

An Analysis of Student Assistance  
Program Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine a sample of students who participated in a student assistance program in Southwest Virginia. Using existing data from a school system in Southwest Virginia, this sample was observed to measure changes in student academic performance. The sample was also examined to determine the extent to which they instituted positive behaviors such as school attendance and reduction of disciplinary actions taken. In addition, this study assessed differences in demographic characteristics among student participants. Also studied was the extent to which gender differences related to academic performance and behavior.

Significant changes in students' academic performance, attendance and disciplinary measures were established in the present study. Negative associations were established for those participating in the student assistance program and grade point average. Positive associations were found for those participating in SAP and attendance and disciplinary measures. No significant differences were yielded in the comparison of gender to academic performance and behavior.

SAP coordinators recorded that the majority of participants did improve since referral to program and most completed or currently remained in the student assistance program. However, a small percentage of students actually entered treatment programs following recommendations made to parents from the student assistance program committee.

This research assessed only the demographic and individual characteristics: gender, gifted or special education status, ethnicity and age. Therefore, other

demographics such as socio economic status may offer additional explanation into academic and behavior outcomes of students involved in student assistance programs.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODCUTION

Many adolescents will experience problems that threaten not only their current health but also their ability to become healthy adults capable of leading full productive lives (McGovern & Dupont, 1991). Despite the presence of awareness programs such as DARE and an increase in popular advertising aimed at prevention, one of the problems that continues to plague teens and remain a serious public health concern is substance abuse (Weinberg, 2001). In fact, researchers have also found that the number one risk behavior engaged in by adolescents is substance abuse (McGovern & Dupont, 1991). Quite logically, one of the places greatly impacted by this abuse is the public school system, which must on a daily basis deal not merely with students who are experiencing personal problems but also with those whose problems stem from substance abuse (Dean, 1989). Research on the connection between substance use and school performance suggests that students who use and abuse substances demonstrate a decrease in academic performance (“Addressing Barriers”, 2004).

One approach many schools have adopted in an effort to help adolescents and teenagers facing substance use problems is Student Assistance Programs or SAP. Such programs are made up of trained individuals, such as counselors drawn from school personnel, who work in teams to identify students with substance use problems, intervene, and refer them to community agencies for specialized services, but also offer students a safe place to talk about their problems and concerns (“Bridging the Gap”, 2004; McGovern & Dupont, 1991). Additionally, SAPs provide such services as

substance abuse education to teachers, students, and parents (McGovern & Dupont, 1991). In sum, such programs focus on three main goals: to strengthen the ties between the students, family and community; to teach students life skills such as decision making skills; to set and consistently reinforce expectations (“Bridging the Gap”, 2004). Importantly, Student Assistance Programs do not police schools or exercise disciplinary roles but instead provide a place for education, prevention, treatment, and support (McGovern & Dupont, 1991). Their goals are ambitious, their obstacles numerous: SAP professionals estimate that in the recent past over 11% of students ranging in 12 to 17 years of age use or have used substances such as drugs or alcohol (Weinberg, 2001).

### Statement of Problem

Researchers agree that adolescent substance abuse requires continued research, prevention, education, and treatment. Substance abuse is not a problem that can neatly be solved in our lifetime, but rather a dilemma, which society and schools can learn to manage more effectively (Dean, 1989). However, despite a growing mass of literature documenting that prevention and health promotion interventions have been proven successful in well-controlled research, few of these interventions are consistently implemented in applied settings (Fertman, et al., 2003).

Positive student outcomes have been documented for students lucky enough to participate in Student Assistance Programs: those involved show positive improvements in attendance and graduation status, as well as a decrease in discipline problems (Fertman, et al., 2003). Regardless of documented success stories, though (Fertman, et

al., 2003), researchers recommend that formative program evaluation should remain a continuing component of any SAP implementation progress: in short, further studies are required to establish the effectiveness of such programs (Moore & Forster, 1993; Fertman, et al., 2003). Substantially more studies must be undertaken to demonstrate how student assistance programs can use recorded data to help close the gap between research and practice (Fertman, et al., 2003).

In order to advocate the importance and effectiveness of student assistance programs in school systems, a convincing demonstration of their relationships to student performance outcomes is needed. This study focuses on that goal.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine existing data to answer questions regarding the measurable outcomes of Student Assistance Programs. Many schools collected data for inclusion in their student information records. Using these existing databases, this study set about examining a large sample in an effort to measure changes in attendance and academic performance, as well as to examine differences in the demographics among students assessed.

#### Research Questions

This study proposed three research questions:

- (1) To what extent do Student Assistance Programs effect the overall academic performance of students participating in the program?

- (2) To what extent have students instituted positive behaviors such as improvements in school attendance and a reduction in the need for disciplinary measures?
- (3) Are there any differences in individual characteristics among students participating in Student Assistance Programs in relation to G.P.A. and behavior?

#### Delimitations of the Study

Every study must establish certain parameters, and this study is no different. First, the use of a preexisting data set delimited the study in terms of the scope of the research. Therefore, the variables examined were delimited to the information provided in the data set. Second, this study was delimited to the conceptualization of student's academic performances and school attendance as they related to Student Assistance Programs. Furthermore, this study was delimited by the fact that the researcher did not control sample selection, questions asked, or questioning practices.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study also faced certain limitations. For example, the data it used were collected using a pre-existing data set sponsored by a school system in Southwest Virginia. Use of this particular data set limited the researcher in conceptualization of variables and the scope of the research.

Another limitation of this study involved the fact that it was based on information provided by a sampling of respondents from 10 schools in Southwest Virginia. Studying this sample limited the extent to which the findings could be generalized to a larger population.

Additionally, this study was limited because different SAP coordinators collected the data, and each of whom had their own means of and techniques for reporting information on a standard SAP tracking form. Due to differences in the SAP coordinators' reporting styles and techniques, some of the data was difficult to understand; therefore, some information was reported as unclear.

Finally, because this study did not have a control group, other variables might have influenced changes in respondents over time.

### Uses of the Study

This study documented and evaluated changes in respondents' academic performance (grade point averages), attendance records, and number of disciplines received or required after their participation in the Student Assistance Program. It also assessed differences in demographics among respondents. The collected data provided information helpful to understanding the value and uses of SAPs, as well as to answering the question of whether such programs effectively improve student performance in Southwest Virginia Schools in particular. School personnel might find the study useful because it would permit them greater insight into how or if such programs provide assistance to specific student populations.

Findings from this study will provide a base for future research. Additionally, the results of this study could be compared to results from future studies of similar populations.

This study possesses the potential to assist numerous groups—not merely schools and school personnel, but also (and perhaps more importantly) students, families, and communities. Findings could provide information that would be helpful in the designing and improving of schools-based intervention programs to assist students struggling with substance use problems. Assessing the relationship between SAPs and student performance could provide information for families and communities affected by substance abuse issues.

### Operational Definitions

The following operational definitions are defined as they were used in this study:

#### Academic Performance

The ability to carry out an action or pattern of behavior associated with school and or academic courses.

#### Alcohol Abuse

A continued excessive or compulsive use of alcoholic beverages.

#### Alcoholism

A complex chronic psychological and nutritional disorder associated with excessive and usually compulsive drinking.

#### Excessive

To overindulge in a substance surpassing moderate use (two drinks per day).

#### School Attendance

To be present throughout all periods of a school day.

#### Barriers to Learning

Any hindrance students might face that would cause disruption of or interference with education.

#### Core Team Members

A professional team, including school staff and liaisons from community alcohol, drug, and mental health agencies, trained to identify problems, determine whether or not the presenting problem lies within the responsibility of the school, and make recommendations for assisting the student.

#### Counselor

A trained person who gives professional guidance to the individual by utilizing psychological methods, especially in collecting case history data, using various techniques of the personal interview, and testing interests and aptitudes.

#### Disciplines

A rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity. SAP tracking forms monitor the number of disciplines or number of school regulations infringed by student.

#### Drug Abuse

Improper or excessive use or treatment something and often an illegal substance that causes addiction, habituation, or a marked change in consciousness.

#### Employee Assistance Programs

Programs developed in the 1970s to provide medical and mental health care to workers who were reluctant to seek professional help for drug and alcohol abuse through traditional systems of referral.

#### Intervention

To come between an individual and his or her negative behavior by way of hindrance or modification, with the goal of reducing such behavior.

#### Referral

The act, action, or instance of sending or directing someone for treatment, aid, information, and education.

#### Student Assistance Program Coordinator

A trained school employee responsible for coordinating the drug-free school programs.

#### Student Assistance Program

Intervention programs set up in school systems to address adolescent problems, such as alcohol and drug abuse.

#### Substance Abuse

A continued excessive or compulsive use of substances such as alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, and/or prescription drugs.

#### Substance Use

The use of substances such as alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and or prescription drugs, with such usage ranging in nature from occasional experimentation to habitual use.

### Organization of the Remainder of the Dissertation

This chapter provided an overview of Student Assistance Programs and their relationship to student academic performance, attendance, and number of disciplines reported. It also outlined the problem statement, research questions, and uses of this study. Finally, the chapter concluded with delimitations, limitations, and operational definitions.

The remainder of this dissertation is organized in the following manner: Chapter II: Review of Literature, Chapter III: Methodology, Chapter IV: Results, Chapter V: Discussion, and Chapter VI: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications.

## CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the substantive body of literature devoted to the topic of student assistance programs (SAPs). It begins, quite logically, by reviewing a brief history of such programs. Next comes a consideration of how the literature articulates the nature and function of such programs, then a discussion of the behavioral risk factors that have prompted their organization over time, including drug and alcohol abuse, violence, and sexual behaviors, among others. Other topics studied by the literature follow, including the components of and models for student assistance programs, as well as the processes that drive student assistance programs and the strategies used to track them. Finally, the chapter ends by focusing on the importance and effectiveness of student assistance programs and discussing the issues they face in the future. This review of literature provides a foundation for this research.

### The History of Student Assistant Programs

According to the National Student Assistance Association, a student assistance program (SAP) is a school- and team-based prevention and intervention program for students in Kindergarten through grade twelve (2003) that is designed to remove barriers to learning (Pennsylvania Department, 2004). Student assistance programs were first developed in the 1980's, prompted by the concern of school officials that young people clearly in need of help were not being identified as *at risk* and being offered proper

assistance during their formative school years (Griffin & Svendson, 1986). Prior to this period, most school systems in the United States focused solely on educational matters—for lack of a better description, the *3 Rs*—without recognizing, acknowledging, or confronting the fact that their students' educational capabilities could indeed be shaped by a multitude of external factors, including chemical dependencies, family crises, and sexual issues (Griffin & Svendson, 1986). Once the validity of this fact was accepted, school officials recognized the need not merely for small-scale efforts but instead for a broad approach designed to help students experiencing problems (Griffin & Svendson, 1986). Once begun, student assistance programs not only spread quickly across the United States but also expanded beyond the realm of the school systems themselves (Dean, 1989). In fact, in order to develop programs geared toward early identification of and assistance for at-risk students, schools often formed partnerships and exchanged information with treatment centers (Dean, 1989).

Pennsylvania became one of the first states to implement into its school systems such student assistance programs; in its 20-year history, it has serviced thousands of students (Caron Foundation, 2004). Soon after Pennsylvania's success, other states, such as New York and Kentucky, created similar programs (NSAA, 2003). Now state chapters exist all over the country, in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. In Virginia, Roanoke County implemented a pilot assistance program in Fall 1987 (Atkinson, 1996). This program—funded by a federal grant from the Drug-Free

Schools and Communities Act of 1986 (Lehman, 1992)—was established in order “to provide educational support for students affected by their own or others drug and alcohol related problems” (Atkinson, 1996, p. 3). Since its implementation, Roanoke County’s SAP has grown and currently serves ten secondary schools (Atkinson, 1996; Lehman, 1992).

In the past 20 years, student assistance programs have changed greatly (Dean, 1989). While most such programs began with a focus on alcohol and drug abuse intervention, they have developed an awareness of the multiple facets of such problems and now address the underlying mental and emotional health issues that contribute to alcohol and drug use (Krzanowski, 2004). Today, although hundreds of SAP programs have been implemented across the country and the number climbs steadily each year, they all share a single goal: “to ensure student success through safe, disciplined and drug-free school and communities” (NSAA, 2003 p. 2). As long as such a need exists, student assistance programs will continue to be created (Fertman et al., 2003).

### The First Student Assistance Program Model

Student assistance programs were, in fact, modeled after employee assistance programs (EAP), which were created by corporations and businesses in the early 1970s in an effort to provide services to employees who had substance problems but were reluctant to seek medical treatment on their own (Morehouse & Tobler, 2000; Fertman et al., 2003; “Bridging the Gap,” 2004; Moore & Foster, 1993). As might be expected, such programs originated less in a desire to aid employees than in an effort to improve

productivity, which employers found to be affected mightily by substance abuse (Morehouse & Tobler, 2000). The first EAP in fact had its own model, one devised from the five-step Johnson Institute of Alcoholism Intervention Model (Moore & Forster, 1993). The Johnson Institute's five-step procedure included documentation for impairment, confidentiality, objective resistance to impairment, recommendation for care, and continuing support group within the workplace (Moore & Forster, 1993). In turn, the EAP process involved:

- documentation of substance abuse by trained managerial personnel,
  - an intervention, during which a managerial employee and possible family members or co-workers would present the affected individual with information regarding his or her behavior and employee functioning as a result of substance abuse,
  - a referral of the employee to an assigned EAP counselor trained to evaluate the employee's situation and undertake a treatment plan; and
  - a referral of the employee to a community-based treatment service, with a promise of ongoing work support services (Moore & Forster, 1993).

Under this model, employees were offered rewards and incentives in an effort to gain their compliance to the treatment process (Moore & Forster, 1993).

Such programs were indeed necessary. Studies of the time indicated that 15% of full-time 18-to-34 year old employees reported using drugs the previous month, while 9% reported drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion (Reynolds & Lehman, 2003). The success of the programs were then effectively documented. Research studies found

that they reduced employee absenteeism, disciplinary actions, grievances, on-job accidents, and medical visits (“Bridging the Gap”, 2004). In addition, studies indicated that EAPs were not only effective but also cost efficient (“Bridging the Gap,” 2004). By rehabilitating employees instead of rehiring and retraining new ones, companies benefited by saving both time and money (Moore & Forster, 1993).

For more than twenty years, EAPs have proven successful at helping companies identify and assist employees with substance abuse related problems (Morehouse & Tobler, 2000). What is more, such programs expanded their reach beyond substance abuse problems and now assist individuals with other needs, such as psychological counseling (Morehouse & Tobler, 2000). Acceptance by both employees and management has developed in part due to a widespread programmatic emphasis on confidentiality (Moore & Forster, 1993). In fact, in many workplaces, EAPs are still going strong and expanding their range of referral to more areas of health care (Moore & Forster, 1993).

In their efforts to provide a similar range of assistance to students, school officials first attempted to reproduce EAPs by placing substance use specialists in school settings; this process, in turn, led to the creation of the more developed and cooperative team-based SAPs (Morehouse, 1989). While the first attempts at student assistance programs were not always successful, they did pave the way for the future. In their present-day form, they are capable of providing more services to more students.

## The Present Student Assistance Program Models

Student assistance program primary have two models, the external model and the internal model also know as the core team model. Although, this study investigates student academic and behavioral outcomes based on a SAP program using the internal model, both models will be briefly explained.

### The Core Team Model

The core team model also known as the internal model is the most widely used model in school systems. This model staff typically includes teachers, counselors, administrators, nurses, health educators and community staff from behavioral health programs. The responsibility for leadership is collaborative usually with a coordinator in charge of operation, planning, and evaluation of the teams daily activities. The team is typically under the supervision of a building administrator who routinely works closely with team members in the areas of research and evaluation of these school-team-based programs (Fertman, 2004).

### The External Model

The external student assistance program model depends on community based agencies to provide staff and leadership for SAP operations in schools. Behavioral health specialists and psychologists are often the staff that plays a role in the SAP procedures. This models origin lies in Residential Student Assistance Programs in New York.

Although, the external model is less often used past research has found promising results (Fertman, 2004).

### The Nature and Function of Internal Student Assistance Programs

Simply put, student assistance programs provide education, prevention, early identification, intervention, referral and support services for students prone to or exhibiting risk behaviors that could potentially interfere with their educational success (NSAA, 2003). Their goal is to provide the greatest positive impact on the most students by involving parents, students, school personnel, and community members in the reduction of barriers to learning—“barriers” meaning, in effect, anything that could adversely affect students’ social and academic performance (NSAA, 2003). Using a team approach that coordinates efforts between school officials and outside experts, such as therapists, SAPs recognize problem behavior among the student body and move to intervene and aid students (“SAP Performance,” 1999).

SAP teams are usually comprised of six to eight members and include one central office representative, such as a superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of curriculum, or director of pupil services (“Guidelines for,” 1991). Another member of the team must be a building administrator, such as a principal or a vice principal, from the building in which the SAP will be implemented, while the remaining four to six members can include teachers, counselors, psychologists, nurses, and other professional staff (“Guidelines for,” 1991). Once a referral is made to the SAP team, individuals who serve on it become responsible for collecting observable data, planning appropriate levels of

intervention, treating information received in a confidential manner, maintaining accurate records, providing the school with concise data necessary for assisting students, and utilizing school and community resources to complete the process of assistance (NSAA, 2003).

In order to sit on the SAP team, all members must participate in training and certification procedures (“SAP Performance,” 1999), during which they learn to identify problems, determine whether such problems lie within the school’s responsibility, and then make recommendations for assisting the student (Pennsylvania Department, 2004). Professional training of team members includes an intense orientation to all four phases of the SAP process: referral, team-planning, intervention and recommendations, and support and follow-up (Pennsylvania Department, 2004). This training, which is consistent with state guidelines, is conducted by a commonwealth- or state-approved training provider, a fact that ensures the board of school administrators, parents, students, and the public that team members have up-to-date information consistent with accountable standards and procedures (Pennsylvania Department, 2004). In addition, SAP team members are also responsible for learning about any state and federal laws regarding the privacy rights of parents and students, such as FERPA (Pennsylvania Department, 2004).

The National Student Assistance Association maintains that training programs for team members increase the knowledge and skills necessary to provide for educational support groups, agency referrals, mediation, mentoring, and research-based prevention curriculum (2003). SAP teams are trained to assist in gathering and evaluating objective

data, make accurate and objective faculty observations, identify appropriate school-based and community resources, and match the needs of students with the suitable resource (NSAA, 2003). In order to maintain for it a high level of rigor and professionalism, SAP training is consistently monitored by the Commonwealth Student Assistance Program Training System, also known as CATS (“SAP Performance,” 1999). Teams that undertake such training earn a certificate from the approved training provider and the Department of Education, Health and Public Welfare, which ensures the appropriateness of services (SAP Performance, 1999). SAP teams are required to meet twice a week with the minimum meeting time for the period of eighty minutes (“Guidelines for,” 1991).

Periodically, SAP teams are evaluated in order to assess their progress toward goals, as well as to help them refine their objectives and improve program services (NSAA, 2003). These evaluations take the form of questionnaires and surveys addressing the perceptions of team members concerning the program (Atkinson, 1996; Lehman, 1992). Through the use of evaluations and rigorous standards, SAPs have increased their ability to assist students (Performance report, 1999).

In large part, student assistance programs provide the main tools for schools across the nation to tackle students’ behavioral health needs (Fertman et al., 2003). Selecting and training SAP team members to follow SAP’s systematic process accurately and appropriately permits such programs to reach their primary goals of identifying student needs and linking students to appropriate education, programs, and services (Fertman et al., 2003, Performance Report, 1999). The next section of this chapter

considers the sorts of behaviors that have fueled the rise of assistance programs across the United States.

### The Need for Student Assistance Programs

Without an apparent need, no sort of assistance program would exist. The same principle holds true for student assistance programs, which have grown over time in number and scope as risk factors have increased to put more students in need. Over the last decade, for example, widespread participation in risk behavior has increased among adolescents in America (McGovern & Dupont, 1991; Weinberg, 2001). In particular, many adolescents in the United States engage in behavior that specifically threatens their health, primarily drug and alcohol abuse (Center for Disease Control, 2003; McGovern & Dupont, 1991). Findings by Brent et al. (1999) suggest that the abuse of substances such as drugs and alcohol often serves as the springboard to other risk behaviors that serve as barriers to learning, such as violence, sexual activity, and, in the worst case, suicide (“Addressing Barriers,” 2004). For example, Maney, Gardill and Mahoney (2002) reported that adolescents who reported drinking at high risk levels also experienced higher levels of behavior they regretted, trouble with their parents, sexual activity, dating problems, fighting, problems with friends, and the ubiquitous “trouble in school.” Some researchers have suggested that all of these problems might be attributed to the increase in abuse and neglect experienced by teens, but whatever the cause, risk behavior among adolescents is on the rise and must be dealt with accordingly (McGovern & Dupont, 1991).

At the forefront of the battle against such risk behaviors are SAP team members, who must help students through a myriad of problems that could impact their academic success, psychological and physical well-being, and life chances, including drug and alcohol use, violent behavior, inappropriate sexual activities, and depression or other psychological disorders. While those who deal with adolescents and young adults often perceive these problems to be separate and divisible, most experts now agree that drug and alcohol abuse can in fact lead to other risky behaviors. As a result, such abuse takes precedence among student assistance programs.

#### Drug Use

Among risk behaviors, substance abuse is the problem behavior most engaged in by adolescents (McGovern & Dupont, 1991; Center for Disease Control, 2003), and numerous studies have linked it during high school and young adulthood to lowered potential for educational attainment (Shelia et al., 2004; Yamada, Kendix & Yamada, 1996)

Interestingly, one of the substances most often abused by teens is often considered by many to be the least “harmful”—tobacco (Center for Disease Control, 2003). A 2003 survey by the Center for Disease Control reports that 24.4% of high school seniors admitted to using cigarettes in the past month and that such use increases between the eighth and twelfth grades. For example, of the eighth graders surveyed for this report, 9.6% reported use of cigarettes in the last month, while 16.7% of tenth graders reported cigarette use during the same period (Center for Disease Control, 2003).

Among other substances frequently used by teenagers, one finds controlled drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy (Center for Disease Control, 2003). A 2001 study reports that many adolescents between the ages of 12-17 have tried controlled substances (Weinberg, 2001). That fact is given credence by the Center for Disease Control, which reports that 24.7% of male and 17.3% of female high school seniors had used marijuana in the past month (2003). In addition, the CDC (2003) also found that 2.6 % of male seniors and 1.4 % of female seniors had used cocaine in the month prior to the survey. As for the use of ecstasy (MDMA), an increasingly popular drug, 1.3% of male seniors and 1.2% of female seniors had used it within the past month (CDC, 2003).

The primary obstacle SAPs face in combating substance abuse is a seemingly insurmountable one: numerous research studies have attributed increased chemical abuse among adolescents and young adults to peer pressure (Weinberg, 2001; Dinges & Oetting, 1993; Diwns & Rose, 1991, McDonald & Towberman, 1993; Prinstein, Boergers & Spirito, 2001; Sheila et al., 2004). Such peer pressure cuts across gender lines, making it even more pervasive and difficult to overcome. For example, a report released by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation indicates that teenage girls admit they feel pressured to do drugs and drink in order to fit in and belong (“Voices of Generation,” 1999). Regardless of the difficulty SAPs confront in helping students overcome substance abuse, the fact that the problem is at the top of the priority list makes it impossible to ignore. Close on its heels is alcohol abuse.

### Alcohol Use

Research by the CDC (2003) suggests that the substance most frequently used and abused among high school students is alcohol. In fact, alcohol is among only four risk factors that have deteriorated in adolescents within the past decade (Werch et al., 2003). Numbers bear out the increasingly prevalent nature of the problem. According to a nationwide survey conducted by the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), for example, eight out of 10 high school students have had at least one drink of alcohol in their lifetime, while nearly half (47.15%) had one or more drinks of alcohol in the past month (CDC, 2003; Werch et al., 2003). Not only are adolescents consuming alcohol, but they are also consuming it in alarmingly dangerous amounts (Bartlett, 2004). A study by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health established that 25% of teens surveyed reported drinking more than five drinks in a row and becoming drunk within the past year (Bartlett, 2003). In addition to being a problem on its own, alcohol abuse is directly related to other risk behaviors experienced by adolescents and young adults, including driving while intoxicated and unprotected sex (Bartlett, 2004). For these reasons, SAPs take particular interest in helping students overcome alcohol abuse problems. Solving the single problem can, it is clear, prevent others—like violence, sexual promiscuity, and depression—from occurring.

### Teen Violence

As studies by the Center for Disease Control and other agencies have determined, it is not uncommon that teens involved in substance abuse also find themselves enmeshed in other risk behaviors (Brent et al., 1999; Werch et al., 2003). Primary among such

behaviors are delinquency and aggressiveness (Giancola, Mezzich & Tarter, 1998). In fact, research indicates substantial connections between substance use and higher rates of violent crime (Shelia et al., 2004; Grossman, Chaloupka, Saffer, & Laixuthai). For example, Lowry et al. (1999) determined that as the numbers of substances abused increased, so did indicators of school violence, including weapon carrying, willingness to engage in physical confrontations and levy threats of personal injury, likelihood of stealing or damaging property, and absenteeism. Since such a large number of reported violent activities have occurred when perpetrators—and victims, in many instances—have been drinking alcohol and abusing drugs, researchers have quite easily posited the connection between such factors (Lowry et al., 1999). This means that SAPs must provide due diligence to drug and alcohol abuse for the tendency those who experience it have toward violence. In addition to lashing out against others, however, those who suffer from substances abuse often make themselves vulnerable to violence and more as a result of risky sexual behaviors

### Sexual Behavior

Substance use has also been linked to promiscuous sexual behaviors, teen pregnancy, and, by extension, rising rates of abortions among teens (McGovern & Dupont, 1991). In fact, a 2002 study by Maney, Gardill, and Mahoney confirms the connection between substance abuse and risky sexual behaviors. For the study, which aimed to investigate high-risk behavior in regard to alcohol abuse, the researchers created an in-home health survey on which adolescents could report their involvement in problem

behaviors while under the influence of alcohol (Maney, Gardill & Mahoney, 2002). Resulting data showed that 28.5% of students surveyed reported regretting certain behaviors, among them sexual activity (Maney, Gardill & Mahoney, 2002). Of the students who reported combining drinking with sexual activity, higher risk drinkers—drinkers who consumed 5 or more average servings of alcoholic beverages in a row—were significantly more likely to regret it than low risk drinkers (Maney, Gardill & Mahoney, 2002).

In a related study, Richter, Valois, McKeon, and Vincent (1993) investigated condom usage and number of sexual partners among adolescents and discovered that the tendency for adolescents to engage in risky sexual behavior—including failure to use protection and engaging in sex with multiple partners—is enhanced when they are under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Richter et al. (1993) also found a significant correlation between substance use and risky sexual behavior for the majority of race and gender groups investigated, while in a 2002 study, Kirby discovered that one-fourth of teenagers who had reported promiscuous behavior had contracted to sexually-transmitted disease.

In addition to putting teenagers at risk of contracting HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases, unprotected sexual encounters can also (logically) lead to unwanted pregnancies. Despite the fact that teenage pregnancies (birth rates) have declined, the United States retains one of the highest rates among developed countries (Singh & Darroch, 2000). For example, Kirby (2002) found that 40% of young women become pregnant before age 20. In addition, while the relationship between substance abuse,

pregnancy, and abortion has been under-investigated, the connection at the very least has been posited. For example, in 2004, Reardon, Coleman and Cogle alleged that higher rates of alcohol consumption and illegal drug use lead to higher rates of abortion.

In addition to prompting increased levels of violence or “acting out” and motivating risky sexual behaviors, drug and alcohol abuse can also lead adolescents and young adults to depression and, if unchecked, to suicide.

### Suicide

Drug and alcohol abuse often present just the tip of the proverbial iceberg to student assistance programs. Often, such behaviors are indicative of—or contributing factors to—deeper problems, such as depression and attempted suicide. In fact, in 1999, Brent, et al. established a direct link between substance abuse and suicidal tendencies among adolescents and young adults. Additionally, data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated that adolescents who engaged in substance use were more likely than those who abstained to experience thoughts of suicide and to exhibit suicidal behaviors (Burge, Felts, Chenier & Parrillo, 1995).

Regardless of whether drug and alcohol abuse among adolescents and young adults leads to increased levels of school violence, higher pregnancy rates, and/or greater incidence of suicide, the complex web of associated behaviors without exception impact on students’ learning capabilities. Student assistance programs recognize that in order to help a student achieve academic success and improve life potential, they must effect positive change at the root of the problems.

### Learning Barriers

For years, school systems across the United States have striven to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population—not in terms of multiculturalism, but in terms of emotional, psychological, educational, familial, physical, and economic diversity, each of which can impact student success (Bahr et al., 1999). Many students remain troubled by problems that interfere not only with their emotional and social development but also with their academic performance (Griffin & Svendsen, 1986). Today, even after much progress, our schools are faced still with the difficult task of reducing high-risk behaviors in order to reduce barriers to student learning (“Addressing Barriers,” 2004). One of the most prevalent barriers is substance abuse, a fact established by countless studies (Bahr, Whitten, Dieker, Kocarek & Manson, 1999; Griffin & Svendsen, 1986). It has been estimated that of these adolescents engaging in high-risk social and health behaviors, eighty percent of them need but are not receiving behavioral health services (“Addressing Barriers,” 2004).

American schools have approached the challenges of substance use and high-risk behavior among students in various ways, with student assistance programs being among the most vital and potentially successful of the choices available to them (“Addressing Barriers,” 2004). Researchers have estimated that fifty percent of teenagers need ongoing support to avoid high-risk behaviors, and SAPs provide such assistance on a continuous basis (“Addressing Barriers,” 2004). In order to secure the success of assistance programs, school systems must ensure that they possess several vital component

### Components of Student Assistance Programs

The National Student Assistance Association (2003) recommends that in order to ensure student success in a safe, disciplined and drug-free environment, student assistance programs must possess nine crucial components. Designed to reduce student risk factors, promote protective factors, and increase student development, the nine components are

- school board policy,
- staff development,
- program awareness,
- internal referral process,
- problem-solving team and case management,
- student assistance program evaluation,
- educational student support groups,
- cooperation among and collaboration with community agencies and resources,  
and
- integration with other school-based programs (NSAA, 2003).

First among the components, school board policy is necessary for defining the school's role in creating a safe, disciplined, and drug-free learning community. School board policy also clarifies the affiliation between the student's academics, the use of substances, and engagement in high-risk behavior (NSAA, 2003). In addition, school board policy also provides school staff with appropriate guidelines and procedures (NSAA, 2003).

The second component, staff development, provides all school employees with the necessary foundation of attitudes and skills to reduce risks, increase protective factors, and foster resilience through the services of student assistance programs (NSAA, 2003). Specifically, staff development activities present information and train school faculty so that they can more successfully help adolescents with substance use issues and behavioral problems (NSAA, 2003).

Third among components, program awareness involves educating parents, students, agencies, and the community about school policies regarding alcohol, tobacco, drugs, delinquent behavior, and violence. Additionally, program awareness also supplies information about student assistance program services and promotes student success (NSAA, 2003).

The internal referral process is an important component, because it identifies and refers students with academic and social concerns to multidisciplinary problem-solving case management teams (NSAA, 2003). The goal of this process is identification and referral of students to a case management team responsible for reviewing objective data (grades, attendance and discipline), recording faculty observations and comments, recognizing solutions, and deciding on the next logical step (NSAA, 2003).

An additional vital component involves problem solving team and case management. The task of the case management team (problem solving team) involves evaluating how the school can best serve students with academic and social problems through solution-focused strategies (NSAA, 2003). This team assists in the gathering and evaluating of data and faculty observations and of

identifying appropriate school and community resources. This team provides a system for monitoring a student's academic and behavioral progress and for assessing any changes that should be made in order provide the greatest positive results (NSAA, 2003).

Another component recommended for implementation involves student assistance program evaluation, a process developed to ensure continuous and quality improvement of student assistance services and outcomes (NSAA, 2003). Student assistance program evaluation periodically studies SAP outcomes to assess the progress of the program toward its goals and uses the evaluation results to refine objectives and to improve both program and services (NSAA, 2003).

A seventh component involves educational student support groups, which were created to provide information, support, and problem-solving skills to students experiencing academic and social problems (NSAA, 2003). These educational support groups are also used by faculty, staff and parents to offer information, support, and problem-solving skill and strategies for constructing relationships with adolescents (NSAA, 2003). Cooperation among and collaboration with community agencies and resources, the eighth component, was formed to build bridges between schools, parents, and community resources through referral and shared case management (NSAA, 2003).

Finally, integration with other school-based programs is recommended by the NSAA (2003) to ensure student assistance program success. This component was developed to integrate student assistance services with other school-based

programs and to assure coverage and inclusion in parent, student, and teacher handbooks (NSAA, 2003).

According to the National Student Assistance Association, these nine components serve as the minimum requirements for reducing barriers to learning and for guaranteeing student success (2003). By including these nine components in their own student assistance programs, school systems can assemble a strong foundation for intervention endeavors. Interestingly, these components are analogous to those found in the employee assistance programs created by businesses and corporations to ensure a productive and healthy workforce.

#### The Processes that Drive Student Assistance Programs

During weekly team meetings, SAP members discuss students referred to the program by a variety of sources, including peers, parents, teachers, counselors, and—in many cases—the students in question themselves (“SAP Performance,” 2000). Common reasons students are referred include, but are not limited to, observable behavior changes, performances below academic abilities, and poor attendance (“SAP Performance,” 2000). After a referral is made, the SAP team collects data and reviews information regarding observable behavior from parents and school personnel (“SAP Performance,” 2000). If the team members deem further action is necessary, parental contact is initiated by phone or mail then confirmed by verbal or written acknowledgment of the SAP process (“SAP Performance,” 2000). Parents can choose to participate in the process, or they can refuse to do so (“SAP Performance,” 2000). Following the contact of parents, in-

school or community-based services are recommended as determined by the needs of the child or adolescent (“SAP Performance,” 1999; “SAP Performance,” 2000). In most cases, a counselor is delegated to track students in the SAP program using a tracking form (“SAP Performance,” 1999; “SAP Performance,” 2000).

The final step in the SAP process involves the SAP Coordinator evaluating the program at his/her own assigned school in an effort to determine its success, a task usually accomplished through the use of questionnaires disseminated to faculty and students (Lehman, 1992). Since the overall goal of SAP is to encourage students to overcome a variety of problems in order to remain in school, achieve academic success, and advance to the next grade or to graduate, the coordinator must use the results of the evaluation to determine which elements of the individual program are accomplishing results—and which must be abandoned or altered in order to assure improved outcomes (“SAP Performance,” 1999). In order to achieve its goals, a program must create a tracking form that fully encompasses the design dimensions.

#### Major Student Assistance Programs Tracking Form Strategies

The tracking forms used by SAP teams often differ. For the most part, each tracking form includes an SAP number, school information, and demographic information, date of entry into program, referral date, and exit date from program, recommendation information, and reasons for exiting the program. Demographic information found on the tracking form includes ethnicity, gender,

age, information that can help schools discover relationships between demography and risk factors (Atkinson, 1996). The date of entry, referral date, and date-exited program are significant to the schools because they help create timelines that indicate the effectiveness of the program in teaching its goals (Atkinson, 1996).

Reasons for referral and identification of the person who made the referral are also important because they help determine correlations among students (Atkinson, 1996). Referral reasons may include behavioral concerns, alcohol and drug violations, athletic policy violations, bullying, decline in academics, and decreased attendance (Atkinson, 1996). Determining why the student was referred to SAP is often the first step in getting the student the necessary assistance. Persons who often refer students to SAPs are teachers, counselors, parents, visiting teachers, and peers, although some students are insightful enough to refer themselves. Knowing the person who referred the student to SAP will allow schools to establish relationships and determine nomadic tendencies.

Although every piece of information on the tracking form is crucial, the recommendation information could in fact be the most vital. Using this information, schools can find out what was recommended to the student and if the recommendations were completed or refused. These details help schools determine exactly what makes the difference in the program's overall success—recommendations taken or recommendations refused?

Reasons for exiting the SAP program, could include finished program, transferred to another school, incarceration, dropped out of school, or graduated

(Atkinson, 1996). Determining the reason a student exited the SAP program will help schools investigate differences among individuals that remain in SAP versus individuals that exit the program.

While there are no specific criteria required for the tracking form and many in fact differ from school district to school district, the subjects listed in this section can be found on the majority of forms used by student assistance programs and, it is agreed by many, provide the greatest range of information for tracking the overall success of intervention and assistance endeavors.

#### The Importance and Effectiveness of Student Assistance Programs

Since their inception, student assistance programs have undergone the scrutiny of social researchers and scholars alike. Numerous reports and articles have tracked their successes and delineated the ways in which they can be improved. In this section, some of those studies will be considered.

Often, the goal of such studies is widespread evaluation of success. For example, in 1999, Bahr and colleagues studied school-based intervention teams in an effort to determine how successful they were in accommodating diversity among students. Their findings revealed that positive practices by many school-based intervention teams did in fact result in accommodating an increasing diverse group of students (1999).

Other studies have focused on the efforts of individual school localities. In one particular study, for example, over a period of a single academic year (1987-1988) Lehman investigated the Roanoke County (Virginia) Student Assistance

Program . Data indicated that the program was successful in its development and implementation (Lehman, 1992). Results determined that school personnel understood program and polices, indicated that students were utilizing the variety of services offered by SAP and thus were benefiting from it, and established that participants had a favorable attitude toward the SAP program (Lehman, 1992). In an additional study, Atkinson (1996) also examined the SAP in Roanoke County Virginia, and verified that these programs provided education, assistance, support, early intervention and linkage to the appropriate resources. Atkinson (1996) established evidence that the Roanoke County Student Assistance Program had substantial positive impacts on students and played a critical role in maintaining safe and drug-free schools in the Roanoke Valley.

Similarly, Fertman, Tarasevich, and Helper (2003) analyzed the outcome of Pennsylvania's Student Assistance Program and reported that "positive student outcomes are evident for students participating in SAP for attendance, drug/alcohol policy violation, promotion, retention and graduation status." More precisely, Fertman and colleagues (2003) examined a sample consisting of secondary school students who were referred to the SAP program for the schools years 1998-2001. Students in this study showed positive improvements in attendance and decreases in drug/alcohol policy violations, while retention increased and graduation status improved after their referral to SAP (Fertman, et al., 2003). This study showed that by reducing absenteeism and alcohol and drug violations, students in the program improved their academic performance and reached graduation, facts that validate program success.

Some studies take a “have and have not” approach, focusing on whether students for whom such services are available find themselves more likely to remain in school and succeed both academically and in life. For example, a study by Scott, Surface, Friedli, and Barlow (1999) investigated whether Nebraska students in schools with Student Assistance Programs can be associated with reduced alcohol and substance use and a higher level of academic performance than can students from schools without student assistance programs. The study disseminated a survey to over 3,454 students in grades seven to twelve at eighty-three Nebraska schools, then compared results to a second survey collected by each school team. Results showed that students from schools with student assistance programs reported a lower use of alcohol use in the last month compared with rates of students from schools without SAPs. In addition, results also showed significant differences in academic achievement. The study thus determined that in schools with SAPs, students exhibited lower alcohol usage rates and higher academic success (Scott, Surface, Friedli & Barlow, 1999).

In a related study, Morehouse and Tobler (2000) investigated student assistance programs in residential settings, referred to as Residential Student Assistance Programs (RSAP). Such programs are directed toward high-risk adolescents who reside in residential facilities such as foster care sites and treatment centers for teens. For this study, student assistance programs were implemented and data was collected. Following implementation of such programs, the results determined among residents a 1% decrease in alcohol use, and a significant decrease in marijuana and tobacco use (Morehouse & Tobler,

2000). Morehouse and Tobler (2000) concluded that the residential student assistance program reduced both the amount and number of drugs abused by residents.

Since a vital component of such programs extends into the realm of mental health, some studies have focused on that topic. In 1996, Wassef, et al, conducted a study to determine if school-based intervention programs effectively address students' emotional distress and behavioral problems. The study investigated the efficacy of a proactive student-assistance program—based on volunteer-facilitated peer support groups—in addressing students' emotional distress and behavioral problems. Participants took part in weekly 50-minute peer support groups and later anonymously evaluated their progress and the program using a self-assessment questionnaire. Results demonstrated that over half of alcohol and substance users reduced their intake, while 60% percent of those who had considered dropping out of school continued their education (Wassef et al., 1996). Results provided evidence that student assistance programs show promise for early recognition and management of emotional and behavioral problems (Wassef et al., 1996).

In the twenty years of their existence, student assistance programs have borne the scrutiny of many eyes. Their successes have been carefully measured, evaluated, and proclaimed. Yet, it is inevitable that even the most successful of programs face obstacles. For student assistance programs, drug testing proves particularly problematic, as it serves as an umbrella under which hide a myriad of related questions and issues, including parental permission and privacy rights.

## Issues Facing Student Assistance Programs

Several thorny issues confront student assistance programs and often can interfere with their process and success. Issues such as drug testing, reluctance of students to seek help, and parental factors often can inhibit the procedure and outcome of student assistance programs.

### Reluctance of Students to Seek Help

Other factors also affect the success of a student assistance program in reaching its goals. First and foremost, Individuals with drinking and drug problems become particularly reluctant to seek help, often due to fear, embarrassment, or the belief that if they do so they will be rejected by their peers (Reynolds & Lehman, 2003). These facts have been tested by studies conducted in the business world. In one such study, 990 participants were randomly selected to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire on health and performance in the workplace (Reynolds & Lehman, 2003). The study found that employees with drinking problems were significantly less willing to use employee assistance programs than were employees without drinking problems. Many employees believed that there were negative aspects to seeking help for problematic drinking and drug use, such as revealing a problem and becoming stigmatized (Reynolds & Lehman, 2003). These findings clearly indicated that employees who would most benefit from EAPs were the most reluctant to use them (Reynolds & Lehman, 2003). Since employee assistance programs and student assistance are so inherently similar, it is possible to extrapolate that many students with drug and alcohol issues would be reluctant to use student assistance programs for reasons

such as humiliation and lack of acceptance. For those students who do overcome their fears and begin such programs, the assistance of parents often proves crucial to their success.

### Parental Factors

Parents have proven to be vital partners in the success of student assistance programs (NSAA, 2003). According to Baker and Soden (2000), studies suggest that parental involvement in children's formal schooling and early intervention programs is vital for academic success. There is also mounting evidence that continuous parent involvement throughout the educational process facilitates academic achievement (Baker & Soden, 2000). Researchers Fantuzzo, Davis and Ginsburg (1995) demonstrated that early intervention programs which included a parent involvement component were far superior to intervention programs that did not.

Nationwide, school districts are being encouraged to revise their parent involvement policies in an effort to improve children's education (Baker & Soden, 2000). However, further parent involvement studies are recommended to determine with greater precision the types of involvement that have the most positive outcomes for student learning (Baker & Soden, 2000).

### Summary of Literature Review

This chapter has provided a review of literature related to student assistance programs. In the twenty years that have passed since the inception of

such programs, research has shown that they present effective strategies for identifying, assessing, and referring adolescents with social and academic problems.

Topics covered by this chapter included the history of student assistance programs, their nature and function, the need that exists for them, their components and models upon which they are based, the processes that drive them, major tracking strategies, their effectiveness, and the issues they face.

This review of literature suggests that further research must be conducted to assess the effectiveness of student assistance programs. Results of the research suggested that SAP programs are potentially effective if implemented and monitored accurately. Further research could be used to promote and persuade more school systems to utilize student assistance programs in an effort to accomplish safe and drug-free schools.

## CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology and procedures used to answer the research questions of this study. The purpose of this study was to examine existing data to answer questions regarding the measurable outcomes of Student Assistance Programs in Southwest Virginia. A discussion of the characteristics of the sample, development of the instrument, variables, the data collection procedures, and data analysis utilized in this study is provided.

### Sample

The source of the data for this research was from the a student assistance program in Southwest Virginia. Student assistance program coordinator recorded information on student assistance program tracking forms. The sample consisted of students who were referred to student assistance programs from variable sources in primary and secondary schools in Southwest Virginia across a period of 4 years.

The sample for the initial tracking information conducted by staff of the student assistance programs consisted of 2,533 students who participated in SAP from September of 2001 to August 2004. Data was analyzed in 2006.

Students were referred to SAP by varied sources including, administration personal, guidance counselor, parents or guardian, courts, treatment program, faculty, self-referral, peers, outpatient counselor, visiting teacher, and or other sources. SAP coordinators recorded information about students onto a tracking

form, information recorded included, school name, SAP number, student number, grade level, age, gender, ethnicity, special education or gifted student status, date of referral, number of legal charges, G.P.A., disciplines, absences, referral source, referral reason, action taken, out of school referral reasons, out of school referral source, whether action was taken, urine screen results, recommendations made to parents, number of recommendations followed by parents, status of treatment program, date exited SAP program, reasons for exiting program, if further alcohol and drug violations occurred and performance measures.

Services offered by the student assistance program include both in school and out of school services. The in school services include, monitoring, student interview, parent interview, follow-up with faculty, drug and alcohol group, two day self assessment program, tobacco education, grief group, bully intervention group, one-to-one guidance counselor, concerned others group, recovery group, one-to-one counseling with coordinator, one-to-one counseling with SRO, anger management, special education/child study, school psychologist, truancy group, smoking cessation and guidance group. Out of school services include, mental health assessment, urine screens, counseling, drug and alcohol assessment, support groups, Behavioral Healthcare, Family Services, The Center for Emotional Health, Private Psychiatrist, Appalachian Counseling Center, Manassas Group, Private Counselor, Court Services, Residential Treatment Program, Crisis Services, Child Protective Services, Support Group, Carolina Labs, and School Psychiatrist.

### Development of Instrument

The original instrument was developed by the student assistance coordinator and SAP committee members in 1999 to record and assess students referred to the program.

The tracking form is a paper and pencil questionnaire containing twelve sections with a total of nineteen questions, which were completed by the SAP coordinator. The SAP coordinator records information onto the tracking form throughout the school year for each student participating in SAP. At the end of each school year the SAP committee reevaluates the SAP tracking form and makes changes, for that reason each school years (01-03 and 03-04) was analyzed separately. Each school year will be compared following analysis.

### Research Questions and Variables

Three research questions were addressed in this study: (1) To what extent do Student Assistance Programs effect the overall academic performance of students participating in the program? (2) To what extent have students instituted positive behaviors such as improvements in school attendance and the number of discipline received? (3) Are there any individual differences in the individual characteristic gender among students participating in Student Assistance Programs and G.P.A. and behavior?. Not all the questions on the instrument (tracking form) pertained to this research project. Only the variables that were relevant to this study are discussed further in this chapter. The following sections discuss the variables of interest and how they were measured.

Table 1

Example of the Student Assistance Tracking Form for 2004

1. School
2. School Number
3. Student Number
4. Grade
5. Age
6. Sex
7. Special Education
8. Ethnicity
9. Data
  - a. Date of Referral
  - b. Repeat Referral
  - c. Number of Legal Charges
  - d. a. G.P.A.
  - e. Disciplines
  - f. Absences
10. Referral Source
  - a. Administration
  - b. Policy Violation
  - c. Guidance Counselor
  - d. Parents/Guardian

- e. Courts
- f. Treatment Program
- g. Faculty
- h. Self
- i. Peer
- j. SRO
- k. Outpatient Counselor
- l. Visiting Teacher
- m. Other

#### 11. Referral Reason

- a. Violated School Policy
- b. Violated Drug & Alcohol Policy
- c. Violated Athletic Policy
- d. Violated Tobacco Policy
- e. Behavioral Concerns, Alcohol & Drug
- f. Behavioral Concerns, Mental Health
- g. Bullying
- h. Discipline Problems
- i. Drop in Grades
- j. Concern for Others
- k. Self-reported Problem
- l. Suicidal
- m. Recovery

- n. Tobacco Issues
- o. Tobacco Education
- p. Anger Issues
- q. Attendance
- r. Pregnancy
- s. Grief
- t. Other

12. A. Action Taken In School Referrals

- a. Monitoring
- b. Student Interview
- c. Parent Interview
- d. Follow-up with Faculty
- e. Drug & Alcohol Group
- f. 2 Day Self-Assessment Program
- g. Tobacco Education
- h. Grief Group
- i. Bully Intervention Group
- j. One-to-one Counseling with Guidance Counselor
- k. Concerned others Group
- l. One-to-one Counseling with Coordinator
- m. One-to-one with SRO
- n. Anger Management
- o. Special Education/Child Study

- p. School Psychologist
- q. Truancy Group
- r. Smoking Cessation
- s. Guidance Group
- t. Other

#### B. Out-of-School Referral Reasons

- a. Mental Health Assessment
- b. Urine Screens
- c. Counseling
- d. Drug & Alcohol Assessment
- e. Support Groups
- f. Other

#### C. Out-of-School Referral Source

- a. Behavioral Healthcare
- b. Family Services
- c. The Center for Emotional Health
- d. Private Psychiatrist
- e. Appalachian Counseling Center
- f. Manassas Group
- g. Private Counselor
- h. Court Services

- i. Residential Treatment Program
  - j. Crisis Services
  - k. Child Protective Services
  - l. Support Group
  - m. Carillon Labs
  - n. School Psychiatrist
  - o. Other
- D. No Action
- a. Data gathered did not warrant recommendation
  - b. Parent refused service
  - c. Student refused service
13. a. # of positive urine screens
- b.# if negative urine screens
- c. N/A
14. Recommendations
- a. # Recommendations made to parents
  - b. # Recommendations followed
  - c. N/A
15. After Outside Evaluation
- a. Did student enter program?
  - b. Is student currently in program?
  - c. Did they complete treatment program?
16. Date exited program

17. Reasons for exiting program

- a. Transferred to another school
- b. Incarcerated
- c. Dropped out of school
- d. Other
- e. N/A

18. If referral was drug and alcohol related have any more D & A violations occurred?

19. Performance Measures

- a. Has student improved in relation to primary reason for referral?
- b. If the student was not working up to potential upon entry into program, has there been a change?
- c. Pre and Post scores if applicable for anger management, drug and alcohol, life skills, truancy, 2 day program, COA and Other.
- d. Locus of Control Scores

### Individual Differences

Individual differences were measured using four demographic variables: age, gender, special education or gifted student status, and ethnicity. For the continuous variable age the values recorded from 11 to 18 years old. For the categorical variable gender the responses were marked either male or female. Special education and gifted student status are also categorical variables and their values were yes or no. For the final categorical variable ethnicity, the categories were American Indian/Alaskan White, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic and White. Frequency analyses were conducted in order to evaluate individual difference among students participating in SAP.

### Student Academic Performance

Academic performance was measured using one measure, which was grade point average. Grade point average or “G.P.A.” is the average grade earned by a student, figured by multiplying the grade received to credit units attempted and then dividing the sum of these products by the sum of the number of credit units attempted. Formula for G.P.A. is:  $\Sigma(\text{grade} \times \text{credits}) / \Sigma(\text{credits})$ . Grade point is calculated as: 4 points for an “A” grade, 3 points for a “B” grade, 2 points for a “C” grade, 1 point for a “D” grade, and zero points for an “F” grade. G.P.A. was calculated by the school system and then recorded for all students referred to SAP upon entry into program and then taken again at each quarter or semesters end and or at the end of the school year. A comparison of the beginning G.P.A. was

compared to ending quarter and semester G.P.A. for each student participating in the student assistance program.

Table 2

*Student Academic Performance Items from 2004 SAP Tracking Form*

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Item

9a. Students G.P.A. at 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

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Student Behavioral Improvement

Student behavioral improvement was measured using four items on the SAP tracking form: (1) the number of disciplines given for each quarter, (2) the number of absences received for each quarter, (3) improvement in relation to the primary reason for referral, (4) change in degree to which the student is up to potential? The number of disciplines given and number of absences acquired were compared over the four quarters or semesters for each student. Disciplines and absences ranged from 0 to 20+. Improvement in relation to the primary reason for referral were recorded as yes or no. For change in degree to which the student is up to potential was recorded as improvement, decline, same or not applicable.

Table 3

Students Behavioral Improvement Items from 2004 SAP Tracking Form


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 Item

9b. Number of disciplines given for 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

9c. Number of absences given for 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

19a. Has the student improved in relation to the primary reason for referral (yes/no)?

19b. If the student was not working up to potential upon entry into the program has there been a change (improvement, decline, or same)?

20. If drug and alcohol referral, has additional alcohol and drug violations occurred (yes, no, not applicable)?

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Data Collection

Data for this study were collected from students involved in southwest Virginia student assistance programs. Data was collected from different primary and secondary schools in Southwest Virginia. SAP coordinators recorded answers to questions on a SAP tracking form. Tracking forms were then compiled in the school board office and given to the researcher who entered data into databases for comparison purposes.

### Data Coding

Each question or item from SAP tracking form was entered into the data file Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 12.0 (SPSS). Each question was then labeled with a variable name. Any data that was not legible was coded as unclear. Also any data that was omitted was coded as such.

### Data Analysis

Data were screened before conducting analyses. A scan was conducted using frequencies, Z scores and scatter plots to identify recording errors and out of range responses. Data in doubt were compared with original data sheets and errors were corrected. Cases with data values that were more than 2.5 standard deviations from the mean were excluded from future analysis. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and ranges, were used to describe the demographic profile of the sample represented in this study.

A repeated measures ANOVA was used to answer the first research question (to what extent do Student Assistance Programs change the overall academic performance of students participating in the program?). This analysis will determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of G.P.A. improvements in academic performance across the times of assessment, within the school year of interest.

A repeated measures ANOVA was used to answer research question two (to what extent have students instituted positive behaviors such as improvements in school attendance and the number of discipline received). This analysis will

determine statistically significant differences in mean scores of the variables of interest (the number of disciples given for each quarter, the number of absences received for each quarter or semesters) across the times of assessment, within a school year of interest.

$X^2$  statistics were used to evaluate the number of students showing improvement in relation to the primary reason for referral; change in degree to which the student is up to potential. These analyses will determine whether frequencies for the categories of change differ from what would be expected by chance alone.

As for research question three (are there any differences in individual characteristics among students participating in Student Assistance Programs who improved in relation to G.P.A. and behavior) analyses were conducted to compare groups on demographic variables. A  $X^2$  analysis was performed for each of the two categorical variables (gender and special education or gifted student status). These analyses will determine whether the number of people in each group differ from the frequencies we would expect in the larger population.

### Summary of Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine existing data to answer questions regarding the measurable outcomes of Student Assistance Programs in Southwest Virginia. This chapter described the source of the data and the population and sample for the study. Preexisting data was coded and entered into computer program SPSS and data were analyzed.

The development and content of the instrument used, data collection and data analysis methods used to answer the research questions also were discussed.

## CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

The following chapter presents the results of the present study which inspects a large sample ( $N= 2,533$ ) of students in Southwest Virginia who participated in a student assistance program. Specifically, these analyses focused on changes in academic performance and student behavior, and tested the role demographic characteristics in predicting improvement in academic performance and behavior. Sample characteristics and results are discussed with respect to the present studies research questions.

### Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The following section discusses the demographic characteristics of the participants. These demographic variables consist of age, gender, special education or gifted status and ethnicity. This sample encompassed students who were referred to SAP ( $N= 2,533$ ) for the school years 2001 through 2004.

As shown in Table 4, 49.3% of the students in the study were female and 50.7% were male. The majority of the students (70.7%) were not special education students, 29.3% of the students were special education. Very few students (1.1%) were considered gifted, 98.9% were not gifted.

The students in this sample ranged from 9 to 19 years of age ( $M= 14.57$ ,  $SD=2.02$ ). After combining categories, the bulk of teens in this sample were between the ages of 14 and 19 (68.8%). The remaining teens 39.6% were

between the ages of 9 to 13. The modal age of teens participating in this study was 16 years.

Of the teens that participated in this study 92.1% identified themselves as white, while 6.0% reported their ethnicity as black (African-American). A small percentage (1.0%) were Asian or Pacific Islander, while even a smaller (0.8%) were Hispanic or American Indian/Alaskan White.

### Research Question 1

The first research question was to what extent do Student Assistance Programs change the overall academic performance of students participating in the program? Academic performance was estimated using grade point average taken at different times during the semester for each student involved in SAP.

### Student Academic Performance

This section conveys the scope of change in academic performance of students participating in the SAP program. G.P.A. was used to measure academic performance. G.P.A. was reported at entry of the SAP program and then again at the end of the semester for the school years of 2001-2003. For the school year 2003-2004 upon entering into the program G.P.A. was taken at each quarter during the year. Due to the differences in recording for the year 2003-2004 school years 2001-2003 will be merged, while 2003-2004

Table 4

*Demographic Characteristics of the Study*

Demographic Characteristics	Valid Percent	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Gender			
Male	50.9	-	-
Female	40.7	-	-
Age (in years)	-	14.57	2.02
Special Education			
Yes	29.3	-	-
No	70.7	-	-
Gifted			
Yes	1.1	-	-
No	98.9	-	-
Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaskan White	0.1	-	-
White	92.1	-	-
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.0	-	-
Black	6.0	-	-
Hispanic	0.8	-	-

data will remain separate and be analyzed as such. Grade point average scores were then compared to determine whether there were any significant changes.

To test research question one, for the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years, a repeated measures ANOVA determined that grade point average was significantly negatively associated with student participation in the student assistance program,  $F(1, 1414) = 124.06, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$ . On average, participant G.P.A.s at time of referral were higher than G.P.A.s recorded at the end of the school year. As indicated in Table 5, means and standard deviations for participants were, G.P.A. at time of referral to the SAP program were 2.38 (.83) and G.P.A. for ending grades were 2.18 (.91).

As for the school year 2003-2004 participants G.P.A.s were taken quarterly and a repeated measures ANOVA yielded that grade point average was significantly negatively associated with participation in the student assistance program,  $F(3, 691) = 54.04, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$ . Tests showed that participating students G.P.A.s decreased from the time of referral to SAP to the second, third and fourth quarter measures. As illustrated in Table 5 means and standard deviations for students were, G.P.A. for first quarter 2.37 (.85), for second quarter 2.12 (.88), third quarter 2.19 (.87), and fourth quarter G.P.A. 2.20 (.90). Although, these results show a significant decrease from the first quarter grades to the second, third and fourth quarter grades, means demonstrate a slight increase in fourth quarter G.P.A. when compared to second and third quarter G.P.A.s.

As shown in Table 6 the results of repeated measures paired comparisons indicated that SAP students had significantly higher grade point averages during

the first quarter than they did second, third and fourth quarters. In regard to the second quarter, grades were significantly lower than first, third and fourth quarter grades. With respect to third and fourth quarter grades, although grade point average was significantly lower than first quarter and significantly higher than second quarter grades, grade point average for third and fourth quarter did not significantly differ from one another.

### Research Question 2

The second research question addresses the extent that students instituted positive behaviors such as improvements in school attendance and a reduction in the need for disciplinary measures?

It was assumed that student assistance programs would be associated with behavioral measures of attendance and number of disciplines acquired. Absences for the school years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 was significantly positively associated with participation in student assistance programs,  $F(1, 1500) = 184.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .12$ . Students referred to SAP showed fewer absences at referral compared to end of the school year absences. As shown in Table 5, means and standard deviations for absences at referral were 2.53 (3.83) and ending year absences were 4.56 (5.92).

Additionally, school year 2003-2004 yielded similar findings. Absences were significantly positively associated with participation in student assistance programs,  $F(3, 323) = 18.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .18$ . Participants showed an increase in the amount absences when comparing first quarter absences to second, third and

fourth quarter absences. Means and standard deviations for absences for first quarter were 3.73 (3.24), second quarter were 5.16 (3.95), third quarter were 4.99 (4.77) and fourth quarter absences were 5.46 (4.86).

Repeated measures paired comparisons revealed that SAP students had significantly fewer absences in the first quarter than they did second, third and fourth quarter. In regard to absences for the second quarter, while significantly fewer absences for the fourth quarter and significantly more absences than the first quarter, the number of second quarter absences did not significantly differ from the number of absences for the third quarter. In addition results found that the number of third quarter absences were significantly less than the number of absences for the fourth quarter and significantly more than the number of absences for the first quarter, there were no significant differences between third quarter absences and second quarter absences established. With respect to fourth quarter absences, there were significantly more than the number of first, second and third quarter absences. These results are illustrated in Table 6.

With respect to disciplines acquired, it was hypothesized that number of disciplines would be related to student assistance programs. For the school years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 disciplines were positively associated with student assistance programs,  $F(1,1512) = 8.83, p < .01, \eta^2 = .006$ . Means and standard deviations for disciplines were, at time of referral 1.21 (2.63) and ending year disciplines were 1.45 (2.99) (See Table 5).

For the school year of 2003-2004 results produced similar findings. Disciplines were positively associated with participating in student assistance

programs  $F(3,137) = 3.86, p < .05, \eta^2 = .08$ . Students participating in the student assistance program demonstrated an increase in disciplines. As indicated in Table 5, means and standard deviations for first quarter disciplines were 3.32 (2.38), second quarter disciplines were 4.02 (3.31), third quarter disciplines 4.01 (3.45) and fourth quarter disciplines were 3.33 (2.74).

The results of repeated measures paired comparisons indicated that SAP students had significantly fewer disciplines in the first quarter than they did in the second or third quarters. With respect to the fourth quarter, while significantly fewer than the number of third quarter disciplines, the number of fourth quarter disciplines did not significantly differ from the number of disciplines during the first or second quarters. These findings are exemplified in Table 6.

With respect to question twenty on the tracking form, if referral was drug and alcohol related, has additional alcohol and drug violations occurred. Frequency statistics findings showed that only 0.5% of students attained additional alcohol and drug violations. The percentage of students that did not have further drug and alcohol violations was 90.3% and 9.1% of students acquired more violations that were not drug and alcohol related. A chi squared analysis revealed that all groups were either under or over represented in the sample,  $X^2(2, n = 362) = 533.21, p < .001$ .

Comparable findings were observed for the question, has the student improved in relation to the primary reason for referral? Results determined that 12.3% of students did not improve, 66.5% did improve and 21.2% of students remained the same. A chi squared data analysis was performed and the results

Table 5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Grades, Absences and Disciplines During School Years 2001-2004.*

	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter
School Year 2001-2003				
Grades	<i>M=2.38</i> <i>SD=0.83</i>	-	-	<i>M=2.18</i> <i>SD=0.91</i>
Absences	<i>M=2.53</i> <i>SD=3.83</i>	-	-	<i>M=4.56</i> <i>SD=5.92</i>
Disciplines	<i>M=1.21</i> <i>SD=2.63</i>	-	-	<i>M=1.45</i> <i>SD=2.99</i>
School Year 2003-2004				
Grades	<i>M=2.37</i> <i>SD=0.85</i>	<i>M=2.12</i> <i>SD=0.88</i>	<i>M=2.19</i> <i>SD=0.87</i>	<i>M=2.20</i> <i>SD=0.90</i>
Absences	<i>M=3.73</i> <i>SD=3.24</i>	<i>M=5.16</i> <i>SD=3.95</i>	<i>M=4.99</i> <i>SD=4.77</i>	<i>M=5.46</i> <i>SD=4.86</i>
Disciplines	<i>M=3.32</i> <i>SD=2.38</i>	<i>M=4.02</i> <i>SD=3.31</i>	<i>M=4.01</i> <i>SD=3.45</i>	<i>M=3.33</i> <i>SD=2.74</i>

Table 6

*Repeated Measures Paired Comparison Results for First through Fourth Quarter Grades, Absences and Disciplines.*

	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	F(df)	$\eta^2$
Grades	2.37 <sub>c</sub> (.85)	2.12 <sub>b</sub> (.88)	2.19 <sub>a</sub> (.87)	2.20 <sub>a</sub> (.90)	54.04(3, 691) <sup>***</sup>	.19
Absences	3.73 <sub>a</sub> (3.24)	5.16 <sub>b</sub> (3.95)	4.99 <sub>b</sub> (4.77)	5.46 <sub>c</sub> (4.86)	18.97(2, 323) <sup>***</sup>	.18
Disciplines	3.32 <sub>a</sub> (2.38)	4.02 <sub>bc</sub> (3.31)	4.01 <sub>b</sub> (3.45)	3.33 <sub>ac</sub> (2.74)	3.86(3,137) <sup>**</sup>	.01

*Note.* <sup>\*\*\*</sup> =  $p < .01$ , <sup>\*\*</sup> =  $p < .001$ . Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means. Within rows, means that do not share subscripts are significantly different at least at the  $p < .05$  level, based on paired comparisons for repeated measures. The average effect size ( $\eta^2$ ) for significant differences between quarters for grades, absences, and disciplines were .04, .05, and .03, respectively.

revealed that the option yes student improved was over represented while the alternate options (no, same and N/A) were under represented in the sample,  $X^2(2, n = 1554) = 786.14, p < .001$ .

As for the question twenty-one on the tracking form, if the student was not working up to potential upon entry of program, has there been a change? Analysis exhibited that 5.2% of students were reported as declined, 63.9% showed improvement and 30.9% remained the same. The chi squared analysis illustrated that the improvement and not applicable categories were over represented while the categories decline and same were under represented,  $X^2(2, n = 768) = 399.38, p < .001$ .

### Research Question 3

Are there any gender differences among students participating in Student Assistance Programs with respect to G.P.A. and behavior?

For the school years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, a repeated measures ANOVA analysis provided these results. There was no significant gender effect for grade point average,  $F(1,11409) .01, p > .05, \eta^2 = .00$ . Female participant grade point averages demonstrated no significant differences when compared to male participants G.P.A.. Means and standard deviations for female subjects grades at referral and ending grades were 2.56 (.82) and 2.21 (.81), respectively. Means and standard deviations for male subjects grades at referral and ending grades were 2.36(.91) and 2.01(.88), respectively.

Table 7

*Chi Squared Analysis of Student Behavioral Improvement Items*

Items	<u>Response Categories</u>			X <sup>2</sup>	df
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not A &amp; D Violation</u>		
Additional drug & alcohol charges.	33 (120.0)	327 (120.0)	2 (120.0)	533.21	2
Improved in respect to reason for referral.	<u>Yes</u> 1033 (518.0)	<u>No</u> 192 (518.0)	<u>Same</u> 329 (518.0)	786.14	2
Working up to potential	<u>Improved</u> 237 (256.0)	<u>Same</u> 491 (256.0)	<u>Decline</u> 40 (256.0)	399.38	2

*Note.* Expected frequencies appear in parentheses below observed frequencies.

*Note.* For D & A mean that the student acquired a disciplinary measure that was not drug or alcohol related.

For the school year 2003-2004 outcomes were similar. There were no significant findings among gender and grade point average,  $F(3, 684) .62, p > .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .003$ . Means and standard deviations for females at first quarter, second quarter, third quarter and fourth quarter grade point average were 2.56 (.05), 2.30 (.05), 2.40 (.05) and 2.40 (.05), respectively. Means and standard deviations for males grade point average at first quarter, second quarter, third quarter and fourth quarter were 2.18 (.04), 1.94 (.05), 1.99 (.05) and 1.99 (.05), respectively.

With respect to attendance and disciplines, for the school years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 female and male subjects were compared using a repeated measures ANOVA in order to detect significant changes in the frequency of absences and disciplines. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship among females in regard to overall changes in attendance and disciplines. Contrary to expected results, no significant associations were found between absences and gender,  $F(1,1495) .001, p > .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ . Means and standard deviations for absences at referral and ending absences were, females 2.44 (3.67) and 4.48 (5.85); males 2.59 (3.92) and 4.63 (5.99).

The school year 2003-2004 yielded parallel findings. There was not a significant relationship established between gender and absences,  $F(3,320) .79, p > .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Means and standard deviations for females at each quarter were, first quarter 3.98 (3.51), second quarter 5.25 (3.67), third quarter 4.85 (4.23) and fourth quarter 5.36 ((5.28). Male subjects means and standard deviations for quarter one through four were 3.51 (2.93), 5.11 (4.23), 5.17 (5.30) and 5.36 (5.60), respectively.

With respect to disciplines and their association with gender during 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, results showed that there was no significant connection between the two factors,  $F(1, 1507) .08, p > .05 \eta^2 = .00$ . Disciplines at referral means and standard deviations for females and males were .73 (1.99) and 1.68 (3.05) respectively. Ending disciplines means and standard deviations for female and male subjects were .95 (2.02) and 1.95 (3.64), respectively.

As for the school year 2003-2004 there was no significant association between gender and disciplines determined,  $F(1, 134) .07, p > .01 \eta^2 = .03$ . Disciplines at first, second, third and fourth quarter means and standard deviations for females were 2.54 (1.57), 3.30 (2.73), 3.70 (2.59) and 3.11 (2.89) respectively. Disciplines at first, second, third and fourth quarter means and standard deviations for males were 3.63 (2.57), 4.34 (3.47), 4.16 (3.75) and 3.44 (2.71) respectively.

In summary with regard to research question (are there any gender differences in G.P.A. and behavior?) gender did not effect G.P.A., attendance and discipline status among SAP participants. On average females did have higher grade point averages, fewer absences and lower disciplinary measures.

### Supplementary Analyses

This section presents supplementary analyses that were conducted, but were not directly in the scope of the three primary research questions. Descriptive and frequency analyses of additional data collected are presented to further illustrate outcomes of students involved in student assistance programs in Southwest Virginia. The following topics are discussed, number of parents that

refused services, number of students entering treatment programs and the number of subjects that finished the program.

#### Parents Refused Services

SAP coordinators at the various schools studied recorded information and answered questions from a tracking form previously designed by the SAP committee. One of the questions asked was did parents refuse services? Coordinators had two possible options, either yes parents refused service or no parents did not refuse service. After initial referral to the student assistance program by the SAP committee, parents were contacted and services were offered. According to the tracking forms, of the 2,533 families contacted during the school years 2001-2002, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004, 64.4% of parents/guardians did not refuse services, 8.4% refused services and 27.2% of the data was either missing or considered unclear by data entry analyst.

#### Entrance Into Program

As part of the SAP program, students were evaluated by an agency external to the school system. Following the outside evaluation 17.4% of students entered the program. Subsequent to outside evaluation 28.4% of students did not enter program and 54.2% of students were considered not applicable. The not applicable alternative could mean several things, the students' parent refused services, data gathered did not warrant recommendation to program or the student refused services.

### Completion of Program

Sap coordinators were also asked to track and record if the student completed program following the outside evaluation and entrance into program. The coordinator could indicate one of three possible answers, no student did not complete program, yes student did complete program or not applicable. If not applicable option was chosen it could mean either the student was still presently in program or student exited program early. Tracking forms indicated that 5.4% of students did not complete program, while 24.7% of students did complete program and 69.9% of students were considered not applicable.

### Summary of Results

Analyzing existing data collected by SAP coordinators at a variety of schools allowed for a comparison of changes to answer the first research question. Changes in grade point average were analyzed using a repeated measures ANOVA. Analyses revealed a significant negative trend, where students' grade point averages tended to decrease over time.

The second research question was to what extent have students instituted positive behaviors such as improvements in school attendance and a reduction in the need for disciplinary measures. Analyses determined that there was a significantly positive association between SAP participant absences and disciplinary measures. Descriptive analyses established that very few students were reported as having additional drug and alcohol violations. In addition, less than 10% of students were reported as declining in relation to the primary reason

Table 8

*Additional Descriptions on Refusal, Entry and Completion of SAP 2001-2004*

Additional Questions	Student Status		
	Refused Services	Accepted	Missing or N/A
Parents refused service	8.4%	64.4%	27.2%
Students entered SAP	Entered Program 17.4%	Did not enter 28.3%	Missing or N/A 54.2%
Students completed SAP	Finished Program 27.4%	Did not finish 5.4%	Missing or N/A 69.9%

*Note.* The percentages listed in the table above are based on an  $N= 2,533$ .

for referral to the program. Very few students considered not working up to potential upon entry of program were reported as declining. Unfortunately, for many of the different aspects of research question two there was a large percentage of missing data.

The third research question assessed if there was any gender differences among the students in relation to grade point average and behavioral measures. A chi-squared analysis suggested no significant differences in gender with regard to grade point average and behavioral measures.

The final section presented included supplementary descriptive analyses that were beyond the scope of the research questions. Topics covered were refusal percentage of parents, percentage of students that entered program

following outside evaluation and completion of program rates. These topics were used to further discuss student assistance program outcomes of participants.

## CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings of this study, which examined a sample of students from primary and secondary schools located in Southwest Virginia who were referred to SAP during the years of 2001-2004 ( $N = 2,533$ ). Using existing data collected by SAP coordinators, this sample was inspected to measure changes in academics and behavior.

### Discussion of Findings

The chapter presents findings in an order that conforms to the order in which the relevant or guiding research questions were introduced in Chapter IV. The discussion first focuses on students' demographic variables, then it proceeds to a study of changes in academic performance (Research Question 1). An examination of behavioral measures, such as attendance and disciplines acquired, follows (Research Question 2), leading to a discussion of analyses performed to determine the relationship between grade point average, behavior, and gender (Research Question 3). Finally, the chapter concludes with an exploration of supplementary analyses (Research Question 4).

### Demographics of the Sample

In the selected sample, which encompasses 2,533 Southwest Virginia students, a little more than one-half of the participants were male. The mean age of students within the sample was 14.57, with over one-half of the students between the ages of 14 to 19. In terms of their academic standing, the majority of

students studied can be considered average; that is, they belonged to neither extreme end of the educational spectrum, “special education” or “gifted.” Most of the study’s participants were Caucasian. Less than one-tenth were reported as African American, while the remaining students derived from the groups *Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaskan White*.

In summary, the sample was (a) primarily Caucasian, (b) non-special education or non-gifted male and female students (c) between the ages of 14 - 19.

### Research Question 1: Changes in Academic Performance

The present study tested — as reflected in Research Question 1 — that individuals referred to the Student Assistance Program would demonstrate some measurable change in academic performance. While findings indeed support the assumption, the nature of that alteration is surprising: rather than exhibit academic improvement, students who participated in SAP actually demonstrated decreased performance. The potential causes of this unexpected result are complex. First, the act of labeling potentially could impact student performance. According to Labeling Theory, social labels shape people’s behaviors: essentially, when an individual is caught engaging in a particular delinquent act, he or she might begin to adopt the behaviors of the label imposed by society and subsequently act in a manner that conforms to negative expectations (Leighninger, 1996). For example, when society persistently labels a person a criminal, he or she can be expected eventually to act like one. With regard to adolescents and issues of juvenile delinquency, Labeling Theory provides a crucial piece of understanding:

during one's youth, when one's identity is being shaped, social labels or tags can in effect set the stage for future behavior, both positively and negatively. What insight does Labeling Theory offer into the poor academic performance of SAP participants? In essence, if an adolescent is labeled an academic failure, then his or her skills and personality might develop accordingly, and he or she will be far more prone to engage in the sort of delinquent behavior that makes academic advancement difficult (Calhoun, 1989). It is quite possible that students referred to SAPs consider the very recommendation a condemnation of their future potential, a belief that could very easily translate into academic surrender—*Why bother when everyone already thinks I'm a screw-up?*

Although this study suggests that in significantly measurable ways academic performance is negatively associated with SAPs, it cannot at this time, given its scope and limitations, ascertain causal links. It is possible, in fact, that an uncontrolled third variable could be influencing the academic advancement of SAP participants, which would confound the study's results.

### Research Question 2: Changes in Student Behavior

The second major research question undertaken by this study focused on the extent to which students participating in SAPs altered their behavior in positive ways. For the purposes of refining its scope, the study assessed two types of positive behavior outcomes: (1) increase in school attendance and (2) reduction of disciplinary measures needed. Also assessed were subjective responses to certain questions listed on the student improvement tracking form.

### Attendance

The study first measured attendance behaviors, based on the hypothesis that a significant correlation would exist between participation in SAPs and improved attendance . Once more, however, analyses determined a significant negative impact. Results showed that over the course of a nine-month school year, students in SAPs showed an increase in days absent from school. Again, though, the negative results cannot be linked to a single factor. Perhaps the increase in absenteeism depends on the date a student formally entered the program. For example, it is likely that a student referred to SAP during the fall semester of the school year will miss more days throughout the overall school year simply because more days are being considered in the overall measurement. Another explanation for the unexpected results recalls the basic tenets of Labeling Theory: when students miss class, they are simply acting out a self-fulfilling prophecy. Since the assumptions are made that being (a) a troublemaker and (b) an academic underachiever means they are likely to (c) skip school (whether a and b lead to c, or vice versa), such students simply act in accordance with what has been prophesied about them.

One should note, however, that upon close examination of the data, it appears that for the 2003-2004 school year, attendance during the first quarter was less than the second through fourth quarters, with third quarter absences less than those of the second quarter. This trend seems to imply that students in SAP can indeed improve in terms of their attendance.

### Disciplinary Measures

As its second outcome to determine behavior changes, the study focused on disciplinary measures. Again, although the study hypothesized that disciplinary measures might decrease with student involvement in SAPs, the analysis revealed that there was in fact a significant increase. As with the other unexpected results, this consequence could be caused by a number of different factors. While Labeling Theory and the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy can be used to explain the other results, in the case of disciplinary measures, confirmation bias proves useful. A type of statistical bias describing the tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that confirms one's preconceptions, confirmation bias occurs not only in experimental settings but also in a variety of real-life or real-world scenarios. For instance, in school-based settings confirmation bias has been found in situations wherein superiors actively seek and assign more weight to evidence that confirms their perception of a person *instead* of that which would disprove their personal perceptions. It is probable that school leaders who know that a student is referred to SAP form a personal perception about that student and then pursue substantiation that will validate their personal bias. Confirmation bias can also lead to teachers and school authorities treating a group of students differently, which then may lead to the students behaving in less desirable ways. Some researchers have argued that confirmation bias may in fact cause self-perpetuating and self-fulfilling social beliefs (Wason, 1960).

Upon closer observation, evidence from the individual quarters of the 2003-2004 school year suggest some discrepancies regarding disciplinary information. In fact, although disciplinary reports for the first quarter are

significantly lower than those of subsequent quarters, those for the third and fourth are lower still than those of the second. This data suggests that in some cases, disciplinary measures in fact decreased.

#### Tracking Form Questions

In addition to investigating attendance and disciplinary measures, the study also considered questions on the tracking form itself, particularly three questions that assessed students' improvement subsequent to their association with the SAP.

The first question sought to measure changes in behavior for students who were referred to the SAP as a result of involvement with drugs and alcohol: did alcohol and drug violations increase or decrease? According to the tracking form results, only 3.7% of these students reported additional alcohol and drug violations. This low result proves interesting, particularly when considered in light of the fact that the data showed a significant increase in disciplinary measures. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that the additional disciplinary measures imposed on such students were not alcohol and drug related. Another, even more plausible explanation takes into account the excessive amount of missing data related to this question. In fact, it appears that data for a large number of students — 59.6% — was recorded as missing /not applicable.

The second pertinent question on the form considered whether the student improved in relation to the primary reason for referral to the SAP. Data analysis revealed that the majority of the students did in fact improve; however, once

again a sizeable amount of missing data was missing and for 38.6% of the students, the situation was considered “not applicable.” Without question, these factors could affect the overall result.

The third and final question on the tracking form assessed whether any academic change had occurred for students judged “not working to potential” upon referral to the program. Descriptive analyses established that a very small percentage of students in fact revealed academic decline. However, the percentage of missing and not applicable data is disproportionate to the other selections.

In addition to descriptive analyses, chi-squared analyses were also applied to the data and revealed that for each question all possible categories were significantly disproportionate. Thus, the options for each question were either overrepresented or underrepresented, depending upon the circumstance. Concerning the inconsistent representations could give the wrong impression about the data collected.

In summary, due to the considerable quantity of missing data, the study was forced to consider as insignificant all three questions assessing student improvement. Furthermore, chi-squared analyses revealed over representations and under representations of all categorical variables evaluated.

### Research Question 3: Gender Correlations

Research Question 3 focused on determining whether any correlations existed between gender, grade point average, and behavior of students referred to the SAP. The study tested whether gender would in fact show significant

connection to both grades and behavior. First, data analysis used the students' grade point averages to compare gender to academic performance. Then, gender was again assessed with reference to attendance and disciplinary measures. Ultimately, results failed to support the hypothesis that a correlation existed between the variables *gender*, *grade point average*, and *behavior*.

This unanticipated outcome can be interpreted in a number of ways. Although the results indicate that in fact no link exists between gender and grade point average or between gender and behavior, it could be likely that this study's design simply was not sensitive enough, due to sample size factors, to distinguish any such relationships. It is plausible that the sample size is limited in generalizability to the overall population.

Another explanation for why there no correlation appears to exist between gender, grade point average, and behavior is that better methods can be used to measure academic performance and student behavior. For example, attendance and disciplinary measures might not appropriately estimate student behavior. In this case, indirect assessment methods could prove more useful. Such methods include interviews with teachers and other adults (bus drivers, office staff, cafeteria staff) who have direct contact with the student, as well as interviews with the students themselves. Supplementary methods consisting of surveys and questionnaires administered to adults with direct contact to each student, as well as with the student, also could prove helpful. As for gender and academic performance, grade point average might not provide the most effective measure.

Certain achievement tests, such as standardized ones, could provide an enhanced measure of academic performance.

In summary, the analysis determined that the individual characteristic *gender* did not significantly contribute to the variables *academic performance* and *student behavior*. In other words, no correlation existed between the three variables.

### Supplementary Analysis

Using information gleaned from student tracking forms, the study conducted supplementary descriptive analyses that were in fact beyond the scope of the research questions but that nevertheless provided important data about students referred to the SAP. These additional questions derived directly from the tracking forms and plumbed such issues as whether parents refused services recommended by the SAP, how many students entered treatment programs recommended to them following outside evaluation, and how many students completed the student assistance program.

In general, for each area investigated, data tended to have a high amount of missing or not applicable responses. Regarding the parental refusal rate, the majority of parents (64.4%) accepted services that were recommended to them by SAP, while a low percentage (8.4%) refused them. The remaining percentage — a relatively high 27.3% — was designated as *missing data* or *not applicable*. In regard to the number of students referred to SAP who actually entered a treatment program following outside evaluation, 17.4% did enter such a program, while 28.3% did not. An extremely high percentage — 54.2% — was designated as

*missing data or not applicable*. Concerning completion of the SAP, 24.7% of students studied completed the program, while 5.4% of did not. An even higher number — 69.7% — was designated as *missing data or not applicable*. However, for this particular area of study, it is likely that most instances of *not applicable* occurred because the student was still enrolled in the program.

Regrettably, high amounts of missing data could have affected the results of the supplementary analyses. Due to the sizeable amounts of missing data it was difficult for such analyses (a) to be entirely accurate and (b) to establish correlations between variables. It is hypothesized that much of the missing data can be attributed to errors in recording of information on student tracking forms. These errors include inconsistency in recording patterns, illegible handwriting, and transcription errors.

Errors on the tracking forms and missing data could also explain why some of the research questions results were unexpected. Furthermore, these unexpected results can also be explained by some of the supplementary analyses outcomes. For example, the percentage of entrance into treatment programs recommended by SAP could among participants clarify the decrease in grade point average, increase in disciplinary measures, and decrease in attendance. It is possible that discrepancies existed in grade point average, attendance, and disciplinary measures because only 28.3% of students referred to treatment programs actually entered them. It is possible that if more students had taken advantage of such programs, the results regarding academics and behaviors would have improved significantly.

## CHAPTER VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter begins by summarizing the study's research outcomes, then it presents conclusions and recommendations for future research. The chapter ends by providing implications for researchers, SAP Coordinators, educators, student assistance program staff, and students.

### Summary of Research

In order to measure potential changes in academic behavior and performance among students participating in Student Assistance Programs, this study examined existing data provided by a sample drawn from Southwest Virginia schools. The study also inspected the sample to determine the extent to which the individual characteristic of gender might impact changes in behavior and academic performance. Furthermore, this study also explored differences in demographics among students.

The study focused on three major research questions:

- (1) To what extent do Student Assistance Programs change the overall academic performance of students participating in the program?
- (2) To what extent have students participating in the program instituted positive behaviors, such as improvements in school attendance and a reduction in the need for disciplinary measures?

- (3) Are there any differences in individual characteristics among students participating in Student Assistance Programs in relation to G.P.A. and behavior?

The research sample included students from school systems in Southwest Virginia who were referred to Student Assistance Programs during the 2001-2004 school years. For any student participating in the program, SAP coordinators at various schools in the county documented tracking forms. .

The analyses performed by this study compared variations in students' academic performance and behavior. In order to measure academic performance, the study relied upon grade point averages taken at separate points within the relevant timeframe. In regard to behavior, the study considered at various intervals the variables *disciplinary measures* and *attendance*. Academic performance and behavior were examined by repeated ANOVA analysis. Although the study theorized that the findings would indicate positive outcomes in terms of academic performance and behavior modification, they instead suggested significant negative correlations. Students who participated in the SAP displayed higher grade point averages at their time of referral than they did at the end of the quarter and/or the year. In addition, students involved in SAPs also showed an increase in disciplinary measures and a decrease in attendance.

Using repeated measures ANOVA and chi-squared analysis, the study also investigated the demographic characteristic of gender to determine whether any correlation existed between it, academic performance, and behavior. Findings

suggested no significant relationship between gender and the variables of academic performance and behavior. However, chi-squared analyses did discover that there were unequal representations of variables analyzed.

Supplementary analyses determined that while the majority of parents did not refuse services recommended by SAP, a small percentage did. Furthermore, over a quarter of the students did not enter into treatment following the recommendations of outside evaluation. Additionally, a very small percentage of students did not complete the program. However, these findings could be skewed by the fact that supplementary analyses discovered an abundance of missing data.

### Conclusions

From this study one can derive the following conclusions:

1. Gender was evenly distributed among participants in the Student Assistance Program. Approximately half the students were male; half, female.
2. The majority of the students could not be placed in the academic category *gifted*; however, over one quarter of the students could be considered *special education*.
3. The students' ages ranged from 9 to 19 years, with the average being 14.5.
4. The greater part of the adolescents' ethnicity was Caucasian; whereas less than one tenth of the students were African American.
5. For all three school years considered by the study (2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004), SAP participants' academic performance – as reflected by

their grade point averages – showed a marked decrease. In other words, the students' grade point averages significantly decreased following their referral to the Student Assistance Program.

6. For each of the three school years, the attendance of students declined after their referral to the SAP
7. Each school year reflected an increase in disciplinary measures required for program participants.
8. Analysis determined that very few of the students referred to the SAP experienced additional drug and alcohol violations.
9. SAP coordinators recorded that a little less than half of the students were thought to have improved with regard to their primary reason for referral.
10. A very minuscule percentage of students initially considered not working up to potential were thought of as declining even as they participated in the program.
11. To a great extent, a large portion of the data sought by the tracking form was missing or was marked *not applicable*.
12. No correlation could be discovered between gender, academic performance, and behavior, including attendance and need for disciplinary measures.
13. The bulk of parents accepted services offered to their children by the SAP.
14. Less than one quarter of students referred to treatment programs following outside evaluation actually attended them.
15. A small percentage of students did not complete the treatment program.

16. A large part of the data was missing for many of the items investigated. SAP coordinators either left blank a large portion of the tracking form or marked items *not applicable*.
17. One explanation for the unexpected results involving academic performance and student behavior could be linked to the quantity of missing data.
18. A second explanation for the negative association between academic performance, student behavior, and SAP participation could be linked to the timing of the students' entry into treatment and their completion of the program.

### Recommendations

Based upon the conclusions raised by this study, the following recommendations for future research are suggested:

1. Since this study found substantial significant correlations between research variables, it is recommended that further research explore the SAP participants' academic performance and behavior.
2. Replication of this study with other samples is recommended. This study was delimited to students in Southwest Virginia schools. The majority of students were Caucasian; therefore, it is suggested that future studies should focus on or at the very least include more diverse groups.
3. In an effort to increase understanding of outcomes, future research should consider the content of Student Assistance Programs.

4. To determine further explanations for results of this study, it is suggested that other methods of measuring academic performance and student behavior should be considered.
5. Future studies should compare the variety of tracking forms used by Student Assistance Programs to determine if one is more efficient than others.
6. Future projects could investigate the effect of training SAP coordinators how to properly and most efficiently record student information onto forms.
7. The measures for this study should be evaluated. Conducting repeated trials with the measures is recommended.
8. Further studies should investigate possible explanations for the data missing from SAP tracking forms. The findings may lead to additional explanations for errors in reporting.
9. In order to address the effectiveness of such programs, future studies should utilize other methods for data collections, such as surveys mailed to students and parents.
10. Future studies should include both objective and subjective measures to determine the effectiveness of SAPs.
11. Additional research could expand the store of information about SAPS by investigating other data covered by the tracking form..

## Implications

The following section provides implications of this study for researchers, SAP coordinators, educators, SAP committee members, students, and parents.

### Researchers

Chapter 1 suggested that the findings of this study could in fact provide a basis for future research. The data collected by this project provided information on Student Assistance Programs that could assist future researchers in developing a keener understanding of their value. The conceptualization of the variables and measures in this study can be used and improved upon by future researchers.

### SAP Coordinators

Being mindful of the outcomes assessed by this research could shape or alter the methods that SAP coordinators use to interact with “troubled” students. It provides information that could help coordinators develop the sorts of interventions and techniques that could not only assist students prior to their referral but also increase the success of existing programs. Now that the importance of thoroughly developed tracking forms is established, coordinators could also use the results of the present study to make improvements in such forms.

### Educators

By providing information regarding academic performance and behaviors of student participants, this research also holds implications for educators. As educators attempt to understand the various obstacles facing students as they strive for success, they can use such expanded knowledge to enhance the value and focus of their individual SAPs. This research could provide educators with strategies to improve student's academic performance and behaviors such as attendance and discipline. In addition, educators themselves would also benefit from continuing their own educations with regard to SAPs. If educators learned the techniques for identifying students in needs of assistance programs, they could improve their overall outcomes.

### SAP Committee Members

Student Assistance Program committee members would likely benefit from the information this study provides on program creation. These benefits include: (1) reevaluation of tracking forms, (2) creation of an education program for SAP coordinators that focuses on the accurate recording of information on tracking forms, (3) assessment of the program before and after the period covered by this study (2001-2004), and (4) development of new tracking form items that could improve the methods for measuring changes in student outcomes. SAP committee members could also benefit from learning about how other school districts create, maintain, and measure the success of their own assistance programs.

### Parents/Students

For the reason that students and parents are the most directly effected by the outcome of Student Assistance Programs, it is of utmost importance that both parties understand that no such program alone can offer a magic remedy for academic and behavioral issues. In addition to working on personal and family issues, parents and students should take advantage of the assortment of additional treatment programs that are made available to them. Before deciding to participate in the SAPs, parents should take into consideration the impact additional treatment, such as support groups, can have on troubled adolescents. Student Assistance Programs that help reduce unwanted behavior and improve academic performance, as well as assist students socially and emotionally, would be beneficial to all parents and students—not just those who exhibit such problems.

### Summary of Discussion

This chapter discussed results gathered by a study of Student Assistance Programs in Southwest Virginia schools. The chapter focused on the results of three major research questions:

- (1) To what extent do Student Assistance Programs change the overall academic performance of students participating in the program?
- (2) To what extent have students instituted positive behaviors, such as improvements in school attendance and a reduction in the need for disciplinary measures? and

- (3) Are there any differences in individual characteristics among students participating in Student Assistance Programs in relation to G.P.A. and behavior?

The results of supplementary analyses conducted to determine other potential bases for research questions also were presented and discussed in this chapter.

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Appendix A  
SAP Tracking Form 2001-2002

SAP Individual Tracking Form 2001-2002

1. School \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Sex M \_\_\_ F \_\_\_  
 2. SAP Number \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Special Ed. Y \_\_\_ N \_\_\_  
 3. Student Number \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Gifted Y \_\_\_ N \_\_\_  
 4. Grade \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Race \_\_\_\_\_

## 9. Data

\_\_\_\_\_ Date of Referral \_\_\_\_\_ # of Legal Charges  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Grades at Referral \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Grades  
 \_\_\_\_\_ # of Disciplines @ Referral \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Number of Disciplines  
 \_\_\_\_\_ # Absences @ Referral \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Number of Absences  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Entry into Program \_\_\_\_\_ Date Exited Program

## 10. Referral Source

\_\_\_ Adm. \_\_\_\_\_ Faculty \_\_\_\_\_ Visiting  
 Teacher  
 \_\_\_ Policy Violation \_\_\_\_\_ Self  
 \_\_\_ Guidance Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ Peer  
 \_\_\_ Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ SRO  
 \_\_\_ Courts \_\_\_\_\_ Outpatient Counselor  
 \_\_\_ Treatment Program \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Referral Reasons

\_\_\_ Violated School Policy \_\_\_\_\_ Concern for Others  
 \_\_\_ Violated D & A Policy \_\_\_\_\_ Self Reported  
 Problems \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_ Violated Athletic Policy \_\_\_\_\_ Suicidal, ideation, gestures,  
 attempts  
 \_\_\_ Violated Tobacco Policy \_\_\_\_\_ Recovery  
 \_\_\_ State Bill 1244 \_\_\_\_\_ Tobacco Issues  
 \_\_\_ Behavioral Concerns, A & D \_\_\_\_\_ Tobacco Education  
 \_\_\_ Behavioral Concerns, MH \_\_\_\_\_ Smoking Issues  
 \_\_\_ Bullying \_\_\_\_\_ Anger Issues  
 \_\_\_ Discipline Problems \_\_\_\_\_ Attendance  
 \_\_\_ Drop in Grades \_\_\_\_\_ Pregnancy  
 \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Grief

## 12. No Referral After Initial Contact

\_\_\_ Date gathered did not warrant a referral  
 \_\_\_ Parent Refused Services  
 \_\_\_ Student Refused Services

## 13. Action Taken (Recommended/Completed) CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

## A. In-School Referrals

R C  
 \_\_\_ Monitoring \_\_\_\_\_ Concerned others Group  
 \_\_\_ Student Interview \_\_\_\_\_ Recovery Group  
 \_\_\_ Parent Interview \_\_\_\_\_ One-to-one Counseling  
 \_\_\_ Follow-up with Faculty \_\_\_\_\_ One-to-one with SRO  
 \_\_\_ D & A Group (in school) \_\_\_\_\_ Anger Management (in  
 school)  
 \_\_\_ 2-Day Self-Assessment Program \_\_\_\_\_ Special Education  
 \_\_\_ Tobacco Education \_\_\_\_\_ School Psychologist  
 \_\_\_ DFYIR \_\_\_\_\_ Grief Group

Rightrac  
  Bully Intervention  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Truancy Group  
  Smoking Cessation

B. Out-of-school Referral Reasons

R C  
  MH Assessment  
  Urine Screen  
  Counseling

R C  
  D & A Assessment  
  Support Groups  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

C. Referral Source

Behavioral Healthcare  
  Family Services  
  The Center for Emotional Health  
 Connect, EOS)  
  Private Psychiatrist  
  Appalachian Counseling Center  
  Manassas Group  
  Private Counselor

Court Services  
  Residential Services  
  Crisis Services (Respond,  
  Child Protective Services  
  Support Groups  
  School Psychologist  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Since Referral:

14. # if Positive Urine Screens \_\_\_\_\_

# negative Urine Screen \_\_\_\_\_

15. # Recommendations Made to Parents \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

# Recommendations Followed

16. After entry into program

\_\_\_\_ Number of tobacco violations  
 incidents

\_\_\_\_ Number of fits/anger related

\_\_\_\_ Number of suspensions

17. After Outside Evaluation

A. Did Student Enter TX Program

\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_ No

B. Did Student Currently In TX Program

\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_ No

C. Did they complete TX Program

\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_ No

18. Has this student been referred to SAP previously?

\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_ No

19. From previous year?

\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_ No

20. Reason for Exiting the Program?

\_\_\_\_ Transferred to another school

\_\_\_\_ Finished Program

\_\_\_\_ Incarcerated

\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Dropped out of School

21. If referral was drug and alcohol violation, have additional D & A occurred?

\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_ No

22. Performance Measures

A. Has the student improved in relation to the primary reason for referral?

\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_ No  
 \_\_\_\_ Same

B. If the student was not working up to potential upon entry into the program has there been a change?

\_\_\_ Improved                      \_\_\_ Decline              \_\_\_ Same  
    \_\_\_ N/A

Pre and Post Scores (if applicable)

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ Anger Management

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ D & A

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ Truancy

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ D & A 2 Day Program

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ COA

Appendix B

SAP Tracking Form 2002-2003

SAP Individual Tracking Form 2002-2003

1. School	_____	6. Sex	M___F___
2. SAP Number	_____	7. Special Ed.	Y___N___
3. Student Number	_____	8. Gifted	Y___N___
4. Grade	_____	9. Race	_____
5. Age	_____		

## 10. Data

_____ Date of Referral	_____ # of Legal Charges
_____ 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. Grades	_____ 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. Grades
_____ 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. Disciplines	_____ 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. Disciplines
_____ 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. Absences	_____ 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. Absences
_____ Date of Entry into Program	_____ Repeat Referral

## 11. Referral Source

___ Adm.	___ Faculty	___ Visiting
Teacher		
___ Policy Violation	___ Self	
___ Guidance Counselor	___ Peer	
___ Parent/Guardian	___ SRO	
___ Courts	___ Outpatient Counselor	
___ Treatment Program	___ Other _____	

## 12. Referral Reasons

___ Violated School Policy _____	___ Concern for Others
___ Violated D & A Policy	___ Self Reported
Problems _____	
___ Violated Athletic Policy	___ Suicidal, ideation, gestures,
attempts	
___ Violated Tobacco Policy	___ Recovery
___ State Bill 1244	___ Tobacco Issues
___ Behavioral Concerns, A & D	___ Tobacco Education
___ Behavioral Concerns, MH	___ Smoking Issues
___ Bullying	___ Anger Issues
___ Discipline Problems	___ Attendance
___ Drop in Grades	___ Pregnancy
___ Other	___ Grief

## 13. Action Taken (Recommended/Completed) CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

## A. In-School Referrals

R	C	
___ Monitoring	___ Concerned others Group	
___ Student Interview	___ Recovery Group	
___ Parent Interview	___ One-to-one Counseling	
___ Follow-up with Faculty	___ One-to-one with SRO	
___ D & A Group (in school)	___ Anger Management (in	
school)		
___ 2-Day Self-Assessment Program	___ Special Education	
___ Tobacco Education	___ School Psychologist	
___ DFYIR	___ Grief Group	
___ Rightrac	___ Truancy Group	
___ Bully Intervention	___ Smoking Cessation	
___ Other _____		

## B. Out-of-school Referral Reasons

R C

MH Assessment  
  Urine Screen  
  Counseling

R C

D & A Assessment  
  Support Groups  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

## C. Out-of-school Referral Source

Behavioral Healthcare  
  Family Services  
  The Center for Emotional Health  
 Connect, EOS)  
  Private Psychiatrist  
  Appalachian Counseling Center  
  Manassas Group  
  Private Counselor

Court Services  
  Residential Services  
  Crisis Services (Respond,  
 Child Protective Services  
  Support Groups  
  School Psychologist  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

## 14. No Referral

Date gathered did not warrant a referral  
  Parent Refused Services  
  Student Refused Services

Since Referral:

15. # if Positive Urine Screens \_\_\_\_\_

# negative Urine Screen \_\_\_\_\_

16. # Recommendations Made to Parents \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Recommendations Followed

## 17. After Outside Evaluation

A. Did Student Enter TX Program

 Yes  No

B. Did Student Currently In TX Program

 Yes  No

C. Did they complete TX Program

 Yes  No

18. Date Exited Program: \_\_\_\_\_

## 19. Reason for Exiting the Program?

Transferred to another school  
  Incarcerated  
  Dropped out of School

Finished Program  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

20. If referral was drug and alcohol violation, have additional D &amp; A occurred?

 Yes  No

## 21. Performance Measures

C. Has the student improved in relation to the primary reason for referral?

Yes   No  
  Same

D. If the student was not working up to potential upon entry into the program has there been a change?

Improved   Decline   Same  
  N/A

Pre and Post Scores (if applicable)

  Anger Management  Truancy

\_\_\_\_ D & A  
\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ D & A 2 Day Program  
\_\_\_\_ COA

Appendix C

SAP Tracking Form 2003-2004

SAP Individual Tracking Form 2003-2004

1. School \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Age \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. SAP Number \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Sex M \_\_\_ F \_\_\_  
 3. Student Number \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Special Ed. Y \_\_\_ N \_\_\_  
 4. Grade \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Race \_\_\_\_\_

9. Data  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Referral \_\_\_\_\_ Repeat Referral \_\_\_\_\_ # of Legal  
 Charges

<u>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter</u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter</u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter</u>
_____ G.P.A.	_____ G.P.A.	_____ G.P.A.	_____ G.P.A.
_____ Disciplines	_____ Disciplines	_____ Disciplines	_____ Disciplines
_____ Absences	_____ Absences	_____ Absences	_____ Absences

10. Referral Source  
 \_\_\_ Adm. \_\_\_\_\_ Faculty \_\_\_ Visiting  
 Teacher  
 \_\_\_ Policy Violation \_\_\_ Self  
 \_\_\_ Guidance Counselor \_\_\_ Peer  
 \_\_\_ Parent/Guardian \_\_\_ SRO  
 \_\_\_ Courts \_\_\_ Outpatient Counselor  
 \_\_\_ Treatment Program \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Referral Reasons  
 \_\_\_ Violated School Policy \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_ Concern for Others  
 \_\_\_ Violated D & A Policy \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_ Self Reported  
 Problems \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_ Violated Athletic Policy \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_ Suicidal, ideation, gestures,  
 attempts  
 \_\_\_ Violated Tobacco Policy \_\_\_ Recovery  
 \_\_\_ State Bill 1244 \_\_\_ Tobacco Issues  
 \_\_\_ Behavioral Concerns, A & D \_\_\_ Tobacco Education  
 \_\_\_ Behavioral Concerns, MH \_\_\_ Smoking Issues  
 \_\_\_ Bullying \_\_\_ Anger Issues  
 \_\_\_ Discipline Problems \_\_\_ Attendance  
 \_\_\_ Drop in Grades \_\_\_ Pregnancy  
 \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_ Grief

## 12. Action Taken (Recommended/Completed) CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

## A. In-School Referrals

<u>R</u>	<u>C</u>
___ Monitoring	___ Concerned others Group
___ Student Interview	___ Recovery Group
___ Parent Interview	___ One-to-one Counseling
___ Follow-up with Faculty	___ One-to-one with SRO
___ D & A Group (in school)	___ Anger Management (in school)
___ 2-Day Self-Assessment Program	___ Special Education
___ Tobacco Education	___ School Psychologist
___ DFYIR	___ Grief Group
___ Rightrac	___ Truancy Group
___ Bully Intervention	___ Smoking Cessation
___ Other _____	

## B. Out-of-school Referral Reasons

R C

MH Assessment  
  Urine Screen  
  Counseling

R C

D & A Assessment  
  Support Groups  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

## C. Out-of-school Referral Source

Behavioral Healthcare  
  Family Services  
  The Center for Emotional Health  
 Connect, EOS)  
  Private Psychiatrist  
  Appalachian Counseling Center  
  Manassas Group  
  Private Counselor

Court Services  
  Residential Services  
  Crisis Services (Respond,  
 Child Protective Services  
  Support Groups  
  School Psychologist  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

## D. No Action

Date gathered did not warrant a referral  
  Parent Refused Services  
  Student Refused Services

Since Referral:

13. # if Positive Urine Screens \_\_\_\_\_

# negative Urine Screen \_\_\_\_\_

14. # Recommendations Made to Parents \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Recommendations Followed

## 15. After Outside Evaluation

A. Did Student Enter TX Program

 Yes  No

B. Did Student Currently In TX Program

 Yes  No

C. Did they complete TX Program

 Yes  No

16. Date Exited Program: \_\_\_\_\_

## 17. Reason for Exiting the Program?

Transferred to another school  
  Incarcerated  
  Dropped out of School

Finished Program  
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

18. If referral was drug and alcohol violation, have additional D &amp; A occurred?

 Yes  No

## 19. Performance Measures

E. Has the student improved in relation to the primary reason for referral?

Yes   No  
  Same

F. If the student was not working up to potential upon entry into the program has there been a change?

Improved   Decline   Same  
  N/A

Pre and Post Scores (if applicable)

  Anger Management  Truancy

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ D & A  
\_\_\_ \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ D & A 2 Day Program  
\_\_\_ \_\_\_ COA

Locus of Control

Pre \_\_\_ Post \_\_\_

Appendix D  
IRB Request Form

## Research Protocol for IRB Request

### Student Assistance Programs in Roanoke County

#### I. Justification of Project

Adolescent substance abuse will require continued research, prevention, education and treatment. Substance abuse is not a problem that can neatly be solved in our lifetime, but rather a dilemma, which society and schools can learn to manage more effectively (Dean, 1989). Despite growing literature documenting prevention and health promotion interventions have been proven successful in well-controlled research, few of these interventions are consistently implemented in applied settings (Fertman et al., 1998).

Positive student outcomes are evident for students who participated in Student Assistance Programs or SAP. Students show positive improvements in attendance, graduation status and a decrease in discipline problems (Fertman et al., 1998). Formative program evaluation should be a continuing component of any SAP implementation process (Moore & Forster, 1993). Because the relationship between SAP and student performance has been documented (Fertman et al., 1998), researchers recommend that further studies be performed to establish the effectiveness of student assistance programs. There must be substantially more demonstrations of how student assistance programs researched can use data to help close the gap between research and practice (Fertman et al., 1998).

In order to effectively advocate the importance of and the effectiveness of student assistance programs in the school system, convincing demonstrations and or relationships to student performance outcomes are needed.

The goal of this study is to examine existing data to answer questions regarding student assistance program outcomes. The overall purpose of this study is to determine outcomes of the Roanoke County Student Assistance Program. Many schools collected data as part of their student information records. Using these existing databases a large sample was examined to measure changes in attendance and academic performance. This sample also examined differences in the demographics among students assessed.

#### II. Procedures

Respondents for this study will be drawn from the Student Assistance Programs in Roanoke County Schools. Data from students participating in Student Assistance Program from the years 1999 to 2004 in Roanoke County schools were recorded onto tracking forms by guidance counselors at each school. The researcher received 3 years of tracking forms from the SAP coordinator. The tracking forms contained no names or any other identifying variables. The student information

that is included in the tracking form is; school, student number, grade, age, sex, race, special education status and gifted status. The tracking forms' information will be imputed into databases by experimenter and comparison studies will be ran on data for analysis purposes.

The statistical program SPSS will be used to calculate frequencies, percents, means and standard deviations for the data collected. The SPSS program will also be used to compare the pre and post grade point average scores, attendance and number of disciplines for each subject and to determine if significant differences occurred. The experimenter will analyze the results by placing the data into a contingency table.

### III. Risks and Benefits

There are no risks to the subjects participating in this research and as such the project should be exempt from review by the IRB under criteria c(1) because "subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers with the information provided".

Several benefits arise from this project. Changes in respondents' academic performance, attendance record and number of disciplines reviewed will be evaluated. Difference in demographics among respondents was assessed in this research. This research will allow the examination of changes in students' academic performance through changes in grade point average, attendance records and number of discipline acquired after entrance into SAP.

This study's measures will allow documentation of academic performance outcomes, attendance changes and number of disciplines reported. The collected data will provide information helpful to understanding student assistance programs in schools. The question of, is student assistance programs effective in improving students performance in Roanoke County Schools, is important because of the implications on students referred to SAP. Thus, an understanding of the student assistance program concerns faced by public schools and their effects on specific student population could be helpful to schools and school personal.

Findings from this study will provide a base for future research. Results of this study may be compared to results from future studies of similar populations.

Not only would schools and school employees benefit from this research, but there are also implications for students, families and communities. Findings may provide information that would be helpful in designing and improving schools based intervention programs to assist students struggling with substance use problems. Assessing the relationship between SAP and student performance my provide information for families and communities affected by substance use issues.

#### IV. Confidentiality/Anonymity

The tracking forms that will be used in data collection and analysis are numbered and students were given identification numbers. No names are present on the forms the only identifies that are present is the form number and identification number.

No other identifiers will be present in data collection and there will be no sharing of names, addresses, or other individual information between the schools and researcher. Confidentiality will be strictly maintained throughout the research process.

#### V. Compensation

There is will be no compensation given because the data is derived from pre-existing data sources.

#### VI. Informed Consent

N/A

## VITA

Shannon B. Hardwicke

Shannon B. Hardwicke received her B.S. degree in Physical and Health Education, specializing in Sports Medicine from Radford University and her M.S. in Physical and Health Education also from Radford University. While pursuing a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at Virginia Tech, she worked as a graduate teaching assistant for two years. She plans to continue teaching in the field of Health Promotion.