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ABSTRACT
            In the 1989-90 school year, 13 dropout prevention
programs were implemented in the Leon County (Florida) School
District. The Comprehensive Dropout Prevention Program (CDPP) for
Leon County schools included Educational Alternatives Programs, a
Teenage Parent Program, a Substance Abuse Program, and Youth Services
Programs. This report presents results of a 1989-90 formative
evaluation of the CDPP, using data from the Student Information
System, document reviews, parent questionnaires, and 38 interviews
with teachers and administrators. Seventy-eight percent of
participating students remained in school. Fewer implementation
problems existed at the elementary school level, in which parents had
positive attitudes toward the programs. At the middle school level,
some programs had strong parent support and some students made strong
academic progress. The high level of middle school student attrition
and the lack of valid data made evaluation difficult. Project Success
programs for 9th and 10th graders corresponded with improved
attendance and citizenship, but academic achievement, dropout rates,
and promotion rates need improvement. Parent involvement was lowest
in the high schools. Dropout program success should not be based
solely on dropout rate reduction. Programs should focus on academic
achievement, personal counseling, and staffing by caring adults to
meet short- and long-term goals. An appendix lists evaluation
objectives. (Contains 8 references.) (SLD)

ED 363 653

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS, TEACHERS' FEEDBACK

AND

SELECTED STUDENTS' OUTCOMES

IN THE

EVALUATION OF DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Chicago, Illinois; October, 1991

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2

DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR LEON COUNTY SCHOOLS
1989-90 School Year
Executive Summary

Overview:

In the 1989-90 school year, 13 dropout prevention programs were implemented at the elementary, middle and high school levels. This report presents the results of the 1989-90 evaluation of these programs. The nature of the evaluation is formative. The intention is to provide information to improve the implementation and impact of the programs.

Although the main focus of the evaluation is to report on students' performance as it relates to achievement of the objectives set for the programs, this is only one of the areas of study involved in this year's evaluation. The results of a study among parents and of a survey with teachers and administrators are also reported.

Major Highlights:

78% of the students enrolled in dropout prevention programs remained in school. They were enrolled in school during the 1990-91 school year.

The majority of elementary students included in the evaluation decreased the numbers of absences by at least 10%.

Over 60% of fourth and fifth graders included in the evaluation improved their academic performance in language arts, mathematics and reading by .5 of a performance level.

In the Community Partners in Schools (CPS) program, 60% of the sixth graders and 84% of the eighth graders included in the evaluation improved their academic performance in language arts by .5 of a performance level.

In the Project Success program, 68% of tenth graders included in the evaluation decreased the number of absences by at least 10%.

In the Project Success program, 63% of eleventh graders and 89% of twelfth graders included in the evaluation improved their GPA by .5.

In SAIL, over 70% of ninth, tenth and eleventh graders included in the evaluation decreased their absences by at least 25%.

In SSP, all the students participating in the program attended at least 80% of the scheduled days.

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The majority of teachers and/or administrators considered the lack of appropriate counseling and social services as one of the most serious problems that hinders the successful implementation of the dropout prevention programs.
Over 70% of elementary, middle and high school parents surveyed have a very positive attitude toward the dropout prevention programs.

Summary:

In summary, the Leon County Dropout Prevention Programs have been successful on a number of objectives. At the elementary level, the programs seem to have fewer problems in their implementation. The students demonstrated an overall improvement in attendance, academic performance, and citizenship. In addition, the parents surveyed seem to have a very positive attitude toward the programs.

At the middle school level, programs such as GALA, ESCAPE and Alpha have strong parent support. The academic progress made by the CPS students was encouraging. However, the high level of attrition among middle school students and the availability of valid data prevented this year's evaluation from arriving at more definite conclusions with regard to the middle school programs.

In Project Success, the programs for ninth and tenth graders deserve more attention. The improvement in their attendance rates and citizenship grades was encouraging, but their academic performance, dropout rates and promotion rates need to be improved. Teachers and administrators at the high school level see more serious problems in their programs than the staff at the elementary and middle school levels. It is also at the high school level that the degree of parent involvement is the lowest.

Finally, while there is strong interest in reducing the dropout rate for the district, the success of the dropout prevention programs should not be judged solely in terms of their effect in reducing the dropout rate. This is the long range goal of the programs. At present, the programs should concentrate on challenging the students academically, in providing personal counseling and in being staffed by caring adults. These efforts will help students to stay in school and, consequently, the dropout rate should be reduced. For further information, contact Margarida Southard, 487-7196.

2

1989-90 DROPOUT PREVENTION EVALUATION
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Consider to evaluate the Dropout Prevention Programs to meet the DOE requirements and to provide information to improve the program.

2. Consider conducting **separate evaluations of special programs** such as Alpha, GALA, SCAPE, SSP, SAIL, and TAP. These programs deserve an in-depth qualitative evaluation.

3. Consider **expanding school counseling** and social services to better address the needs of at-risk students. Encourage a case manager approach involving other social agencies.

4. Continue to devise strategies to **increase parent support** at all school levels.

5. Consider providing **in-service training for new teachers** prior to their assignment to the program.

6. Revise the **attendance and academic achievement objectives to include all the students.**

7. Continue to devise strategies to **improve attendance,** especially for ninth grade students.

8. Consider investigating which **courses high school students most often fail** and why.

9. Consider re-examining the instructional strategies offered for **ninth and tenth graders in Project Success** towards strengthening student achievement outcomes.

10. Continue to provide in-service **training in classroom management** and handling disciplinary problems.

11. Consider devising an **alternative course of study** for students with virtually no chance of earning a high school diploma within a reasonable period of time.

12. Consider investigating the specific **factors influencing the increased dropout rate.** Involve schools, program and district staff.

13. Consider investigating the **reasons why students drop out.** The current dropout codes provide limited information.

3

14. Consider conducting a study with the high school students who dropped out of the dropout prevention programs. Their profile should be compared with a sample of students who remained in the program. **Differences between the in-school group and the dropouts** should give insights into how to design new programs to meet the needs of at-risk students.

15. Consider devising strategies for **luring dropouts back** to school. A case work system, extended outreach and part-time jobs are some of the strategies to be explored, or tried and evaluated.

4

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Parents' Perceptions, Teachers' Feedback and Selected Students' Outcomes in the Evaluation of Dropout Prevention Programs

In 1986 the Florida Legislature adopted the Dropout Prevention Act to increase the number of students completing high school and receiving a high school diploma. District School boards were encouraged to establish dropout prevention programs to meet the needs of students who were not effectively served by conventional education programs in the public system. Leon County Schools addressed this challenge by establishing comprehensive dropout prevention programs in four categories: educational alternatives, teenage parents, substance abuse, and youth services.

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of the 1989-90 evaluation of these programs. The nature of the evaluation is formative. The intention is to provide information to improve the implementation and impact of the programs.

The evaluation design combines quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques. Specifically, this paper has three main objectives: (1) to describe the variety of evaluation strategies used in the study; (2) to present the findings associated with each strategy and (3) to propose recommendations for program improvement. The study covered the 1989-90 school year.

This summary of the full report includes an overview of the programs, a description of the evaluation design and a summary of the findings as they are related to the specific evaluation questions and strategies used in the study.

Program Overview

The Comprehensive Dropout Prevention Program for Leon County Schools has been planned and implemented to help more students become functioning, productive members of society. The overall goal is to provide positive school experience for all students through a variety of educational alternatives geared to increase the number of learners, thereby, ultimately reducing the dropout rate in Leon County.

To reach this goal, several prevention approaches were put in place.

A. **Educational Alternatives Programs**

These programs have been designed as nontraditional educational programs marked by considerably more flexibility in educational activities than is found in traditional school settings. The pupil/teacher ratio is low, in most cases is 15 to one, and personal interactions are high. They function within the

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framework of the total school program at each site, such as a school-within-a school. Their main goal is to return the student to a regular classroom setting with increased skills and abilities to deal with school in a positive manner. Participation is voluntary, which means that the student is not assigned to the program without parental permission.

Programs were implemented in nineteen elementary schools, six middle schools and five high schools. In addition, two other programs were offered for high school students and housed in the Lively Vocational Technical Center.

B.   Teenage Parent Program (TAP)

The program is designed for students who are pregnant or parenting. TAP offers regular academic classes so that students can continue their academic program. They also provide instruction in nutrition and health, parenting skills, and infant and child care. On site pre-natal care is provided through an obstetric clinic. In addition, the program provides day care services for the children of the students. Participation in TAP is voluntary and parental permission is necessary prior to being assigned to the program.

C.   Substance Abuse Program: Disc Village

DISC Village is a state-licensed, federally funded, residential rehabilitation facility for students who have drug related problems. The program offers educational services, while HRS provides students with substance abuse treatment. The course of study includes vocational training, physical education, drug and alcohol counseling, self concept training and interpersonal relations. Participation in a substance abuse program is assigned but may be voluntary.

D.   Youth Services Programs

Youth Services Programs are designed for students who are participating in the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services residential programs. Three programs deal with youthful offenders aged 8-18. All three programs offer instruction in academic subjects, physical education and interpersonal skills. Participation in a Youth Services program is assigned. Assigned participation means that the placement is required by the school district, courts or other agencies.

Program Components

The programs differ from traditional education programs in philosophy, curriculum implementation, structure and teaching strategies. Below is a summary of the main components common to the alternative education programs. When appropriate, the specific characteristics of SAIL (School for Applied Individual Learning) and SSP (Secondary Skills Program) will be mentioned.

1.   Classes should be smaller (approximately 16 students).

2.   Teachers should closely monitor student progress and offer

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constant rewards. They should recognize good academic performance, improved attendance and demonstration of good citizenship behavior.

3. The curriculum should be presented using an integrated approach, making the instruction relevant to the needs, interests, and talents of the students.

4. The curriculum should follow the guidelines for academic curriculum as stated in the district's pupil progression plan, in addition to the minimum performance standards set by the State of Florida. A unique part of the curriculum for high school students is the provision of peer counseling -- a course that provides the students the opportunity to learn and use counseling techniques in working with others.

5. Teachers should use a variety of instructional strategies to match students interests, needs, and ability levels to the level of difficulty of school curriculum. Some of the approaches used are: cooperative learning, peer tutoring/peer counseling, hands-on/multisensory/project-oriented activities, simulations, roup development, and group dynamics experiences. An individualized, self-paced curriculum is offered at SSP.

6. Teachers should maintain close contact with the parents of participating students. Parental involvement is an integral part of the alternative education programs throughout the district. At the Alpha Project, parent support and involvement are conditions for participating in the program.

7. A team approach is recommended to address the needs of students and their families. Social workers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, and school staff should join with personnel from outside agencies (Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS); Department of Labor, Employment and Security; Department of Law Enforcement, etc.) to diagnose special needs and to provide support services for students and their families.

8. Students should attend a minimum of three (3) alternative education instructional periods per day. SAIL offers seven (7) classes a day. Students in the Secondary Skills Program (SSP) attend academic classes for three hours each day and spend the remainder of the day attending vocational classes or working part-time as part of the work study component (DCT).

9. An in-service training for dropout prevention teachers should be delivered through summer institutes, district in-service training sessions, individual study activities, etc. Some of the areas of interest are: classroom management, behavior management, developing motivation, self esteem, etc.

Evaluation Purposes

The purpose of the evaluation was two-fold: (1) Provide information for the program staff, school and district administrators to support decision making and the on-going operation of the program; and (2) determine the extent to which program activities have impacted on the student population.

Evaluation Objectives:

.   Determine the characteristics of the students enrolled in the
    programs.

.   Determine the impact of program activities on student attendance,
    academics, citizenship, promotion rate, and dropout rate at each of
    the programs.

.   Determine the degree of parents' satisfaction with the programs'
    efforts to improve their children's performance.

.   Determine the level of parents' participation in the activities
    promoted by the programs.

.   Determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding
    problems associated with the implementation of the programs and the
    immediate and future benefits of the programs.

Data Collection:

Data for this evaluation was obtained from the Student Information
System (SIS), review of documents, questionnaires, and interviews.

1. Student Information System (SIS)

    Student data from the Student Information System (SIS) were
    utilized to obtain data on number of absences (excused and
    unexcused), academic grades, and citizenship grades. The design
    called for the collection of data of one student population and the
    comparison of its data in 1988-89 to 1989-90 school years. In
    addition, demographic data on students served and promotion and
    dropout data for both school years were collected.

2. Interviews

    A total of 38 qualitative interviews was conducted with teachers
    and administrators in dropout prevention programs. The purpose of
    the interviews was to obtain information to design the problem and
    benefit survey.

3. Problem and Benefit Survey

    The survey was designed to determine teachers' and administrators'
    perceptions regarding problems associated with the implementation
    of the dropout prevention programs and benefits derived from their
    implementation. It was administered in May/June, 1990.

4. Parent Survey

    The survey was designed to obtain parents' perceptions of the
    programs and their degree of involvement with the programs. It was
    administered in May, 1990.

8

<u>Summary of Findings:</u>
The major findings are summarized below in a question and answer format.

1.

> What are the characteristics of the dropout prevention students?

In the 1989-90 school year, 2,330 students were enrolled in dropout prevention programs. This is a duplicated count since a student can be enrolled in more than one program for the same time period. The unduplicated count of students served in the 1989-90 school year was 2,145. Of the 2,330 students enrolled, 1819 (78%) were enrolled in Alternative Education Progr⌐⌐s, 204 (8.8%) in the Teenage Parent Program, 38 (1.6%) in the Substance Abuse Program, and 269 (11.5) in the Youth Services Programs. (Chart 1)

The overall population is comprised of 56% males and 43.8% females. About 45% were black, 53.7% white, and 2% from other racial/ethnic groups. Black students were served at a higher rate in dropout prevention programs than their proportion in the K-12 population (35.4%). The high percentage of black students can be accounted for in the Youth Services Programs (69.5%).

Of the 2,145 students served, (unduplicated count), 1,678 (78.2%) remained in school, 93 (4.3%) graduated, 214 (10.0%) dropped out and 160 (7.5%) transferred to another school in or out of state. (Chart 2) Ninety percent of the students who remained in school were promoted and of the 214 students who dropped out, 88 (41%) were in the ninth grade and 46 (21%) were in the tenth grade.
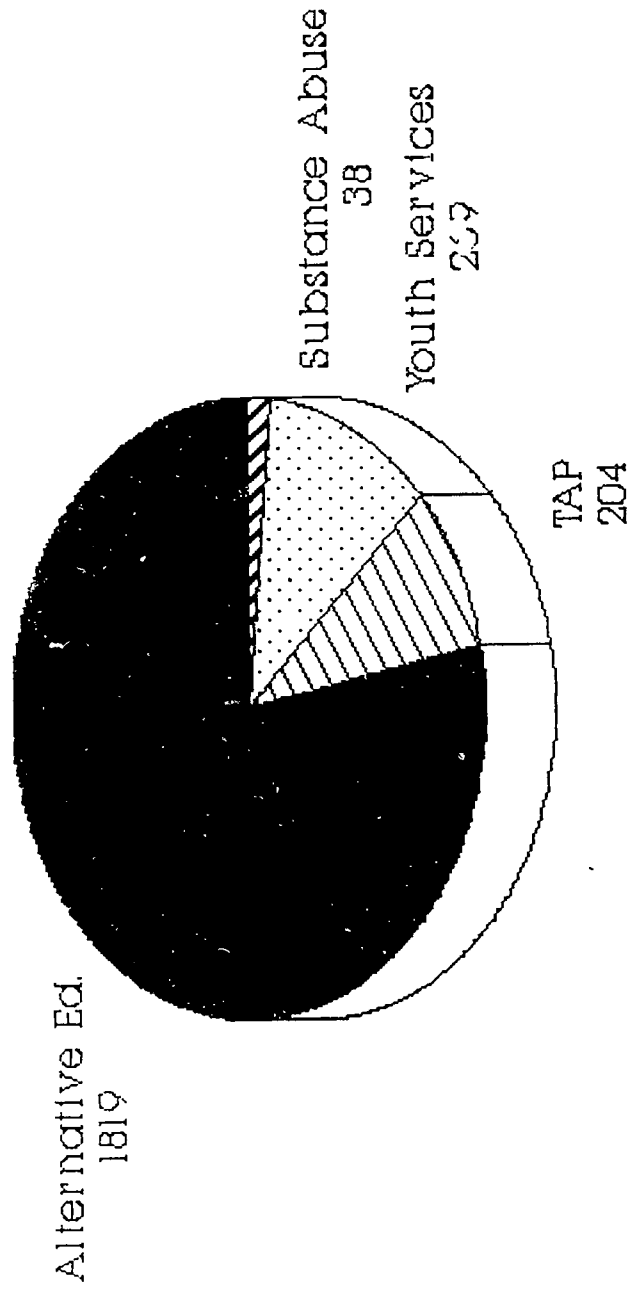
2.

> What was the perception of teachers and administrators re-garding the seriousness of the problems affecting the dropout prevention programs? Are there differences among school levels?

The purpose of the problem and benefit survey was to gather information for program improvement. A separate paper entitled "Process Evaluation in Dropout Prevention Programs: Detecting and Predicting Problems and Benefits through the Use of Problem Benefit/Survey" describes the methodology and the specific results of this study. Here the main results are summarized:

The majority of the respondents did not perceive serious problems in the areas of scheduling of classes, condition and location of classrooms, equipment and space. They also seemed satisfied with the level of support received by the school and district staff. In addition, elementary school staff saw fewer problems in their programs than their counterparts at the middle and high school levels.

9

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CHART 2

Dropout Prevention
Students Served by Program
SY 89-90

Alternative Ed.
1819

Substance Abuse
38

Youth Services
2?9

TAP
204

CHART 5

Dropout Prevention Students
Status at the end of 1989-90 SY

Dropout 10%

Transferred 7%

Graduated 4%

Remained 78%

14
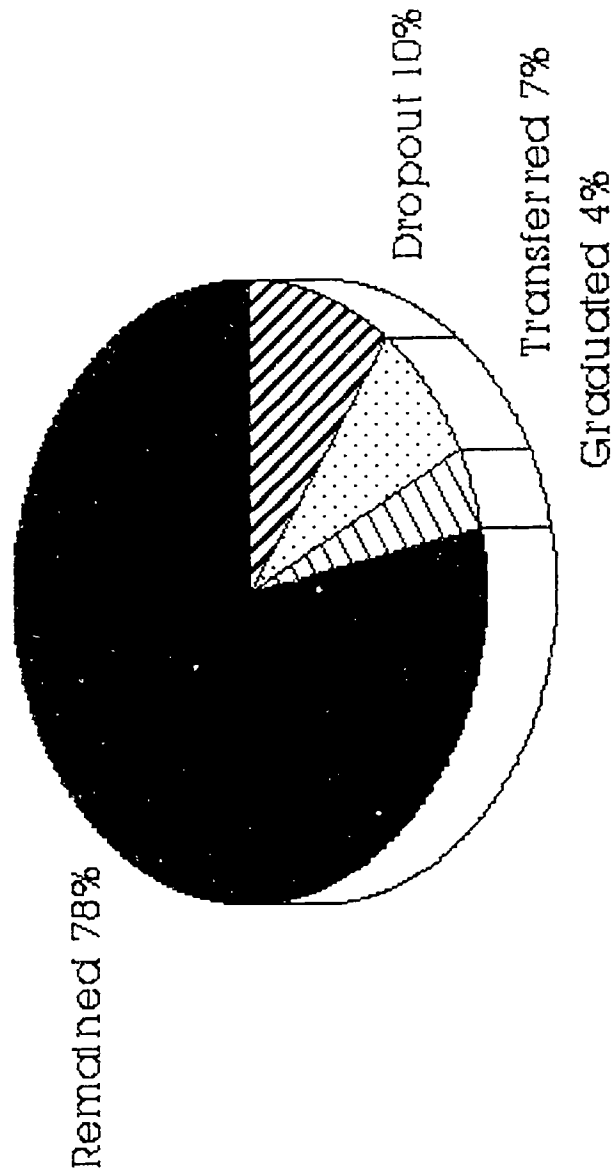
An examination of the results revealed that the regular
school counseling and social services are not sufficient to
deal with the at-risk student. Teachers find themselves
spending more time dealing with the students' personal and
familial problems than with teaching. Most of the critical
problems identified in this study were related to the
category of lack of provision of counseling services and
social services across all school levels (elementary,
middle, and high).

The traditional curriculum is not relevant to many students.
There is a lack of match between the school program and the
needs of the students. In addition, too much time is spent
in classroom management and discipline problems.

More parent involvement and support is needed, especially at
the high school level. This is consistent with the results
obtained with a survey of dropout prevention parents.
Fifty-five percent did not visit their children's classroom,
and only one-third attended parent-teacher conferences. The
result of this survey will be presented in the next section
of this paper.

The category related to training in general was not
considered a problem. However, training for new teachers
before being assigned to the programs was considered a major
need, especially at the middle school level. Almost 60% of
the middle school staff mentioned this problem as one of the
most critical. Finally, the need of a full-time aide in
each classroom seems more critical at the middle school
level.

3.

> What did teachers and administrators perceive as the
> benefits, both immediate and future, for students in the
> dropout prevention programs?

The respondents were asked to name the immediate and future
benefits of the dropout prevention programs through two open-

12

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ended questions. The response to these questions yielded 263 statements that were then categorized. Table 1 ranks the top three immediate and future benefits as perceived by teachers and administrators at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

An examination of the results suggests that teachers and administrators at all school levels generally agree in their rankings. The immediate benefits are related to improving a student's experience in school. The future benefits are seen in the light of the program's capability of reducing the individual and social cost of dropping out of school.

Across all three school levels, the small class size was considered the most important benefit by teachers and administrators. In their statements they expressed that the higher teacher to student ratio allows for more one-on-one interactions between students and teachers. Students then receive the individual attention they need. This is consistent with the research literature which indicates that a caring and committed staff and a non-threatening environment are the most important features of an effective dropout prevention program.

Having more group and individualized counseling was seen by teachers as another benefit of these programs. It should be pointed out that the lack of counseling services was ranked as one of the serious problems affecting the programs. Teachers perceive the provision of counseling services as one of the benefits of these programs, but feel that the services being offered are not sufficient to meet the needs of the students.

The development of self-concept, a positive attitude toward school and the alternative of staying in school, instead of dropping out, were also perceived as immediate benefits of the programs.

In terms of future benefits, this study revealed that the major strengths of the program are the decrease in the number of dropouts, the production of competent graduates and responsible citizens, and the development of a positive self-concept. It is important to note that the reduction in the dropout rate is seen as a future benefit of the program and not as an immediate one.

13

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TABLE 7

RANKING OF TOP THREE (3)
IMMEDIATE BENEFITS

	TEACHERS				ADMINISTRATORS		
	Elementary	Middle	High		Elementary	Middle	High
#1	Smaller Classes	Smaller Classes	Smaller Classes		Smaller Classes	Sr ler Classes	Smaller Classes
#2	Counseling	Self-Concept	Counseling		Student Success	Self-Concept*	Positive Self-Concept*
#3	Positive Self-Concept	Counseling	Stay in School		Positive Self-Concept	Stay in School*	Positive Attitude toward* Education

RANKING OF TOP THREE (3)
FUTURE BENEFITS

	TEACHERS				ADMINISTRATORS		
	Elementary	Middle	High		Elementary	Middle	High
#1	Self-Concept	Self-Concept	Graduate/Productive* Citizens		Decrease # of Dropouts	Decrease # of Dropouts	Graduate/Productive Citizens
#2	Study/Survival/Coping Skills	Productive Citizens*	Counseling*		Positive Self-Concept	Self-Concept*	Positive Self-Concept
#3	Responsible Citizens	Positive Attitude Toward* Education	Lower Dropout Rate		See Benefits of Education	Productive Citizen*	Support Group

* Tied in ranking

18

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37

4.

> What was the degree of parents' satisfaction with the
> programs' efforts to improve their children's performance
> in the areas of attendance, academics, study habits,
> discipline, etc.?

A total of 1,273 parent questionnaires was sent home with each
student of the Alternative Education Programs and Teenage Parent
Program. To increase the response rate, McDonald coupons were
available for those students who returned the completed survey to
their teachers. Four hundred forty-nine (449) parents (35%)
completed the survey. Chart 3 displays the results in a graphic
format.

Over 70% of elementary, middle and high school parents surveyed
agreed that the alternative programs have helped their children
to improve their attitude toward learning and toward school; have
improved their grades, attendance and study habits; have helped
them to be more comfortable with classwork; have helped them to
feel better about himself/herself; and have helped them to stay
in school.

Parents at the elementary school level seemed more concerned with
the programs' ability to handle discipline problems and
attendance problems. They showed less degree of satisfaction.
This result could mean that they did not think their children had
a discipline or attendance problem and, therefore, marked the
"Disagree" category. If this is so, then, a response category
"Not a Problem" should be added in future questionnaires.

Parents at the middle school level showed the highest rates of
satisfaction with the programs' efforts in helping their
children. This is explained by the high level of parent support
and involvement in programs such as Alpha, GALA, and ESCAPE.

5.

> Do parents feel that the programs are involving them in
> their children's education?

The second area of concern in this study focused on whether
parents felt the programs were promoting activities to involve
them in their children's education.

15

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The majority of elementary and middle school parents felt that the programs were always promoting parent-teacher conferences, field trips and parent meetings. They felt that they were always informed about their children's progress in class. However, a third of the elementary school parents felt that they did not know whether parent-education workshops were scheduled throughout the year. Here again, the degree of satisfaction and involvement and the programs is higher among middle school parents due to the support of the parents in some of the programs.

At the high school level, parents were less positive regarding the activities promoted by the school. On-fifth of the sample felt that the programs never scheduled parent-teacher conferences. They also seemed to be less informed about school activities. Forty percent of the parents said they did not know if parent-education workshops were scheduled, and 26% were not aware that they could be invited to participate in the classes as volunteers. More involvement of the high school parents seems to be an area that deserves attention.

6.
> Do parents participate in the school programs' activities (teacher/parent conferences, meetings and workshops, etc.)?

Finally, the parents were questioned about their participation in the activities promoted by the programs. Table 2 presents the results.

It is evident that the majority of high school parents surveyed have difficulties in participating in school activities. Fifty-five percent did not visit their children's classroom and only one-third attended parent-teacher conferences.
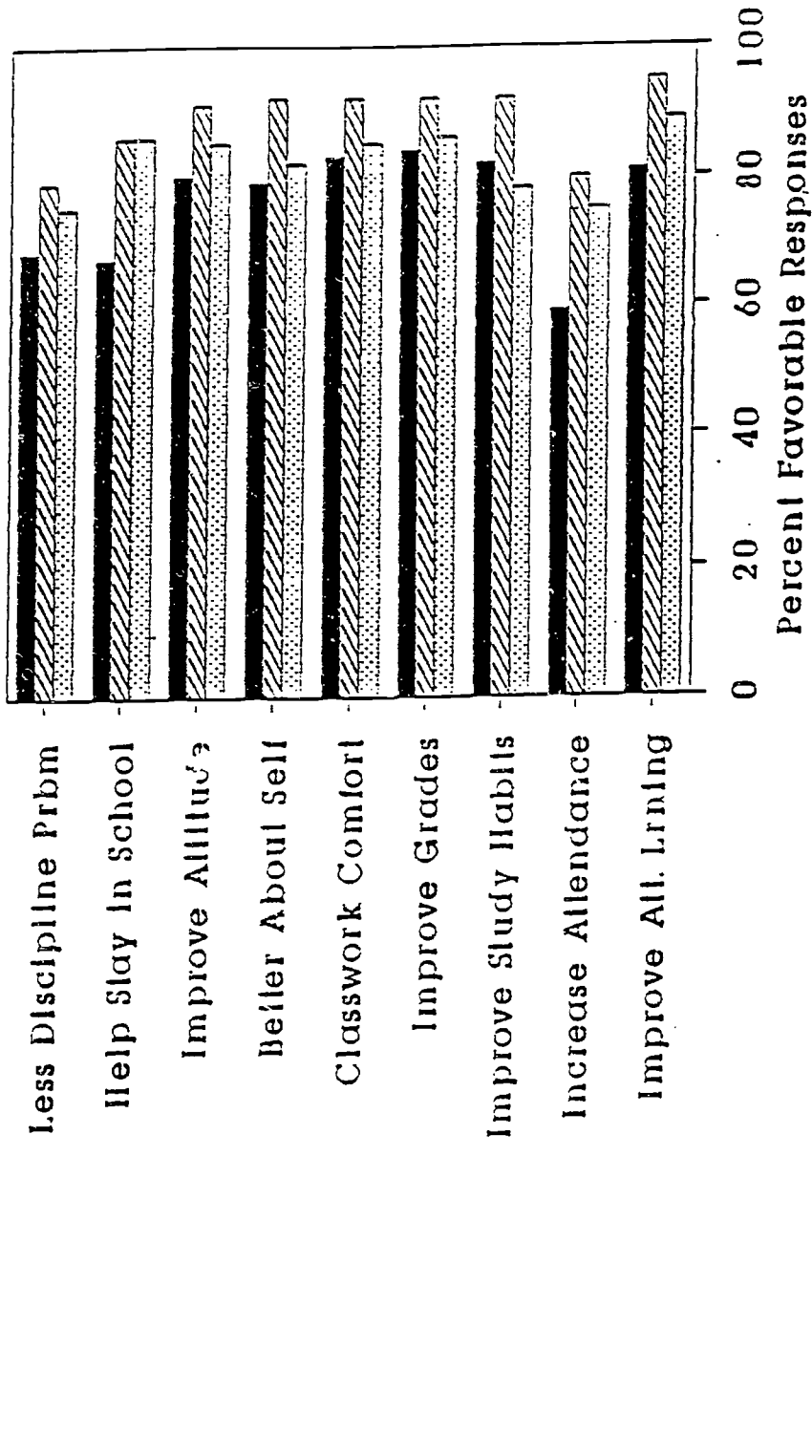
Volunteering in the classroom is very difficult for all parents. Only 8% at the elementary school level and 4% at the high school level served as volunteers. At the middle school level, 31% of parents served as volunteers, most at the Alpha and GALA programs.

Attending parent-teacher conferences (57%) and visiting their children's classroom (41%) were the main activities for elementary school parents.

These results are consistent with research in the areas of parent involvement. Parents, in general, face many barriers to being active in their children's school. Work schedules, daily survival problems, and feelings of intimidation of educators are some of the barriers that prevent parents to devote more attention and energy to school matters.

16

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Chart 8

Alternative Education Parent Survey
1989-90

Attitudes Toward Program

Less Discipline Prbm

Help Stay In School

Improve Attitude

Better About Self

Classwork Comfort

Improve Grades

Improve Study Habits

Increase Attendance

Improve Alt. Lrning

0   20   40   60   80   100

Percent Favorable Responses

Parent Groups

Elem (4-5)   Middle (6-8)

High (9-12)

22

23

TABLE 11

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES	SCHOOL LEVELS	N	RESPONSES		
			YES	SOMETIMES	NO
Attended parent - teacher conferences	Elementary	118	57.0	32.0	11
	Middle	103	75.0	15.0	10
	High	179	36.0	15.0	49
Parent volunteered in classroom	Elementary	114	8.0	30.0	62.0
	Middle	99	31.0	21.0	48.0
	High	178	4.0	13.0	83.0
Parent visited child's class	Elementary	120	41.6	42.5	15.8
	Middle	102	46.0	34.3	19.6
	High	176	21.5	23.2	55.1
Parent attended meetings and workshops	Elementary	111	16.2	36.0	47.7
	Middle	100	51.0	28.0	21.0
	High	175	11.4	24.0	64.5

24

25

The following questions will address the outcome measures set for the evaluation. These are attendance, academic achievement, citizenship, promotions, and dropout rate. The results will be summarized for the Educational Alternative Programs. The complete evaluation report includes the analysis and results for the special programs.

Specific evaluation objectives were written addressing each one of the outcome measures. The objectives were stated following a strict behavioral approach. They called for the collection of data of one student population and compared its data in 1988-89 to its data in 1989-90. They also required that the student stay in the program for at least 90 days. Finally, only students who were below a certain criterion of performance were evaluated. The above criteria reduced considerably the number of students with valid data in both years. (See Appendix A for a list of the evaluation objectives.) It should be pointed out that the data presented some limitations, as in any evaluation study. Program attrition is high among the alternative education students at the middle and high school levels. Therefore, many students did not stay in the program for 90 days, and when they did, they did not have matching data in the previous year. As a consequence, there was insufficient valid data to evaluate the student performance at each grade level when looking at individual programs.

Another concern is related to the quality of the data in the database. Student records on the Student Information System (SIS) were incomplete in some cases. Middle schools sometimes reported no absences or did not have attendance data. Second semester GPA was not available on SIS for high schools; therefore, only first semester data was used for both years.

7.

> Did the students in dropout prevention programs decrease the number of absences by 10% in the 1989-90 school year when a comparison was made against their attendance in the previous academic year?

Overall, there was an improvement in the attendance of dropout prevention students, but the evaluation objective set for the programs was not met in some grade levels.

At the elementary level, although the objective was not attained, 54% of fourth graders and 57% of fifth graders improved their attendance by 10%. These results are consistent with those obtained in the 1988-89 evaluation. In general, about 50% of the students improved their attendance in 1988-89 and 1989-90 school years.

At the <u>middle school level</u>, the attendance objective was achieved at each grade level in the Community Partners in Schools (CPS) program. Ninety-six percent of sixth graders, 95% of seventh graders and 100% of eighth graders improved their attendance by 10%. Caution should be taken in interpreting the attendance data at the middle school level due to the quality of the attendance data on the Student Information System (SIS).

At <u>Project Success</u>, the attendance objective was met by tenth graders in the first and second semester, by eleventh graders in the first semester, and by twelfth graders in the second semester. Although the objective was not met at the ninth grade, over 40% of the students improved their attendance by 10%. The following table compares the 1989-90 results with the previous year.

<div align="center">

Improvement in Attendance
Project Success

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<u>Grade</u>	<u>Course</u>			<u>1988-89</u>	<u>1989-90</u>	<u>Change</u>
9	English 1st Semester			44%	41%	-3%
9	English 2nd Semester			49%	48%	-1%
10	English 1st Semester			46%	61%	+15%
10	English 2nd Semester			58%	68%	+10%
11	English 1st Semester			27%	29%	+2%
11	English 2nd Semester			71%	67%	-4%
12	English 1st Semester			86%	45%	-41%
12	English 2nd Semester			75%	75%	0%

As can be seen, there was an improvement in the percentage of tenth graders meeting the objectives. It should be noted that ninth graders in both years had low levels of improvement in attendance. This is consistent with the profile study of Leon County dropouts that showed the typical dropout is a ninth grader who leaves school due to non-attendance.

8.
> Did the students in dropout prevention programs improve their grades/GPA by .5 of performance level in the 1989-90 school year when a comparison was made with their academic performance in the previous semester/year?

Overall, there was an improvement in the academic performance of dropout prevention students, but the evaluation objective set for the programs was not met at certain grade levels.

At the elementary school level, the objective was achieved in the fourth grade in reading and language and in the fifth grade in reading, language and mathematics. Over 60% of the students improved their academic performance by .5 of a performance level.

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At the middle school level, the objective was achieved in language arts at the sixth and eighth grades for CPS students. Sixty percent of the sixth graders and 84% of the eighth graders improved their academic performance by .5 of a performance level. At the seventh grade, the objective was not achieved.

At Project Success, the objective was met at the eleventh and twelfth grades. The following table compares the percentage of students who met the objective in 1988-89 and 1989-90 school years. There was a decline in the performance of ninth and tenth graders and an improvement in the performance at the eleventh and twelfth grades. At the ninth and tenth grades, the objective was not met in either year.

Improvement in Academics *
Project Success

Grade	Course	1988-89	1989-90	Change
9	English	34%	24%	-10%
10	English	59%	51%	-8%
11	English	58%	63%	+5%
12	English	50%	89%	+39%

*First Semester Data

9.

> Did the students in dropout prevention programs improve their citizenship grades by .5 in the 1989-90 school year when a comparison was made against their citizenship grades in the previous academic year?

Overall, there was an improvement in citizenship grades among dropout prevention students. The objective was met at the elementary and high school levels. Over 60% of the students improved their citizenship grades by .5.

At the middle school level, the objective was not attained in the CPS program. However, 57% of seventh graders and 59% of eighth graders improved their citizenship grades in Language Arts. At the sixth grade level, students were already performing at a satisfactory level in the previous year.

At Project Success, positive results were obtained for ninth graders in mathematics and tenth graders in English and Mathematics. Over 60% of the student evaluated improved their citizenship grades.

21

10.

> Did the rate of student promotions among dropout prevention students increase by 10% at the end of 1989-90 school year when a comparison was made with the rate of student promotions in the previous year?

Overall, 90% of the students who remained in school were promoted at the end of the 1989-90 school year. At the middle school level, programs like ESCAPE, GALA, and Alpha had 100% promotion, but at CPS, there was a decrease in the promotion rates at each grade level in the 1989-90 school year. The promotion rate reported for the 1988-89 school year was 100% at each grade level. It is possible that the decrease is due to more accurately reporting the retentions and promotions in the 1989-90 school year.

At the high school level, students in SAIL were promote at a higher rate than students in Project Success in each grade level. The promotion rate for ninth graders at Project Success (63.4%) was the lowest. Almost 40% of the ninth graders who remained in school did not earn enough credits to be promoted to the next grade. These are the students who are most "at risk" of dropping out of school.

A very positive result is the number of students who graduated from Project Success and SAIL. Eighty-three percent of twelfth graders at Project Success and 78% at SAIL graduated.

11.

> Did the dropout rate among dropout prevention students decrease by at least 5% when a comparison was made with the dropout rate in the previous year?

The objective was not met at the high school level. There was an increase in the dropout rates for dropout prevention students at the high school level from 1988-89 to 1989-90 school years. This is not surprising, since the overall dropout rate for the district increased from 5.48% in 1988-89 to 7.9% in 1989-90.

The reason for this increase could be attributed to more accurate record keeping and better quality control procedures. Schools are now using the appropriate withdrawal codes when students are being withdrawn. In addition, Information Services provided a series of verification lists for each school so that the school data on file could be reviewed and appropriate updates or corrections made before the data was provided to the DOE. This approach increases the accuracy and quality of the data and is more reflective of the real dropout rate.

22

However, programmatic reasons should be investigated. A study
should be done involving school and program staff, especially at
the ninth and tenth grade levels, to explain the specific factors
influencing the increased dropout rate.

23

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Evaluation Objectives for
Educational Alternative Programs

At least 60% of the students who were enrolled in LCS for a minimum of 135 days and who exhibited absences (either excused or unexcused) in excess of their grade level median the previous year will decrease the number of absences recorded at the end of the project year by at least 10% or will reach the grade level median for their current grade.

At least 60% of the students whose cumulative performance in the basic skills of reading, language arts, or math was rated as less than satisfactory in the previous year will show an overall performance improvement in the deficient subject area(s).

At least 60% of the students whose previous year's cumulative citizenship grades were below satisfactory will demonstrate an improvement of at least one-half (.5) of one performance level in citizenship grades at the end of the project year.

At the end of the 1989-90 school year, the rate of student promotions among dropout prevention students will increase by at least 10% from the previous year or reach the district average at each grade level served.

The proportion of dropouts among project participants will decrease by at least 5% from the previous year or equal the district average at each grade level served.

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