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ABSTRACT

As part of an effort to reduce high school dropout rates in large city school districts, Phi Delta Kappa, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Council of Great City Schools, and a group of large city school districts undertook an effort to determine baseline statistics in high schools in large cities by using standardized definitions and procedures for identifying students who dropped out of school by name and characteristics. This paper describes some of the problems and accomplishments of that effort in several large city school districts. Eventually, information was obtained for more than 50 city high schools. It was entirely possible to obtain this information, although a number of problems, including discrepancies in definitions and dropout counts and a reluctance on the part of local educators to focus on dropouts, did surface. Among the accomplishments was the downloading of information from each district's centralized computer system to a file for comparison with a derived school holding power index. This information may become the basis of efforts to increase support for schools and educators in their attempts to reduce dropout rates. An attachment describes the data transfer approach. (Contains 16 references.) (SLD)

Determining Dropout Rates in Large City School Districts: Problems and Accomplishments

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The Problem

Graduation from high school is important--to the individual and to society--and though the proportion of students who finished high school increased steadily during every decade of this century, the number who fail to graduate from high school today is still considered both a personal and social loss. The proportion of students in urban high schools that fails to graduate is much higher than the proportion of students that fails to graduate from non-urban high schools, thus the dropout problem is essentially an urban problem.

In 1989 the president and the nation's governors set six national educational goals. One goal was to increase the high school graduation rate to at least 90 percent by the year 2000. Five sets of factors will affect the attainment of that goal: knowing who is most likely to drop out of school; the motivations and aspirations of each student; the structures, programs, and methods in each school; the beliefs, values, and support provided youngsters in each home; and the policies, programs, and practices of every agency and institution in America, governmental and private, that affects the education of young people.

Two years ago Phi Delta Kappa, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Council of Great City schools, and a group of large city school districts developed a two-phase proposal designed to address the dropout problem in high schools in large cities. Phase one was designed to determine baseline statistics in high schools in each city by using standardized definitions and procedures for identifying students who dropped out of school by name and characteristics, and phase two was designed to reduce the dropout rate in participating schools by involving public schools, universities, and professional organizations in collaborative efforts of experimentation, sharing of experiences and resources, and action research.

We were unable to secure funding for phase one (funding agencies were more interested in phase two), but through the concerted efforts of several individuals in the original groups, phase one has been accomplished in a few large city school districts without outside funding. This paper describes some of the problems and some of the accomplishments of that two-year effort in several large city school districts. What follows is not a technical research report, but a sharing of learning experiences of those who have been directly involved. This paper outlines my own personal experiences in struggling to make this project operational.

We began this project with several assumptions. Dropout rates have been declining steadily for the past 100 years. Most young people who start to school finish high school and graduate 12 or 13 years later. Even so, the

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concern about dropouts is very real, and the consequences of not finishing high school today are considered extremely serious. The dropouts rates are especially high in urban areas.

To cope with the dropout problem effectively, we can approach it from adults' perspectives (i.e., "What can we do to motivate students to stay in school?") or from the students' perspective (i.e., "What is interesting or meaningful for me in school, and why should I stay?").

Using either perspective, there are three things we need to do: understand the totality and the complexities of the problem; figure out what causes it or contributes to it; and figure out how to overcome these factors so that more students will stay in school and graduate.

Following directly from this line of logic, five questions arise:

1. Who drops out of school?
2. Why do these students leave school before graduation?
3. What can we do about it?
4. What are we doing about it now?
5. Can we justify the discrepancy between questions 3 and 4?

Many factors affect school completion: (1) parental attitudes and values, parents' previous educational experiences and accomplishments, including their own teaching and support skills; (2) student's abilities, skills, motivations, values, interests, previous experiences, time available, daily routines, and sense of belonging and acceptance; (3) peers' values, previous experiences, motivations, abilities, achievements, expectations, provision of a sense of belonging, concern for excitement, variety, stimulation, and fun; and (4) the school's curriculum, materials, instructional procedures, sense of caring, flexibility, "fittingness," purposes, policies, diagnostic capabilities, professionals' attitudes toward dropping out, motivational procedures, evaluation devices, and the like.

We assume that it will not be easy to change the milieu in which a student finds himself or herself to help that student stay in school and graduate. And there are many factors over which the school has no influence or control at all. Even so, helping young people stay in school and graduate is important. The place to begin is to determine precisely who is dropping out of school now, what those students are like, and why they are leaving school before graduation?

Operating from this frame of reference, this project got underway.

What Was Done

Letters were sent to superintendents of schools in each of the cities that belong to the Council of Great Cities Schools inviting them to participate in this project. In addition, similar letters were mailed to deans of Colleges of Education in universities serving those same cities. (Those deans were in the process at that time of organizing a sub-group within the Council of Great City Schools.) The cities in which the superintendent and dean both expressed interest in participating in the project were then visited to explore the technical and administrative problems and possibilities inherent in getting such a project off the ground.

Several cities expressed interest, but after visits exploring the idea in detail, were unable to continue for one reason or another: Seattle, Nashville, Long Beach, San Diego, Boston, Memphis, Milwaukee, and Toledo. Other city districts worked in their own way during the two year period to try to make phase one of the proposed project fully operational: Detroit, Omaha, Louisville, Tucson, and El Paso. In addition, Pasadena became involved, although it was not a member of the Council of Great City Schools. In each of these districts data were obtained about students who were members of several graduating classes in one or more high schools, and those data were analyzed using the *Holding Power Index* software program.

This entire process was based on several assumptions:

1. Cohort data are better than annual data to make accurate inferences about dropouts.

2. If the dropout problem is going to be dealt with effectively, that will be most likely to occur if action is at the building level rather than the district or state level.

3. Building principals need information about dropouts from their school that is current, accurate, relevant, and easy to access and easy to use.

Information about students was obtained as follows. The individual at each school district's central office in charge of information systems was provided with specific instructions about how to download information from the mainframe about every student who had enrolled in each of the participating high schools after August 15, 1987 onto an ASCII file (see Appendix A). Information included each student's name, sex, racial or ethnic background, ID number, birth date, cohort group (i.e., expected year of graduation), date of entry into the school, date of departure, reason for leaving, and program of study.

The file was downloaded by school, not district. It included every student who had enrolled in that school after a given date, and followed each student by name and over time until the student left school for graduation, transfer, death, incarceration, or dropped out. That information was then imported into a personal computer with *Holding Power Index* software installed, and various analyses were accomplished. The information used involved cohort analysis of dropouts (i.e., students were followed over time as a group), therefore, rather than annual dropout data information (i.e., count the number of ninth graders, count the number of tenth graders next year, then calculate the dropout rate, without adequately accounting for transfers and the like).

Results of those analyses were compared with reports submitted by the districts to their State Departments of Education or other agencies. All together, information from more than 50 high schools including (generally, but not always) every student who originally enrolled as a ninth grader in each of the districts' schools after Aaugust 15, 1987, and was scheduled to graduate in 1991, 1992, 1993, or 1994. In addition, information about students who are currently enrolled and scheduled to graduate in 1995, 1996, and 1997 was also included in the analyses.

Lists of graduates were compared to each principal's graduation list, and names of students who had left school before graduation were studied to verify reasons for leaving. In case of discrepancies, cumulative files in the principal's office were studied to determine whether graduation actually

occurred (e.g., did students have enough credits for graduation?), or for whatever information was available.

This process--download from mainframe, import to a personal computer, verify reports--usually went through several cycles before the information from the central office computer and the principal's records were reasonably consistent (i.e., more than 98 percent agreement). When it was concluded that information from the central office database, principal's records, and reports produced by *Holding Power Index* were consistent, student dropouts for each school were calculated and compared with reports produced by the district office and submitted to the state department of education or used locally.

What We Have Learned

This was an empirical endeavor. Empirical, of course, means both experimental and experiential. This project has been rewarding in both senses of that term. Experimentally, we have generated a tremendous amount of factual information. Experientially, we have identified a number of problems and accomplishments on which we can build.

First, and probably most important, this whole project is very doable. It can be done. We made it work, in a small way, at least. That is important, because previous research suggests (and this project verifies) that there is no standardized set of definitions and procedures currently used to determine the dropout rate in school districts across the country. Some districts have begun to use the National Center for Education Statistics suggested definitions and procedures, and in the long run, those will probably be adopted nation-wide and bring some sense or order to what is currently a very disorderly set of data and procedures.

Having said that the project is doable, however, let me enumerate some of the problems that have become apparent before we return to discuss the accomplishments. These problems will simply be listed here without much elaboration. People who work with these kinds of data will recognize these problems as routine. They are important, however, because these problems make it difficult to obtain information about school dropouts that is comparable across schools within a district, between districts, or between states. Anyone who has much confidence in dropout data has not been through the process that we have described here. Familiarity with the process in several districts and the resulting information leads one to believe that dropout data are probably the least reliable information available today regarding the reality of schools.

Problems That Exist

1. The differences that exist among schools and districts that affect any effort to study dropouts are enormous. There are differences in reporting requirements from various state departments of education, differences in hardware, software, exit codes, entry codes, definitions, computational procedures, skill levels, time available, support available, and commitment. The result: dropout data about individual schools are not comparable within a district, between schools in districts within the same state, or between schools or districts in different states.

2. Many large city superintendents are hesitant to deal with the dropout problem; they do not want to be compared to surrounding suburban districts.

3. Almost nobody wants to do anything about the dropout problem unless it is mandated by somebody else.

4. There is reluctance to assign students unique identification numbers (e.g., Social Security number) that might be used to assure adequate follow-up of students who leave the building, district, or state. Some critics even attribute evil motives to school personnel who make a concerted effort to account for students over space or time.

5. Many principals do not have easy access to information about their own students that enables them to follow individuals over time. For example, one district denies principals access to the district's database that would enable the principal to note the difference between graduates, dropouts, or transfers. That information is only available to people at the central office level.

6. Errors in data entry are not always caught. In one school, half of the students on the graduation roster for 1993 had been counted as "dropouts" because the codes were similar (i.e., L 7, which meant "Leave school to graduate" and E 7, which meant "enrolled from another school within the state"), and an E 7 had been entered rather than L 7, as required for the graduation list. This erroneous entry had been translated to mean "dropout", since the last entry on each students' record was actually an "enter" rather than "leave", and somehow that got translated to "dropout". But because of point "5" above, the principal had been unable even to detect the error.

7. Using annual data rather than cohort data distorts some districts' (even some states') dropout figures. For example, Florida has reported for the last two years, at least, an increase in both the graduation rate and the dropout rate. School administrators who work regularly with annual data understand such information; the general public thinks it is ludicrous. "How can the graduation rate and dropout rate both go up?" they say. "If one goes up, the other should go down." Districts and states that are growing rapidly thus get and give a distorted picture of both dropouts and graduates. Their figures are not believable in the eyes of the general public.

8. Most districts do not follow students, by name, and over time. Many produce a new database each year, and work strictly with that one-year database. Such a process simplifies the demands made on their hardware and software, but students do not exist just one year at a time. There is continuity in the life of a real student, but no continuity in the life of the school district's record keeping system. The annual database system makes it simple to "count heads" on October 1st, say, but very difficult to follow each student throughout that student's entire experience within the school system. It would appear that the "needs of the system" have taken precedence over the "needs of the student."

9. Many (maybe most) high school principals are not interested in dealing with the dropout problem. Some simply say: "I'm not interested in dropouts." A few say, "We need to get rid of those kids. They cause all of our problems. If I could get those potential dropouts out of my school, maybe we could help the kids who really want to learn." Most principals are busy (sometimes overwhelmed) with what they consider more important problems.

10. Many central office people are interested in the dropout problem and willing to cope with the problem in whatever ways they can. They recognize that the information they have is often questionable, and they want to find better ways to improve the quality of that information and to work to help the teachers and administrators in their schools.

11. Within some districts, one school may have a dropout rate of less than 5 percent while another school in that same district has a dropout rate of 60 percent. In every instance in which such discrepancies were identified, it was determined that the discrepancies were actually the result of policies designed to create what might be described as "islands of excellence" within the districts to make a few schools, at least, especially attractive to parents as a way to discourage movement out of the city to the suburbs.

12. Most principals do not find their district's computer database helpful to them. It may not provide the kind of information they want or need. It is often difficult to access, and even more difficult to manipulate, without extensive training and highly sophisticated computer skills. One of the results is that principals produce the reports they are directed to produce by the central office, but often they do not use the information available in creative, effective ways.

Accomplishments

In more than 50 high schools we were able to download information from the school district's centralized computer system onto an ASCII file, import that information into a personal computer which had *Holding Power Index* installed, then do cohort analyses for the graduating classes of 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, and 97 in each school. "Holding Power" was comparable to the "graduation rate" for each class, and was defined as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Graduates} + \text{Number Still Enrolled}}{(\text{Number Originally Enrolled} + \text{Trans. In}) - (\text{Trans. Out} + \text{Jailed} + \text{Died})}$$

As said above, the graduation rate for each school in each district was calculated as defined above, for several cohort groups. Because the data had all been downloaded from the various mainframes using a standardized set of definitions and procedures, then imported into one software program for analysis, it is assumed that this resulted in standardization of the process for determining graduation rates and dropout rates for each of the schools involved.

We have not reported those dropout statistics here, but the pattern is mixed. In some cases, the dropout rates are higher than the district's calculations show; in other cases the dropout rates are lower. In several schools, the results raised questions in the principals' minds about what they had been provided by their own district's central office. But the process works very effectively.

The Problem With the Dropout Problem (After Thoughts)

Most high school teachers are not interested in working with students who might drop out of school. Teachers want those students out of their classrooms and out of their schools. Maybe the Special Education teacher will assume responsibility for working with the potential dropouts. Maybe the Alternative High School will take them on. Most teachers, however, are

unwilling to spend much time or effort to work with students who are likely to drop out of school.

Most high school principals are not interested in potential dropouts, either. Students who are likely dropouts are the same students who create discipline problems in the school and cause lower achievement levels on standardized achievement test scores. "Those kids cause problems. Get them out of here!"

One problem with the dropout problem? There are no incentives for teachers or administrators who have to work with students at the building level to deal with the problem. If pleasure or pain, punishment or reward, recognition, remuneration, or released time are thought to be motivators, there is nothing at work along those lines to motivate professionals in schools.

Obviously the family exerts great influence--positive or negative--to get young people to finish high school, but the school exerts great influence, too. And even if the schools cannot do everything, they can do some things to help students stay in school and graduate.

Looked at realistically, nothing positive happens to teachers or principals who help young people who are likely to drop out of school, except for the good feeling that comes from helping other people. They get paid for doing their job, of course, and one could argue that teaching potential dropouts is their job, but to assume that every teacher or principal should be a saint is probably naive. Altruism is a noble thing, but it is hardly reasonable to presume that every person who teaches high school will be altruistic.

It is essential to motivate teachers and administrators so they will create conditions of learning that will motivate students to work hard and finish school. And that cannot be done by asking either teachers or students to do more of what they already do. Educators need something different; a reason to work extra hard. They need meaningful incentives to succeed.

Further, there are no negative consequences to teachers or principals for refusing to assume responsibility to help young people who are on the verge of dropping out of school. Nothing negative happens to people who provide routine assistance, ignore, or even encourage such students to leave the school before graduation.

"What's in it for me?" they say. "Why should I do it? Why should I subject myself to the difficult and demanding job of working with students who don't want to learn? Those kids don't want to be here, anyway. They cause me special problems. Their parents are almost never cooperative. The students' motivations are low. They lack learning skills. What can I do?"

Given the demands already placed on educators in the public schools, it seems unreasonable to expect teachers and principals to take on this problem without special resources, special materials, special training, and special tools. And incentives are important, too. Threatening teachers or principals with cuts in resources might work, but it would certainly be a crass way to encourage an all-out effort to keep young people in school through graduation.

Increasing the graduation rate is a national goal, incorporated into federal law. The school ought to get more of something--money, teachers, flexibility, recognition, site-level control--if it is expected to assume responsibility for working with some of the toughest problems that confront

those in schools. Working with students who do not want to stay in school and graduate is a terribly difficult job. Most of the people in prisons are school dropouts. Most of the people on welfare are dropouts. Most of the unemployed are dropouts, too. But those people are all in schools before they wind up in those other roles. Assuming the burden of working with marginal students who are not enthused about school and generally eager to get away from required courses, heavy schedules, and regimented days is more than most teachers and principals feel they can pile on their professional plate.

Some teachers and principals are dedicated to helping students finish their education. Many minority teachers and principals understand the negative consequences of dropping out of school, and they want "their people" to finish high school and graduate. They realize what education means. But not all professionals are so committed.

Dedicated people everywhere recognize the nature of the problem, and they recognize the extra burdens that accrue to students who drop out of school, including the disaster that often accompanies failure to graduate for the society as a whole. But there is no reward system, no incentive for professionals to tackle the job. No recognition. No approval. Little control over what they do. Teachers and principals are expected to take on demanding responsibilities because they will feel good about it if they do, or they will feel badly about it if they do not.

The educational system is structured improperly and functions inappropriately to encourage teachers and others to help students stay in school and graduate. For example, reports about dropouts and potential dropouts are asked for by those above them in the hierarchy, but information is seldom made available from those reports that enables teachers and administrators in the schools to be more effective with students who are likely to quit school and leave. Higher level administrators expect compliance when they ask for information, but seldom provide good feedback or interpretations of information that might help those working with difficult students in the schools.

Dropout data based on annual enrollments rather than cohort data about students, by name and over time, does not help teachers or administrators at all. Nobody thinks about dropouts on an annual basis except state-level or district-level administrators. Parents don't. Teachers don't. Employers don't. Numbers of dropouts without names add to the helplessness of people in the schools; bureaucratic number crunching which satisfies the insatiable needs of higher ups who do not work with students and who are convinced that mandates will improve the schools makes it "a war out there," as one dropout project administrator complains. When teachers and principals see no usefulness to data requests, they almost never take those requests seriously. They put some numbers down and turn them in, knowing that nothing will happen. Nothing about the process will provide assistance or benefit to them.

What is needed? Four things: commitment, good information, extra resources, and special incentives that will encourage teachers and principals to assume responsibility for the demanding job of working with potential dropouts and stick with it until those students finish school.

Commitment involves understanding both the short term consequences for young people who do not finish high school, and the long term consequences for society if they do not graduate. It is easy to "write off" a student who does not seem to want to learn, who is intent on "sliding by" or skipping school. It is more difficult to ask these kinds of questions: Am I doing anything that is driving this young person out of school? Is the subject matter in

this course really important? Is it interesting? Is it meaningful? Am I helping this recalcitrant student make sense out of this subject matter in such a way that it is significant, from his or her point of view? Are the school rules reasonable? Is this person socially accepted here at school? Does he or she have any friends? Do I really care about whether this student actually "makes it" here in our school?

And what about the long-term consequences for society? Can we ignore the human costs in taxes and misery and isolation that accrue to people who do not learn to assume responsibility for their own learning and their own lives? Everybody knows that it costs more to keep a young man or woman in prison than to keep that person in school. Everybody knows that the costs of social welfare programs are more expensive than the costs of preparing people to assume responsibility for their own lives. Everybody knows that all of us have to shoulder those financial burdens through additional taxes. Everybody, that is, except those who become unemployed or imprisoned or trapped in the welfare loops. They suffer, but not additional taxes. Everybody else shares those costs. Not the recipients, but those who "make it" through school and "make it" in life.

Good information about dropouts means being able to follow students, by name, and over time, from the time they enter school until they leave. Precise information about dropout rates by gender, race, program of study, where students came from, and the like must be available to teachers and administrators interested in making accurate diagnoses of who is most likely to drop out of school in the future. Head counts on October 1 are not the same as accurate accounting of every student who enters school over the extended period of time.

Resources means special materials, technical assistance, support from universities and central offices, collaboration with other agencies, and flexibility in programming, scheduling, teacher assignments, student assignments, and resource procurement. Teachers and administrators who try to keep potential dropouts in school need lots of help. The regular program will not do it. The conventional textbooks will not do it. Mandates from the state will not do it. Exhortation from the central office will not do it. People at the building level need money, materials, flexibility, a sense of ownership, and opportunities to learn new things and new ways. And they need to decide what they need; that ought not to be handed down from on high.

Finally, of course, incentives for professional staff are imperative if teachers and principals are expected to assume responsibility for this difficult, demanding work. Incentives might come in the form of special recognition, extra assistance, financial support, or the opportunity to exercise control over how they function and how they organize their energies and activities to help young people likely to dropout out of school. Educators understand the value of recognition and praise for children, but we are not particularly generous with recognition and praise for our own. And recognition is a powerful incentive, for children and adults alike. But other incentives are needed, too.

Suppose a solid baseline of information determined that a given school had an average graduation rate of 76 percent, say, over a three year period; 24 percent of the students, on average, dropped out of school before graduation, after those who had transferred, died, gone to jail, or otherwise left the school for some justifiable reason were accounted for. If the high school had an average ninth grade cohort enrollment of 300 students, and 72 of those dropped out before graduation (i.e., 24%), and if that school reduced its dropout rate by 3 percent, that would mean that nine more students would graduate each year than would have been expected.

Now, assume that those nine students in attendance meant that the funds received by the school district from the state for Average Daily Membership count would bring in $3000 for each student, or $27,000 extra each year. Suppose the district gave that principal that $27,000 for his or her school faculty to use in any way that they saw fit to work with students who were likely to drop out of school. And suppose the school got that $27,000, plus an additional $27,000 the next year if they continued to reduce the dropout rate. The school might hire teacher aides, get additional teachers assigned, buy special materials, bring in consultants for special training, purchase computers, reallocate teacher assignments--whatever--but there would be a direct "pay off" to those who worked hard to reduce the dropout rate in that school.

If a school increased its graduation rate (i.e., its holding power), and if that school got extra money for its efforts, or if it got more teachers, special recognition, more flexibility, or more building-level control, those factors might function as incentives for teachers and administrators to continue to address the problem of potential dropouts in the school in creative, effective ways. But only if there is some pay off.

Students who leave high school before graduation generally report that they "do not like school." Nobody cares about them as people. They feel left out, ignored, alone. Courses are not interesting. Schedules are restricting. Rules are confining. There is nothing there that they see as enjoyable, worthwhile, or fun. Students who are accepted socially, reasonably able academically, cared about personally, and integrated into the mainstream activities of the school won't quit. They will not drop out of school.

Making those things possible requires special incentives for teachers who already have their hands full with students who really want to learn, who want to graduate, who would not dream of dropping out of school. Those teachers have to be induced to assume the added burdens and responsibilities required to work with students whose general inclination is to cause problems in school, not achieve in school, and leave school when they get a chance.

This analysis is based on several assumptions: Young people are better off in school than out of school. Even a poor education is better than none at all. Young people who drop out of school generate social costs that other people must bear (i.e., prison costs, welfare costs, unemployment costs), and society has to find a way to encourage teachers and principals to improve their effectiveness in working with young people who are likely to drop out of school.

The dropout rate today is lower now than it has ever been. Schools have increased the holding power of the school almost one percent per year since the turn of the century, when high schools became widespread in this country. Schools have done a good job in the past. More students high finish school now than ever finished before. Achievement levels are higher. College attendance is higher. All these are positive signs. But the demands placed on young people today for higher levels of education continues to increase. The need is for more and better education for everyone has not diminished, it has increased. We must help even more young people be successful in school, finish school, and graduate. We dare not ease up now.

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FROMSDF Utility operation
06/29/93 modified 08/21/94
Phi Delta Kappa

When importing data from your student database system to Holding Power, you have two options:

1. create an XBASE-style database file from your data using the structure described in the document file HOLDDBF.DOC, which is included on your Holding Power distribution disk. This requires:
   a) a copy of Foxpro, Dbase III, Clipper or some other XBASE-compatible database application.
   b) a way to transmit or import your data from the source machine.
   c) and the knowledge to put all this together.

2. Use FROMSDF (the easier route!)

FROMSDF stands for "From an SDF-format import file". SDF stands for "Space-Delimited Fields".

All you need to do is to write a program on your source computer that creates an SDF data file in text format. Each line of text data represents a record. In each line, the fields are organized in a fixed-length fashion with space characters padding to the end of each field. The fields must be in a specific sequence and of an exact length for proper conversion:

```
FIELD                        # OF
INFORMATION               CHARACTERS
------------------------------
last name................. 15
first name................ 10
middle initial............ 1
student id................ 11
class..................... 2
source.................... 2
gender.................... 1
race...................... 2
record modification date.. 8
student birth date........ 8
program................... 2
current status.............2
verification...............2
```

Sample data line:

```
         1         2         3         4         5         6
123456789012345678901234567890123456789012345678901234567890123456
|              |         ||          | | || |       |       | | |
CAMBRON        JIM       A123 44 35679301M0106/03/9301/01/50100102
JOHNSON        RANDOLPH  Q123-45-67899302M0106/03/9301/12/50104006
```

Finally, each line of text data must end with a carriage return (13 decimal).

Once you have created this SDF-format data file as specified above, you need to import it from whatever computer system it resides on to an IBM PC/AT formatted disk or media. This can be done in one of the following ways:

1) Using a transfer utility, copy the data to a PC-compatible 5.25" or 3.5" disk. You may need to break the file into smaller chunks if it is too big to fit on one disk.

2) Using a network or serial ports and communications software, transfer the data from the source computer to the target PC (or an intermediary computer that generates disks for step 1 above).

When the SDF-formatted data is on the Holding Power computer and is located in the same directory as Holding Power, you are ready to run FROMSDF.

The FROMSDF utility allows you the flexibility of using your code formats for fields like source, race, program, status and status verification -- assuming they are in the two-character format -- and then converting them to HOLDING POWER code format. You may also force your data for the above fields into HOLDING POWER format in your conversion program by referring to the tables at the end of this document. If you use Holding Power codes, simply use the default code values during the setup portion of FROMSDF by pressing "ENTER" at every conversion entry that offers a default value.

FROMSDF also lets you choose several different representations of gender, date and student ID formats in order to make data conversion easier:

Sex codes: M F (all caps)

Date format:
MM/DD/YY
MM-DD-YY
YYYYMMDD

Student ID format:
xxx-xx-xxxx
xxx xx xxxx
freeform

The conversion program handles other fields in the database records on its own. To do this, the conversion program obtains important information found in the disk directory that the Holding Power program resides in. Therefore, it is IMPERATIVE that FROMSDF is copied to the Holding Power Directory before attempting to run it.

Notes on codes for Program, Race Source School, Status and Status Verification:

The conversion program has defaults built-in, should it find a code in the ACSII transfer data that does not match up with the conversion table the user builds during the conversion process. These defaults are:

Program = General
Race = Other
Source = Other
Status = Currently Enrolled
Status Verification = Not Applicable

This will be especially handy if the source database has a larger number of data types in these categories than that of Holding Power.

If the database you are about to convert does not have any or all of the Program, Race, Source School, Status or Status Verification information in each record, you should force a value into the SDF-formatted data record that would most closely match a majority of the students that you are converting. Doing this will also reduce the amount of rekeying needed after the conversion process.

NOTE: FROMSDF will not work properly if fields are missing or misplaced in the SDF data records.

Here are valid Holding Power data types and their matching codes:

Program Data Description	Code
Academic/College Prep	10
General	20
Vocational/Technical	30
Special Education	40
Learning Disability	41
Mentally Retardation	42
Speech/Language Impaired	43
Hearing Imparied	44
Vision Impaired	45
Emotionally Disturbed	46
Orthopedic Impaired	47
Traumatic Brain Injury	48
Autism	49
Multi-Handicapped	50
Other Health Impairments	51

Race Data

Description	Code
White/Caucasian	01
Black/African American	02
Hispanic	03
Asian	04
Pacific Island	05
Middle Eastern	06
Native American	07
Other	08

Source Data

Description	Code
This Dist. Feeder School	01
Other Dist. Feeder School	02
This Dist. Comp HS	03
This Dist. Voc. HS	04
This Dist. Alt. HS	05
Other Dist. Comp HS	06
Other Dist. Voc. HS	07
Other Dist. Alt. HS	08
Other Agency (jail, Hosp.)	09
Other (ret. from expulsion, etc.)	10

Status Data

Description	Code
Transfer Out - This District Comparable School	21
Transfer Out - This District Vocational School	22
Transfer Out - This District Alternate School	23
Transfer Out - Other District Comparable School	24
Transfer Out - Other District Vocational School	25
Transfer Out - Other District Alternate School	26
Transfer Out - Agency (eg Hospital)	27
Graduated	01
Expelled	31
Currently Enrolled This School	40
Deceased	32
Withdrew/HS Equiv. Certificate	02
Jailed	33
Dropped Out	50

Status Verification Data

Description	Code
Transcript Requested	01
Exit Interview	02
Report From Agency	03
Report From Parents	04
Other	05
Not Applicable	06