in turn implies a need to help the youth break out of the isolation that traps so many of them within their ghettos of race, ethnicity, and language.

III. LESSONS FROM PAST AND CURRENT PROGRAMS

For many years the federal government and other organizations have supported numerous education programs and training and employment activities for youth. Some have proven helpful, others not. Any new policy directed toward at-risk youth should build on the lessons from past programs. A policy targeted at 9 to 15 year olds should be based on a clear understanding of what the goals are and who the target population is.

This chapter reviews past and present activities, both educational and employment and training activities related to education, to see whether there are lessons that might be instructive in considering programs and policies directed toward educationally and economically disadvantaged students age 9 to 15. Principal emphasis in the review is given to federally assisted initiatives.

Educational Initiatives

Concern about education is never far from the center of public discussion. National concern appears to shift between emphasis on educational quality and educational equity i.e. the equality of access to education. Consider that in the very early 1960s the emphasis was on the quality of education; an emphasis stimulated by the achievements of the Soviet Union in space. Yet before that decade was over, emphasis was shifted to equity. The emphasis on equity persisted throughout the rest of that decade and through most of the 1970s. In the early 1980s concern shifted again to quality of education -- a concern prompted once again by international competition, this time in the economic sphere.

The current emphasis on educational quality is focused primarily on the high school. Beginning with the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, entitled **A Nation at Risk**, there has been a drumbeat of appeals for a tightening of standards for high school graduation. Just as Federal leaders have sought to increase standards for the high schools, many of the States have pursued far reaching reforms to strengthen curricula, improve the quality of teaching, and increase and/or standardize the requirements for graduation from high school (including minimum competency standards for graduation).

While it is not clear that there is any organized opposition to the emphasis on the improvement of the quality of high school education, the movement has to some extent spawned a new round of concern about equity. There are some, including urban educators and spokespersons for the disadvantaged, who maintain that improvements in quality will benefit primarily the more advantaged students and that it will serve to drive out many less advantaged students. Other educators indicate they agree with

many of the reform proposals, but they must be phased in and coupled with reforms in the lower grades. It does no good, the argument goes, to impose increased standards at the high school level when students enter high school unprepared for them.

The public debate about the future of secondary education, and the implicit concerns about quality and equity, give some support to the need for the kind of inquiry represented by this project.

Educational Programs to Assist Disadvantaged Youth. The early educational needs of the very young are addressed in Head Start, certain appropriations under Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) and other preschool programs. Other provisions of Chapter 1 serve primary age children, ages 5 to 8. Dropout prevention programs and employment and training programs are designed to serve the high school population of youth-at-risk. Few if any educational initiatives, policies or programs offer assistance to those presently participating in the middle school or junior high school years of their educational experience -- youth, age 9 to 15 (Bitney, 1987).

Head Start, which has been in existence since the middle 1960s has been serving, in recent years, 400,000 to 450,000 poor young children, with appropriations running on the order of $1 billion per year. It is a program that assists in the total development of these disadvantaged children. In the context of this project, it assists these children in developing their readiness for school. There are nursery school and similar experiences that seem to come as a matter of course for more advantaged children. Special emphasis is placed on parental involvement in the children's development.

Assistance for the Educationally Disadvantaged is provided under Chapter 1 of ECIA; this title was formerly known as Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act originally adopted in 1965 as part of the anti-poverty effort then being mounted. When first enacted, the objective of the legislation was to provide assistance to poor children living in poor neighborhoods. Financial assistance was provided to districts for schools that served low income areas. The emphasis was, and is, on improving instruction in these schools and on increasing parental involvement in the children's educational experience. As a practical matter, assistance has been used for students in the lower primary grades, kindergarten through third grade, although higher grades are eligible.

In general, the assessment has been that children who have received services under Title 1 and Chapter 1 have had higher levels of achievement than comparable children who have not received the services. (See Hearings on Reauthorization of Expiring Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Programs, US House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Elementary,

Secondary, and Vocational Education, 1987.) What is less clear is whether the perceived gains are sustained after the students move beyond the third grade.

Concern has been expressed in the Congress about targeting of the Chapter 1 funds within schools. The question has revolved around whether the least educationally advantaged or the most advantaged are being selected within schools for participation in the programs. Also, questions are being asked about the school administrators' commitment to parental involvement. (See Hearings, 1987.)

Youth in the middle of the public school continuum of grades, those age 9 to 15, are, for the most part -- but not totally -- ignored in Federal legislation. Federal legislation which mandates resources for early childhood assistance has proven to be effective for youth at that early stage of development. Yet, because of the lack of appropriate follow through needed to sustain and/or enhance the results of early educational assistance through the middle school years and high school, the effects of these early remedial efforts deteriorate over time. (Bitney, 1987).

Employment and Training Program Initiatives.

Youth most often attempt to enter the labor market by obtaining a job or by pursuing more specific training in postsecondary educational institutions. Those who leave high school without a high school diploma and those who leave without acquiring basic skills often experience difficulty in establishing themselves in the labor market. In March 1987 the aggregate unemployment rate for dropouts, for example, was 11.1 percent as compared with 6.3 percent for high school graduates; ten years earlier in 1977, the overall unemployment rate for dropouts was 8.9 percent and 5.5 percent for graduates. It is interesting to note, however, that in both years the unemployment rate for black high school graduates was higher than the unemployment rate for white high school dropouts. (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1987.) The Federal government has attempted to respond to the serious employment problems of this latter group of at-risk youth through the development and implementation of training and employment programs.

To some extent, lessons learned from past initiatives designed to serve older youth who may have dropped out or who do not possess basic skills are applicable to considering alternatives for programs to serve 9 to 15 year old youth. The problems facing older youth are an accumulation of problems experienced in their younger years. The difference is that for older age youth the problems become more acute and severe. (See Lacey, 1987; Winters, Rubinstein & Winters, 1987; and Bruckerhoff, 1987).

The Federal investment in training and employment programs for youth experiencing difficulty in the labor market over the past two decades has been substantial, reaching a total of almost 20 billion dollars, in programs earmarked exclusively for youth. (Extrapolated from calculations by Baumer and Van Horn, 1985.) The level of appropriations and expenditures rose over the late 1960s and peaked in the 1978-1980 period when the Youth Employment Demonstration Pilot Projects Act (YEDPA) was in effect (peaking at just over $2 billion per year) and has declined somewhat during the 1980s. For the most part youth training and employment programs have been and are targeted for youth who have reached school leaving age. However, a few programs presently are directed to assisting youth age 14 to 15 -- the Summer Youth Employment Program and certain programs authorized under the Job Training Partnership Act, including exemplary youth programs and employment competency. There are no training and employment programs that presently are designed to offer assistance, either year round or on a summer school basis for youth, age 13 and under. Such programs have been aimed traditionally toward those entering the labor market and are legally able to do so.

Some programs have and do emphasize skills training, work experience, job search assistance, and other types of training, experience and assistance. The basic models for youth programs that focused on educational objectives were established in the 1960s by passage of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964. That legislation created the Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Job Corps; the summer youth employment program was added to the act later in the decade. The program models and, in the case of the Job Corps, the name, persist to this day. Program emphases and funding levels have undergone numerous changes but the concepts have remained.

1. The Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) was created to provide poor youth with work experience and income. The original objective was to use the work experience as an orientation to the world of work and the income was designed to remove economic incentives to dropping out of school. NYC had both in-school and out-of-school program components.

In-school youth were given part-time jobs in the schools that they attended -- usually custodial or maintenance work that in theory helped to instill some sense of responsibility to themselves and to their schools. Out-of-school youth were provided jobs by both public and private employers as a means of gaining "real world" work experience. Here, too, the income was thought to help provide the resources and encouragement for those youth who had dropped out for economic reasons to return to school.

Early NYC programs were criticized for several reasons, but principal among them was the absence of effective supervision. In- and out-of-school participants in the public sector were thought to have been given vague assignments and were not held accountable for either attendance or

performance on the job. Participants employed in the private sector were generally thought to have received better supervision, but the training value of assignments in both sectors was discounted.

The original Neighborhood Youth Corps programs under the Economic Opportunity Act were administered at the national level by the Department of Labor (DOL) through a delegation agreement with the Office of Economic Opportunity. In- and out-of-school programs were transferred by legislation to DOL by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973. No programs exist today under the name Neighborhood Youth Corps, but authority to operated both in-school and out-of-school programs continues under the Job Training Partnership Act.

2. The Job Corps, also created in 1964, was designed to deal with the toughest cases -- the long-term unemployed. Enrollees included dropouts, ex-offenders, people who at the time would have been classified as social and economic misfits. In the minds of some of the sponsors, the model for the Job Corps was the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. In the view of these sponsors the CCC was a successful model to use in providing services for poor, disadvantaged young people. Although controversial in the early years, the Job Corps has continued in its basic form to the present. It has always been administered as a national program, subject to national standards and supervision. During its first five years, it was administered by the Office of Economic Opportunity and then delegated to the DOL in 1969. Job Corps was transferred in 1973 to DOL by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.

The Job Corps' mission is to provide intensive employment and training treatments for the most severely disadvantaged young people. The services, which may be provided in residential or nonresidential settings, include occupational training, remedial education, on-the-job training, work experience, and other employment and training services. Also provided are physical rehabilitation, counseling, subsistence, transportation, clothing, and recreational services. In addition, Job Corps provides monthly allowances and readjustment allowances upon Corpsmembers' termination.

Job Corps' services were and are costly. Consequently, costs have always been a matter of concern. Program size was reduced in the early 1970s to about a 22,000 service year (or program slot) capacity and doubled in the late 1970s to a capacity of about 44,000 service years.

Job Corps is generally recognized as a successful program. It is perhaps the most rigorously examined of the employment and training programs and by most measures it is considered a cost-effective means of delivering good services to participants. That is to say, that the benefits of the program as measured in dollars are greater than the high unit costs. Documented educational improvements are recorded, both in terms of increases in grade-level performance and in terms of acquisition

of GED certificates. Over time, the placement record for Corpsmembers has proven to be successful. (Mathmatica Policy Research, 1982; National Academy of Sciences, 1985; Taggart, 1981.)

3. Federally-assisted employment and training programs for youth continued in much the same pattern from the mid 1960s until 1977 when the Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act (YEDPA) was passed. That legislation was the result of a convergence of congressional interest in learning something definitive about what did and did not work in employment and training for youth, and an Administration interest in antirecession efforts. Funds were greatly increased for programs and for research, demonstrations, and evaluations.

Under YEDPA, the in- and out-of-school programs were continued as the Youth Employment and Training Program. A doubling of the capacity of the Job Corps was authorized. A new community-oriented youth employment program, operated through community-based organizations, was created, and a new job guarantee demonstration was mandated. Also, funds were provided for other demonstrations (not specified in the legislation). In addition to the employment and training programs specifically authorized or mandated under this legislation, numerous other programs were conducted under the Act to provide labor market information, placement assistance, and other services for disadvantaged youth.

What is known about the effects of federally-assisted training and employment programs for youth is still limited. The Job Corps has established a creditable track record in increasing educational performance of Corpsmembers; there is a national system for remediation to increase grade-level performance of dropouts and low achievers (and a national system for measuring progress toward this goal). Job Corps, thus, has been able to document its success in this area. Evaluators suggest that Job Corps' record is less clear and the evaluative results are inconclusive with respect to the effects of the incentives to stay in school or return to school. (National Academy of Sciences, 1985; Taggart, 1981.)

The record is mixed with respect to the labor market effects of most of the other youth programs. Earlier programs were not conducted with specific, measurable goals or objectives. Evaluations of specific goals of later programs did not produce conclusive results. It has been difficult, therefore, to draw broad conclusions about their effects. (See National Academy of Sciences, 1985.) There are two exceptions. The Job Corps, as noted, has proved to have had beneficial effects on the income and employment of participants; and it has had a small but significant positive benefit-cost relationship. (Mathmatica Policy Research, 1981.) The other exception is the Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Project (YIEPP). Under this project, eligible youth who had dropped out of school were guaranteed part-time and summer employment if they agreed to return to school. YIEPP, conducted in 17 locations, was a carefully controlled experiment. It had

positive results in improving the earnings and employment of participants and in closing the earnings and income gap between blacks and whites. Since the job guarantee was short-term and dependent upon participants returning to school, it is clear that the participants did so. But it is not clear how many stayed to graduate and what the long range effects have been. (National Academy of Sciences, 1985.)

4. Summer youth employment programs were begun in the late 1960s as a continuation and expansion of Economic Opportunity Act programs. Some would say they were passed as "riot insurance," since they were adopted partly in response to the urban riots then occurring. But the principal objectives were the same as those for the NYC programs: work experience, income, and motivation to return to school. Once again, the income from the 7 or 8-week minimum wage jobs was expected to be used to purchase things needed for the new school year.

Summer youth programs received much the same assessment as NYC programs. Participants often received very little training and had very poor supervision. However, summer programs have received new emphasis in recent years. This new emphasis is related to research that took place during the late 1970s and early 1980s showed that disadvantaged youth experience significant learning losses over summer breaks. (Heyns, 1979.) Further, the research indicated that such summer learning losses had a negative influence on learning gains in each successive school year because of the time had to be used each fall in making up for the losses that occurred over the summer. In the recent amendments to JTPA, the Congress required that education components be included in summer programs. This was partly in response to early findings from the STEP demonstration which is discussed in the folloing section. (See Lacey, 1987).

Current Activities

1. JTPA Exemplary Youth Programs. Current training and employment programs for eligible youth, 14 years of age and older, are authorized under JTPA. The Act requires that 40 percent of the funds made available for services to disadvantaged persons shall be used for youth. The Act authorizes a full range of services for both youth and adults. ("Youth" includes individuals 14 to 21; the 1986 JTPA amendments were to be counted toward the total for the Act's youth expenditure requirement.) In addition to the array of service mentioned for both youth and adults, the Act specifies certain "exemplary" youth programs that may be adopted for local use.

The four exemplary youth program areas are:

-- An education for employment program for youth who have not attained a diploma or who have educational deficiencies despite possession of a diploma. Priority is to be given to dropouts. Curricula to prepare students to meet requirements for State or locally determined General Equivalency Diplomas or basic competency requirements are mentioned specifically in the law.

-- A "preemployment skills training program" for 14 and 15 year old youth. In addition to remedial education, a variety of labor market activities are mentioned.

-- "Entry level employment experience." This includes subsidized employment experiences for youth who meet certain requirements. Entry employment experiences may include full- and part-time employment in public and private nonprofit agencies and tryout employment in the private for-profit sector or in the nonprofit sector when opportunities are not available in the for-profit sector.

-- "School-to-work transition assistance" for seniors or dropouts. These services include the range of job search assistance activities; any of the youth services mentioned above; and any adult training activity or referral to the Job Corps.

The National Association of Private Industry Councils in 1986 conducted a survey of more than 500 Private Industry Councils (PICs) to determine their experience with exemplary programs in the Transition Year and the first two Program Years JTPA was in effect. Of concern to this study are responses to the questions on the pre-employment skills program. Some 70 percent of the 219 Private Industry Councils responding to the survey indicated that they were running pre-employment skills programs. The average PIC/SDA budget for the pre-employment skills training program was about $144,000. Average case loads for the programs grew 99 per program to a projected 201 per program over the period of the survey. Slightly less than half of the respondents indicated that their pre-employment programs strongly resembled programs operated under the predecessor legislation to JTPA while slightly more than half felt that they did not.

Almost 294,000 youth ages 14 and 15 were enrolled in JTPA programs in Program Year 1986. The positive completion rate was about 5.7 percent or about 17,000 youth. (NCEP/WESTAT, 1988.) The Department of Labor figures from actual reports are in the same range.

2. JTPA Demonstrations. Two JTPA-related demonstrations are underway that are targeted on 14 and 15 year old students -- part of the age range of concern to this project. The demonstrations, STEP and BRIDGE, both use

summer employment program funds as incentives in their program strategies. STEP, which is being conducted by P/PV, is a rigorously designed experiment to test the effects of several treatments on school retention and learning enhancement (or at least summer learning loss reduction). BRIDGE is a somewhat less controlled demonstration that has basically the same objectives. Both programs work with junior high school age students who are exhibiting signs of being dropout prone -- poor academic performance, behavior problems, and excessive absenteeism, traits which many of the students bring with them to junior high school.* Each of the programs is described briefly in the paragraphs that follow.

STEP is being conducted in five cities. In the schools, potential dropouts are identified by their teachers and nominated for the project. Students who are eligible for summer programs are assigned on a random basis to either a control group or an experimental (treatment) group. Those assigned to the control group are given summer jobs and those assigned to the treatment group are given part-time summer jobs and are involved in treatment components that include a) education remediation, b) life skills, and c) full school year support in remediation and life skills to reinforce the improvements that occurred during the summer and to promote students' return to the program the following summer. (P/PV, 1986, 1987.)

The education remediation program involves at least 90 hours of computer-based instruction in basic subjects -- instruction designed to raise the students' level of mastery of the basics and to forestall erosion of what students have learned during the year. Improvements in the implementation and conduct of the remediation component were noted between the first and second summers, improvements that P/PV attributes to changes in its own and local sponsors operation; by being able to get curriculum materials out earlier and recruit and train instructors earlier, the local sponsors were able to get into the instructional program much more quickly and surely. Results improved in the second summer.

The life skills component focuses heavily on responsible behavior, especially sexual behavior. Since pregnancy is a major cause of dropping out among female students, the P/PV program designers believed that this was a subject that had to be faced squarely with both male and female participants. While much attention is given to the mechanics of birth control, equal stress is place on abstinence as both an acceptable and a desirable method of birth control for this age group.

The full year support program involves working with the students in their regular schools during the normal academic year. Special personnel are assigned to work with the STEP participants both individually and in

* For purposes of this report the terms junior high school and middle school are being used interchangeably. There is debate about the definition of the grades that should be covered by each.

classes to help keep them on track. In terms of work experience, the treatment group students are provided half-time jobs most frequently in clerical, maintenance, and recreational occupations.

Results from the first two demonstration years were "encouraging," to use P/PVs term. The Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) was used to measure educational performance. Overall, the treatment group performed measurably better than the control group; in terms of reading, performance results were stated in losses over the summers. During the second summer, the reading loss for the treatment group averaged six points on the MAT and 20 points for the control group. In terms of mathematics, the treatment groups all registered gains in MAT test scores. Test results were also calculated by students' race and ethnicity, and Hispanic students demonstrated the greatest gains. In terms of knowledge of matters of sex and contraception, tests were administered to both treatment and control groups and the treatment group showed greater knowledge than did the control group. In response to questioning about their sexual behavior, the treatment group boys reported less sexual activity than did the control group boys. (P/PV, 1986, 1987.)

The final results of the STEP demonstration, of course, will not be known until 1990-91 when the final classes for this group are scheduled to graduate from high school.

BRIDGE is a demonstration that is designed to provide support and assistance to dropout prone students, identified in the eighth and ninth grades, to help ease the transition to the 11th grade in high school. It is a year-round program of which the summer employment program is a key component. Begun first in the summer of 1986 in Hartford, Connecticut, it is being conducted in four other locations as well. In addition to these locations, a BRIDGE-type program is being conducted in the State of Oregon. In that State, BRIDGE programs are being operated in four schools; SDAs compete for funds to operate them. BRIDGE programs are sufficiently different from one another so that they can not be called a demonstration in the same way that the STEP programs can and there is not a generic program model that can be described. All share the same objective, i.e. to help motivate disadvantaged, underachieving students to attempt to do better in school and to stay in school until they graduate. P/PV is monitoring and documenting the programs and will develop the final reports. (Funkhouser, 1987; P/PV, 1987; NCEP, 1987.)

While there is no standard work program for the various BRIDGE programs, all seek to provide year-round support for the students. Summer jobs are provided as well as remediation. During the school year, part-time, paid internships are provided for students who need them and there are special classes that provide remediation and instruction in life skills. In Hartford, assistance is available for students having personal or family problems; program and school staff, as well as community volunteers, are available to assist. All of the programs have broad-based

participation in their management; the business community, community-based organizations, employment and training agencies and others are involved. The program's impetus in Hartford came from the business community.

The BRIDGE demonstration is too new for there to be any definitive results. However, the leadership group in Hartford was pleased enough with the results from the pilot summer's experience in one high school (1986) to expand the program to all high schools. (Funkhouser, 1987; P/PV, 1987.)

3. One Employment Service-education related program was identified during the course of this project. That was the Communities in Schools (CIS) program, operated by the Texas Employment Commission (TEC). CIS is a program that is designed to reduce the dropout rate among high-risk students. The program was begun in Houston in 1979 and has since been expanded to Austin, Dallas, El Paso, and other cities.

While the principal focus of the program is on assistance to high school students, it should be noted that the local programs work with clusters of feeder schools that include both elementary schools and middle schools. Students are provided: group, individual, and family counseling; tutoring; work maturity and job search training. Summer jobs are provided and part-time jobs are not encouraged during the school year, but are found in cases where the students really need them. There are special staffs in the cities where CIS operates and additional personnel are assigned to the participating schools. Emphasis is placed on participation by the business community and by community groups. CIS has been able to document reduced dropout rates in the Houston high schools that have participated.

Government funding for CIS comes from the State's Wagner-Peyser Act innovative programs fund and from the State's 8% set aside funds under JTPA. Each local community is required to contribute at least $60,000. Businesses contribute funds and also participate in other ways. (National Alliance of Business, 1987; interview with State Program Director, Ms. Jill Shaw, June 1987.)

The Texas program was once part of a larger national effort known as Cities in Schools. Cities in Schools has operated for the last 10 years with the objective of delivering coordinated human services to a-risk students and their families. Cities in Schools has affiliated programs in more than 20 cities around the nation; probably the best known example is Rich's Academy an alternative high school in Atlanta. (Lacey, 1987)

The reviews undertaken for this project show several things. They show increasing efforts to link education and employment and training in new ways, many of the efforts originating at the local and state level. The reviews do not cast any new doubt on the efficacy of the kinds of programs that have been mounted in the past; what they do show is a kind of program evolution that is occurring in several places. That is, a movement toward programmatic involvement with students at-risk at younger ages. The research papers by Bruckerhoff and Lacey treat this trend from somewhat different perspectives. Bruckerhoff examines the experiences of children growing up in poor families and the effects this has on the children's ability to function in school. He also looks at the rather negative effect that the school experience can have on the poor child. Lacey examines some of the same issues, but also examines the earlier physical and social maturation of children and the effects this can have on their attitudes toward schooling and work. For different but related reasons both conclude that earlier interventions might be useful.

Both Lacey and Bruckerhoff examine the ferment that is taking place in education and conclude that the drive toward improved quality in education might not work to the benefit of the economically and educationally disadvantaged.

Lacey explores the need for partnerships in efforts to assist economically and educationally disadvantaged students — partnerships that involve all elements of the community. He examines especially the growing recognition on the part of the leadership of the business community of the need for outside intervention in the development of these youth. Lacey also suggests that employment and training can and should play an important role in the design and execution of such policy interventions. He reports on examples of the importance of Job Training Partnership Act funds in several locally-developed programs, but generally believes that JTPA is a neglected and underused resource in the effort to reduce dropouts and to encourage greater appreciation of the relationship between education and work.

In addition to the papers by Bruckerhoff and Lacey, a background paper on the demographics of at-risk youth and the legislation as well as some model programs designed to assist them was prepared by Winters, Rubenstein and Winters. Case studies of community efforts to assist at-risk youth were prepared on the cities of Albuquerque, New Mexico; Baltimore, Maryland; Hartford, Connecticut; Oakland, California; and, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The case studies examine the communities, and how local leadership defines and measures its youth at-risk population, and the evolution of programs to aid them. The Hartford case study is somewhat different in that it focuses on two programs, BRIDGE and Club CO-OP -- a unique program for youngsters 9 to 13 years old. The executive summaries of the commissioned papers appear as Appendix A to this report, and the complete papers are being published as Commission research reports.

IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

A Beginning Rather Than an Ending

This study began with a search for a new way to look at the youth employment issue. Would it be possible to undertake interventions at younger ages than we presently do? Given the importance of basic skills to more successful entry of young workers into the labor market, is there a way for employment and training to make an earlier contribution to the educational process? Economically and educationally disadvantaged youth in the 9 to 15 year old age group appear to be a largely overlooked group that could benefit from additional assistance. This study has opened up the topic rather than closing it. It is a beginning rather than an ending.

What Was Examined

1. One of the first issues examined was the question of who, from an educational perspective, is at risk in the labor market -- at risk of not finding employment, having long spells of unemployment, and/or low earnings -- and why were they at risk. A paper was prepared that examined the relationship of educational attainment to these questions and the groups of youth who were most likely to have low levels of attainment.

2. A rough measure was taken of the numbers of youth who were at risk of low levels of educational attainment.

3. An examination was made of past Federal education and employment and training programs to see if they shed light on the issue of attempting to assist youngsters in the 9 to 15 age group.

4. A number of case studies were commissioned to see if current community experience would provide any clues about the difficulties and the prospects for working with the 9 to 15 year olds.

What Was Found

1. Young people who lack basic skills and who have failed to graduate from high school have the most difficulty in securing entry to the labor market. It will come as no surprise that poor youngsters and especially poor black and Hispanic youth are those least likely to acquire basic skills or graduate from high school.

2. Our estimate is that some two and one-half to three and one-half million of the total 18 million 9 to 15 year old students can be classified as economically and educationally disadvantaged and are at risk. While economically and educationally disadvantaged children can be found in the vast majority of the nation's school systems, they are concentrated overwhelmingly in urban schools.

3. The review of past Federal education and employment and training programs involved with education does not provide a great deal of insight into the topic of providing assistance to at risk youngsters age 9 to 15. Most current programs are focused on young people who have reached, or almost reached, school leaving age (16 - 21) but have not graduated. Employment and training program funds have been authorized for youth age 14 and older who are enrolled in school. Substantial amounts of education funds have also been authorized to assist schools that serve economically disadvantaged students. Summer employment programs have also been a source of assistance for disadvantaged youth.

4. The Job Training Partnership Act authorizes two programs that serve 14 and 15 year olds -- exemplary programs for youth and the summer employment program. To date, information about the full-year JTPA programs is limited. However, the summer youth employment program funds are being used creatively as incentive funds in two of the demonstrations and positive results in terms of school retention and improved learning retention appear to be showing up. New program guidance from the Department of Labor and changes in legislation covering summer programs have resulted.

5. No consistent patterns appear in the community case studies. One of the cities participating in the demonstrations has seen fit to extend the dropout prevention program (using the summer program) to all of its high schools in advance of the demonstration's completion. Other cities have gone back and forth on working with younger students although all provide some services for 14 and 15 year olds. All of the case studies provide insights into the need to involve employers in the dropout prevention activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This project and the report have proceeded on the premise that in order for young people to compete in the labor market successfully, they must have basic skills, employability skills, and appropriate attitudes toward work. The project has also proceeded on the premise that for most economically and educationally disadvantaged young people, the public schools are the principal -- if not the only -- institution that can be relied upon as the vehicle for imparting these skills and attitudes. Changes in family life and in community institutional and economic structures have rendered ineffective many of the traditional ways in which

the skills and values are passed from one generation to the next.

It is recognized that the Federal government, State and local governments, and the private sector have supported and operated programs to offer a "second chance" to youth entering the labor market without those skills and attitudes. Through dropout prevention programs for students in high school and some in junior and middle schools, these same sponsors have attempted to find ways to insure that the youth stay in school until graduation. Some of these programs have had good results.

This study, however, has explored the question of whether it would be useful and desirable to begin working with the children and youth at ages somewhat younger than that at which the "second chance programs" come into play. Would earlier interventions help to insure that economically and educationally disadvantaged students are equipped better to enter the labor market or pursue postsecondary education or training? Specifically, the study explored the feasibility and desirability of beginning to work with 9 to 15 year olds, students generally in the fourth to the ninth grades. This age range was chosen primarily because it appears to be an age range that basically is not covered broadly in present Federal program and policy initiatives.

Based on this exploration of current educational research, current activity in both education and employment and training, it is concluded that the 9 to 15 year old age group does present a useful target of opportunity. Work with economically and educationally disadvantaged young people offers a chance to reduce the proportion of youngsters entering high school with large educational deficits -- students who are already candidates for academic failure and dropping out. It may be that some of the need for second chance services could be reduced through use of earlier interventions.

It would appear that the public school system has become the primary institution to be relied upon in providing assistance in the overall development of economically and educationally disadvantaged youth if they are to become useful, productive adults. The institutions that society has depended on traditionally -- the family, the churches, businesses, and other community institutions -- frequently are dysfunctional or nonexistent in many poor communities. By default, this thrusts upon the schools the roles of parents, pastors, physicians, and mentor. While these may be roles that go beyond that of educator, it is not inconsistent with the roles the schools have been called on play; witness driver education, the physical fitness movement, or tobacco, drug, and alcohol education. The policy question is how can the society help the schools to perform these roles that they must be called upon to play?

In the United States, education, traditionally and primarily, has been a responsibility of the localities and the States. There have been,

however, areas in which the government has taken the lead in efforts to improve programs or to stimulate change. The information developed in this study suggests that developmental needs of economically and educationally disadvantaged youth constitute a new area in which Federal leadership could usefully be asserted and assistance proffered. This effort should involve the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Labor. It would be premature to suggest any large new programs or significant modifications to existing programs. While the problem is clear, not enough is known at present to specify the design of such a program, and given present budget constraints, it would be unwise to develop new proposals. However, new links need to be forged among education, employment and training, the community, and the private sector if this population of youth at risk is to be served effectively. The recommendations that follow should help the process to begin.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor should fund a small number of demonstration projects experimenting with ways of delivering assistance to economically and educationally disadvantaged students age 9 to 15. Experiments with school-based personnel might be one of the areas in which a demonstration might be attempted. This could include assistance in training for guidance staff or the provision of persons with DOL funds to support guidance positions. Other activities to be considered are the development of instructional materials and strategies (such as job fairs) to interest third, fourth, and fifth graders in the world of employment and the range of occupations that exist. Emphasis should be given to programs for 9 to 13 year olds since some information is beginning to emerge from demonstrations already in place with respect to 14 and 15 year olds.

2. The Departments of Education and Labor should monitor and report on local efforts to provide assistance to disadvantaged 9 to 15 year olds. Such reports should give attention to the content of such local efforts and to administrative arrangements to conduct local programs, including the use of intermediary organizations. The reports should be given wide dissemination among grantees and contractors of the two departments and institutions in the private sector.

3. The Secretaries of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor should establish an interagency work group to continue studies of ways to assist economically and educationally disadvantaged students in the 9 to 15 age group. The objective of this assistance should be the real mastery of basic skills and encouragement of school completion. Activities of the work group should include continued research into the topic and the development program information and ideas. Attention should be given to identifying ways in which the Departments can work together complementary and coordinated ways.

4. Governors and Chief State School Officers should establish similar work groups with similar missions within their respective jurisdictions. (The Federal agencies should provide small grants -- or authorize the use of a portion of funds from existing grant programs -- to support the efforts of such work groups.)

5. The Secretaries jointly should support the collection of data to be used to track the progress of the 9 to 15 year old age group.

6. The Department of Labor should develop "world of work" materials that could be used locally by schools or community groups to increase the exposure of economically and educationally disadvantaged students (especially in the 9 to 13 year age group) to careers, career options, and the need for continued learning. Such materials could be used by schools and other local institutions attempting to serve such students. World of work materials should also be developed for in-service training of teachers and other school staff.

7. The Department of Labor on a regular basis should analyze and report on the use of Job Training Partnership Act, section 205 and eight percent, set aside funds as they apply to 14 and 15 year olds. Such reports should include information on program content and results; these reports could be used as a source of program ideas by PICs, SDAs, and local school officials.

This Commission will continue its own studies of the 9 to 15 year old age group in order to develop a clearer understanding of the issues and to begin to develop more precise recommendations as to future course of action. New data are becoming available that can be used as a basis for further study.

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BUILDING THE WATER TABLE OF YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY:

Collaboration To Support Children and Youth At Risk Between Ages 9-15

by

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May, 1988 RR-88-08

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The national movement for educational reform sustained during the 1980s has concentrated policy making and program development at two levels of public schooling. First, major reports directed at high school reform have led to higher academic standards generally, driven by policies for increased course requirements for grade promotion and for graduation, as well as longer school days and related measures. Second, policies are directing resources to pre-school years, with special attention to children at risk.

Policy makers will be responding to the many results, expected and unexpected, of initiatives into the 1990s, when the demographic effects of increasing percentages of disadvantaged and minority groups converge with pressures emanating from international economic competition, an aging American population, and costs of a structurally unemployable underclass.

Recommendations by the Committee for Economic Development (CED), Education Commission of the States, and other groups converge around increased attention to the older and younger levels of public schooling. In contrast, the recommendations in our analysis of priorities for children and youth at risk cluster around the years nine to fifteen. This is the period of schooling that has traditionally begun at fourth grade and has ended when adolescents are sophomores -- the point where most school dropouts occur.

This group -- elementary and middle grade children and young adolescents at risk -- is easily overlooked because of the more obvious priorities for the youngest children and high school students. The middle grade years have been described as a period of "growing up forgotten;" this is especially true for youngsters at risk, even as the attention of public and private sector leaders fixes upon educational reform.

Our analysis concentrates upon the need for coordinating public and private resources to build the social and basic academic skills of at-risk youngsters so that they can function effectively in a variety of settings, including family, school, the community, and among their peers. Our conclusion is that these skills are the foundation of reliable work habits and behaviors that will increasingly be required in the workplaces of the 21st century. The critically important time for building self-confidence, social and basic academic skills in a supportive rather than highly competitive environment is in pre-adolescence -- about age 11 or 12. A variety of experiences, including

well-designed exposure to careers and workplaces, must build positive attitudes among youth whose disadvantages too often lead them to perceive no alternatives to negative decisions when crises bedevil them during adolescence.

The premise of this analysis is that resources directed primarily toward the youngest and older students at risk will be dissipated if the seven-year span from nine to fifteen is neglected. It is at age nine, fourth grade, that students are expected to use reading to acquire knowledge of subject matter content. If elementary students are not adequately supported in a variety of ways, starting with ability to read in fourth grade, the deleterious effects of multiple disadvantages from then into the first years of high school will overwhelm the gains made in earlier years. Furthermore, resources devoted to secondary school programs will be inordinately devoted to intensive remediation, behavior modification, and similar crisis-oriented efforts of dropout prevention and retrieval.

Several other reports, including three reports by CED, advocate public-private partnerships, usually between business and public schools, as a strategy for coordinating and focusing school reform, legislative advocacy for public schools (particularly at the state level), and strengthening the transition of youth between school and employment. Drawing upon conceptual studies, documentation of collaboration over time, descriptive analyses, interviews, and telephone and on-site interviews, our analysis emphasizes the complexities and demands upon all parties of public-private collaboration. Our conclusion urges caution in undertaking partnerships, especially if a goal is to foster employability of disadvantaged youngsters. Collaboration must be based on long-term, strong commitments at top levels of all participating institutions and should include the employment and training community, Private Industry Council and JTPA Service Delivery Area administrators. Collaborative planning and program development must be grounded in knowledge of lessons learned from other experiments in partnerships, both successful and unsuccessful.

Beginning with a discussion of the "rising tide of mediocrity" in A Nation At Risk, the 1983 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, our report explores the topic of building employability through coordinating services for children and youth at risk between ages nine to fifteen. Eight recommendations flow from this analysis, concluding with an image that contrasts with the "rising tide of mediocrity" -- namely, building the water table of youth employability -- creating a capacity among various community institutions for reliable support through the ages of nine to fifteen.

The analysis concludes with eight recommendations to guide a confluence of public and private resources to support and prepare disadvantaged youth to build social and academic skills and self-confidence as they begin formal preparation for employability and postsecondary training or higher education.

Recommendation 1: Program planners should concentrate on building leadership and social skills among middle grade students, particularly at ages 11 to 14. These skills have direct application to their daily relationships with peers and adults and are essential for building the habits that assure employability and academic success in high school. Programs in every institution that deals with these youngsters should be designed and staffed to support youngsters in learning to apply effective problem-solving skills and strategies in diverse situations -- school, recreation, community service, family, and workplaces.

Program managers, especially those involved in public-private partnerships, should foster supportive programs for middle school youngsters at risk. Recreational and social programs, tutoring by employees, summer programs, pre-employment skills training, exposure to career opportunities, and provision of special incentives and rewards for attendance and satisfactory performance are all helpful. Our report provides several descriptions of programs of various sizes and types. Where programs are well-known, such as the Boston Compact, the discussion addresses special considerations that illuminate the larger theme.

Recommendation 2: Adult participants in programs involving young adolescents should be trained to understand the dynamics of early adolescent development and multicultural factors in attitudes and behavior. Education and training should be provided to educators as well as to parents, social service personnel, employees in businesses, and managers of employment and training programs.

Management of programs involving middle grade youngsters at risk should be designed around special developmental needs of this group.

Recommendation 3: Children and youth at risk should not only be provided with a wide array of supportive services, but should be afforded opportunities to provide services to others as well. School-based community service programs, social service agencies, and corporate social service programs should be expanded to target this age group in close coordination with teachers and counselors.

Recommendation 4: Public school systems that serve high concentrations of children and youth at risk should create policies that encourage maximum flexibility and responsibility for decision-making at the school building level. Above all, teachers should be provided time and resources for their own development and for planning and monitoring their work with at-risk youngsters.

Recommendation 5: Creative uses of JTPA funds (section 205 and the eight-percent provision) should be encouraged and expanded through intensive collaboration between JTPA and school officials. Collaborative activities should be designed to involve practitioners who deal directly with the at-risk youth themselves.

State officials should regularly convene groups of public-private sector planners, especially those that include the business community, to identify receptive Private Industry Councils, school systems, and individual school staffs that serve at-risk youngsters to conduct comprehensive planning and program development.

Recommendation 6: Title II-B funds that are currently restricted to summer employment should be made available to provide remediation and support services for the full year. Many promising programs for at-risk youth conducted with JTPA funds must cease or be privately funded as soon as the youth return to school. A matching funding requirement, as in the eight-percent provision, could be used to encourage collaborative planning and management of year-around programming.

Recommendation 7: Leaders of public-private collaboration must recognize and adapt to the extensive demands and complexities of partnerships aimed toward ambitious aims of human resource development, minority youth employment, and school improvement. Provision of sufficient time and resources for planning is essential -- particularly time.

Collaborative inter-sector planning must involve lower-echelon people, such as teachers and PIC staff at the earliest stages possible. Trainers, counselors, JTPA intake interviewers, and others, such as corporate employees, who will have direct responsibility for implementing plans, must be engaged in the formulation of programs for at-risk youngsters.

Recommendation 8: Programs should be conceived, developed and promoted around provision of maximum exposure to disadvantaged youngsters of options in careers, career paths, and lifetime learning. JTPA funding standards should not restrict participants in exemplary youth programs to students who seek immediate employment after graduation. Postsecondary education, including higher education, should be a legitimate option.

On the premise that disadvantaged youth should be aware of and be able to pursue a number of alternatives, programs that build employability skills should not communicate the message that higher education is a realistic option only for mainstream, economically advantaged students.

Planning should be conducted collaboratively with those who work closely with the youngsters themselves, such as teachers and social service agency staff. Innovative programs resulting from such planning that would increase the long-term educational, training and employment options for disadvantaged youth should be able to draw upon JTPA funds.

REMOVING THE STIGMA OF DISADVANTAGE: A REPORT ON THE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY OF 9-15 YEAR-OLD YOUTH "AT RISK"

by

Charles Bruckerhoff

May, 1988 RR-88-09

Executive Summary

In the face of convincing evidence that significant numbers of youth, age 9 - 15, are "at risk" of leaving school early with underdeveloped competencies in basic academic and work related skills, inappropriate attitudes and perceptions for active and continuing participation in the occupations of a modern, technological society, family histories of life in conditions of poor physical health and social development, the National Commission for Employment Policy has conducted an investigation of disadvantaged youth.

It is the purpose of this report to describe and explain aspects of the problem in the public schools known as youth "at risk." In particular, this study has its focus on the characteristics of youth, between the ages of 9-15, who come from circumstances of economic and educational disadvantage and who have a tendency to develop perceptions and behaviors about schooling that lead them to leave school before completing requirements for a high school diploma. It is reasonable to assume that the failure of elementary and junior high school students to show satisfactory achievement in school subjects, particularly the basic subjects, will severely limit their opportunities for obtaining meaningful and productive employment during their adult lives.

This report examines the following issues and problems of youth "at risk" who are 9 - 15-years-old: compulsory attendance laws, education, and adulthood; school programs and education; demographics; developmental characteristics; patterns of behavior leading to academic success or failure; academic achievement; and school/community efforts and the "at risk" youth.

The results of this study corroborate findings reported elsewhere. There is a large population of dependent children, 9 - 15-years-old who come from circumstances in their homes that tend to have a negative influence on the children's performance in school. The achievement records of school age children nationally show that, whatever are the gains that have been made in recent decades, these gains do not substantiate the conclusion that sufficient progress has been made by the majority of disadvantaged children. Most educational programs that operate for the purpose of dealing with youth "at risk" are based upon long-standing policy and practice. It is too early to state with any assurance whether the effects of the newly re-instituted programs will have a substantive influence on the dropout problem.

This report recognizes as factual that the American school curriculum is a standardized curriculum and operates in routine ways at all grade levels and in most public schools. At the federal level there is some provision for direct assistance with the educational and welfare needs of disadvantaged youth. Policy and practice at the state level tends to reinforce established procedures for operation of schools. At the local level the work of educators is generally done in accordance with standard procedures. Many officials for the schools perceive themselves as instruments for carrying out the policies handed down from superordinates in the form of influential special interest groups, legislatures, and politicians seeking office.

This report on the problem of youth "at risk," who are 9 - 15-years-old, makes the following recommendations for policy makers concerned about taking effective steps in the direction of providing the disadvantaged youth of this nation with a foundation in schooling that promotes a positive sense of self-worth, at least satisfactory levels of achievement in basic academic and occupational skills, and preparedness for active, meaningful, and productive involvement with the economic, political, and social aspects of adulthood in the twenty-first century.

- To restructure public elementary and secondary schools.

- To design and implement a differentiated public school curriculum.

- To improve competencies in basic skills.

- To provide occupation and career orientation programs in the schools.

- To establish networks of educational and social welfare programs.

- To broaden opportunities for disadvantaged youth to obtain regular jobs.

- To promote interest in lifelong learning among disadvantaged youth.

Based upon the evidence collected in this inquiry, the youth of this nation who are 9 - 15-years-old and are economically and educationally disadvantaged face a greater likelihood of becoming unemployable adults. Children who are 9 - 15-years-old are at a critical stage of development of fundamental attitudes of self and others in relation not only to academic study, but also to work and to recreation. Disadvantaged youth need coordinated programs of assistance which deal in substantive ways with their development of basic academic and occupational skills. The results reported here argue that many corrective measures are required now to help these youth to become employable, productive, and satisfied adult citizens of this nation.

AN INVESTIGATION OF EDUCATION OPTIONS FOR YOUTH-AT-RISK, AGES 9-15: DEMOGRAPHICS, LEGISLATION, AND MODEL PROGRAMS

by

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May, 1988 RR-88-10

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report begins with an introduction that identifies its intent and scope. Three sections then follow entitled Demographics, Legislation, and Model Programs. For each section, the reader is provided with an introduction and a summary. The report ends with Conclusions and Recommendations.

Demographics

Dropouts are indicators: they are a downward predictor of students who are and will be at-risk. Yet, the 9-15 at-risk group is difficult to quantify because their being at-risk is due to a variety of cumulative factors such as pregnancy, grade failure, low academic achievement relative to peers, below grade-level in reading, low socioeconomic status, having a parent who dropped out of school, and being a member of a traditionally disadvantaged group.

Legislation

The 9-15 group of disadvantaged youth is most dramatically affected by Chapter 1. H.R. 5 could strengthen the quality of Chapter 1 programs by holding the LEAs more responsible, by expanding programs, and by improving allocations in other areas. H.R. 5 has been reported out of the House of Representives, has gone to the Senate, and, as of the end of November, 1987, is expected to go to a conference committee. The future of Chapter 1 as well as fourteen other elementary and secondary education programs is at stake.

Model Programs

A number of factors form and affect the life styles of participatory members of a democratic society. Successful model programs pull together the various facets of a child's life. They provide the child with a team or collegial approach by enabling the home, community, government, and schools to work together and meet the needs of that pupil. Yet, one must realize that although schools contribute to the success of economically/educationally disadvantaged youth ages 9-15, educational institutions are not the prime investor in these children; therefore, we must recognize the limitations of model programs.

ALBUQUERQUE CASE REPORT
OPTIONS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH -- AGE 9-15

by

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May, 1988 RR-88-11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Albuquerque's efforts to serve disadvantaged youth have reached a critical juncture in 1987. On one hand, Albuquerque has developed over the past two decades a national reputation for innovative programming for at-risk youth. This recognition has emerged largely through a series of model programs that have been either developed or tested in Albuquerque. These have included youth employment programs, alternative schools, and efforts to serve special populations such as teen parents and adjudicated youth.

There is increasing awareness in Albuquerque, however, that the existing network of programs and services is not yet adequate; that a comprehensive approach to dropout prevention -- one that focuses on averting problems through early intervention and provides the necessary level of assistance to all youth in need -- remains an elusive goal in Albuquerque.

Summary of Data

An estimated 11,500 youth aged 9-15 are economically disadvantaged within the Albuquerque area. Of those, approximately 2,691 are white; 7,498 are Hispanic; 529 are Native American; 483 are black; and 299 are Asian. Overall, minorities comprise 46.7 percent of the school age population and 76.6 percent of the poor students.

Students in New Mexico are required to take the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) battery in their third, fifth, and eighth grade years. Albuquerque Public Schools students score higher than both the state and national norms. Ten to fifteen percent of APS students in the third, fifth, and eighth grades score in the bottom quartile of students nationally. The percentage of students scoring in the bottom quartile varies widely from school to school, and it is closely correlated to the percentage of students within the school who live in low-income homes. Overall, CTBS results suggest that 5,000 students aged 9-15 may be in need of remediation. The evidence suggests that most of these at-risk students are poor, minority, or both.

Indicators of the number of 9-15 year olds with attitudinal and behavioral problems is sketchy. Available information reveals:

- 917 crimes were committed on school grounds during the 1983-1984 school year. About 80 percent of these were burglary and larceny, and there were 15 rapes and 106 cases of assault reported.

- In 1986, the Albuquerque Police Department made 3,620 juvenile arrests covering 5,746 crimes committed by juveniles. Of these crimes, 2,815 (49 percent) were committed by youth 15 years or younger.

- in 1984, 1,080 babies were born to teen mothers in Bernalillo County, including 368 babies to mothers 17 and younger and 24 babies born to mothers below 15 years of age.

- according to a recent statewide survey, 71 percent of ninth grade students in New Mexico have experimented with beer or wine; 56 percent have experimented with liquor; and 34 percent have experimented with marijuana.

The dropout rate for APS students in 1986-87 was 8.03 percent, meaning that 1,975 students were counted as drop outs. Of these, 968 were white; 844 were Hispanic; 71 were black; 66 were Native American; and 23 were Asian. Dropout rates were significantly higher for Hispanics, blacks, and Native Americans than for Whites and Asian students.

APS also conducted a major survey in 1986-87 to improve its understanding of the drop out situation -- identifying more than 4,000 students who dropped out of the APS system from 1984-1986 and contacting 251 of these dropouts for personal interviews. The study found that the dropout problem is most severe for ninth grade students. Apparently, the transition from middle school to the much larger, less supportive, more impersonal high schools has driven many students out of the APS system -- a fact that was not recognized in previous data.

Program Inventory

The most comprehensive efforts to serve Albuquerque's at-risk youth are provided by the public schools. They include Chapter One remedial education services offered to over 6,000 students each year, and summer school -- attended by over 5,000 students each year. In addition, APS operates several alternative school programs. The best known of these is New Futures School for adolescent parents.

Employment programs and career education are not widespread for 9-15 year old youth. The JTPA summer employment programs works with 500 14 and 15 year olds each summer, providing limited remedial instruction to complement work experience. Dial-a-Teen, a temporary employment service for youth, provides more limited work opportunities for

approximately 2,500 youth in the summer months. New progams by Mountain Bell and the Hispano Chamber of Commerce are offering some exposure to career and work issues for younger students, but overall there is little career education and counseling available to the 9-15 population.

During the past year, a number of parallel initiatives has emerged in Albuquerque to focus the energy both of the schools and the larger community toward meeting the challenge posed by the at-risk youth population. These efforts are benefitting from a marked increase in interest and involvement from the private sector. The Ford Foundation and the National Alliance of Business are also providing support for new approaches to dropout prevention. These efforts are hindered, however, by the difficult fiscal environment facing the Albuquerque Public Schools. The vast majority of school funds are provided by statute through the State of New Mexico, which supports public education through a severance tax on energy. Revenues from the tax have suffered considerably in recent years due to falling energy prices.

Conclusion

In its quarterly report for June-August 1987, the Albuquerque Business Education Compact wrote: "It is clear that the majority of students dropout or lose interest in school before the high school years -- enough so that the earlier years require at least as much attention as the later years for intervention to occur."

Interviews with school staff for the recent APS dropout prevention study revealed several policy questions that must be resolved before APS can move forward with a more comprehensive approach to dropout prevention.

First, a major question facing APS is how to assist students in the difficult transition from middle school to high school. In response to this problem, APS has recently developed the Community School alternative program; unfortunately the Community School can serve only 30 of 6,000 ninth graders per semester.

The APS study suggests that "early high school curricula should focus on the development of personal responsibility for social behavior and classroom performance." Several high school principals suggested that students not be allowed to enter high school until they have demonstrated a mastery of middle school basic skills. The policy options are numerous, yet there is a growing consensus that an improved system for easing this middle school to high school transition will be an essential component of the overall APS dropout prevention strategy.

A second major issue raised by several staff members concerned the APS alternative education programs. APS has shown a clear preference in the past toward alternative education programs removed from the mainstream school environment. It has placed less emphasis on in-school support. The APS student-to-counselor ratio is approximately 450:1, and several APS officials admit that the level of counseling services -- both for in-school counseling and home-school liasons -- is limited.

Many APS staff also complain that the system's mandatory attendance policies -- under which students are suspended for non-attendance -- are counterproductive, prohibitting students from attending school rather than providing an incentive for improved attendance. A number of APS officials feel that these priorities are inappropriate to the needs of the current population of potential dropouts.

The third major issue facing Albuquerque is how to make the emerging Business Education Compact most useful to APS and to Albuquerque's youth. Albuquerque's private sector has grown increasingly involved in supporting APS and serving the City's youth. Up until now, however, the impact of this involvement has been limited. A major challenge for the Compact is to increase both the quantity and the depth of these partnerships.

The support of the private sector will become even more critical in the future due to the overall funding constraints facing APS. While the private sector cannot provide significant supplemental funding to offset these constraints, the Albuquerque Business Education Compact might do well to establish a local foundation to support public education -- as several cities have done in recent years. Through incentive programs and active involvement in the schools, private businesses might also help to provide the type of environment that motivates students to remain in school and to succeed.

Albuquerque clearly has a long way to go in addressing the dropout problem and the other problems facing its at-risk youth population. But the city, which has long been recognized for its innovation in youth programming, is beginning to think more broadly, ask the right questions, and generate the support and involvement of the greater community.

PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATION OF DISADVANTAGED YOUTH IN THE BALTIMORE SCHOOLS

by

EDWARD C. LORENZ

May, 1988 RR-88-11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study reviews the history and current status of efforts by community institutions, businesses, and employment and training agencies to develop partnerships with the public schools in Baltimore to increase the educational options of at-risk youth nine to fifteen years of age. Baltimore is a good location for a case study for several reasons, including:

1. The city has a large disadvantaged population, with serious problems of youth adjustment to the schools,

2. Baltimore has experienced economic changes typical of many older industrial cities, and

3. The city has a long history and extensive current experience with partnerships linking community institutions and the schools to deal with the problems of at-risk youth.

The study begins with a review of the history of the school system's attempts to assist disadvantaged youth and with the development of partnerships with institutions outside the schools. This history, which extends back to the turn of the century, has several lessons for today:

1. There have been mixed views of the benefits of vocational schooling as a solution to the problems of at-risk youth, with some strong opposition to such training arising from organizaed labor, citing the class biases implicit in vocationalism. Critics also charge that vocational training favored special interest, since the schools were assuming the job training responsibilities of selected industries.

2. The problems of at risk youth relate most directly to the social class of the youth, and within the social class, to the family disintegration which often correlates with class status; however, the fact that a disproportionate number of blacks in Baltimore are poor has resulted in race being confused with the class origins of the problems. That is, frequently programs to solve problems arising from poverty have been indiscriminately directed at minorities.

3. The decisions of many poor youth to drop-out are not totally irrational, since the rewards they observe for extra years of schooling are minimal, due to class biases in hiring and other discriminatory practices.

4. Many of the problems of at-risk youth have been present in the city for generations; however, the problems seem worse in recent years because population change has made disadvantaged youth a larger proportion of the school's enrollees.

5. There are a number of long term patterns in the community relative to the development of partnerships, including

   a. As the schools have become more defensive about their performance, they have been less willing to welcome input from partners.

b. The Greater Baltimore Committee (the chamber of commerce) has sought an increasingly prominent role in partnerships while being unwilling to provide on-going operational leadership or support for greater public funding for educational improvements.

c. The public sector, non-educational institutions have had to take a lead role in developing partnerships.

While the history of efforts to improve the education received by disadvantaged children is important in showing that many of the problems and the solutions are long term, not simply contemporary, most attention in the paper focuses upon current partnerships. Those partnerships can be classified by their goals and their institutional support.

There are essentially three goals for partnerships that assist the disadvantaged. They are:

1. Program Enrichment,

2. Student Employability Development, and

3. Problem Intervention.

Enrichment programs seek to improve the quality of schooling so that disadvantaged students are aware of the educational options before them and may overcome some of the educational disadvantages of their background. Such efforts include the Engineering Pipeline, designed to inform minority youth of careers in the sciences. Also included are activities such as the Junior Great Books programs supported by companies such as Baltimore Life and the C. and P. Telephone Company; and the grants to support educational innovation provided by the Fund for Educational Excellence.

Student employability development programs are targeted on making system graduates vocationally skilled and aware of the demands of city employers. The Greater Baltimore Committee's (GBC) stated goal for the "Partnership Program" falls under this heading. However, few employers appear to focus on a simple employability improvement effort in their actual adoptions of schools.

Problem intervention programs focus on the symptoms of the maladjustment of at-risk youth, such as the high dropout rates or pregnancy rates. The Ford Foundation's Collaborative seeking to coordinate existing services to reduce the number of dropouts is such a program, as is the Futures program funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA).

If partnerships are classified by institutional sponsor, it is found that at least five types of institutions are heavily involved in partnerships with the Baltimore city schools:

1. Businesses, both individually and as members of business associations;

2. Universities, as research sponsors, potential employers, and as educators

of motivated disadvantaged graduates of the system;

3. Foundations;

4. Employment and Training agencies, primarily the JTPA funded Office of Manpower Resources; and

5. Community Organizations, such as the church and labor sponsored Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development (BUILD).

The study of current partnerships results in a number of conclusions regarding the factors which must be considered in establishing partnerships. The primary conclusions are the following:

1. The solution to the problems of disadvantaged youth will require a long-term effort, and participants in partnerships must be aware of this fact. Goals and methods of programs have been changed much too frequently. Stability in the educational environment is one of the primary needs of both disadvantaged youth and their often demoralized schools.

2. Probably the most direct cause of the educational problems of disadvantaged youth is the family instability inherent in lower class life. The community should give adequate resources to efforts to improve family life, including the sexual practices and perceptions of disadvantaged youth.

3. The focus of corrective efforts must be more on solving the general social problems of disadvantaged youth rather than on the personal problems which often are symptoms rather than causes of difficulties.

4. A commitment must be made to early intervention in the education of disadvantaged youth. If this is not done, the efforts to improve the quality of public education will only cause more low achieving youth to dropout. Many partners to the schools have difficulty focusing on early intervention, feeling that they have less to offer the schools in expertise in dealing with young children.

5. The focus in some partnerships upon making the graduates more employable, relates to the point above, for many partners of the schools possess valuable experience in job related training of adults. However, there is a real danger in focusing partnerships upon vocational preparation, if that preparation is too directly linked to only a few skills or industries. In a democracy with many highly technical jobs, the schools need to stimulate creativity and free youth from ignorance. They must be careful that demands for improving the employability of disadvantaged youth do not decrease the educational options of the youth by focusing only upon a few job-related, educational basics.

6. There is a need for partnerships to give attention to general issues of school structural reform as well as to one-on-one partnerships with individual schools, or pupils. Often the school's most needed assistance

is in general administrative fields, such as budgeting or human resource management. Another key asset outside partners bring to administrative problems is their independence of the schools, which allows them to place sufficient pressure for reform on key officials to counterbalance bureaucratic resistance to change.

7. An honest commitment to the evaluation of partnership programs is needed on both the local and national level. There is too much concern with getting credit for the success of experimental programs rather than with receiving credit simply for having tried to solve problems. Current evaluation methods are nearly non-existent and, when used, find only success and originality. In fact, soaring dropout rates indicate large scale failure and wasteful duplication of effort are more common.

8. More attention must be given to the general issues of the economic pay-off from education and the anti-intellectualism inherent in the urban culture, particularly lower class culture. The Commonwealth program, which guarantees jobs or college admission to successful students is a start, if only it reaches the proper audience. The current partners of the schools include the major media companies which can obviously exercise considerable influence in this area. The interest among some partners in only the employability of graduates sends the wrong message regarding the intellectual value of schooling. At-risk youth must see that the schools play a valuable part in their acculturation, particularly training for citizenship.

9. Structural changes are needed in the schools to remove the stigma from youth who drop-out and wish to return to school. The scheduling of education must recognize the desire of some adolescents to experiment in the labor market. Youth who leave school before graduation should know they will be welcomed back. The schools for returning dropouts should be free and equal in quality to the schools serving youth who do not elect to interrupt their education. Partnerships should be encouraged with such schools so that returning dropouts experience the same enrichment as other high school students.

10. There must be no confusion of the benefits of educational partnerships with the need for greater regular funding for urban education. All persons concerned with improving the educational options of disadvantaged youth in cities such as Baltimore must realize that urban schools require even more funding per pupil than the best suburban systems, serving a primarily advantaged population. Partnerships are designed to enrich the curriculum or in some other way help an adequately funded system. They are not a substitute for inadequate funding.

There are several specific recommendations for changes in federal law and regulations which might allow partnerships to be more productive including:

1. Changing the distribution of Chapter I funds and the restrictions upon their use to allow funding of general institutional changes in urban systems.

EVALUATION OF THE BRIDGE AND CLUB-COOP EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Compared to the State of Connecticut as a whole, the City of Hartford's population is relatively poor, relatively uneducated, and has a relatively high proportion of single parent families. About 90% of the public school students in Hartford are black or Puerto Rican, and over half the students come from economically disadvantaged households.

A general concern about high drop out rates in Hartford has led to the formation of a broad coalition of organizations to address the problem, primarily in the form of Project Bridge, a drop out prevention program aimed at providing academic instructions, employability preparation, study skills and life skills to "at-risk" students in 7th through 10th grade.

The core of Project Bridge is the special attention paid to participants' overall social needs, including their academic deficiencies, and the incentives offered for participation, namely paid internships and early promotion. Though the program is too new to have made an observable impact on drop out rates, there are strong indications of the correctness of the approach and its potential for success.

The second program discussed in this paper is Club Co-op, a six week summer program providing recreational and educational activities for nine to thirteen year olds. Similar to Project Bridge, Club Co-op provides employment education and also uses monetary incentives for participation. The best measure of Club Co-op's success is the fact that two to three more children seek entry to the program than there are places available.

Recommendations discussed in the paper examine several alternatives for extension of the existing Bridge program. The recommendations are based on the conclusion that Project Bridge and Club Co-op are worthy of continued support, and that aspects of each might be incorporated into expanded programs serving "at-risk" youth in Hartford.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR 9-15 YEAR OLD YOUTH "AT RISK" IN PHILADELPHIA

by

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for

MDC, Inc.
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

May, 1988 RR-88-11

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR 9-TO-15 YEAR OLD YOUTH AT RISK IN PHILADELPHIA

Case Study prepared for MDC by
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-EXECUTIVE SUMMARY-

Background

Approximately 140,000 young people, aged 9 to 15, live in Philadelphia (pop 1.7 million). Of these some 97,000 attend the city's public schools, with the remainder in the city's unusually large and well-developed Roman Catholic and other private school systems. Some 76% of public school students are from minority families (64% black, 9% Hispanic), and over 40% come from households receiving public assistance. The public schools are the "default" system of choice for youth at-risk, although approximately 10% of Catholic school students meet Federal tests for educational disadvantage.

The percentage of public school youth "at risk" is large but somewhat problematic to calculate. Depending upon relative weight given to income or to test scores, and depending upon which test scores one believes (the school system's new tests, its old tests, or the state's tests), somewhere between one-third and two-thirds of youth can be called "at risk". If one takes as a reasonable measure the percentage of youth who drop out of school (40-45%) plus the percentage of graduates who are inactive (neither in the labor force, in school nor in the military) a year after graduation (13%), 50% is about the right percentage--i.e., about 50,000 9-to-15-year olds in the public schools will face severe problems in the school-to-work transition if current patterns continue. (Another 8,000 9-to-15 year old parochial school students can be estimated for a grand total of 58,000).

In the 1970's, the public schools of Philadelphia were in crisis, marked by minor corruption, major budget deficits, recurrent teacher strikes and declining enrollment, sped by the flight to independent schools of middle class parents of all races. In the past five years a new superintendent and Board of Education have stabilized the budget, improved labor relations, initiated a number of educational reforms and begun to restore public confidence in the public schools.

In the city itself, the 1970's were a troubled economic period, with substantial job loss, primarily in the manufacturing sector, and high unemployment. There has been a rebound in the 1980's, during which a strong and growing services sector has created a strong local economy and relatively low unemployment rates.

Youth at-risk, however, are concentrated heavily in inner

city communities which have not reaped many benefits from the growing economy. In fact, there is evidence that the neighborhoods in which they live are more devastated, more segregated by race and income, and less capable of sustaining "grassroots" improvement efforts than ever before.

Services

There are significant efforts underway in the city and the School District to address the education and employment needs of older teen-agers, but little special attention has been given to the needs of the 9-to-15 year-old group.

In the schools, some programs for high school students serve 14 and 15 year-olds, but overall, except for the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act's Chapter I remedial education services, very few programs or services are targeted specifically at this group. Rather, insofar as their needs are addressed, they are addressed through general school reform: implementation of a standardized curriculum, tougher promotion standards, summer school for students who fail to be promoted, and movement underway to switch from a predominant K6-3-3 mode of school organization to a "middle school"-based 4-4-4 system deemed more appropriate to early adolescents, and various efforts at individual school improvement.

Special services and linkages to strengthen the basic academic skills and develop knowledge and attitudes helpful in the subsequent school to work transition are limited for "at risk" 9 to 15 year-olds:

- Chapter I remedial programs have a demonstrated and documented history of failure, with some exceptions noted.
- Other than Title IIb summer jobs programs, which emphasize remedial education for 14 and 15 year-olds, there is no broad scale service of this group by the PIC or JTPA.
- Career education, development and counseling programs are, as a recent joint school/business study concluded, underdeveloped, with no more 25% of students receiving them.
- The PIC and the state employment service have recently become involved in a partnership program with the schools, but it serves primarily older youth.
- Some community-based agencies, settlement houses and voluntary organizations do offer services to this age group, including tutoring, counseling and enrichment activities, but programs are few and far between, with little solid evaluation of effectiveness.
- Most youth advocacy and most special programs for at-risk

youth in Philadelphia are concentrated either on older teens or on special population subsets: e.g., adjudicated youth, abused and neglected children, where the City is experiencing a crisis in both quantity and quality of service.

Recommendations

Despite the relatively paucity of current services to the population of concern, there are some promising developments upon which to build.

For older (14 and 15 year-old) members of the age range, the High School Academies program, a school business partnership now providing alternative vocational education options for some 1,600 disadvantaged youth, has a documented track record of improving school retention and post-graduate employment of participants.

The early results of another school/business partnership which also involves the PIC and the state employment service, the Education for Employment Initiative of the Committee to Support Philadelphia Public Schools, shows powerful promise for reducing drop-out rates and improving school performance and retention of highly "at risk" youth, including some 14 and 15-year olds.

The School District has preliminary evidence that middle schools (serving grades 5 through 8) are considerably more effective educationally than junior high schools (serving grades 7 through 9), and is planning to expand middle schools while experimenting with the most effective approaches to education for the early adolescents who attend them.

The School District also believes that delivery of Chapter I remedial education services to entire school populations, as an integral component of the basic education program, is producing far better results than "standard" Chapter I services, which involve pulling selected students out of regular classes for remediation. The system is seeking regulatory changes to permit broader application of the more effective approaches, which are now constrained to less than 10% of Chapter I eligible students.

A number of school officials and others also advocate expansion of career education and career development programs. In theory, these are available to all students from kindergarten through 12th grade, but in practice they are offered to only a small percentage.

In addition, there are a number of examples of community-based or voluntary agency programs which have a good reputation and make conceptual sense, although most lack systematic evaluation. Key themes of these programs are providing individualized tutoring, counseling, and family involvement/intervention, as well as experiences which broaden student horizons (trips, interaction with "role models", etc). In some cases, it appears possible to expand such services to youth

after school or in the summer at relatively low additional cost, with overhead supports provided by existing agencies. However, major expansion would require basic investment in new capacity development.

Finally, school officials believe that a concerted effort to link health and social service systems to the schools is desirable to address the many non-educational impediments to learning which large numbers of "at-risk" youth face.

Potentially, Private Industry Councils and their subcontractors could play a role in expanding after school and summer services to 9-to-15 year old youth, as well as in forging service linkages to the schools. However, it would take both a major revamping of JTPA legislation and a major reorientation of the local PIC to realize this potential. In Philadelphia, it is not clear that in the long run the JTPA-delivery system offers significant advantages for serving this population.

It is estimated that an additional $90 million a year would be required to fund the type of supports for at-risk 9-to-15 year-old youth suggested. It is unclear that Federal dollars could or should pay the whole bill, but a number of areas for Federal initiative are suggested, including:

- Funding demonstration, evaluation and dissemination activities.
- Regulatory reform, especially of Chapter I of E.C.I.A, to provide greater flexibility in local use of these funds (with a quid pro quo of meeting performance requirements.
- Requiring relevant HHS and DOL-funded programs to work closely with the schools.

OAKLAND CASE REPORT
OPTIONS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH -- AGE 9-15

by

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An estimated 33,800 youth aged 9-15 live in Oakland, California (1986). Most of these youth are ethnic and racial minorities, and many of them are poor. About 27,400 of these youth attended public schools, with most of the balance in private schools (approximately 15 percent). Most public school students are from minority ethnic groups (90.6 percent in 1986). The majority of students are black (60.7 percent in 1986), while Asian students (14.1 percent in 1986) are the second largest ethnic group in the schools. Over 40 percent of all 9-15 year olds are members of AFDC families.

A large proportion of these youth are "at-risk" in the sense that they are not making normal progress in educational activities that prepare people for a reasonably productive and healthy life, and are from families who do not have the financial resources to attempt private remediation. These youth may also be experiencing conflict with the law or be engaged in seriously self-destructive activities. Using AFDC status and school test performance as criteria, we estimate that one in three of Oakland's youth age 9-15 is educationally at-risk, about four in every ten are economically disadvantaged, and about one in five is both educationally and economically at-risk.

While less than one in four of Oakland's non-poor youth are educationally at-risk, almost half of Oakland's economically disadvantaged youth are educationally at-risk. A study commissioned by the Oakland School Board estimated the cumulative dropout rate for grades 10-12 at 33 percent, suggesting that 11,260 of the 9-15 year old cohort of 33,800 can be expected to drop out of Oakland's schools. These figures indicate that conservatively between 20 and 33 percent of Oakland's 9-15 year olds are "at-risk" and will have difficulty competing in the labor market.

There are a wide variety of programs attempting to stem this tide in Oakland but efforts to coordinate and focus these activities are just beginning. The school system, in the throes of adjusting to a series of State funding reductions, is reorganizing its at-risk effort under the leadership of a change-oriented superintendent. The private sector and other non-school groups are involved in numerous partnerships with the schools. The overall impression is that Oakland is ripe for a concerted attack on the at-risk problem; it just hasn't happened yet.