

**CONCENTRATE-ON-ONE:
AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO INCREASING ACADEMIC AND
SOCIAL SELF-ESTEEM IN AT-RISK STUDENTS IN A HIGH SCHOOL**

by

Robert James Landry

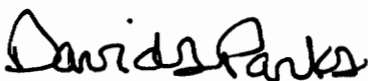
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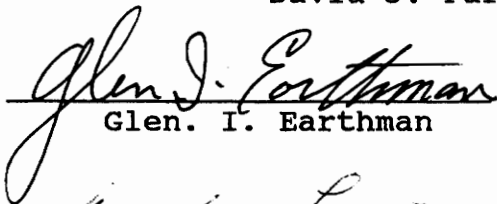
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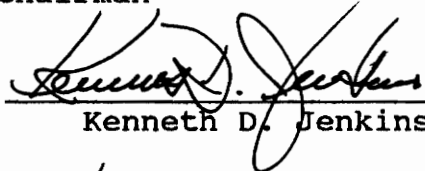
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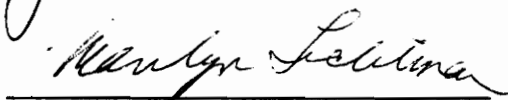
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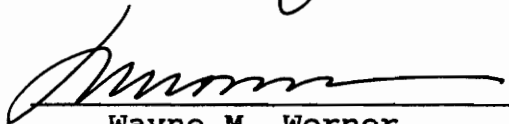
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Concentrate-on-One:

**An Alternative Approach to Increasing Academic and
Social Self-esteem in At-risk Students in a High School**

by

Robert James Landry

Committee Chairman: David Parks

(Abstract)

Educators cannot control who enters the public schools, but they can have an impact on those who do enter. The purpose of this study was to examine how student academic and social self-esteem was affected by a special program for high school students in a rural school district in North Carolina.

Concentrate-on-One was exactly as its name suggests--a program that allowed students to focus on one academic course at a time for a nine-week period. Designed for at-risk students who need extra motivation and a small classroom situation, these courses covered one year of material in three hours per day over nine weeks. At the end of each nine-week period, students rotated to another academic course.

Each teacher requested to participate in the program. Each stated that the opportunity to form a team comprised of

optimistic teachers made it inviting. These teachers believed that children should--and could--succeed.

Evaluation of the program was conducted throughout the year. Ten students, four teachers, seven parents, and three other school personnel were interviewed and students were administered the Exploration and Self-Profile three times. Data were managed and analyzed according to the guidelines provided by Merriam (1991) and Ely (1991).

The Exploration and Self-Profile showed that academic self-esteem increased from August 1992 to May 1993 for eight out of ten students. All students interviewed in May had increased positive feelings towards themselves. These positive feelings were accompanied by a reduction of boredom, one academic course each nine weeks, choice in course selection, supportive teachers, a reduction of failure, increased attendance, a sense of a meaningful future, and feelings of success in mathematics.

The Exploration and Self-Profile showed that social self-esteem increased from August 1992 to May 1993 for nine out of ten students. All ten students expressed positive social self-esteem through the interviews. Positive interactions, feelings of increased self-worth, and student maturity all brought forth positive changes.

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Although I cannot identify them by name, much appreciation goes to the students, teachers, parents, and other professional educators in the program being studied. They allowed me to enter their lives so that I could know more about the at-risk dilemma. The interview experience allowed me to learn an incredible amount about listening and hearing what others were saying.

A very special thank you is appropriate for Dr. David Parks, who has had sufficient faith in me and who gave me the necessary prodding when I needed it most. I am grateful to Dr. Marilyn Lichtman, who worked with me in two courses on the qualitative approach. Dr. Wayne Worner I always found to have a question or two which forced me to tackle the toe of the elephant and not the elephant itself. I appreciate Dr. Ken Jenkins for his continuous support through the project and for offering his advice. Thanks also go to Dr. Glen Earthman for encouraging me through a difficult time.

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Life and living have not waited for me to complete this academic project. Fortunately, I have had colleagues and

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I dedicate this study to my love and dearest professional colleague, Kay, who in 1981 wrote on the at-risk population. Your dedication to these students allows many to achieve, where originally, they were failing. Your constant glimmer of hope keeps them attempting.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how students identified as at-risk changed during their placement in the first year of an alternative program. The program design attempted to affect student self-esteem, reduce their level of risk, and increase student achievement. This is a case study limited to a specific location and population of students.

The release of A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) increased concern for educational excellence in American public schools. This report emphasized first that:

America's position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer.

(p. 6)

Second, mediocrity in education had become the norm rather than the exception. The low rankings of United States' students on international comparisons of student achievement--increasing numbers of functionally illiterate citizens, declining Scholastic Aptitude Test and science achievement test scores, and increasing costly remediation programs--reflected this norm. The report concluded with an

appeal for all citizens to work harder for improvement.

Where should this improvement begin? Many recommendations have come from state and national departments of education, educational commissions, educators, and industry. Recommendations for educational reform have covered such topics as increasing graduation requirements, homework assignments, length of school day, certification requirements for educators, and course standards.

What caused our nation to become educationally at risk? The report A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) suggested that America was educationally at risk because of mediocrity in education. Did the mediocrity come about from students failing to take advantage of the opportunities available to them? Or, could it be due to lack of student motivation?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine changes in the self-esteem of students identified as at-risk during their placement in the first year of an alternative program designed to reduce their level of risk and increase their achievement. Students' feelings about self and school were monitored, student participation in school activities was documented, and relationships with teachers, friends, and family members were examined. All data collection occurred

during the 1992-1993 school year.

Research Question

This study was designed to address the following question: Throughout the first year of the Concentrate-on-One Program, how did participating students change in academic self-esteem and social self-esteem? These changes were observed by examining students' perspectives on the following:

- a. Feelings about self
- b. Feelings about school
- c. Feelings about teachers
- d. Feelings about peers
- e. Relationships with family members
- f. Participation in school activities

Justification for the Study

Interpretations derived from this study can be offered for an increased understanding of how the Concentrate-on-One Program affected the self-esteem of identified at-risk students. The entire program or some elements of the program may be useful to other schools interested in working with at-risk students.

Definition of Terms

Academic achievement: Knowledge obtained and skills developed in the students as measured by grades recorded in the cumulative grade record.

Self-concept: The perceived self, one's own personal existence as visualized by oneself.

Self-esteem: Feelings of acceptance and self-respect based on evaluations of the self-concept.

Concentrate-on-One Program: An alternative educational program for tenth grade students identified as at-risk within a high school. Four high school teachers teamed to service sixty-four students classified as at-risk. Teachers received training in working with at-risk students, and they expressed a positive attitude and desirability to work with these students.

Teachers taught the first three periods of each school day. These teachers met to coordinate and integrate lesson activities during the fourth period of each school day. Teachers assessed student progress through individual student portfolios. Teachers facilitated seminars, conducted site digs, and facilitated mathematical hands-on activities and numerous computer activities.

Teachers graded students on a J-curve. Students received grades of "A," "B," "C," or Incomplete. Student work and tests receiving a grade scored below a "C" were assigned Incompletes. A grade of Incomplete became a grade of failure only when a course was not completed at the end of summer school.

The courses covered one year of material in three hours

per day over nine weeks. At the end of each nine-week period, students rotated to another academic course. Sixteen students were scheduled per course.

Limitations of the Study

The study examined the impact of one program on at-risk student self-esteem. To assess the impact, both qualitative and quantitative research strategies were used. Data collection occurred over school year 1992-1993. The methodological boundaries of the study were the following:

1. A population of sixty-four at-risk students within a 1000-student high school.
2. Ten students randomly selected from the sixty-four.
3. The researcher was the principal who studied the problem as an active participant with an inside point of view, which may or may not have affected the results of this study.

Overview of the Report

"Concentrate-on-One: An Alternative Approach to Increasing Academic and Social Self-esteem in At-Risk Students in a High School" is a case study written in five chapters with a list of references and appendices. Chapter 1 is an introduction and rationale for the study. A review of related literature on self-esteem, school influences, and methodology is provided in Chapter 2. Methodological

procedures are in Chapter 3. The findings are in Chapter 4. A summary and interpretation of the entire study is in Chapter 5. Recommendations are included. Six appendices are attached. Appendix A is a copy of the introductory letter to the associate superintendent. He granted permission verbally. Appendix B is the school personnel interview guide. Appendix C is the student interview guide. Appendix D is the parent interview guide. Appendix E is the Exploration and Self-Profile used to measure self-esteem changes as perceived by the individual student. Appendix F is a letter from one participating student's psychologist.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

The review of literature includes research findings which provide a conceptual background for the study. It has five sections: (1) historical background of the problem; (2) significance of self-esteem; (3) the development of self-esteem; (4) relationship between self-esteem, at-risk factors, and achievement; and (5) methodological issues.

Historical Background of the Problem

The current search for excellence in public education in the United States is not a new occurrence. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) claimed that the "secondary school curriculum has been diluted, and diffused to the point it no longer has a central purpose" (p. 18).

In response to the criticism of public education, studies conducted by Goodlad (1984) andSizer (1984) searched for excellence and improvements in public education. As a result of such studies, several proposals were designed and were introduced to improve schools.

A key to achievement motivation is one's self-esteem (Walz, Bleuer, 1992). An assumption of the current study was that the qualities which students bring with them to school and the way they feel about these qualities will determine their success or failure both socially and

academically. If this is true, then the characteristics of the students entering school today need strengthening to improve the output of the schools.

Individuals evaluate themselves based on experiences with significant people in their lives (Purkey, 1970). Coopersmith (1967) said, "Self-esteem is a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself" (p. 5). Branden (1994), responding to the question "Why is self-esteem an urgent need?" answered: "Of all the judgments they pass in life, none is more important than the judgment they pass on themselves" (p. 5). Branden (1994) further commented that positive self-esteem is needed for psychological growth.

Schools have had the responsibility to teach students the need to desire knowledge. Branden (1976) suggested that one's self-esteem determines one's desire to achieve.

The Achievement Motivation Theory

McClelland (1955) studied motivation and achievement and developed the Achievement Motivation Theory. He based the theory on the assumption that some people have built-in personality traits that lead them to productive activity. McClelland (1961) argued that a child receives exposure to people and situations. The child is taught things and is treated in one way rather than another; these experiences may foster or hinder self-esteem.

Self-Esteem Theory of Motivation to Achieve

Branden (1976) summed up the self-esteem theory of motivation to achieve by stating the following:

Self-esteem is the key to man's motivation--by virtue either of its presence or its absence. And perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the urgency of man's need of self-esteem is the terror that haunts the lives of those who fail to achieve it, the twisted paths along which terror drives them--and the inevitable wreckage at the end. (p. 153)

Lerner (1985) commented on two approaches to self-esteem: the self-esteem now and the earned self-esteem. He said the following about self-esteem now:

American parents, like American teachers, went to great lengths to ensure the happiness of American children in those decades [the 1960's and the 1970's], nurturing their self-esteem and protecting it from injury, discarding standards and discipline, at home and at school. (p. 16)

The theory of "earned self-esteem" focused on success by meeting the test of reality--measuring up to standards--at home and at school.

The Significance of Self-esteem

A basic concern for each individual is the search for personal significance and identity. Purkey (1970) offered an

overview of the self from a historical perspective. He said Freud gave attention to the self under the concept of ego development. Yet, Freudians and Neo-Freudians hesitated to make the self a primary psychological unit in their theoretical formulations.

Rogers (1951) built a system of psychotherapy around the importance of the self in human adjustment. Rogers saw the self as the central aspect of personality. Combs and Snygg (1959) proposed that the basic drive of the individual was the maintenance and enhancement of the self. They further declared that all behavior depended upon an individual's personal frame of reference.

Purkey (1970) claimed that maintenance and enhancement of the perceived self are motives behind all human behavior. Szasz (1976) explained, "The more self-esteem a person has, the greater, as a rule, is his desire, and his ability to control himself" (p. 57). Lickona (1992) expressed the following:

When we have a healthy measure of self-esteem, we value ourselves. When we value ourselves, we respect ourselves. We're less likely to abuse our minds or allow others to abuse us. Studies show that children with high self-esteem are more resistant to peer pressure and better able to follow their own judgement than those with low self-esteem. (p. 58)

Branden (1994) concluded:

Self-esteem empowers, energizes, and motivates. It inspires persons to achieve and allows them to take pleasure and pride in their achievements. It allows them to experience satisfaction. High self-esteem seeks the challenge and stimulation of worthwhile and demanding goals. Low self-esteem seeks the safety of the familiar and undemanding which in turn weakens the self-esteem. (p. 5)

The general idea behind self-esteem is clear, yet the term has no standard definition. Clemes (1981) indicated that the terms "self-concept" and "self-esteem" are different. "Self-concept" is a set of ideas a person has about himself. "Self-esteem" represents feelings--a set of attitudes and beliefs that people have about themselves when facing the world. Clemes summed up the influence of self-esteem on behavior when he stated: "At every stage of life our self-esteem determines how we act, how we learn, how we relate, how we feel, and how we work" (p.11).

Kohn (1994) argued that researchers have defined self-esteem by having subjects complete self-esteem surveys. He stated, "Very few people who fill out self-esteem surveys wind up with scores near the bottom of the scale" (p. 273). He concluded:

People classified as having low self-esteem are

typically not so much down on themselves as simply neutral in their self-descriptions. (p. 273)

The Development of Self-esteem

Based on the definitions as stated earlier, self-esteem develops as the self-concept develops. The development and structure of the self-concept is a lifelong project in which changes in one's self-concept continually occur through the various experiences of the developing person. The developing person organizes a theory of personal existence based on experiences with significant people. Purkey (1970) supported this developmental concept.

The ingredients of self-concept are primarily social. We seek to understand ourselves by studying how others relate to us. Self-evaluations are basically the product of how we think significant people in our lives perceive us and relate to us. Coopersmith (1967) suggested that the "individual need not to be aware of his attitudes toward himself, but they will nonetheless be expressed in his voice, posture, gestures, and performance" (p. 7).

The Relationship Between Self-esteem, At-risk Factors, and Achievement

Jencks (1972) stated the following:

[The] character of a school's output depends largely on a single input, namely the characteristics of the entering children. Everything else--the school budget,

its policies, the characteristics of the teachers--is either secondary or completely irrelevant. (p. 256)

The primary variable related to the quality of the school's output may be self-esteem. If self-esteem is high, the quality of output may be high. If self-esteem is low, the quality of output may be low. Considering the relationship between self-concept and self-esteem, Coopersmith (1984) suggested that a person's self-esteem is a "subjective experience which the individual conveys to others by verbal reports and other overt expressive behavior" (p. 5), which suggests that self-esteem could be considered as an initiator of human behavior. Branden (1994) stated:

Clinicians cannot work on self-esteem directly because self-esteem is a consequence. Interventions can be designed with that end in view. But the practices themselves can arise only within the client and can only be caused by the client. (p. 6)

Some studies reviewed support the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. Sears and Sherman (1964) indicated that the self-concept of children plays a major role in determining their success in school and interactions with the world. Brookover, Thomas, and Patterson (1964) indicated that children with high self-esteem perform better in their school than children with low

self-esteem. Shaw and Alves (1963) supported the conclusion that feelings of confidence and self-respect are as important in school as they are in other areas of life. Wylie (1979) and Miller (1981) also found a consistent positive correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement.

Dornbush (1986) indicated that research suggests that student activities and relationships with their parents predict grades more surely than parental education, family income, ethnicity, sex, and family structure.

Ginsburg (1985) conducted a study to determine if there was a relationship between values and educational success among disadvantaged students. The study showed a strong positive relationship between traditional personal values (understood to be part of the self-concept) and academic success of students from various disadvantaged backgrounds. This study suggested the intertwining of character development (the basis of self-concept) and intellect. If teachers and parents collaborated to engage positive values of students, they would likely enhance academic achievement and success in school.

Covington (1984) asked what role self-esteem played in motivating students to achieve. He commented upon the "self-worth" theory. He proposed that students motivated themselves to preserve the self-esteem they have and to

acquire more. Covington stressed that pride in a well done job and self-improvement are themselves important. He further stressed the importance of cooperation over competition and effort over ability as sources of personal worth.

Conrath (1986) emphasized enhancing self-esteem by gaining confidence in one's ability and gaining confidence in one's values. He believed that once students recognized that their world was under their control, then they would feel self-confident and see themselves responsible for their lives. Conrath then examined the question: What would make these students continue to strive? He concluded that with an internalized need, education would become desirable. Teachers, parents, administrators must clarify the purpose, value, utility, and relevance of things they ask students to do.

Kohn (1994) commented on the pedagogical approach championed by many critics of effective education:

If learning is taken to mean multiplying naked numbers, or reading the sodden prose of a textbook and answering the even-numbered questions at the end of the chapter, or memorizing disconnected facts and definitions, then there is some truth to the charge. The problem, though, does not lie with the students or with "human nature" or with high self-esteem, it lies with a drill-

and-skill curriculum. (p. 280)

Educational reform measures at both the state and local levels resulted from the premise that mediocrity in education is behind the dilemma in technology, education, and society in general. Is our dilemma due to inadequate educational training or due to students not taking advantage of the educational opportunities as represented by the dropout problems, the truancy, the lack of student achievement, and other at-risk factors? The literature suggests that motivated students are productive. If the dilemma reflects a lack of student productivity, could the cause of our problem be a lack of student motivation based on self-esteem?

The literature suggested that self-esteem is the key to man's motivation. Because our dilemma in education appears to reflect a lack of motivation, the development of self-esteem may be the preventive solution to reducing the at-risk factors and increasing student academic success. Koerner (1986), editor of The National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, commenting on student self-esteem, expressed the following:

High self-esteem, we have learned, is essential to our development as human beings. Without self-esteem, students are susceptible to becoming dropouts, to abusing drugs and alcohol, even to considering suicide.

(p. ix)

Decades of formulations and reformulations in educational practice have not yet been able to solve the problems of at-risk students. An "at-risk" student is likely to have a low socio-economic background, lives with a single parent, has low expectations about schooling, shows low self-esteem, has lost a sense of control of the future, and has experienced academic failure within the formal school system. Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock (1986) and Barber and McClelland (1987) have found low academic achievement, difficulty getting along with teachers, and dissatisfaction with school as common reasons for students becoming at-risk.

Other studies indicated that the crucial variables are student school performance as measured by grades, attendance, and retention (Canfield, 1990; Fine, 1991; Wells, 1990). Ekstrom, Goertz & Rock (1988), Greene & Uroff (1989), and Natriello, McDill & Pallas (1985) all stated that poor academic performance, primarily reflected by low grades, is the most common reason students leave high school. Matthews (1988) suggested that at-risk students seem to have more negative self-esteem. Glasser (1986) reported that at-risk students do not have a positive view of school; they do not feel good about learning, teachers, or themselves.

If society desires to reduce student at-risk factors through increased self-esteem, the logical place to begin such efforts is the school (Kennedy, 1982). The school--a place where virtually all children spend 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, 36 weeks a year, for 13 years--is where all children and youth have contact with trained professionals. Welhage (1983) noted the features of schools which retain at-risk students. First, they create an environment that provides students with the opportunity to bond socially. Second, they use some experimental learning format, which allows students to perceive a practical application of the skills learned.

Beane (1991) argued that self-esteem should be enhanced in schools for three reasons. The first is the school's role as a social agent. The second is the correlation between self-esteem and achievement. Beane cautioned that this correlation is relatively weak when self-esteem is global, yet strong when self-esteem is situational and specific. Beane claimed the third reason as the most powerful: He argued that the personal development of self-esteem should be extended to promote student growth.

Writing on student disenchantment with school, Hamby (1989) commented that failure, boredom, and loss of self-esteem stand high on students' lists. He further stated that setting standards for young people and then blaming the

failure entirely on them, their families, or some other element outside of school is an abdication of our roles as educators. A good part of a student's self-concept is developed at school. Educators need to consider what effects various school qualities, practices, and procedures may have on the self-esteem of a student body.

An attack on the at-risk problem should begin with those factors over which the system has direct influence--those within the school. Comer (1991) wrote the following:

Schools can help youngsters maintain or increase their self-esteem in academic and social interactions. In schools that encourage a climate of positive interaction among parents, students, and staff, students learn the skills they need to continue to feel positively about themselves and to go on to successful adulthood. (p. 200)

Canfield (1990) reported that when students feel better about themselves, there is a strong likelihood that they will perform better in school and feel good about their performance. His report suggested that today's students are not receiving adequate amounts of affection and positive attention from parents or teachers. The result of this lack of affection and positive attention is an increasing number of students with low self-esteem.

Presseisen (1988) found within the literature on the

at-risk population that the centrality of students' self-esteem consistently emerged. At-risk students frequently portrayed negative attitudes towards themselves in the areas of academic, social, family, and general experiences. If schools help these students to re-evaluate their self-esteem, perhaps these students will desire to remain in school, participate in school activities, and interact positively within the family.

Dusa (1986) conducted a four-year study noting what happens when a school makes an effort in the area of self-esteem. The study confirmed that a school could make a significant impact on building student self-esteem and reducing at-risk factors.

One solution to the problem of reducing at-risk factors appears to lie in making each student feel connected in some way to the school. Kohn (1994) offered the three C's of motivation--collaboration, choice, and content of the curriculum--as facilitators to increase student achievement. Kohn (1993) argued for the following:

Collaboration involves more than occasional cooperative learning activities....Choice means that students are brought into the process of making decisions about what (and how and why) they are learning....To raise the question of content is to challenge the assumption that students are indifferent about their schoolwork because

they are not sufficiently motivated (or, from another point of view, because they simply have low self-esteem). The real problem may be that the work itself is not meaningful, engaging, or relevant. (p. 281)

Canfield (1976) criticized the assumption that success in school and life is dependent on intelligence as measured by an I.Q. score. He argued that student self-esteem correlated more highly with student success than I.Q. Canfield also argued that teachers can do little to raise I.Q.; however, teachers could do much to increase student self-esteem at school.

Scheirer and Kraut (1979) concluded that although self-esteem can be manipulated and academic performance improved, results are at best short-lived and at worst contradictory. Further study is called for in this regard.

As educators restructure the educational environment to reduce at-risk factors by helping students raise their self-esteem, controversy arises. Finn (1987) argued that schools should avoid reforms directed at students who are at-risk of dropping out. Instead, he argued, schools should focus on raising academic standards. His thesis was that students drop-out because of factors related to their social and family background over which the school has no control.

"Pondering Self-Esteem," an article in Newsweek (March 2, 1987), presented a clip of "Doonesbury" zapping the

California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem. The article concluded with a remark from Washington state legislator Rep. Bob Basich. A former collegiate football coach, Basich stated, "I've seen it happen on the field, you feel good about yourself and you can win" (p.70). Leo, writing in U.S. News & World Report (April, 1990), said, "Self-esteem programs use simple exercises frankly borrowed from the 'You're much too hard on yourself' California therapies" (p. 16). He further wrote, "There is almost no research evidence that the programs work" (p. 16). Robert (1990), commenting on the report released from the California Task Force to Promote Self-esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility, pointed out two findings:

People who esteem themselves are less likely to be engaged in destructive and self-destructive behaviors and the school environment plays a major role in the development of self-esteem; schools that feature self-esteem as a clearly stated component of their goals, policies and practices are more successful academically as well as developing healthy self-esteem. (p. 22)

The research compiled by the California Task Force supports the belief that low self-esteem is directly related to low school achievement and dropping out of school.

Opinions varied relative to the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. One such opinion was

that of Scheirer and Kraut (1979), who concluded, after reviewing the literature on the causal relationship between self-esteem enhancement programs and academic performance, that the effects were not long-lasting, and it remains possible that the increase in self-esteem resulted from achievement followed by parental or social approval. The evidence on the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement remains inconclusive. Walz and Bleuer (1992), however, commented:

Some people will argue that the research data linking self-esteem and achievement are not conclusive. They argue that we should wait until better studies are conducted. This thinking parallels the argument between smoking and lung cancer. More and more people today are kicking the smoking habit because they believe that smoking causes cancer. A large portion of our society still smokes and the tobacco industry still discredits the research. Over 30% of our youth are educationally at-risk; the stakes are too high. We must act now. (p. 55)

A search of the literature on self-esteem shows there are many educational practices established to address the issue of student self-esteem. Good schools provide the stimuli of a personal vision that motivates the effort and commitment of students to achieve (Welhage, Rutter, Smith,

Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). Finally, Kohn (1994) offers the following remarks on the failure and success canned programs in the classroom and their relation to achievement:

The evidence doesn't support the claim that programs intended to help children feel good about themselves are likely to raise students' achievement. But now it seems clear that the Old School approach favored by many critics of these activities is even worse. (p. 281)

Methodological Issues

Naturalistic Research

Kohn (1994), commenting on the analysis of self-esteem, stated the following:

How have researchers operationalized the concept? The answer is that they have, in effect, simply asked experimental subjects how favorably they regard themselves. Researchers have subjects fill out a form on which they indicate how much they agree with such statements as 'I feel that I have a number of good qualities.' (p. 273)

The researcher recognized the limitation of students responding to specific questions on a form; therefore, interviews were conducted with students and others to provide a richer data base from which findings could be drawn.

The general research approach used in this study was naturalistic inquiry. This method employs qualitative methods aimed at understanding "naturally occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring states" (Patton, 1980, p. 41). Ethnographer James Spradley (1980) described naturalistic inquiry as a pathway to understanding the cultural differences that makes us what we are as human beings, to step outside our narrow cultural backgrounds, and to perceive the world from the viewpoint of other human beings.

Observational data were used to describe settings that were observed, activities that occurred, people who participated, and the meaning of the setting and activities to those who participated. Observations can be used as a check on information that is revealed during the interviews (Patton, 1980).

Students and teachers taking part in this study were interviewed using the technique known as group interviewing. The concept is based on the assumption that individuals who share a problem will be more willing to talk about it amid the security of others who are also discussing the problem. Instead of using a structured question and answer methodology, the procedure is to encourage a group to discuss feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of the topic being studied.

Bers and Smith (1987) commented that the role of the moderator is of prime importance to the success of group interviews. Rapport, level of verbal ability, relevancy, and direction of the discussion are important responsibilities of the moderator. They recommended that the interviews be recorded, thus allowing the moderator to concentrate on leading the group and not being concerned with taking notes. They further expressed that the tape recording should be transcribed and reviewed for important ideas and concepts which may be translated into hypotheses.

Kerlinger (1973) strongly supported the interview as an effective method of collecting information:

The personal interview far overshadows the other (methods) as perhaps the most powerful and useful tool of social scientific survey research. (p. 412)

Kerlinger (1973) also noted the following:

The best instrument available for sounding people's behavior, future intentions, feelings, attitudes, and reasons for behavior would seem to be the structured interview....(p. 487)

Lofland and Lofland (1984) suggested a flexible, open-ended format for interviews. A flexible, open-ended format would allow the researcher to add further questions in the pursuit of the reality of the one interviewed. Denzin (1970), writing on triangulation of data, suggested that

without multiple methods of assessing the data the researcher would have no way of judging his observations and methods. He stated, "We look for connections in all our data" (p. 510). Combining interviews, observations, and physical evidence to study the same unit is seen as a major strength of this study. While conducting the interview, Whyte (1982) added the following reminder, "Rephrase, reflect back to the informant what he seems to be expressing" (p. 112). The reminder by Whyte could help the researcher assist the interviewees to clearly express their perceptions of the problem studied. Merriam (1991) affirmed the reminder by Whyte by stating, "The purpose of the interview is to find out what is in someone else's mind" (p. 196).

With the interviews completed the next process should be the analysis of the qualitative data. Miles and Huberman (1994) provided an illustrative guide to the analysis of qualitative data. These researchers suggested that the process consists of three activities: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion-drawing and verification. These researchers concluded that the data reduction process helps to sharpen the distinctions in the data, helps to focus on the critical areas, and facilitates the discarding of extraneous data. A seven step cycle for analysis provided by Ely (1991) provided the refinement of

data.

The reduction process and data display lend credibility to the interpretation of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also suggested the arranging of peer debriefing for credibility of findings. This process helps to maintain the integrity of the findings.

Examination of a periodic measure of the individual student and group profile could provide perspectives on changes of the self (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). Yin (1994) stated, "The ability to trace changes over time is a major strength of case studies" (p. 113). The Exploration and Self-Profile was administered to the participants three times during the school year. This allowed the researcher to note student self-esteem changes.

The naturalistic research method has the advantage of allowing the researcher to make inferences about important aspects of a culture (Spradley, 1979). This research also carries many limitations. In the traditional sense, validity and reliability are sometimes suspect. Bias may be introduced in any study that uses the perspective of a narrowly selected population. Building rapport with the interviewees, biased questioning, and preconceived ideas about the existence and importance of certain factors in the analysis of the data are all potential threats to the validity of the data.

Lincoln and Guba (1985), commenting on researcher bias, advised researchers on how to establish credibility. They recommended that the researcher have a prolonged engagement in the field, do persistent observations, triangulate, search for negative cases, experience peer debriefing, and check with the participants studied.

This study assumed that the self-esteem children bring with them to school and the way they feel will affect their success or failure. With this framework, a program implemented at a high school in rural North Carolina addressed the issue of student self-esteem to reduce the levels of risk and increase student achievement.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

A case study was designed to determine changes in self-esteem of tenth-graders identified as at-risk during their placement in the first year of a program designed to reduce their level of risk. The study was based on several assumptions: (1) a positive change in self-esteem would reduce student risk, (2) an increase in self-esteem may be assessed by studying students' feelings about their academic and social self-concepts, and (3) examination of feelings about school, participation in school activities, and relationships with teachers, friends, and family members would provide the data needed to assess changes in self-esteem. The study was conducted during the 1992-1993 school year.

Research Design

This study examined changes in the academic and social self-esteem of students identified as at-risk during their placement in the tenth grade in an alternative high school program. Student changes were analyzed through interviews, the Exploration and Self-Profile, participant observation, and a review of school documents. The researcher followed Merriam's (1991) recommendations on transcribing the data and Ely's (1991) on analyzing the data.

Setting

In July 1992, the researcher requested permission (Appendix A) from the associate superintendent to study the "Concentrate-on-One" program which was developed and implemented to address the issue of at-risk students. The program encompassed sixty-four students, each identified as at-risk.

This study took place in a large rural high school in which the principal had concerns about the transitional problems of tenth-graders. The high school served approximately 1100 students in grades 10-12. It was the only high school in a school district of approximately 4,500 students in grades K-12 with a 70:30 racial mix of white and black students. At the time of this study, the state of North Carolina reported a 2.77 percent dropout rate. The school system in which this study was conducted reported a dropout rate of 2.79. Consistently, 36 percent of the student dropouts in this district occurred in the tenth grade.

Population and Sample

Sixty-four students were identified as at-risk by teachers from the two junior high schools in the school system. Ten students of the sixty-four were selected for the population for this study. Systematic sampling procedures were employed: students were alphabetized within

each of the four academic classes, and every sixth student within each class of sixteen students was selected. To complete the sample of ten students, the sixth student, alphabetized, was chosen from the list of remaining students in the math and social studies classes.

A description of the students is presented in Chapter 4 to provide a larger context from which to understand and interpret the findings.

Methodology

Data Collection Procedures

The goal of this study was to obtain student, school personnel, and parent perspectives on changes in the self-esteem of at-risk students during the first year of a special program designed to reduce factors associated with their at-risk condition. The goal was achieved by collecting descriptive data from interviews with selected teachers and other school personnel, students, and parents; participant observations; student questionnaires; teacher diaries; and a review of documents.

Interviews. Individual interviews, focus group interviews, the Exploration and Self-Profile self-esteem questionnaire (The National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University, 1991), and the researcher's diary were the primary methods of data collection. A student focus group interview was videotaped, documenting the interaction

among students on the topic studied. Two night meetings were videotaped capturing the interaction between students, parents, and school staff. The first videotape occurred in the fall of the school year and the second occurred at the end of the school year during "Celebration Night." The videotapes were transcribed as field notes. All interviews were recorded using a portable tape recorder, allowing the researcher to focus on the questions and responses. The researcher recorded each interview using the interview log described by Merriam (1991). The log represented the main points of the conversation, with a notation of the tape position for access to the data. In the right hand column, the researcher added his own observations about what was said or other information affecting the informant at the time.

The Interview Guides

Two interview guides were developed and used. The initial school personnel interview guide was designed to tap the teachers' first perceptions of the students. The second guide had a common core of questions for students and parents. This guide permitted the comparison of perspectives from the previous school year to the current school year. The questions created a flow of subject matter and encouraged conversation around broad categories. This made it easier to do a mental check to prevent redundancy

and to determine if information in a given area was adequate.

Pilot Interviews

Pilot interviews conducted with a support group of students in a qualitative research class at Virginia Tech allowed the researcher to field test the questioning technique. Suggestions by the group were these: slow down when asking questions, wait for responses, ask open-ended questions, and listen to the person interviewed.

Teacher Interviews

Teacher interviews lasted an hour each time. Teachers were interviewed as a focus group three times within the year.

The first interview occurred at the end of the first school day in August because teachers would not know the students yet, but would have initial impressions after the first day of school. The second interview was conducted after the first grading period in October. The teachers and students had interacted with each other for nine weeks, and the teachers had become familiar with their students. The final interview was conducted on a teacher workday in June.

Interviews were conducted with school personnel utilizing a general interview guide (Appendix B). The questions included both specific probes and opportunities for spontaneously generated information. Staff were asked

to talk about school policies and structures, their own roles within these structures, and how, in their view, school factors impinged on tenth-grade students. They were asked to share their views of tenth-graders who appeared to be "at-risk" on dropping out of school. The assistant principal, counselor, and behavioral specialist were interviewed once, at the end of the school year.

Interviews with school personnel were tape recorded, and the recordings were transcribed following the interviews. Notes were also taken by the interviewer throughout each interview. All notes and transcriptions were read and analyzed for notable patterns and recurring themes. The researcher was interested in focusing on the respondents' perceptions of at-risk tenth-graders' needs and problems in this high school.

The teacher focus group interviews explored general perspectives on the ten students about student self-esteem and the students' feelings towards themselves, the school, teachers, peers, and participation in activities.

Interviews with Tenth-Graders

The researcher sought and received permission to interview the ten selected students and their parents. The students were interviewed in a focus group and individually using the student interview guide (Appendix C). A focus group interview was conducted in October. The videotape of

the focus group was used to match the voice to the individual and to note any factors which may have influenced the interview. The researcher analyzed the videotape and recorded comments on the interview log.

Each student was also interviewed individually. In all the interviews, students were asked questions relating to the school: understanding of math and English, people at school, high school graduation, teachers, boredom at school, and extracurricular activities. Students were also asked about their families and about goals beyond high school.

All individual interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions plus notes taken during the interviews were analyzed for general information and common themes among these tenth-graders.

Individual interviews were conducted at the end of the school year, after each student had the opportunity to experience school organizational changes which could have increased their self-esteem and reduced their risk. Each interview was conducted after the students had completed three of their academic courses and were enrolled in the last academic course for the school year. Each interview lasted about one hour and was conducted in the Counseling Office so the interview would not be interrupted.

To stress the need to tape record the interview, each student was asked, "How are things going for you?" Their

responses were recorded and the tape recording was played back so the student could hear himself. This tactic encouraged the student to feel comfortable with the process. With the counter reset for the interview, the interview began. The researcher began each interview by introducing himself, stating the date and time, stating the purpose of the study, and stressing confidentiality.

With this completed, the researcher asked each student to define the term "self-esteem" as they understood it. Clarification on their perspective of the term "self-esteem" was sought. This dialogue provided the stimulus to begin conversation on the specific questions to be addressed.

Parent Interviews

The researcher contacted seven out of the ten parents of students in this study by phone requesting their permission and participation in an interview. Seven agreed. The researcher went to the homes of the three parents whom he was not able to reach by phone to request their permission and participation. Two parents declined, and the other parent had moved to another site. Initially the parents were awed at being tape recorded; however, they relaxed during the interviews.

The researcher told parents during the initial contact and during the interview that they could offer important perspectives for this study. The researcher wanted these

parents to trust him; therefore, they were assured that all information would be confidential and that they would not be personally identified in the written account of the study. Parents and the researcher agreed on a date and time when the interview would be conducted. The researcher gave the parents his phone number in the event they chose to cancel their interviews.

The seven interviews were scheduled at the parents' convenience in the researcher's office. All occurred late in the afternoon or early evening. In six out of seven interviews, the mother was the interviewee. Fathers were less receptive to being interviewed.

The parent interviews took from thirty minutes to an hour depending on how much the parent desired to converse and how successful the researcher was in keeping the conversation flowing. Following introductory remarks, the interview began with the researcher asking the parent to speak on the self-esteem of their child. The researcher followed with the questions on the interview protocol (Appendix D). The researcher tried to capture the essence of how the parent observed, felt, and believed that their child's self-esteem had changed.

Other Significant Staff Interviews

The assistant principal was interviewed. He was responsible for disciplining students, monitoring student

attendance, and scheduling students. His perspectives were sought because he worked with both teachers and students. He was interviewed at the conclusion of the school year.

The students' counselor was interviewed. The counselor knew many of these students from previous experiences. She had worked with several of them in their elementary school years, as they progressed through the middle grades, and finally as high school students. She offered perspectives from her area of expertise on these students.

The behavioral specialist was interviewed. He had worked with student #3 for over eight years and had noted both positive academic and social self-esteem changes in this student.

Exploration and Self-Profile

All ten students selected for this study were administered the Exploration and Self-Profile (Appendix E) three times throughout the 1992-93 school year: during the first week of school in August, at the end of the first semester in January, and at the end of the school year in June. The instrument was developed at the National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University.

The National Dropout Center (1991) offers the following note to school counselors:

It (the instrument) was designed to enable the student to engage in some basic self-analysis of his or her

attitudes. Often it is the intangible aspect of attitudes that predisposes a student to consider dropping out of school. This brief examination can help the student recognize his or her perceptions of SELF, FAMILY and SCHOOL and how they contribute to the surrounding environment. It is not designed as a sole indicator of student attitude but may offer some areas for further exploration. (np)

The instrument is written on a sixth grade level and is designed for use with students in middle and high schools.

This brief self-examination can identify changes in self-esteem by questioning students about participation in school activities, family relationships, and feelings about school, teachers, and peers. Evidence of validity will be provided in the analysis as interviews and Exploration and Self-Profile responses are compared. The National Dropout Center had no information on the reliability and validity of the instrument.

Participant Observation

Students and teachers knew the researcher because of his position as principal and his interaction with them at school. The researcher, as the principal of a secondary school, needed to address the issue of reducing the at-risk population. The researcher had been a teacher and an assistant principal at the school where the study took

place. The teachers and the researcher did not know the new tenth-graders arriving for the school year. The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.

Numerous observations were made of the day-to-day operation of the program. Students and teachers interacted with the principal-researcher on a daily basis, thus reducing their view of the researcher as an outsider. The researcher had worked as an observer and evaluator of teacher work for thirteen years. Classroom observations were made during the morning hours while students and teachers in this program worked together. Other observations occurred around the school setting throughout the day and at night activities.

Review of School Documents

Student transcripts provided individual student information prior to placement in the program. Verbal permission was received from the teachers to maintain observational data from the required teacher evaluations. The researcher maintained these evaluations. Cumulative records were reviewed to document the tenth-graders' school performance in the areas of academic achievement, attendance, and behavioral incidents.

Reduction of Bias

The naturalistic inquiry method has the advantage of allowing the researcher to make inferences about aspects of

a culture (Spradley, 1979). It also has limitations. In the traditional sense, validity and reliability are sometimes viewed with distrust. Potential bias is introduced in any study using a narrowly selected population. Building rapport with interviewees, biased questioning, and preconceived ideas about the existence and importance of factors in the analysis of the data are potential threats when the researcher becomes the primary instrumentation. As indicated earlier, steps were taken to reduce these sources of bias. The interviews were audio taped, the data were triangulated with information from school documents, and a core of questions guided the interviews.

Data Analysis

A series of steps were used to analyze the interview tapes. All tapes were noted following the transcript log recommended by Merriam (1991):

Identify at the top...the name, date, and other necessary details of the interview. Words or phrases or entire sentences are quoted exactly. These notes are coded to the tape counter so the exact location of such words can be accessed quickly at a later time. Tape position is recorded to the left of the words or phrases....In a column to the far right is space for the

researcher to add his or her own observations about what was said. (p. 84)

Notations were made based on associations between the qualitative data and the themes on the Exploration and Self-Profile.

With the transcripts completed, the analysis of qualitative data was completed following the recommendations of Ely (1991). She described the process as follows:

1. Study and re-study the raw data to develop detailed, intimate knowledge
2. Note initial impressions
3. List tentative categories
4. Refine categories by examining results of steps 2 and 3
5. Group data under still-tentative categories and revise if needed
6. Select verbatim narrative to link raw data to the categories
7. Compare findings for commonalities or patterns, differences, and unique happenings (pp. 150-151)

Common subthemes emerged from the notations. The emergent subthemes were categorized into one of the two established domains, academic self-concept and social self-concept. Outlines for each subtheme were created, noting contradictions and similarities among the students, teachers

and parents. Narratives were written based on the outlines.

Presentation of the Findings and Interpretations

The findings are presented descriptively in the following chapter through quotes generated from the interviewees. Results on the Exploration and Self-Profile are presented in a table format. The quotes provide descriptive support to the findings of the instrument.

Chapter 5 contains recommendations for improving self-esteem for at-risk students and suggestions for future research. The recommendations are intended to challenge educators to direct their efforts to reduce the at-risk factors of students.

CHAPTER 4

Changes in Feelings about Self

Studying the Concentrate-on-One Program offered a variety of opportunities for the researcher to become knowledgeable about changes in students identified as at-risk. The program was designed to affect student self-esteem, reduce their level of risk, and increase achievement. This study was designed to address the following question: Throughout the first year of the Concentrate-on-One Program, how did participating students change within two domains: (1) academic self and (2) social self. This was accomplished by examining the following categories:

- a. Feelings about self
- b. Feelings about school
- c. Feelings about teachers
- d. Feelings about peers
- e. Relationships with family members
- f. Participation in school activities

Changes in self-esteem of the identified students were found in the responses of the students, their parents, their teachers, and others at school. Notations from the researcher's diary on the study were included to support the findings. Several subcategories and themes emerged from the

data within each domain.

A Description of the Participating Students
at the Beginning of the Program

Table 1 contains descriptive information on the ten participants in the study. Three students were sixteen years old when they were included in the program in the tenth grade. One student missed fifty-seven days during the last school year. On the eighth grade California Achievement Test, seven out of ten scored below the fiftieth percentile in reading and language; eight out of ten scored below the fiftieth percentile in mathematics. All ten students had a grade point average at or above seventy (A mark of seventy is the criterion for passing a course successfully.). One student scored above average (90-120) on the IQ test. Four out of the ten had been retained prior to the placement within this program. Four students had attended summer school instead of being retained in a grade level. Six of the students were recommended highly by school personnel for inclusion into the program. Six of the students' family structures were composed of one parent. One student was placed in the tenth grade without completing the minimum five units of credit towards graduation. During their ninth grade placement, two students received discipline referrals to the office which resulted in suspension from school. One student attended an alternative

Table 1

Descriptive Data on Participating Students

Characteristic	Student ID									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Age	15	16	15	15	15	16	15	16	15	15
Sex	M	F	M	F	F	F	F	M	M	M
Race	C	C	C	B	B	B	B	C	C	C
Abs	0	12	0	9	10	57	13	4	9	10
Rdg	94	42	73	35	10	9	45	35	66	27
Lang	77	46	41	31	48	6	65	30	51	48
Math	81	29	72	25	46	28	46	35	43	31
GPA	74	79	*94	83	78	78	76	76	70	75
IQ	124	93	101	87	91	91	98	90	110	102
RTN	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
SS	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
Fac Rec	H	H	H	H	H	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
Fam Strt	B	B	S	S	S	S	S	B	S	B
Units	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	2	5
Discipline	5	0	NA	0	0	0	1	0	5	1
Chapter 1	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N

Race

C = caucasian B = black

Abs

Number of days absent in 9th grade

Rdg, Lang, Math

Reading, language and math percentiles
on the 8th grade California Achievement Test

GPA

Grade point average at end of 1st semester in 9th grade

*

Student 3 attended an alternative school

IQ

Measured intelligence

RTN

Number of times retained in same grade level

SS

Number of summer schools attended

Fac Rec

Faculty recommendation for student placement
(H = highly recommended, Y = recommended)

Fam Strt

Family structure (B = both parents, S = single parent)

Units

Units earned upon completion of the 9th grade

Discipline

Number of times referred to the office for
disciplinary action resulting in suspension
from school during 9th grade (NA = referrals were not available)

Chapter 1

Received Chapter 1 services prior to inclusion (Y = yes, N = no)

school due to his behavior. Three students had received Chapter 1 services the previous year.

Changes in Academic Self-Esteem

Academic self-esteem was monitored with Exploration and Self-Profile measurements in August 1992, January 1993, and May 1993, with a focus group interview in October and individual interviews in May. This is the period of time that the students were in the Concentrate-on-One Program.

First Perceptions

Teachers and counselors at the participating students' former schools indicated in the spring of 1992 that the ten participating students be placed in the Concentrate-on-One Program because they were at-risk of failing academically. Six students of the ten were recommended strongly by their teachers and counselors. Teachers said that these students did not care about school, would not do the work, or could not do the work. Teachers also reported that these students had family problems affecting their attitude. Teachers voiced their opinions that these students had the ability to succeed but needed another chance.

The students at the beginning of the program in August 1992 had a mixed-opinion on their academic self-esteem. Students' feelings about themselves were derived from their responses to the Exploration and Self-Profile and interviews completed in August 1992 during the first week of school.

Table 2 contains student responses to the five statements associated with academic self-esteem in the Exploration and Self-Profile. On three of the five items (not understanding math and English, finding school boring, and having parents who don't care whether they pass exams), at least seven of the ten students either answered yes or sometimes. The remaining two items (#4 and #11) were concerned with finishing school and were answered favorably; that is, a majority thought their parents did care whether they completed school, and they thought that it was important to graduate even if others in their family had not graduated from high school.

Statements made by the teachers and students during initial interviews provided many examples of the level of the students' academic self-esteem at the beginning of the program. When teachers presented the use of a different grading policy (J-curve) with these students, teachers found that students were not able to comprehend the concept of not failing. Teacher D asked why they (students) made D's and F's last year, and the students told him that it was allowed. Teacher K stated, "That's what they usually aim for."

Teachers said that students gave the following as reasons for their failure: personal problems, lack of course understanding, speed of instruction, and desire to

Table 2

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Student Responses to the Academic Self-esteem Items on the
Exploration and Self-Profile

Item	August, 1992			May, 1993		
	Y	S	N	Y	S	N
2. I really don't understand math and English.	2	8	0	0	7	3
4. I don't think my parents care whether I finish school.	3	1	6	0	2	8
7. I often think school is boring and doesn't meet my needs.	2	6	2	2	7	1
9. My parents don't care if I pass my tests or exams.	3	4	3	0	1	9
11. I don't think that graduating from school is important because others in my family didn't.	0	2	8	0	0	10

Code

Y Yes
S Sometimes
N No

complete a course during five weeks in summer school. The last response was a surprise; however, student #1 explained that sleeping in class and then completing the course in twenty-two days, two hours each day, during summer school was attractive to him.

Teacher K explained, "You can't teach unless you (the teacher) bring up that self-esteem." The low self-esteem was attributed to lack of a social self, math anxiety, fear of failing, and lack of attention.

Finally, teachers said that school personnel in the past were partly to blame. They felt that these students had been beaten emotionally for so long that it was hard for them to accept praise and positive rewards instead of grades indicating failure.

The first interview with students was conducted by the researcher as a focus group on October 24, 1992. Students spoke about themselves as they were the preceding year. They said they failed academically. They spoke on the theme of boredom. As one student said, "Being bored is part of the problem. I didn't learn anything, and I tried to make it fun for everyone."

Students spoke about how they wanted to drop out of school the preceding year and were waiting for their 16th birthday to drop out officially if school was not better. They said that teachers the preceding year were hard to work

with. One student said, "I think teachers last year had a code; they must not be nice." They said that teachers expressed no care toward them, and it showed through their teaching methods. Student #1 said:

Last year was boring. The teachers did the same thing over and over. You had to write notes. One teacher would go over eight or nine problems a day, and she would fill the overhead forward and backward. I don't know how many chapters we covered a day. We were doing Mach 8.

In summary, the statements made by the students and teachers provided examples of their initial perceptions on the academic self. All described the frustrations which evolved from low expectations, boredom, lack of attention, desire to dropout, and teaching methodology.

Changes in Students' Academic Self-esteem: The Exploration and Self-Profile Data

The students at the end of their participation in the program in May 1993 varied in the amount of change in their academic self-esteem. In May 1993, students completed for the third time the Exploration and Self-Profile. A comparison of the August and May scores is found in Table 2. On all except one of the five items student responses became more positive. The one exception was the level of boredom in school. This shifted slightly towards the YES response.

However, a different perspective is gained through the qualitative data where students' spoke strongly about not being bored in the Concentrate-on-One classes.

One measure of change in the students' overall academic self-esteem is the change in the school scores on the Exploration and Self-Profile. Table 3 contains the change in scores for students in three categories: **SELF, FAMILY, and SCHOOL**. The data illustrate how students felt in these categories at three points during the school year. The overall change for each student is shown in the **Total** column.

On the category of **SCHOOL**, students responded to four specific questions. Eight students indicated a positive increase between August 1992 and May 1993 in how they felt about school. One student indicated no gain, and another indicated a decrease in feelings about school.

Changes in Students' Academic Self-esteem: Interview Data and Documents

An analysis of the interviews with students, parents and teachers, an assistant principal, the behavioral handicap specialist, and the counselor found change in the students' self-esteem. Whereas seven students spoke negatively about school in the past, only one student now spoke negatively about school. Three out of seven parents recalled negative experiences with the school about their

Table 3

Comparison of Student Scores on Pre- and Post-administrations
of the Exploration and Self-Profile Instrument

Student	Category	Pre Aug.	Post Jan.	+/-	Post May	+/-	Total +/-
1	Self	11	10	-1	10	0	-1
	Family	9	10	+1	10	0	+1
	School	8	9	+1	8	-1	0
	Total	28	29	+1	28	-1	0
2	Self	7	11	+4	11	0	+4
	Family	10	11	+1	11	0	+1
	School	9	8	-1	10	+2	+1
	Total	26	30	+4	32	+2	+6
3	Self	9	9	0	11	+2	+2
	Family	6	10	+4	12	+2	+6
	School	7	10	+3	9	-1	+2
	Total	22	29	+7	32	+3	+10
4	Self	7	9	+2	12	+3	+5
	Family	7	10	+3	11	+1	+4
	School	5	7	+2	8	+1	+3
	Total	19	26	+7	31	+5	+12
5	Self	9	6	-3	9	+3	0
	Family	9	11	+2	11	0	+2
	School	9	9	0	8	-1	-1
	Total	27	26	-1	28	+2	+1
6	Self	7	11	+4	12	+1	+5
	Family	9	12	+3	11	-1	-2

Student	Category	Pre Aug.	Post Jan.	+/-	Post May	+/-	Total +/-
	School	10	12	+2	11	-1	+1
	Total	26	35	+9	34	-1	+8
7	Self	7	9	+2	8	-1	+1
	Family	9	10	+1	9	-1	0
	School	6	8	+2	8	0	+2
	Total	22	27	+5	25	-2	+3
8	Self	9	11	+2	11	0	+2
	Family	7	12	+5	12	0	+5
	School	10	11	+1	11	0	+1
	Total	26	34	+8	34	0	+8
9	Self	7	10	+3	8	-2	+1
	Family	6	7	+1	10	+3	+4
	School	6	4	-2	7	+3	+1
	Total	19	21	+2	25	+4	+6
10	Self	9	9	0	10	+1	+1
	Family	10	11	+1	10	-1	0
	School	6	9	+3	9	0	+3
	Total	25	29	+4	29	0	+4

children; three parents spoke positively about the school the previous years and one parent offered no comment. All seven parents now spoke positively about the school their children were attending. Teachers working with these students this school year commented on student changes. Teachers and students attributed the changes in self-esteem to a number of factors, including level of boredom, one academic course per nine weeks, course selection, teacher role, class size, removal of fear of failing, student attendance, future aspirations, and changes in attitude toward math.

Table 4 contains measures of performance located in the individual student cumulative folder at school, comparing the preceding year to the year the students were in the Concentrate-on-One Program on the following: success in math, courses completed, absences, honor roll achievement, grade point average, and success in vocational courses.

Analysis of student performance showed a decrease in mathematical success. The preceding year, three of the students failed math; during the year of the program, five students failed math. However, six students completed more courses than previously, with two students completing all seven courses. Previously no student had made the honor roll; however, in the year of the program, three students made the honor roll. Two of the three students made the

Table 4

Changes in Measures of Performance by Student

PERFORMANCE

PRECEDING YEAR (1991-92) YEAR OF THE PROGRAM (1992-93)

STUDENT ID	Success in Math	Courses Completed	Absences	Honor Roll	GPA	Success in Voc. Ed.	Success in Math	Courses Completed	Absences	Honor Roll	GPA	Success in Voc. Ed.
1	No	3	0	0	74	1/1	No	5	9	3	80	1/1
2	Yes	6	12	0	79	0/0	No	4	8	0	75	0/1
3*	Yes	6	0	0	94	0/0	No	4	9	0	83	0/2
4	Yes	6	9	0	83	1/1	Yes	7	0	1	84	2/2
5	Yes	6	10	0	78	1/1	Yes	6	10	0	80	1/2
6	Yes	6	57	0	78	1/1	Yes	6	7	0	78	1/2
7	No	5	13	0	76	1/1	No	6	9	0	81	1/2
8	Yes	5	4	0	76	0/0	Yes	7	2	3	90	1/1
9	No	2	9	0	70	1/1	No	4	7	0	75	1/2
10	Yes	5	10	0	75	1/1	Yes	6	3	0	76	0/1

CODE

Successful completion of Pre-Algebra (1991-92) / Algebra (1992-93)

Number of courses completed

Days absent from school

Number of times on honor roll

Grade point average at end of year

Successful completion of vocational courses

(indicated as "passed" over "attempted")

Student attendance at a behavioral school

Success in math

Courses completed

Absences

Honor Roll

GPA

Success in Voc. Ed.

*

honor roll three times each. Seven out of the ten made gains on final grade point averages. Seven students took and completed vocational courses in the preceding year; however, in the year of the program, all students took vocational courses, yet, they were not as successful.

Student boredom. The theme of boredom was found in both the Exploration and Self-Profile and the student and teacher interview data. On the Exploration and Self-Profile, the majority of the students responded that they were somewhat of the belief that school was boring and did not meet their needs. However, the interviews provided a different perspective. Students viewed classes in the Concentrate-on-One Program as less boring than previously taken courses. Changes in boredom resulted from (1) the use of a variety of instructional methods by teachers--courses were seen as fun, hands-on learning, a slower pace, and (2) the short duration of the course.

Students provided testimonies on the variety of instructional methods used by teachers. Students contrasted the past to the present; they believed boredom was reduced in the classroom. Seven out of ten students commented about the boredom in classrooms in previous years. One male student described his experience as not being able to keep up with the pace of the teachers. Three females and three males presented a picture of boredom. They said there was

nothing to do but listen and take notes. These students found class non-gratifying because they were involved in passive learning experiences. As one student explained:

In the past we copied a lot of Mickey Mouse facts, and I didn't see any point in that. (student #3)

Five students were adamant that they were not bored in this current school year. Three males and the two females stated that if boredom began to settle within the classroom, the teacher would change the pace or use manipulatives. One student commented that the first fifteen minutes of the class were spent on note-taking, and the remaining two hours and forty-five minutes were spent working on class projects. The researcher observed hands-on class projects in all academic areas. One student explained it best when he said:

Teachers last year would not have a movie about the subject, such as science. This year in biology we got to see a movie about mitosis, the splitting of cells, and that was neat. We also went to Hanes Mall theater for a special showing of Columbus for our class during the school time. My classes are hands on now. You get to try the stuff they teach you. (student #3)

One teacher voiced the only school personnel opinion on student boredom when he stated:

I was working so hard to get all the material ready so fast because the students were eating it up so fast, I

did not give them a chance to get bored. (teacher/P)

In summary, boredom was seen as a force destroying students. When both the teacher and the student are bored, learning begins to cease. Students, parents and teachers spoke on the lecture, which they felt did not impact positively the learning process. Boredom grew instead. They called for teachers to incorporate teaching methodologies that would enable the student to interact in the learning process.

Student class schedule. Prior to the Concentrate-on-One Program, simultaneously working on a minimum of four academic courses and two or three electives was difficult for these students. The success of the students in the program may be partly due to the concentration on one course at a time. Students attended each core course for only a nine week period for three hours a day instead of the traditional one hour per class each day per course for an entire year. The Concentrate-on-One academic courses were held in the morning, and students ended their school day with electives.

Seven students commented that the three hour class structure was beneficial because it allowed them to concentrate on one academic subject per nine-weeks. These students commented that they were either not able to or were not going to concentrate on many different subjects at the

same time. They said that they could not do all the homework which was expected of them previously. Studying subject after subject and preparing for the different course tests contributed to their lack of success. It was easier to give up according to them. As one student stated:

I could not concentrate on more than one academic class previously. I probably would have failed or had low grades if I had taken all courses everyday this year instead of one at a time. I would not have studied for each of them, and I know I would not have done the homework for each, each day. (student #3)

Student #4 spoke on how the school administration may have impacted her lack of academic success the previous year (1991-1992) when they scheduled her math class:

They changed my schedule three different times for my math class. It made it difficult for me to adjust to each class. It also changed my other classes, and I never got settled. (student #4)

Students also presented the picture of the Concentrate-on-One teachers as having more time to work with individual students. Students felt that the time allotted made it possible for the teacher and the student to have time to work on the problems which students incurred while in the class. Students said that previously, in one hour classes, the teacher did not have time to work individually with

students. One student explained:

Classes last year were short. When you got in there, you usually had homework, and when you finished it, you were given more homework. They tried to pack it into you before the bell rang. You packed your bags and off to another class for the same thing. It is a whole lot better this year because you have time and don't have to switch so much. We have time to do stuff with the work we are given. We get more work, but the teacher sits down with you if you don't understand it and works with you. (student #8)

Three parents echoed the students feelings about the time allotted within the classroom in the program. Parents were initially concerned that students would become bored and not concentrate on the one subject; however, that feeling changed as students began to succeed. Parents commented that their children succeeded because the students concentrated on one academic subject at a time and that the children also studied at home. As one parent stated:

In the past he would blow up because I tried to get him to work on his school work, but not now. He now sits down and listens. This year he was in one class for a longer time, concentrating on one class at a time. He has a hard time concentrating on more than one class at a time. If he zeros in on one class, then he does

better. If he had to take all at one time, then he would not do well in any of them. (parent/student #3)

In summary, students and parents agreed that working on one academic course per session was helpful to the student. Students and parents said that teachers incorporating different teaching strategies such as digs, computer usage, seminars and hands-on activities for three hours per day in only one class reduced the level of boredom. Students and parents also agreed that the caring attitude of the teacher contributed to the student success in the three hour classes. All agreed that working on one course per session allowed the student to concentrate on that one course without channeling energies into numerous courses at once. Students, parents, and teachers felt that concentrating more time on a specific subject, with a manageable workload for students, was beneficial to student achievement.

Student course selection. Another theme which emerged was student course selection. All students felt that in the past they had no choice of courses they desired to take. They were correct in their assumption. Junior high students took the courses prescribed for them. The high school allowed these students to make choices, an important step toward their success. One student said:

At the high school you got all these classes that you can take and maybe get one you really like. I want to

go to a technical school or become a mechanic. (student #9)

While another student very confidently echoed:

I am trying to plan out my schedule so that my senior year will be my easiest year in regards to required credit. I will walk for graduation. (student #1)

Parents did not discuss the issue of course selection.

In summary, course selection by students seemed to affect student academic self-esteem positively. The data were sparse. Students desired to make choices as early as their junior high school years.

Teacher role. Many of these students indicated that in the past they had lost respect for or just plain hated their teachers. They felt the teachers, specifically in the junior high schools, were out to get them. Student #1 held no love for his teachers the previous year when he stated, "I would have burnt their houses down if I had gotten a chance. I got mad about every day."

Student #7 echoed, "I can't stand for teachers to nag or constantly boss me around; it got to me that teachers were always bossing me around." And finally, student #10 said, "Teachers were on my back all the time for nothing."

All ten students indicated they admired and loved their teachers now. These students believed the teachers working with them in this program worked differently and treated

them as individuals. A typical statement follows:

Today, it is a different story. Staying in school is not an issue with me. My counselor and I work close. The school-within-school teachers I respect them, and I love them for what they are trying to do for us.

(student #3)

Students and parents saw teachers as working differently from the preceding year.

The topic of teaching methodology emerged from the data provided. One of the primary reasons for low academic self-esteem may be teaching methodology. Students before classes appear excited, energetic, and happy. When they enter classrooms, they change. Students commented in this study that they desired involvement.

When students come to class, they may hear lecture after lecture. Nine out of ten students commented negatively on the methodology teachers used previously. Students expressed that teachers lectured, stayed on topics too long, gave busy work, and, finally, just talked. Student #4 commented, "They just stood up and talked." Student #1 described the boredom as "watching golf or bowling." And finally, student #3 stated:

I was down on myself because I did not really want to be in school because it was boring. We had little hands-on work. Copying down a lot of Mickey Mouse

facts is boring.

Three parents expressed that teachers in the past did not meet the instructional needs of the students because they lectured all the time.

Students and parents expressed their appreciation for the increased amount of teacher attention students received. Seven students commented that they felt they received more personal attention from their teachers than they had previously in the junior high schools. One student stated:

I love my teachers, especially my three-hour teachers, because I feel that I can go to them and talk to them if I have any kind of school problem, any kind of family problem, and they would understand. (student #2)

Parents also agreed with their children on the attention which they felt teachers were giving to students. As one parent said:

Last year he could not think of anything good to say about his teachers, and this year he really felt a lot of respect about the teachers in the program. I think that he really felt that they were taking more of an interest and they really cared. (parent/student #1)

In summary, students and parents expressed the lack of respect for previous teachers. This lack of respect came from the teachers' work with these students. Students now

expressed respect and love toward their teachers because the teachers gave them much attention and seemed to genuinely care for them. All ten students and all seven parents felt that the attention which teachers gave to students was positive and contributed to students' feeling better about themselves. A cause of the teachers' ability to pay more attention to the students was the smaller student-teacher ratio.

Expectations. The theme of low expectations emerged from the teachers' data. They said that many of their students in the past had aimed for and had made grades of "D" and "F" because it was allowed. Teachers said that students did not mind if they made low grades because they were expected to earn them. Teachers commented that when they explained to students the "J-curve" grading policy the students were confused because they had been allowed to make weak or failing marks. As teacher D explained:

I told my students, talking about the J-curve, that they would not be allowed D's or F's. I asked them why they made these in the past, and they responded it was something we were allowed to make.

The counselor expressed her view about one student:

Student #1 is very bright and makes some of the worst grades you will ever see. Talk about a low self-esteem. He expected to fail, and therefore did not

try.

In summary, the teachers and counselor provided the scant data on this theme. They recognized that perhaps other school personnel previously expected these students not to succeed. Students recognized that the adults had a lower expectation of them, and they performed as expected.

Class size. Sixteen students were scheduled in each class. Two out of the ten students specifically spoke about smaller class size as a factor in teachers being able to pay more attention to students. One student said:

I think this is the way that schools should operate-- small groups. Ours has fourteen students right now, and it is easier. With a crowd of people, I don't care how fast the teacher grinds, they will never get to everybody, and they won't explain everything. It just doesn't work when you have thirty plus people in a class; that's too many for one teacher. (student #1)

And one parent voiced:

When you have twenty-five or more students in the class, you can't give that much to each student. I know; I have been there, so I know he received more attention this year than in previous years.

(parent/student #1)

Teachers discussed class size, and they said that they could offer more attention to the students. All four

teachers commented that in a regular setting of 25-30 students, the teacher would not have been able to pay as much attention to the students, and they believed that this type of student would have either failed or become a behavioral problem. One teacher said:

Student #4 admitted to me that she needed a small student/teacher ratio, so she could get extra attention, especially on race issues. (teacher K)

One student and a parent commented on the attention received from the teacher in Algebra I. The student said:

As a ninth grader I just failed completely when it came to math. Math is hard. It was something that I did not know what I was doing. I am getting extra help from my math teacher. (student #5)

The parent commented:

Math is not a good subject for him, and yet this year he did better. I feel he got more personal attention in math this year. He definitely did better. (parent/student #8)

In summary, the amount of attention the teacher afforded was seen by all as more positive, due in part to the smaller teacher-student ratio. Students and parents felt the attention contributed to positive student self-esteem.

Removal of fear of failing. Students in this program

were encouraged to succeed, and one of the means was to use the "J-curve" grading policy. In this policy, students received grades of "A," "B," "C" or Incomplete. A grade of incomplete becomes a grade of failure only when a course is not completed at the end of summer school.

Six students expressed their previous lack of academic success and their expectations that they could not succeed. Student #1 shared his feelings:

I was doing nothing in school, bad grades; I think that was one of my worst years ever. I gave up after the second semester started; I quit in science, I tried a little in English, but really didn't care....I was failing three out of four academic subjects. That's seventy five percent of my academics; I stopped caring. It didn't bother me that I was failing.

Student #2 expressed her frustration:

I have never done well in school as far as "A" and "B," I've never had enough self-motivation to push myself in school, and I struggled hard because the teacher would not like me.

Nine students out of ten felt that the grading policy used in the program was a good one because it allowed them to make up work missed, re-attempt work completed unsuccessfully, and instilled in them a positive expectancy.

Students spoke about the fairness of the policy because

it encouraged them to make up all work missed. Some of these students felt that prior to inclusion in this program they were not expected to make up work missed. Students perceived being allowed to or encouraged to make up work which they had missed as a factor contributing to their academic success. Student #7 said, "This year these teachers allowed me to make up tests."

Re-attempting work done poorly was seen as a positive factor by students and parents. Students believed that the opportunity for improvement made them feel better about themselves. One student commented:

This year my grades have come up a great deal, I would say at least 70 percent. I am making A's and B's, and last year I was making D's. It makes me feel better to be able to make up the work I did bad on. I have not gone to see my therapist this year because I feel good about my grades and it makes me feel good. (student #4)

And, finally, one parent expressed the following:

The chance that he had to making grades up from D's and C's to A's and B's makes him feel better. We don't worry much about his classes this year as in the past. (parent/student #8)

One student who balked at remaining in the program since the beginning of the school year said:

It has helped me this year because now I know that I do

not have to make an F because now I can learn it instead of memorize it. I have heard people say that they would rather get zeros than an Incomplete because with zeros you can still pass as we have, but with the Incomplete we could get an F. Last year I always was used to making low grades. At first you would get an F and then somehow it got changed, but this year I made higher grades in my school-within-school, and when I made an F in an elective class, I couldn't believe it. (student #7)

At the completion of the first nine weeks, several students had not completed their work. When they received their report card indicating a grade of "Inc," they finally recognized the fact that they were not going to be given a grade not earned as perhaps they had previously. Students were observed staying after school making up the work, and the grades were changed to the proper grades indicating success.

Students created a positive expectation for themselves as they experienced significant changes in their academic success. Student responses in Table 2 indicated the group felt more positive about their understanding of math and English. A significant positive shift occurred with question #9, "My parents don't care if I pass my tests or exams." Students in August felt their parents perhaps did

not care if they passed tests; however, by May the students believed their parents did care. A typical response by students about their grades in May was, "My grades have come up a great deal" (student #1).

One student even quantified her increase by stating:

I feel better this year. My grades have tremendously come up, a great deal, I say at least seventy percent. (student #4)

Another student expressed his excitement by comparing last year to this school year:

This year makes me disgusted to think about how I felt last year because so far now I have passed seventy-five percent of my academics. Last year I failed seventy-five percent of them. (student #1)

And, finally, student #5 compared last year to this year:

As a ninth grade student I knew what I was doing with my work, but when it came to math, I just failed completely. I feel good now, and I know that I have only two years of school, and I'm going to pass.

The researcher made the following observation on the topic of student academic success:

I walked into the science class this morning and students #3 and #9 began bragging about their grades. They were smiling and asking me to ask the teacher to verify their marks. The teacher nodded his head and

confirmed that both had made high marks on the test. Both students raised their necks even higher so that the other students could notice.

In summary, the honor roll--that unreachable roll for many students--distinguishes scholars from all other students. Students are glorified for their academic success. None of the students in this study had made the honor roll previously; therefore, they had yet to experience the success of this honor. By the end of the year, three students had made the honor roll. Two of these students were males, and they had made it three times each. One of these males failed to make the honor roll when he was taking math. One female made the honor roll once. One student who did not make the honor roll, and yet realized its importance, explained it best when he said:

I've come within a hair of making the honor roll. It makes my mother happy, and she tried to get me to get one of those stickers about the honor roll. I said to her that I did not think they give them away and she told me to ask if they would once. (student #3)

Student attendance. Schools for years have devised attendance policies which incorporate rewards and punishments to encourage higher student attendance. The regular school policy on attendance allowed students to be absent seven days each nine week period. If the student

missed any day beyond the seventh, and if any one of the accumulated days during the nine week period was classified as unexcused, then the student received a grade of F in that class. The principal received permission from the associate superintendent to discard the attendance policy in this program. It was believed by the principal and teachers that an attendance policy would have little positive impact on these students. The purpose was to impact positively student achievement leading to better self-esteem.

Three students spoke about attendance as being an issue to them. The three students spoke about quitting school when they reached the age of sixteen. They also expressed that they would only attend school by their choice, not because they would be required by the school and parents to attend.

In the state of North Carolina, a sixteen year old student may drop out of school without parental consent. In October, six of the students vented their frustration with schooling and expressed their desire to quit or be dropped from school. Student #7 provided a typical comment, "I just wanted to quit school last year, things got so frustrated." Student #1 adamantly said, "I was set, I was ready for January 19 (student's 16th birthday) because I was going to fill out the withdrawal forms."

Four out of the seven parents interviewed spoke on

their child's previous lack of academic success as an obstacle which they feared could increase their child's chances of dropping out of school. Typical of parental responses, one parent expressed her feelings:

Last year was negative feelings, nothing good to say. He kept saying that he was going to drop out from school. (parent/student #1)

Another parent said:

In the past he waited to reach the age of sixteen so he could quit school. Last year he basically cared nothing; it was just school. (parent/student #9)

One student who was already sixteen years of age and had his own vehicle said it best:

I could have quit school on January 19, but I am still coming to school, and I don't have any plans not to come. (student #1)

One female student had a baby and could have dropped out of school or could have missed classes as she desired; however, speaking on school attendance, she added:

I can get up and come to school because I want to, except when I have to take my baby to the doctor or I have to stay home with my baby because my mother can't. (student #6)

In summary, seven out of ten students increased their attendance (Table 4) from the preceding school year.

Examination of the variable "absences" for the preceding year showed student six missed 57 days due to her pregnancy. While attending the ninth grade, these students accumulated a total of 124 days absent from school. This current year these students accumulated a total of 64 days absent from school.

Educational aspirations. Students responded to a question on continuing their education beyond high school. Six students said during the first focus group interview that they desired to end their educational career and get a job. This attitude changed throughout the year. Students became aware of their need for further education. Students were motivated to come to school because they began to feel good about themselves and what was occurring in their lives. With academic successes, dreams rooted within the self began to emerge as students saw possibilities. Eight out of the ten students mentioned that they wanted to go to college or technical school. A typical remark made by the students is the following:

I don't think I will ever hold an office job. I will have to do something where I will have to work with hands on. I am planning on going to a community college or technical school and get some business courses and run my own business. (student #1)

Two of the eight students spoke about going to the

community college across from the high school because they each had a child at home. These two students felt strongly about continuing their education for themselves and also for their children. One student explained:

Last year I looked at wanting to go to a four year college and get a BA in business law and become a secretary. But now I don't have anyone to watch my son..., so I want to go to the community college and study cosmetology in the day while my son is in school and gets his education. (student #6)

Three parents expressed their feelings about the educational aspirations of their children. The parents commented that previously their children had not really discussed the topic on continuing their education. One parent said that her daughter now enjoyed school and talked about going on to further her education although she did not know in what specific area. The other two parents said that their sons had earlier spoken about growing up to be football players and policemen, but now they were targeting trades, whether it be an accountant or a mechanic. One parent said:

I heard him say that perhaps he wants to go to [Forsyth Tech] or somewhere and go into diesel mechanic[s] or something like that, working on vehicles.

(parent/student #9)

And, finally, the behavioral specialist working with student #3 offered his view on perhaps a future for the student:

Earlier he and I talked about him going to the community college. He has a dry wit and seems to like to express himself; he writes well and his English teacher turned him on to writing. I think he has a future there.

In summary, students began to contemplate an educational future beyond their current school year. They felt better about the possibilities. Two students spoke about their need to continue schooling as a means of teaching their children the importance of schooling. Parents spoke about aspirations and dreams which their children appeared now to have.

Success in vocational courses. A theme which emerged from the data on student report cards at the end of the school year was the number of vocational courses which these students completed successfully. Data are included in Table 4.

The ten students as a group were enrolled in sixteen vocational courses. These students completed successfully eight out of the sixteen courses, representing a fifty percent success rate. The researcher believed that ending the students' day with vocational courses would provide more

hands-on learning for the students and would be a positive factor. Core courses were defined as English, math, social studies and science. Students completed academic core courses more successfully. These students completed successfully thirty-five out of forty academic core courses, representing an eighty-seven percent success rate.

Vocational education did not provide all students with academic success. Although the data were limited, the analysis of Table 4 presents a picture of fifty percent success rate for these students. All failures in Vocational courses occurred in the agricultural course. Further analysis within the school perhaps found a reason for the lack of success. In the late 1980's, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction adopted a competency-based curriculum in the area of Vocational Education. Vocational courses such as agriculture, auto mechanics, and masonry traditionally had been taught in the field; however, the new curriculum emphasized a greater increase of time in the seat for students. At the high school where the study was conducted, seatwork increased, specifically in the agricultural courses. Teacher lectures and students completing worksheets increased, and hands-on activities outside the classroom decreased.

Attitude toward math. Some students would have had higher scores on the Exploration and Self-Profile except for

their performance and feelings about math. Four students, three males and one female, expressed their hatred for math. The students spoke about not understanding math in previous years. Four out of the seven parents also spoke on the difficulties which their children encountered in math. These parents also indicated that their children lacked understanding of math prior to placement in the program. Both the counselor and the behavioral specialist spoke about the lack of student understanding of math as a hindrance to self-esteem. The researcher made two observations in which he heard students discuss their hatred for math, and further discussion with the students indicated the problem to be one of lack of understanding.

Further differences were found between males and females and between those students who participated previously in Chapter 1 and those who did not. Three out of the ten students received Chapter 1 services prior to inclusion in the program. Five male students and two female students had not received Chapter 1 services previously. The significance of this notation was that the Chapter 1 services utilized a program called H.O.T.S., Higher Order Thinking Skills. This program utilized computers throughout its curriculum, and students worked on mathematical word and computerized problems. Few students were afforded the opportunity to participate in the H.O.T.S. program because

it was available only at one junior high school. The three female students who participated in H.O.T.S. responded more favorably to the math course. These three students said they felt good doing math problems, and the math teacher agreed. The math teacher said that these students assisted other students in math.

Five out of ten students responded that they liked math more this year. Two students indicated their continued hatred for math. It appears that students had a better understanding of the topics covered in math. As one student said:

I made an F last year and now I have an A. I have always hated math, but this year I actually enjoyed it because I knew what I was doing and what I did not know, I learned. (student #7)

All seven parents responded to the topic on math. Four out of seven believed that their children had improved on their attitude toward math because they had begun to understand the material. As one parent said:

I believe that he got an 82, and that is certainly different from last year because he lost out at the beginning of the year in math. (parent/student #10)

A total of three male students in this study were sent to the office for disciplinary measures, and this occurred while the students were in the math course within the

program. The researcher's diary notation on April 20, 1993, indicated:

Conference with parent and student #1 and math teacher.

Student hates math and ran his mouth to the teacher.

He has not been in trouble all year until now.

The researcher's diary notes indicated that students attempted to evade the course on math. A male student who had made the honor roll in three previous grading periods in the other academic courses now desired to drop the course:

The researcher's diary notes for May 5, 1993, indicated:

Student #1 had made the honor roll three previous nine weeks but not now. He is making a grade of Incomplete and tells me that he would be happy to be given an F for the course.

In summary, the statements made by students and parents on the topic of math clearly present a frustration detrimental to the academic self. The topic of math was found in the past to be an obstacle to successful student academic self-esteem. Students and parents commented that the math course was manageable now because the student had a better understanding. The students who had been placed in the Higher Order Thinking Skills program at one junior high school appeared more successful. Discipline was not an issue for students in the program until they were engaged in

the math course.

Academic Self-Esteem: Summary

Academic self-esteem increased from August 1992 to May 1993. Analysis of Table 1 indicates that these students entered the program with limited previous academic success. Testimonies from students, parents, and school personnel provided initial snapshots of the low student academic self-esteem. Appendix F is a letter from one students' psychologist, commenting on student academic success. He wrote, "I have been extremely impressed with the improvement in work quality and positive attitude on the part of these youngsters."

By May 1993, students had completed nine months in the program. The responses the students gave on the SCHOOL category of the Exploration and Self-Profile indicated an increase in positive feelings about school. On the initial survey in August 1992, the mean for the group was 7.6 out of 12 points. In May 1993, the mean rose to 8.9 (see Table 4). Students' attitudes toward math negatively influenced their response to the questions on school.

Academic self-esteem increased throughout the year as evidenced by the interviews. The increase can be attributed to a number of factors, including the following: reduction of boredom, one academic course each nine weeks, course selection, teacher role, reduction of failing, increased

attendance, future aspirations, and the feeling of success in math by some participants. Math was also found to be a major obstacle to self-esteem of some students in this study. Students did not succeed in vocational courses as well as they had in the previous year.

Changes in Social Self-Esteem

Social self-esteem was monitored with measurements in August 1992, January 1993, and May 1993. This is the period of time that the students were in the Concentrate-on-One Program.

First Perceptions

The students at the beginning of the program in August 1992 had low social self-esteem. Students' feelings about themselves were derived from responses on the Exploration and Self-Profile and interviews with teachers completed in August 1992, the first week of school.

Table 5 contains students' responses to the seven statements in the Exploration and Self-Profile associated with social self-esteem. On all seven items student responses reflected considerable social isolation. Eight of the students sometimes felt they didn't belong anywhere, seven reported they believed most people at their schools were "jerks," five (yes-1, sometimes-4) reported teachers didn't care about them, eight (yes-5, sometimes-3) said they would marry or live with someone at a young age, all ten

Table 5

Student Responses to the Social Self-Esteem Items on the
Exploration and Self-Profile Instrument

Item	August, 1992			May, 1993		
	Y	S	N	Y	S	N
1. I feel like I really don't belong anywhere.	0	8	2	0	3	7
3. I believe that most of the people in my school are jerks.	4	3	3	0	5	5
5. I feel like my teachers really don't care about me at all	1	4	5	0	3	7
6. I'll probably be married or living with someone by the time I'm twenty.	5	3	2	2	4	4
8. I don't like to spend time at home.	9	1	0	4	2	4
10. I don't like to participate in clubs, sports, band or other activities at school.	6	1	3	3	2	5
12. I feel that what other people think about me is very important.	2	7	1	1	4	5

Code

Y Yes
S Sometimes
N No

(yes-9, sometimes-1) indicated they didn't like to spend time at home, seven (yes-6, sometimes-1) said they didn't like to participate in extracurricular activities, and nine (yes-2, sometimes-7) said they didn't care what others thought about them. Statements made by students and teachers provided many examples of the initial level of the students' social self at the beginning of the program.

On August 19, 1992, a focus group interview was conducted with the teachers in the program. These teachers had completed their first three hours with the students. Their initial perceptions of these students gave birth to a theme: These students had a difficult time interacting with each other. As teacher D commented: "These kids have a low self-esteem. I don't know where it comes from, but that is apparent very quickly in terms of interaction with other kids."

The teachers talked about how reserved these students were in the classrooms and had observed that the students would not easily interact with each other. One teacher commented that it was almost as if these students were "gun shy" because they either did not trust or did not want to try to get to know each other. The students had been enrolled at either of the two junior high schools in the same system prior to inclusion in this program.

Teachers recognized that the interaction between the

students and previous teachers was negative. The teachers commented that these students and their previous teachers must not have worked closely. They expressed their excitement for the opportunity to make a positive difference with these students. As teacher K said:

These kids have been turned off so much that we are going to have to nurture them slowly. The teacher has to be approachable for one thing, understanding, and has to pat them on the back for every little thing they do.

In summary, the first teacher interview presented a picture of previous negative interactions among the students and between the students and teachers. The teachers believed they needed to approach the students with positive feedback and positive interaction.

In October, the second faculty focus group interview was conducted. The theme of the family and its impact on the student emerged. Teacher K commented:

I have come to the conclusion that somewhere along the line their families did not do them justice either by over-indulgence or neglect.

And teacher C offered:

I had a student tell me that he had to sleep in the car last night because mom and dad were fighting.

Students interviewed as a focus group in October 1992

commented on the family as a factor in their self-esteem. Family break-up, unplanned children, and constant family fighting created strains on these students. They responded that at times they wanted to get away from their parents.

Student #7 said her mother always screamed at her, even when she did not do anything wrong. Student #1 said he believed that his father always wanted him to fail so he could remind him of his failure, thus reducing his self-esteem. Finally, student #10 commented that his parents never offered positive comments and grounded him for everything. Nine of the ten students felt they received little positive emotional support from their parents when it was needed.

The initial measurement of the Exploration and Self-Profile results presented in Table 5 showed students did not want to go home. Perhaps the students viewed the family as a negative factor. Some students said during the interviews that they did have difficulty with their home life. Student #1 said that his father did not like him. Another student said that he has had to sleep all night in the car because of the fights between his mom and his dad.

Changes in Social Self-Esteem by Year's End

The students at the end of their participation in the program in May 1993 varied in the amount of change in their social self-esteem. A comparison of the student responses

to the social self-esteem items in Table 5 found students from August 1992 through May 1993 had increased positively their social self-esteem. Testimonies from students, parents, teachers, the behavioral specialist, and the counselor all provided data on positive student social changes. The major factors associated with the change in student social self-esteem were student-to-student interaction, student-to-teacher interaction, child-to-parent interaction, student self-worth, and student maturity.

Interaction is a mutual or reciprocal action or influence of an individual with his social environment. Interaction emerged as a major social factor which increased positive student social self-esteem. A typical comment by the students illustrates how students worked better with their parents now and were trying to reduce the conflict in the home. Student #1 commented:

I feel fantastic now; it makes me feel better about myself. My parents never had control of me, but now I am working with them.

This student talked about the interaction with parents as a power struggle between parent and child.

Interaction among peers, a significant activity with teenagers, was seen as changing positively. When these students gathered on the first day of school, teachers commented that interaction with peers was an obstacle.

Teachers and students believed the interaction improved by year's end. Teacher P remarked:

I have one young lady who was quiet at first, but now she feels good about herself and interacts with the other students and stands up for herself.

As the students and teachers developed a feeling of family, teacher interaction with the students had a positive impact on raising student social self-esteem. Additionally, the four teachers commented on the change in the quality of interaction between themselves and the students. The teachers indicated they felt these students and their previous teachers had interacted negatively. The teachers shared that the students desired to create a family atmosphere in the program. Teacher D said:

Four or five persons in this room care more about sixty-four students than their own parents in the majority of the cases, and the kids do not know how to deal with someone who cares for them. It is harder than the academic [the core courses], but I tell you, we made big gains this year. We now talk about our bunch.

This researcher noted that this family of four teachers and sixty-four students sponsored three events--two night meetings and a Saturday event. At one of the night meetings in September--held for students, parents, and teachers--

students provided examples of their oral and written work through portfolios. The researcher made the following observations:

6:30 p.m. and parents and students already at school. The program does not start until 7:00 p.m. The mood is friendly and I note smiling faces among all. Teachers opened the meeting and three students read their best selections from their portfolios. The group breaks as teachers, parents and students visit in the classrooms to hear and see what students have been learning. At 8:30 the groups return to the library. Prior to the conclusion, one parent comments aloud, "This is great. Since my son has been in the 3rd grade he has hated school; he loves it now." Another parent comments on her family members dropping out of school in the past but says her daughter will not because she is excited about school.

The second activity, a cook-out on a Saturday in October, was successful. Students, parents and teachers commented favorably on the event. Student #1 stated his feelings:

I really appreciate my teachers for having a picnic for us on a Saturday; it was fun. If you had teachers such as these in the other classes, it would make a difference, and I don't feel I had that last year.

Finally, a Celebration Night was held at the school at the end of the school year. Parents, students, school personnel, local political officials, and other significant guests attended. Significant interactions were noted. The researcher observed students acting as waiters, serving food and drinks, without being asked to perform these tasks. Students presented a skit. The researcher noted that the students applauded for each other because of achievements gained. Students rewarded their teachers for their efforts and contributions to their success.

Participation in clubs and athletics are two other activities found in almost any junior and senior high school. Six students commented they had experienced some participation in previous years when they were younger but had not for the last few years. These students offered several reasons for their lack of participation. Students in both the junior and senior high school have to complete successfully four academic courses each semester to remain eligible for athletic participation. These students previously had few academic successes; therefore, they did not participate. Student #3 spoke about not getting along with the coaches; therefore, he quit the team and refused to play. This student said he had wanted to play previously but not currently. Two students said they wanted to participate, but their parents were not able to work out the

transportation issue. Student #7 sadly said:

I didn't participate in anything when I was younger because I did not have a chance to stay after school because my parents were always at work, and I did not have a ride home. It is too late to get involved now.

The researcher heard Teacher P ask student #7 to run on the track team at school this year, but she refused.

Two students participated in athletics. One of these played football and ran track. This student felt confident about participating in sports. The assistant principal said that this young man was well liked on the playing field because he never complained and always got the job done.

None of the students participated in school clubs. The VICA club, sponsored by the vocational department, traditionally offers a variety of outings for students. Every one of these students was taking a vocational course, yet none joined the club.

In summary, the participating students were relatively social isolates at the beginning of the program. At the end of the program all students participated in activities sponsored by their academic teachers, and two students participated in athletics. They interacted much more among themselves and with their teachers, and they were on friendlier terms with their parents. In spite of these gains, the students limited their interaction among

themselves instead of interacting with the larger student population.

Reasons for the Changes in Students' Social Self-Esteem

The change in the social self-esteem of the participating students can be attributed to a number of factors, including the following: (1) changes in attitude toward peers, family and school personnel, (2) changes in self-worthiness, and (3) changes in maturity.

Attitude towards others became more positive. Student attitude toward others became more positive throughout the year. The change of attitude evolved from the interaction students had with peers, family, and school personnel. Students said their attitude toward peers became more positive because of the interaction in the Concentrate-on-One Program. Students spoke on the positive dynamics which developed for them. Several of the students did not know each other prior to participation in the program. Student #2 said it afforded her an opportunity to develop new friendships:

There were preps, there were hoods always in trouble, and I didn't fit with any group. At the junior high, I knew so many because we had grown up together. A good thing about coming here is that you get to meet new people, fit into any group you want to even if you came from a different elementary school.

Students also spoke on bad friendships from the past and current school year. Students talked about friends quitting school, but they were not saddened by the departure from school of friends they considered bad influences. Two students exemplified the group's feelings:

This year I got more friends; we sit in the hallways after lunch, in the mornings, and the afternoons. The students that started trouble last year quit now, and the rest of us are still having fun. (student #6)

Some of my friends were bad influences and some were good. Some like to steal and stuff like that, so I had to stop hanging around those students. I feel good this year except some of them at lunch....[some] people [are] always trying to get smart....I think they are jealous. We all get along fine in the building.

(student #5)

Student #5 defined "trying to get smart" as peers trying to put her down because she was in a special program and was succeeding. She also said that she spent little time with that group of girls because they cause trouble, and she did not want any trouble. The ending to her quotation, "We all get along fine in the building," defines her perception of the attitude among peers in the program.

Student #9, who had previously found himself in frequent trouble with peers and adults, spoke on his change

in attitude. He presented a picture of once having been a school bully:

I thought it was neat as far as the students. They (students) did not mess with me...because we would beat you. The teachers would talk to each other and say, "You don't want him, he is bad, don't talk to him." But not now.

This student, once recognized as and proud to be a school bully, no longer felt the same. Two other students also recognized as school bullies in the past said they too felt better. They were glad to let the past go and be accepted and show others they had made positive changes in their behavior and attitudes.

Many of the students in this program exhibited racist attitudes prior to inclusion in the program. These attitudes changed during the program. At one junior high school, the minority percentage of students in the total school population ranged around three to four percent. At the other junior high school, the minority percentage ranged around 30-33 percent. At the junior high with a small percentage of minority students, there had been racial unrest brought about by white students towards a black student. The black student was taunted by white students with a rebel bandanna. The junior high with a higher minority percentage had a history of students making racial

remarks to each other. Students brought this attitude with them to the high school. This attitude changed throughout the school year as these students interacted. Student #5 explained this way:

I am not a racist or prejudiced, but I heard in the past from my friends that I cannot talk to a white boy nor could he to me, but that changed. There has been a change this year; everybody seems to have learned because...[we] got three hours of the same class and therefore we know each [other] better.

Changes in attitude were helpful in establishing relationships across racial barriers. The observer noted that two students who classified themselves as bullies were also known as racists, but they did not engage in any open racial name-calling. These students were observed working with black students without any confrontations.

Finally, one student had a difficult time establishing friends during her participation in the program. She did not initially desire to be in the program because her friends were not included. She said:

Last year I wanted to fit in with everybody. This year I did not fit in well. I do not have any classes with any of my friends from last year and have lost a lot of my friends. (student #7)

Her attitude was one of disappointment. She changed her

attitude as the school year progressed. She spoke about friendships and attitude changing. She explained what occurred:

I had friends last year, but they have changed. They were nice and I could be their friend, but this year they changed and it seems like they got their friends and I found out that they really were not my friends. They don't talk to me. I entered the class this year and I knew that I did not want to be stuck with these people; they were bad. After a while we got to know each [other] better and better. It is better this year because of the interaction within the class between the people. (student #7)

Losing friends and making new friends were interactions that caused both frustration and happiness for the students. Spending a greater amount of time in class afforded them the opportunity to know each other better. As these students indicated, they felt better about the interactions they had with each other.

The researcher had the opportunity to witness a potentially dangerous interaction between two students. These two students were recognized as bullies in the past and now were ready to fight each other, even with weapons. The researcher noted in his diary on January 15, 1993:

Students #3 and #9 had a major difficulty over a gun

which disappeared from a house. Student #9 does not want trouble therefore he comes to the office asking to meet with me. He calms down, and I get student #3. Before long, both students were yelling, and ready to fight each other. Parents are called and the problem escalates. The police are called to escort students and parents out of school.

The researcher noted in the diary on January 21, 1993: Students #3 and #9 appear to be best friends. They are speaking calmly with each other; they are joking together and with other students.

In summary, nine out of ten students believed their social self-esteem improved from the previous year. Students felt friendships were more meaningful and more positive. Students viewed troublemakers leaving school as a positive factor. Three students said they were bullies in the past but no longer wanted that role. Racial undertones, open before, now were diminishing due to students interacting and knowing each other better. One student initially spoke about her lack of friendships; later she said she gained a better social self due to the interaction within the class.

Student self-worth increased. Student self-worth emerged as a topic because these students believed they were not worthy previously of doing well either academically or

socially. These students apparently had lost their sense of pride in succeeding as their parents and the school had desired.

Student self-worth was associated with different factors: interaction with faculty, decrease in bad-behavior, group performances, and anticipation of graduation. These factors were seen by students, parents, and teachers to be related to positive student self-worth.

Students indicated that in the past they were not able to interact positively with teachers. These students said that they felt that teachers at the junior high schools did not have the time or a desire to know them personally. These students indicated that they felt better about the interaction with their current teachers because these teachers were friendly and made each feel worthy. Students also felt that they knew when and how to seek positive attention and when not to do so. As one student said:

I've been to the point now that I can joke around with my teachers, not disrupt the class, though...I don't know yet what the report card is for the 3rd nine weeks, but I am confident that it is an "A." (student #1)

Students said they wanted to know their teachers and be with them.

A decrease in student bad-behavior was a significant

observation throughout the school year. A closer examination of this phenomenon uncovered a positive relationship with student self-worth. Several of these students changed their behavior, and they attributed it to the positive feeling they now had about themselves. One of the three students, known as bullies in the past, explained it best:

I will gladly show my files to anybody. Open it up from last year, report cards for grades and yellow slips for suspensions, and then open up this year's. I don't care who you are, I will be happy to show you. I am proud of it, I don't see why I should hide something on how good I have done this year--I like to show it off. (student #1)

The above student was ready to compare indicators of his past behavior, which were widely known at the previous school, to the current school year. His enthusiasm was obvious as was his desire to show off his success.

The behavioral specialist works closely with behaviorally-emotionally handicapped children. His role allows him to see students act out all types of mal-adjustive behaviors and also note positive changes. He commented about one student with whom he had worked closely in the past:

His self-esteem just sky rocketed, and he became

totally counted on to set an example that others could follow. He has always thought of himself as Mr. Banty Rooster, and nobody was going to talk him out of anything. Now he feels better about himself, and he can let things go. (behavioral specialist/student #3)

Student #3, according to the behavioral specialist, saw himself as becoming worthy and was able to lead others in a positive manner which he had not done previously.

Self-worth further increased with activities which allowed students to make significant contributions. Students at their night meeting in the fall of the year presented oral and written works to the audience. Parents and students were proud of the presentations. Student #1 made a presentation which made him feel worthy. The researcher noted on November 10, 1992:

Student #1 wants permission to present a petition to the local school board. The petition requests the continuation of the program. He tells me that he intends to conclude his presentation by showing off his honor roll ribbon. Board will meet on December 9 and student #1 will be allowed to make his presentation.

With permission sought and granted, the student made the presentation, and he talked about his feeling on the topic:

I was the only person that night that got an applause

and I was next to last in presenting. It didn't bother me, I kind of liked it, especially when no one else got an applause. (student #1)

This student's mother echoed her feelings about the self-worth of her son:

I saw more pride than I had seen before; he has a positive image of himself anyway, and I think that was enhanced the first quarter because it gave him a lot of confidence to do something like get in front of the Board of Education and speak to them. (parent/student #1)

Student #1 was seen by other students, teachers, his mother, and the researcher as being happy and feeling important, for he had spoken to the local Board of Education about the program in which he was participating. Other students looked at him as a leader who had spoken for them.

This same student suffered a setback in his self-worth in the spring of the year just prior to the Celebration Night ceremony. The ceremony was the finale to the school year for the participants. On that night, student #1 was to play the part of the teacher--a role he wanted and accepted. Both students and teachers were proud of him. At this time of the school year, student #1 had an incomplete grade in math--the one course he hated. The night of the celebration, student #1 failed to show. The researcher

called his mother, and she informed him that her son was asleep and she could not wake him up. Later she confirmed that her son felt that he had failed and chose not to be present. Except for this incident, student #1 was seen by teachers and students as exploding positively in his self-worth.

Analysis of the tape recording of Celebration Night revealed all participants applauding for each other for successes. Students presented a skit representing a teacher teaching a biology lesson on photosynthesis. Upon completion, the students received a round of applause. The video recording captured the smiles of the adults, especially the parents, for they saw their children as successful. Teachers smiled and laughed with the students; they were proud of their students' achievements.

Three students stated they felt better about themselves and about others. These three students discussed changes in their feelings about themselves. Typical of their views is the comment by student #2:

I feel better and I am not as dumb as I thought I was. Even though my grades do not indicate it, inside I feel better about myself and about being with others.

Student #4 had been seeing a therapist for several years because of her low self-esteem. This student saw herself as a failure when she compared herself to her

younger sister. Her self-worth was weak according to her mother. However, this student had a successful year, and her mother offered the following comments:

She has had a problem with self-esteem for a long time, and at first she did not want to be here. Now, she feels good about herself; she is zipping around and trying to experience things. She is not seeing her therapist because she says that she feels good.

(parent/student #4)

Students excitedly spoke about graduation from high school. For many of these students, graduation was not a given. Prior to their inclusion in the program, many of these students had not thought of graduation. They focused on the "one day at a time" philosophy. With their self-worth increasing, these students saw potential in the future, yet they knew they had to graduate. One student with no previous thoughts on graduation began to think better of himself and his successes at school; therefore, he talked about his future. He and his parents recognized graduation as a major obstacle, and his mother provided the following words:

Self esteem has been one of the things which he has had problems with. He had failed so many times and again, but he did better this year. He is saying now that he will graduate from school. (parent/student #9)

In summary, changes in student self-worth were evident as students felt better about their successes and themselves. Their feelings were expressed through their actions, such as speaking to the board of education and teaching a lesson at a night meeting. Parents spoke of the increase in their children's self-worth. They felt their children had finally found themselves to be important and were successful in the social as well as the academic environment.

Student maturity improved. Branden (1969) wrote, "Maturity, in the broadest sense, is the state of being fully grown or developed" (p. 105). He further said, "A cardinal characteristic of maturity is emotional stability" (p. 107). The maturity of students has been discussed little in the research on at-risk populations. An ERIC boolean search 1982-1991 of the words "maturity" and "at-risk student" found zero entries. The topic on student maturity evolved from the teacher interviews. Teachers brought forth the topic during the focus interviews and believed student maturity was a significant factor in social self-esteem. The data revealed two subthemes: (1) the causes of student immaturity, according to the teachers; and (2) the changes in student immaturity, as observed by the teachers and other involved adults.

In the initial interview teachers did not address the

issue of student maturity. However, the issue was raised at the second focus group interview by all four teachers.

Teachers were divided on the cause of immaturity. At times the teachers thought that the immaturity was caused by the student being coddled too much in the past by either teachers or the family. One teacher expressed it as follows:

I agree that a lot of the problems are maturity.

These kids have been coddled or do not know how to work appropriately. (teacher D)

Teachers also spoke about the students' lack of preparation for the material they were studying this year. They did not want to put the responsibility on past teachers; however, they felt that teachers in the past had not expected these students to put forth much effort.

Teacher D commented:

I asked them why most of...[them] made D's or F's last year and the story eventually came out--because it was something they were allowed to do.

The teachers also spoke about parents not expecting much from their children.

The teachers felt their students had control of their families. These children could easily be threatening to adults, and parents did not want to enter into conflicts with their children. One parent provided the following:

Our son took responsibility on himself for the first time. He always has had an excuse for everything, but not this time. (parent/student #9)

A consequence of student immaturity according to the teachers was the students' inability to handle large amounts of information. The root of the problem could be ineffective work habits or a lack of ability to understand the material. The teachers were not able to definitely pinpoint the reason, but they provided potential answers on the topic.

One teacher, speaking for the group, stated:

I don't think they are mature enough to handle large amounts of information, but then they turn around and are so good like this week. They can't work without complaining, "I can't"...; and I tend to think that by their junior year we will see a higher maturity level. (teacher K/2nd nine weeks)

The four teachers reasoned that when student maturity improved, the classes would be easier to teach. Teacher K stated, "At times these students appeared to await on the angels above to come down and do the work," implying these students had done little in the past and just waited on the system to move them through.

Changes in student maturity were seen in the behavior of students. Teachers believed that a decrease in student

bad-behavior reflected an increase in student maturity. Students agreed with their teachers on the improvement in student maturity.

Student #9 explained:

I thought I was top little hell-raiser. If I wanted to do something, I would do it and nobody would stop me....My parents and teachers last year said I was grade number one heathen, and I thought that I was on top of the world or in control and nobody else could tell me what to do or how. I did it my way, and if I did not want to then I did not, whether right or wrong. This year has changed. I ain't in a lot of trouble. I am a lot nicer....It feels good that I don't get in as much trouble, and people don't think the way they do about me. I like hearing teachers talking about how I changed. I am not as mean as I was.

Another student, who was recognized as a potentially dangerous student because of his outbursts with school personnel and students in the past, demonstrated maturity, according to his teacher, in a sensitive situation in her classroom:

When the principal asked for a moment of silence due to a student at school having died, student #3 got mad at a classmate because the other student would not shut up. Student #3 got up to the other student and told

him, "Someone here has died. I did not know him personally, but I know to shut my mouth." I told student #3 to sit down, and he did, and the other person shut up quickly. (teacher K)

The above student was classified as a behaviorally handicapped student; therefore, he had received extended services due to his handicap. The behavioral specialist working with him in the junior high school also compared the student's past to the present. He offered the following analysis of the student:

He [student #3] allowed others to control his life in the past. I saw him a few days ago, and the impression he sees of himself is that he has grown up and matured. And finally the student himself commented on his change:

I don't worry about somebody trying to push me into a fight because that ain't me now. (student #3)

Another indicator of maturity was in the morality of these students. Many of these students by their own admission were not worrying about morality in the past. The students spoke about racial remarks to each other, drugs and alcohol, bad-behavior, and a lack of respect for others. Through their participation and their success, a phenomenon of becoming morality watchers evolved. Some students said that they wanted their classmates to behave properly in

classrooms and hallways.

Students' ethical attitudes changed during the year. Teacher K exemplified the teachers' observations on the attitudinal change:

Student #4 became a moral watcher. She would say, "I don't like what is going on in class," and then we would have a class discussion. Such topics discussed were cheating, copying others' papers.

By their own account, student current behavioral attitudes changed from past behavioral attitudes. All teachers stated that they held class meetings when items on social norms arose; however, they said that this type of meeting seldom was needed.

A final indicator of maturity, social interaction, emerged the night of the celebration. Students and their families arrived dressed in church attire instead of usual school clothing. The atmosphere was cheerful, exciting, and filled with the anticipation of a wonderful evening. With the meal completed, the meeting moved into the presentation of awards.

The awards presentations were exciting as students laughed and cheered for each other. One parent expressed the excitement:

The Celebration Night was wonderful, and the way the kids served the parents and each other impressed me. A

year ago this group would not have done this, and this was amazing to me. They supported each other, and they applauded for each other. (parent/student #8)

The assistant principal at the school also observed maturity changes. Speaking about one specific student, he noted:

[Student #9] was not tracking well when he got here. I did see his social abilities with adults improve. At the function at the end of the year, he was serving as a waiter with tea glasses and keeping those cups filled. He now understands social norms and he fulfilled a role that night which he assumed.

And, finally, the counselor who had known many of these children since they had been in elementary school offered her observations:

I saw kids serving each other that night. They applauded each other, and there was no jealousy between them. They were proud that they had finished a school year. They were hugging each other and rewarding their teachers.

In summary, student maturity evolved from the data as a significant topic. Students perceived themselves as having changed for the better, even the student with a background of violence. One student became a moral watcher within the classroom. The assistant principal, who knew one student

prior to that student's placement at the high school, commented on how that student finally recognized the social norms of society and how the student was finally able to abide by these. Teachers observed the maturity and commented how they looked forward to the following year because over the summer these students may mature even more. Finally, the counselor commented on how these students became a group as they worked and applauded each other on Celebration Night.

Social Self-Esteem: Summary

Social self-esteem increased from August 1992 to May 1993. The students at the beginning of the school year had a low social self-esteem as identified in responses on the Exploration and Self-Profile and in the interviews. Teachers recognized the low social self-esteem after meeting with the students on the first day.

Student social self-esteem was found to change throughout the school year. Positive interactions, feelings of increased self-worth, and individual maturity all brought forth positive changes in the participants' social self-esteem.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusion, Discussion, Reflections, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary

This study examined the self-esteem of identified at-risk students through their participation in a uniquely designed program entitled Concentrate-on-One. The program was designed to affect student self-esteem, reduce their level of risk, and increase academic achievement. Changes in the students' self-esteem were examined in two domains: academic and social. The following categories were included: feelings about self, teachers, peers, and family and participation in school activities. The Exploration and Self-Profile; school documents; interviews with the students, parents, teachers, and other involved school personnel; and the researcher's diary were the sources of data.

Academic Self-Esteem

The students at the end of their participation in the program in May, 1993, varied in the amount of change in their academic self-esteem. On all except one of the five items on the Exploration and Self-Profile, student responses became more positive. The one exception was boredom in school. The qualitative data, however, provided a different perspective: The students' spoke strongly about not being

bored in the Concentrate-on-One Program.

Nine students spoke positively about school. Parents agreed with students on their feelings about school. Teachers working with these students commented on student academic changes. Students attributed the positive changes in their self-esteem to numerous factors: one academic course per nine weeks, course selection, teacher role, class size, J-curve policy, student attendance, changes in attitude towards math, level of boredom, expectancy to succeed and future aspirations.

Boredom was an ever-present topic for all. Teachers were aware these students became bored easily and tried reducing this negative factor. Students described boredom as a force destroying them previously, and they pleaded for current teachers to change teaching strategies.

The number of classes students took per day was a significant factor according to students and parents. All ten students expressed the difficulty they had managing six courses a day, their usual schedule. Parents agreed with their children. Students and parents found that one academic course per nine weeks was manageable. Students said they had more time to work with their teachers. Parents initially were concerned about the time students were in class with the teachers. Their concerns changed as students succeeded. The four academic teachers agreed that these

students would not have successfully completed more than one academic class per grading period. These findings support those of Ryan (1991), who examined a different allocation of time as a factor in raising student achievement. He found a high rate of success in a sample of more than 800 at-risk secondary students, and he concluded that one academic subject per day gave students more concentrated time to focus on and master the subject.

Overall, the teachers expected students to successfully complete more academic courses for promotion. At the end of the academic year, nine students were promoted to the next grade level. The non-promoted student had the opportunity to attend summer school and complete the credit successfully for promotion, but did not.

Students commented that they had little respect for teachers in the past, especially at the junior high level. Students saw teachers working differently with them during the Concentrate-on-One Program. Students expressed that teachers attended to them more. They also said that teachers used a variety of methodologies in the classroom. Parents agreed with the students. All students and parents said that teachers contributed to students feeling positively about themselves. These findings are in line with the thinking of Lee and Berman (1987), who stated, "Students must be given different ways in which to succeed

and to demonstrate their 'multiple intelligences'"(p. 369).

Teachers in this program expressed that the students had little expectation of succeeding academically. They indicated many of these students had aimed for low grades, including failure, and were still promoted to the next grade level. Teachers said students at the beginning of the program were confused about J-curve grading and the idea of removal of failure. Students succeeded and attributed part of this success to the reality that they were operating on a different grading policy which called for them to succeed at a higher mark.

Students previously attended classes where it was common to have twenty-five plus students. Students in this program attended academic classes composed of sixteen students. Students commented that teachers were unable to help them previously because of class size. In the program, they commented that they received personal attention. The findings support Cuban's (1989) contention that a class size of 15-20 students per teacher permits a level of personalizing instruction unavailable in regular settings.

Students may drop out of school at the age of sixteen in North Carolina. In October, three students spoke about dropping out of school when reaching the age of sixteen. Three other students during the October interview vented their frustration about attending school previously. All

six students expressed a desire either to drop out or to be dropped from school. All ten students completed the school year without dropping out. Students attended school more regularly. Parents said their children liked coming to school.

In October, six students said they did not want to continue their education beyond high school. They said they wanted to get jobs. However, this attitude changed throughout the year. All students in May indicated the need for furthering their education. Three parents said that previously their children had not discussed furthering their education, but now did.

Mathematics surfaced as a detrimental factor for these students. Students said that they had little success in mathematics during their previous years but were still passed. Many of these students believed they could not succeed in math, and parents agreed. Three students had been placed in Chapter 1 while attending the junior high school. These three female students were successful in the mathematics course. Probably due to frustration with the subject, three male students were disciplinary problems in the math course. Five out of ten students successfully completed the math course.

Social Self-Esteem

The students at the beginning of the program in August

1992 had a low social self-esteem, as indicated by the Exploration and Self-Profile and the data from focus group interviews. After the first three hours with students, teachers quickly recognized that these students had a difficult time interacting with each other and with adults.

The students at the end of their participation in the program in May 1993 varied in the amount of change in their social self-esteem; however, a comparison of pre and post scores from the Exploration and Self-Profile indicated that nine out of ten students from August 1992 through May 1993 had increased their social self-esteem. Testimonies from students, parents, teachers, and other school personnel provided data which supported the findings.

Teachers said many factors previously affected negatively student self-esteem. Among these factors were student interaction with peers, student interaction with school personnel and student interaction with family, student feelings of low self-worth, and student immaturity.

Students said that family conflicts created hardships on them. Four students said that many times they wanted to get away from their parents. Jablon (1994) writing on the young adolescent in "Families or Foes" stated, "It is at this time in a child's life that peer groups start becoming more important than parents" (p. 18). He further stated:

Rap groups and other non-academic groups may satisfy

some needs for belonging and emotional support, but they will not connect students with their academic classmates or conceptual learning expected in schools (p. 18).

Interpersonal interaction was limited for these students. Teachers observed the lack of interaction among students on the first day of school. Students also spoke about the difficulty of interacting with their parents. However, all students, teachers, and parents believed that the interaction improved by year's end. Parents welcomed the change. Teachers surmised that previous teacher-student interaction must have been negative.

The importance of student and teacher interaction has been the topic of many authors. Noddings (1987), quoting Comer on student complaints, wrote, "The most common complaint of school dropouts against their teachers is, 'They don't care'" (p. 32). Fortune (1988), reporting on Project HUGS, showed that a program based on teacher effort to demonstrate care was able to cut the number of dropouts in half. Cuban (1989) commented positively about programs which incorporated a model of community. He said that in the community achievement is important, but so is caring for others.

The teachers in this study expressed how their students wanted to create a family atmosphere in the program.

Teachers created three opportunities for interaction outside of regular school hours. These meetings and dinners were successful in terms of students interacting with each other and with adults.

McMillan and Reed (1994) said that at-risk students tried to "fit in" with the majority of school students by engaging in extracurricular activities. Yet, this was not the case with these students. These students, while attending elementary schools, had participated in clubs and athletics. At the junior high school level only two students participated in activities. These same two students continued their participation in athletics at the tenth grade. No student joined school clubs. Students attributed this lack of participation to a current lack of desire.

Student feelings of self-worth increased throughout the school year. Previously, these students believed they were not worthy of doing well academically or socially. The increase was attributed to five factors: increased positive interaction with faculty, decrease in negative behavior, group performances, increase in feelings about their self-worth, and talking about graduation.

Students believed their teachers now had the time and desire to work with them personally. Students said they knew when and how to seek positive attention. All students

said they wanted to know their teachers better. Parents expressed their happiness for their children and wanted assurances that their children would have the same teachers the following year. One parent said that all students should experience teachers such as these. The counselor remarked that these students and teachers had become a group.

Student negative behavior decreased from the previous year. One student said, "I would gladly show my discipline files to anyone," comparing the previous year to this year. Another student, known as a bully, said that he did not want to be known as a bully anymore. The assistant principal expressed his appreciation for these students succeeding because he traditionally dealt with many tenth grade student disciplinary problems.

Students, when interviewed in October, did not speak excitedly about graduation. However, throughout the school year, their aspirations changed. Few of these students had planned on furthering their education, but now all did. Teachers expressed that these students could manage an increase in course load the following year. The teachers believed these students could attend some type of formal schooling beyond the high school level.

Student maturity was not initially raised as a problem. Teachers did not comment on student maturity in August.

However, teachers raised the topic two months later. Although all agreed that maturity was an issue, the teachers were divided on the cause of the student immaturity, either coddling or student lack of studying and preparing for class. The teachers believed parents and previous teachers had coddled these students into putting little effort into accomplishing tasks. Yet, these teachers also said that these students could not have previously handled large amounts of information. In June, teachers believed that the students had matured and could handle more information. Teachers felt that the topic on maturity needed further study.

This study showed how relationships with school personnel and a different learning structure may provide encouragement, high expectations, a support system, and accomplishment and recognition. These factors influenced these students in developing their self-esteem, goals, and personal responsibility. Schools must provide the relationships and involvement fostering this development.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion obtained from the data is that the Concentrate-on-One program had a positive effect on the academic and social self-esteem of participants. Although single variables cannot be identified as contributing to the changes in the self-esteem of participants, the components

of the program as a whole can be given credit for the results. These components were (1) caring teachers, (2) individualized and small group instruction, (3) parental assistance and involvement in the program, (4) varied instructional methods, (5) a no failure policy exemplified by J-curve grading and (6) concentration on one course at a time.

Discussion

This study re-affirms what has been echoed in the halls of academia throughout the course of history: school personnel make a difference. It is documented within this study what students felt about previous teachers and current teachers. Perhaps it is unjustifiable for the finger pointing to previous teachers; however, the students, parents and current teachers all agreed on the significant impact caring teachers have on students. Once the students recognized that the teachers cared and respected them, the students reflected the same attitudes.

It is not uncommon to find thirty plus students in classrooms across this country. Although the research continues to note how smaller class size contributes to student and teacher success, smaller class size is still unavailable for the majority of students. This study showed how at-risk students were able to succeed in small classes. Students, parents and teachers spoke on knowing the

individual in the class. The smallness of the group also resulted in the formation of a small group of adults acting as their own parent/student/teacher association.

Traditionally, parents of students classified as at-risk are not found at parent-school organizational meetings. This program provided opportunities for the parents to become involved, and they did. These parents bought into the program because their children succeeded.

Teachers in this program varied their instructional methods. Teachers facilitated seminars, historical digs, computer activities, and biological and mathematical experiments. Students reminded teachers when lectures and note-taking were becoming the norm in class.

Teachers have been taught bell-curve grading and its usage in the field of education. Teachers in this program were instructed on a no failure policy exemplified by J-curve grading. Students on the first day of school were confused about the policy. They said they had been allowed to fail during the previous years and still pass to the next grade level. Students echoed their appreciation for the J-curve grading because it allowed them the opportunity to attempt again work not mastered. Students succeeded academically. Teachers expressed their desire for students to master the course material.

The traditional course schedule secondary students

follow has long been fragmented. Students have worked in many different locations on different courses throughout the school day. This fragmentation had a previous negative impact on these students. Students expressed being overwhelmed by the amount of different school work. Parents spoke on their children being miserable academically during the previous years. Parents now spoke on their children succeeding academically.

Some Reflections on the Study

Initially, the researcher experienced difficulty in focusing specifically on the topic. Eventually, the researcher was able to focus on the self-esteem issue after working with his doctoral committee. The writing was difficult because the researcher desired to include a large volume of participant quotations in the paper. However, this would have made the paper cumbersome.

Another complicating factor was both junior high schools did not maintain equal information on student transcripts. This inconsistency made it difficult to collect student school data. For example, the transcript for student #1 indicated that he had zero absences. However, this student was suspended five times from school, and these days were not documented. Student #3 lived at a boarding school prior to inclusion in the program. This presented a problem when comparing his previous record to the current

status on absences, discipline problems, and academic success. The student lived at the school, all disciplinary problems were not submitted to the office, and the academic program was designed for remediation purposes.

The researcher expected that students ending the day with vocational courses would positively impact their self-esteem. The results were disappointing. Students did not succeed as expected, and they did not speak well of a specific course. Student failures occurred in the horticulture class. The horticulture teacher prior to 1990 taught students outside the classroom, around the school yard and the greenhouses. Since 1990, the horticultural teacher taught her courses on the competency based curriculum structure of paper and pencil.

In this program, the counseling component was limited. This limitation was created by the four teachers. These teachers believed they were responsible for all services to their students. The counselor provided individual counseling in crisis situations. The counselor could have been used in group settings, facilitating continuous personal growth. This could have provided students an opportunity for venting frustrations. The counselor could have provided feedback to both students and adults.

Personnel problems created difficulties. The program received no support from the central office personnel

responsible for the school system dropout prevention program. The principal was transferred to another school at the conclusion of the first year of the Concentrate-on-One program. With a new administration, the philosophy of the program changed. Students wanting to stay in the program were mainstreamed. Student #3 was suspended from school and eventually dropped from school because he wore a cap inside the building and spoke disrespectfully to an administrator. The students were successful in the Concentrate-on-One program because they reduced their level of risk and increased their academic and social self-esteem. Nine out of the ten students were promoted to the next grade level.

Implications for Practice

Goodlad (1984) called for change in teaching methodology to improve learning effectiveness in schools. Teachers in this program worked consistently to involve students actively in the learning process instead of the traditional lecture approach.

Previous lack of teacher attention to students evolved from the interviews with students and parents. These students and their parents said that previous teachers were not friendly and lacked a desire to know these students. Programs need to be designed in all levels of schools to create a family atmosphere.

Mathematics was an obstacle to these students for many

years. Students and parents said that students experienced little success in the upper elementary school in mathematics. In the junior high, five students experienced success in mathematics; three of these had been placed in the Chapter 1 program for two years at the junior high school. Overall, these students said they were turned off from the abstract world of mathematics. The only disciplinary problems in Concentrate-on-One occurred when students were in the math class. Math teachers should focus on implementing strategies to reduce the rigidity of their courses and to make mathematics more concrete. Teachers should teach students the practical usage of math, not the abstract world which they may be unable to comprehend. Student success in mathematics needs further examination.

The students, parents, and teachers appreciated the smallness of class size--sixteen students per class. This allowed students and teachers to work more closely. Principals should refine teacher work schedules to ensure that teachers serving the at-risk population receive small classes.

School policies are tools used for managing school personnel and students. Two such policies include attendance and grading. Punitive attendance policies, where grades are reduced due to absences, do not encourage at-risk students to attend school. The teachers and the researcher

noted that without a punitive attendance policy in place, student attendance improved. School administrators should refocus their energies from overseeing attendance policies to working with at-risk students in a positive manner.

The second policy, grading, needs to be re-examined. Teachers in this program used the J-curve grading policy with students. Students came to understand that failure and weak progress were not acceptable. Students and parents spoke on the fairness of such a grading policy, while teachers said that it required more re-makes of tests. Although teachers voiced that concern, they were excited because students would stay after school to work on material. A higher expectation resulted in higher self-esteem because of the success achieved. The J-curve should be utilized by teachers. It is a model that invites student success. If intelligence, based strictly on cognitive processes and identified by the Spearman coefficient, was the only identifiable intelligence, then the grading policy as used for decades would suffice. However, the recognition of at least seven intelligences by Gardner (1983) calls for different means of assessing and grading children. Teachers need further training and experiences to implement new practices for grading and assessing children.

School administrators should be wary of purchasing and utilizing "canned" self-esteem programs. These may not

resolve the dilemma of raising student self-esteem. Kohn (1994) said:

The evidence doesn't support the claim that programs intended to help children feel good about themselves are likely to raise students' achievement. (p. 281)

Instead, school personnel should utilize classroom activities that allow students to succeed. Students should be rewarded based on what they have learned. The staff in this study supported and encouraged student activities and interaction that provided meaningful, positive student self-esteem boosters, as students in this study found.

Recommendations

One of the keys to an increase in positive student self-esteem is success in both the academic and social domains. If the objective is rescuing a nation of students at-risk, then adults must accept the task and implement strategies which may benefit at-risk students. However, there is no one solution to the problem. Having heard the voices of persons in this study, the following recommendations might be of value.

Parental Assistance and Involvement Program

The school should assist parents to improve their skills in dealing with their own children and to serve as a source of support to improve the school for all children. A

parent/teacher/student organization for these specific children should be established. A smaller group setting may provide the impetus for all to work more cooperatively.

Concentrated Reading, Writing, and Mathematical Programs

Instructional time should be increased, with longer periods of continuity within the day. The instruction should be at the appropriate level and remediation should be available immediately. The Higher Order Thinking Skills (H.O.T.S) program developed at the University of Arizona should be investigated for math and reading instructional strategies.

Individualized Instruction

A custom-tailored curriculum, flexible scheduling, and frequent feedback on learning outcomes within a smaller class size should all be implemented. One core course per semester or other grading period helps the student to master the material and to continue working on other interpersonal issues. A class size of less than twenty students would make it possible for the teacher to individualize instruction.

At-risk students probably could profit from instructional methods consistent with the seven intelligences identified by Gardner (1983): verbal/linguistic, musical/rhythmic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and

interpersonal. The greater variety of methods would likely meet the diverse needs of the at-risk students.

Counseling

Counseling programs are needed from the first year of school through the last. Junior high or middle school counseling programs may be too late for guiding the at-risk student. Counselors need to be placed in every school. The following recommendations, if implemented, may provide services which currently are not offered in schools.

1. There should be an inventory of strengths and weaknesses for each student.
2. The school should take the lead in identifying both students and parents needing help. Counseling must be offered to both.
3. Counseling should emphasize how to get a job, human relations, and reasons for choosing courses in school.
4. The school must become open day and night for counseling services to students and parents, not just a day activity which parents may not get to due to working hours.

The Teacher

1. Teachers must have class sizes which allow them to know and meet their students' and parents' needs. There is a need to recruit more highly motivated teachers.

Cuban (1989) suggested that class size be reduced to no more than 15 to 20 students and school size to no more than a few hundred.

2. Teachers should be encouraged to form teams. Teams must be given time together to plan and formulate instructional activities for their students. Teams must also have the time together so they can meet with support persons and parents regarding their children.
3. Teachers should be selected for their ability to work with students rather than on the basis of their competency in their subject fields.
4. Teachers need to use an alternative grading practice, such as the "J" curve or expectancy model, rather than the traditional "bell shaped" curve or probability model. The latter calls for the letter grade of a "C" to become the average; therefore, it follows that at least half of the students will be doomed to failure under such a system. This type of grading does not allow feelings of competence, capability, and self-confidence for at-risk children.
5. Teachers need to make classroom activities less boring. Goodlad (1984) stated the following:

We do not see in our descriptions much opportunity for students to become engaged with knowledge so as to employ

their full range of intellectual abilities. And one wonders about the meaningfulness of whatever is acquired by students who sit listening or performing relatively repetitive exercises, year after year. (p. 231)

An alternative high school program can positively impact at-risk students' self-esteem through such facilitative characteristics as trust, respect, cooperation and expectation. Further research within the qualitative framework capturing the feelings of at-risk students should be conducted to test the thesis that alternative school programs with the characteristics of the Concentrate-on-One Program may enhance self-esteem and generate socially appropriate attitudes, increase student achievement, and reduce the level of risk.

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APPENDIX A

Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct the Study

July 9, 1992

Mr. Dwight Jackson
Associate Superintendent
Davie County Schools
Mocksville, N.C. 27028

Dear Sir:

Davie High School will open the 1992-93 school year with an alternative program operating. The purpose of this program will be to focus on sixty-four students categorized as at-risk by teachers, principals and the Davie County School System Drop-Out Prevention coordinator. I desire entry into the study of this program to collect data for my dissertation.


I propose to examine how student self-esteem changes reduce student levels of risk and increase student achievement. Much evidence has been gathered about who the dropout or at-risk student is, this study will attempt to gather and document perspectives on the topic. The topic is timely with the thrust set forth by the North Carolina State Board of Education on reducing the student at-risk factors. The findings from this study will provide a greater understanding of the students' view on their self-esteem and how the school impacts it, which in turn, could lead to more effective methods of responding to student needs.

I will need access to students, teachers, parents, and other school personnel so I may interview these. I propose to meet with you so that I may present an overview of the study, and to answer questions which may arise.

I ask you as chair of the policy committee on rules, regulations and procedures for students and school personnel, for the following consideration. I propose that the attendance and tardy policy be waived on the students in the program developed.

I ask permission to conduct this study at Davie High School and I request your prompt response. Thank you for considering my request to conduct this study at Davie High School for the upcoming school year of 1992-93.

Sincerely,


Robert J. Landry
Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide for School Personnel

Introduction to the Interview:

I will be making some notes as we talk so I'll know that we have covered all of the areas I want to talk to you about. As I have told you, I appreciate being able to record our conversation. I can't remember all of the details. Having what we talked about on tape will help me when I write it up. I promise you confidentiality. Do I have your permission to tape record you?

First Impression: August 1992

- Tell me about your first impression of your morning class.
- Can you talk about the program you're involved in?
- How did you get selected?
- Why should you care about the program?
- Speak on the unacceptability of failure.
- Speak on the students being allowed to fail in the past.
- Speak about the types of students you have.
- How do you know they are potential dropouts?
- What are the characteristics of these students?
- Did you recognize their self-esteem today?
- How are you going to work with students who have a low self-esteem?
- What things are you the teacher going to do?
- Is there anything you would like to add which I have failed to ask about?

Second Interview: October 1992

- Speak on your frustrations.
- Speak on student achievements.
- Has student esteem changed? If so, how?
- Talk about the picnic.
- Speak on today being the last day for students in the first class.
- How do you feel as teachers?
- Is there anything you would like to add which I have failed to ask about?

Third Interview: June 1993

The researcher used the following prompts to seek information from teachers about the participating students in this study.

- Speak on their feelings about their family.
- Their future?
- How did the student do in math?
- If did not do well in math, why not?
- Was school boring for the student?
- Speak on friendships.
- Speak on their feelings about teachers.
- Speak on their self-esteem from the first day and now.
- Speak about Celebration Night.
- Speak on teacher self-esteem.
- Is there anything you would like to add which I have failed to ask about?

APPENDIX C
Student Interview Guide

Introduction to the Interview:

These questions were used in the focus group interview in October, and the individual interview in May.

I will be making some notes as we talk so I'll know that we have covered all of the areas I want to talk to you about. As I have told you, I appreciate being able to record our conversation. I can't remember all of the details. Having what we talked about on tape will help me when I write it up. I promise you confidentiality. Do I have your permission to tape record you?

Please tell me about you.

Please respond to the term self-esteem. I plan to talk with you on the topic of self-esteem. I want to learn more about what you, the student, thinks.

Self

-How did you feel about yourself last year as a student?

-How do you feel about yourself this year as a student?

-How did you feel about fitting in with other students last year?

-How do you feel about fitting in with other students this year?

-What did you think about your future last year?

-Has it changed since last year?

-If so, how?

-Last year, how did you feel about what others thought of you?

-How about now?

Family

-Recall the last conversation you had with your family about school. What did you talk about?

-Is that different from conversations last year?

-Have you talked about graduation?

School

-Would you speak about your classes last year?

-How about your classes this year?

-Describe the people at your school last year?

-Describe the people at your school this year?

-How did the school meet your needs last year?

-How did the school meet your needs this year?

-Was school boring last year? If so, then why?

-Is school boring this year? If so, why?

-If not, then why not?

-Talk about your participation in clubs, sports, or school activities last year.

-How about now?

-How did you feel about school last year?

-How do you feel about school this year?

-Have your friends changed this year?

-How?

-How did you feel about teachers last year?

-How do you feel about teachers this year?

-Is there anything you would like to add which I have failed to ask about?

APPENDIX D
Parent Interview Guide

Introduction to the Interview:

I will be making some notes as we talk so I'll know that we have covered all of the areas I want to talk to you about. As I have told you, I appreciate being able to record our conversation. I can't remember all of the details. Having what we talked about on tape will help me when I write it up. I promise you confidentiality. Do I have your permission to tape record you?

Self

- Compare your child's self-esteem last year to this year.
- School grades last year and this year.
- Speak on the topic of mathematics, last year to this year.
- Discussion on your child's future last year and now.
- Discussion on what others thought of your child last year and now.
- Talk about family talk on the topic of school.
- Speak on your child's classes last year and now.
- Talk on your child's participation in sports, clubs, etc.
- Speak on how the school met the needs of your child last year and now.
- Speak on friends last year and now.
- Speak on teachers in the past and now.
- Speak on the topic of boredom at school.
- Speak on the Celebration Night.
- Is there anything you would like to add which I have failed to ask about?

APPENDIX E

Exploration and Self-Profile

HOW'S YOUR ESP? EXPLORATION AND SELF-PROFILE

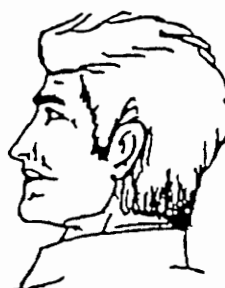
TAKING A LOOK AT WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR SCHOOL

TO THE STUDENT: This short look at yourself will help you think about what you feel. What you think about school. What you think about your family. What you think about yourself. It will only take a few minutes. Just remember, you must be absolutely honest with yourself.

HOW'S YOUR ESP? STUDENT EXPLORATION AND SELF-PROFILE

Twelve statements are listed on the following page. Read each carefully and slowly. Do they sound like something you would say? Put a check mark in the blank under the statement that best describes what you think. Each column has a point value. One point for "sounds like you," two points for "maybe sounds like you" or three points for "doesn't sound like you at all." Give yourself a score for each statement you check.

At the end of each of the two scoring sections are three statements which are based on your scores. These will give you an overall look at how you think as well as a more in-depth look at what you think about SELF, FAMILY and SCHOOL. Please talk to your teacher or counselor if you need any help. Good luck getting to know yourself!



STEP ONE: Respond to the 12 statements below. Read each slowly and carefully before answering. If a statement sounds like you, check column A. If the statement sometimes sounds like you, check column B. If it doesn't sound like you, check column C. Keep in mind, the purpose is not to get a high or a low score, but to be honest with yourself.

1. I feel like I really don't belong anywhere.
2. I really don't understand math and English.
3. I believe that most of the people in my school are jerks.
4. I don't think my parents care whether I finish school.
5. I feel like my teachers really don't care about me at all.
6. I'll probably be married or living with someone by the time I'm twenty.
7. I often think school is boring and doesn't meet my needs.
8. I don't like to spend time at home.
9. My parents don't care if I pass my tests or exams.
10. I don't like to participate in clubs, sports, band or other activities at school.
11. I don't think that graduating from school is important because others in my family didn't.
12. I feel that what other people think about me is very important.

STEP TWO: Add the values from each box checked and enter the total at the bottom of the column in the space provided. Give yourself 1 point for each check in Column A, 2 points for each check in Column B and 3 points for each check in Column C. Total your scores in each column and go to the next page.

COLUMN A Yes, Sounds Like Me	COLUMN B Sometimes Sounds Like Me	COLUMN C Doesn't Sound Like Me
1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
SELF		
SCHOOL		
SCHOOL		
FAMILY		
SELF		
SELF		
SCHOOL		
FAMILY		
FAMILY		
SCHOOL		
FAMILY		
SELF		
Total Points Column A	Total Points Column B	Total Points Column C

Okay, let's see what you think about things.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

STEP THREE: Write your total from each column into the spaces provided. Add them together and compare the point value next to each of the three statements below. This will give you a good idea of your feelings.

_____	+	_____	+	_____	=	[]
Column A Total		Column B Total		Column C Total		Grand Total

30-36 points = I've got myself together and I'm on my way to becoming all I can be. I'll keep checking myself as I go along.

21-29 points = I'm in pretty good shape, but I could use some guidance and encouragement along the way to make sure I stay on track.

12-20 points = I'm an OK person, but I need to find someone to help me now so that I won't make the mistake of dropping out of school.

SELF-ANALYSIS

STEP FOUR: Take a closer look at your scores because they can help you find out how you feel about yourself, your family, and school. In order to discover where your strengths and concerns are, statements are organized into three categories: SELF, FAMILY and SCHOOL, with four statements in each category.

The numbers in parentheses refer to the statements on the preceding page and are grouped according to the particular category under which they fall. In the blanks, simply write in your score for each statement. Add up the total for the individual category and refer to the point values next to each of the three statements.

Statements	TOTALS
SELF (1)_____ + (5)_____ + (6)_____ + (12)_____ =	[]
FAMILY (4)_____ + (8)_____ + (9)_____ + (11)_____ =	[]
SCHOOL (2)_____ + (3)_____ + (7)_____ + (10)_____ =	[]

10 - 12 points = I have a good idea of how I feel about myself, my family and my school. I know when something is bothering me and talk it over with those who can help.

7 - 9 points = I generally know what I'm feeling, but sometimes I could use help to make sure I make the right choices.

4 - 6 points = I'm all right, but many times it would be nice to have someone to turn to for encouragement and help in making tough decisions.

What do you do next?

The following page contains some suggestions on where or who to go to for help in making choices, getting along with your family or others and feeling better about school.

Okay, let's see what you can do?

STEP FIVE: Seek out those who can help. There are people in your community who care about you and want to help. They enjoy helping young people like you solve problems, build better relationships and succeed in school. They won't know you want help unless you ask. Explore with them ways in which you want to improve and those areas where you feel you need attention. Life is tough sometimes, and it's not always easy to make the right choices. Your decisions can make the difference between a happy and successful life and a life of limited opportunities.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP?

If you need support in:

Feeling better about yourself
Discovering your talents
Making friends
Finding out about jobs and career opportunities
Solving a difficult problem

Getting along with family members
Feeling more comfortable at home
Showing your parents that you are responsible
Handling drugs or alcohol
Finding a time or place to study

Feeling more successful in school
Staying in school to graduate
Participating in sports, clubs, etc.
Improving your grades
Feeling like you belong

Ask for help or talk to any of these:

A close friend
Your parent(s)
A teacher you like
A school counselor you trust
A community youth leader or worker

A trusted relative or an older adult
Your best friend's parents
A close neighbor
A religious leader
A nurse or doctor

A teacher or coach
A school counselor or principal
A business person
Another student you trust
A friend who has graduated

There are many people like those listed above who care about you. Talk to them; ask their advice. They won't make fun of you. They will help you work through hard times or difficult situations. They've been where you are. Also, there are many self-help books in your school or public library. Ask the librarian to help you find what you need or check the card catalog under the subject in which you are interested.

STEP SIX: It's your life. Take charge! Now that you know what to do and who can help, make a plan to try and change the things that you want. Ask your friends, teachers or counselor to help you think of some ideas.

I've looked at my feelings about myself, my family and my school and recognize that I will need support and encouragement to change things. I will attempt the following actions as my plan for the future.

I plan to:

(1) _____

(2) _____

Your signature

Date

APPENDIX F
Psychologist's Letter

C. Drew Edwards, Ph.D.

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

November 12, 1992

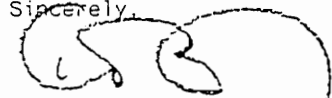
Luther Potts
Chairman, Board of Education
Davie County Schools
220 Cherry Street
Mocksville, North Carolina 27028

Dear Mr. Potts:

I understand that the "School-Within-A-School" program at the county high school will be coming up for review soon. In my work as a psychologist, I have had occasion to see young people who have participated in the program this school year. Without exception, I have been extremely impressed with the improvement in work quality and positive attitude on the part of these youngsters. They have experienced academic success where there has been none before, and, for the first time in their school careers, feel some hope about their ability to progress. Innovative programs like this are a real credit to your school system, and I hope with all sincerity that it will continue to be funded for next year.

Should you desire to talk with me further, I would be happy to hear from you.

Sincerely,



C. Drew Edwards, Ph.D.

CDE/cc

VITA

Robert James Landry

Address: 271-M Dalewood Drive, Winston-Salem, NC 27104

Birthplace: Santurce, Puerto Rico **Date of Birth:** May 10, 1953

Education:

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,
Blacksburg, VA, Ed.D., Educational
Administration., 1995.

Appalachian State University, Boone, NC, Ed.S.,
Public School Administration, 1985.

Appalachian State University, Boone, NC, MA, Public
School Administration, 1978.

Appalachian State University, Boone, NC, BA, Spanish,
1975.

Professional Experience:

Principal, South Davie Middle School, Mocksville, NC,
1993-present.

Principal, Davie High School, Mocksville, NC, 1987-
1993.

Principal, North Davie Junior High School, Mocksville,
NC, 1985-1987.

Assistant Principal, Davie High School, Mocksville, NC,
1982-1985.

Spanish Teacher, Davie High School, Mocksville, NC,
1976-1981.

Spanish Teacher, Plymouth High School, Plymouth, NC,
1975-1976.

Spanish Instructor, Appalachian State University,
Boone, NC, 1974.


Robert James Landry