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HOW PARENT INVOLVEMENT AFFECTS THE ATTRITION RATE IN SANTA ANA SCHOOLS

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To Dr. Peter E. Tobia

Who is the happiest of men?
He who values the merits of others,
And in their pleasure takes joy,
Even as though it were his own.
(-Goethe-)

-one who teaches
and all the while motivates,-
convincing the student
to believe in herself
and never, never, never give up.
Thank you.

HOW PARENT INVOLVEMENT AFFECTS THE ATTRITION RATE IN SANTA ANA SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

HOW PARENT INVOLVEMENT AFFECTS THE ATTRITION RATE IN SANTA ANA SCHOOLS

by Anne Laureen Matejov Menaldo

This qualitative study analyzes the importance of parental invovement in affecting the decisions of students to stay in school. It identifies a key intervention strategy, the Student Success Team, and demonstrates its use as a viable solution to meeting the needs of at-risk students, while at the same time encouraging parent involvement in the school. It presents a case study of an inner-city, predominately Hispanic intermediate school, as representative of schools with similar demographics . It concludes that the Student Success Team process is effective In achieving parent participation in the school activities of the at-risk student, thereby noticeably lowering transiency rates, and recommends that School Districts take a more active role in further encouraging parent participation in schools.

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I. INTRODUCTION: DEFINING THE PROBLEM

A growing number of students are leaving their schools before they finish their courses of study. These students are identified as dropouts, -young men and women who don't remain in school long enough to receive a high school diploma. Unfortunately, current statistics describe a bleak future for these teens. Since they are not capable of being absorbed into the labor market, (a sometimes surprising fact to them that adds to their already low self-concept) they become what James Bryant Conant has referred to as "social dynamite". Unemployed youth, with nothing to do with their time but hopelessly reflect upon their own failure, take to the streets and become an explosive generation. Looking for a sense of belonging, they join gangs. In search of a way to numb their pain, they consume drugs and alcohol. Both in retaliation to the adults for not fulfilling their needs and in hope that some form of employment will fulfill their desire to view themselves as "needed" in society, they succumb to drug trafficking or other forms of crime. This is not to say that all dropouts become delinquents, but the fact that it does paint a realistic picture for many teenagers today warrants our attention and concern. Every effort must be met to identify and meet the needs of these students before they leave school.

The author's purpose in this paper is to present a descriptive analysis or case study of a predominately Hispanic inner city school, as typical of schools in many U.S. urban communities and document the effects that increased parent involvement has on reducing the transiency rates of students at that school. The need for consideration of such a study was evidenced by two statistical facts readily available to educators today: (1) the increasingly high numbers of Hispanic students that are dropping out of U. S. schools, and (2) the positive differences that parents are making in schools when they become involved in activities there. As part of this study, several models of tools used to identify at-risk students were presented, popular parent involvement models

were reviewed and a parent interview was written and conducted. A specific tool or process that encourages parent participation in school, the SST (Student Success Team) was chosen, employed, and followed up with observations of students' behavior following their parents' roles there. Teacher input was required throughout the process of (1) identification of at risk students, and (2) work and attitude reports of the students before and after implementation of the SST. Since concentrated efforts were made to develop strategic plans for meeting the unique needs of each student who took part in this process, and parents were always required to play a part on the Team, it is the author's hope that the results obtained in this case study will provide a model that will help lower the overall numbers of dropouts in many schools in the U.S. today, by continually involving more parents in their children's education.

II. SETTING DESCRIPTION: SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

The author is fortunate to have the opportunity to work in an inner-city school. Carr Intermediate School is located in Southern California, in the city of Santa Ana, and has an enrollment of approximately 2000 students in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. The ethnicity breakdown of the school is as follows: 1% African American, 4% Asian /Pacific Island, 0.7% White (non-Hispanic), 0.5% Native American, and 93% Hispanic. According to statistics at Carr Intermediate School, the number of students who entered or exited the school without completing the total school year for 1994-1995 was 519, and for the school year 1995-1996 was 549. This high rate of transiency (approximately 25% of the school's population and rising) stems from a myriad of reasons that are not presently broken down by the school statistically, but include such things as change of residence, or disciplinary inter-district school transfers, to expulsions and deciding to drop out.

The predominant language spoken in the majority of the homes of these students is Spanish. Many parents do not speak any English, and to meet this characteristic of the school's population, approximately 25 % of the staff at Carr are bilingual (English/Spanish). However, in spite of this help, a great percentage of the parents still do not feel comfortable speaking up at school, or even attending parent meetings held at school. (The average number of parents attending early evening, parent meetings for the 1996-97 school year was 40, which represented only approximately 2.2% of the student population.) Since a review of literature reveals more than a few studies that have shown a high correlation of parent involvement in student activities with consequential benefits for their children, it stands to reason that actively pursuing parent involvement in Carr Intermediate, -particularly for parents of students identified as high-risk, would also benefit the potential dropout in this school.

III. JUSTIFICATION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is descriptive in nature. First, it describes the conditions that exist at Carr School (as a representative of inner-city schools in Southern California with one of the higher rates of student transiency) pertaining to the involvement of parents of students that have been identified as "at-risk" there. Parents of these students were surveyed to determine the degree of participation they had or did not have in school-related activities. In cases where parents did not participate, the study gathered information to determine the reasons behind the tendency of these parents' non-involvement in their children's school, in order to suggest viable solutions to these obstacles. Finally, a method for encouraging the role of "parent" as an active team member in his child's education was employed with this same group of parents, and changes in the students' demeanor after this parent involvement took place were observed and interpreted.

A case study approach was taken for several reasons. According to Stake (1978), the case study approach is often used by anthropologists, psychoanalysts, historians and others to travel deeper into all areas of human existence. Given the disproportionate numbers of at-risk youth in our nation today and the complexity of academic, psycho-social and economic issues that affect them, case studies are needed. As Ellen (1984) notes, it allows professionals a closer look at a particular population and enables them to " establish theoretically valid connections between events and phenomenon that previously were ineluctable." (p. 239)

Heath (1982), (who conducted a study that examined cultural congruence between Black children and Anglo teachers), stressed that the purpose of collecting ethnographic data in an educational setting was not to make judgements or to effect immediate changes, but rather to help parents and the school personnel view students from other perspectives and then determine if changes were necessary.

It is the author's hope that the conclusions and recommendations gleaned from this study will lead to modifications of factors influencing the lack of parental involement in their children's education and that this ultimately, will lead to successful completion of school for more of the at-risk students in the Santa Ana School District.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several models exist in literature which aid in the understanding of the dropout as an individual, and the classifications and effects of parent involvement in schools. A review of both of these types of models provides a foundation for schools, to reflect upon their proficiency of early identification of students at risk, as well as to consider the type of parent involvement prevalent at their institutions and how effective it is there.

The first theoretical framework presented will deal with the dropout as a person, which simplifies his recognition among other students, and thereby aids educators in determining and meeting his needs before he makes the decision to drop out.

The problem of the dropouts is indeed growing and catching the attention of many, and this fortunately includes the attention of researchers. Published material on the dropout, particularly within the last two decades, is voluminous providing a good foundational understanding of the problem as it has evolved to date, as well as familiarity with the tools being used to study and combat it.

A. FACTORS AFFECTING THE DROPOUT

A review of literature showed the term "dropout" is used with several possible meanings. For purposes of clarification, the term dropout is defined here as **a student leaving school and subsequently not enrolling in another school to resume studying.** Studies that speak of high "transiency rates" are speaking of **students that exit the school before completing the entire school year.** Sometimes these studies refer to the students interchangeably as being either transient or dropout, even though many of them may plan to reregister in another school. In this paper, however, the term "dropout" will only denote a permanent abandonment of plans to study. Transiency, on the other hand, will continue to speak

generally about students who leave the school without reference to whether they continue to study or not.

Many efforts are being made to identify this student before he decides to leave by training teachers or other school personnel to watch for certain characteristics which past and potential dropouts tend to exhibit. These students are labeled "at risk" (of dropping out) and attempts are made to involve them as early as possible in programs known as "intervention strategies". A recent study made by Shirley Wells (1990) mentioned that most researchers break the characteristics that dropouts and potential dropouts coincidentally tend to experience into five general areas. These involve the student himself, his school, his family, his community, as well as demographic considerations. Although no one has created a tool for predicting with 100% accuracy which student will drop out, several checklists have been designed to assist those interested in identifying them. Three of these (from the Los Angeles County Office of Education, 1986) are included as samples in the Appendix, and Form #1 will be used in this study because of its efficient design (i.e. most complete, yet requiring the least amount of paperwork).

In many of the recent studies (Wells, 1990, Fuhriman, et.al., 1996, Moles, et.al., 1996), it was emphasized that no one characteristic alone became a determining factor causing the student to drop out of school, but rather this was the cause of several problems that had occurred over a period of time. Each of the categories mentioned by Wells deserves further consideration.

1. THE STUDENT

An often repeated personal trait in cases of teen suicide or drug addictions, and not surprisingly found in the current literature on dropouts too, is the students' lower levels of self-concept and self-esteem, and the feeling that they have less control over their lives than other students (Rumberger, 1986).

John Holt discovered that a strong self-concept (both positive and negative) can easily be detected in children as young as ten (Holt, 1982). Should the child at such a young age already see himself as a failure, he may decide to give up altogether, and adopt a pattern of failing. Holt further determined that these students have found advantages to incompetence. He notes, "Not only does it reduce what others expect and demand of you, it reduces what you expect or even hope for yourself. When you set out to fail, one thing is certain,--you can't be disappointed. As the old saying goes, you can't fall out of bed when you sleep on the floor." (1982, p.43)

Needless-to-say, these students have developed negative attitudes about school in general and therefore, rarely consider goals for future education or occupational training. (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986; Greene, 1966). Dropouts, besides having poor grades overall, have usually been retained a grade, and demonstrate immaturity. They are also known to have frequent health problems and high absenteeism. Many are often found to be involved with drug or alcohol abuse, pregnancy or legal problems. (Los Angeles County Office of Education, 1985).

One of the comprehensive earlier studies made in 1949 reported that dropouts themselves gave "dissatisfaction with the school" as the primary reason for leaving. (Greene, 1966) Dropouts that are interviewed today continue to mention problems with the school, but have added "family problems", "work responsibilities", and "conflicts with other students" as the main reasons for leaving school. (Los Angeles Unified School District, 1985)

2. THE SCHOOL

School-related factors can be divided into cognitive and affective areas. Cognitive characteristics are mentioned more often in both earlier and more recent studies, probably because they are easier to measure. Some of these factors include lower mean I. Q. 's, scoring in the bottom quartiles of nationally administered reading and

math tests, (San Diego, 1985), and that dropouts are two or more years behind in their reading and math, and have been retained a grade. (Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), 1985). LAUSD also reported that students that demonstrate difficulty early and fail either of the first two grades have only a twenty percent chance of graduating, and students who fail at the eighth or ninth grades have similar improbabilities of graduating. But perhaps the most outstanding statement was made by a social psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania (Fine, 1986), who found after studying New York City dropouts that being held back in school is, by itself, the best single predictor of dropping out. This information should cause us to pay particular attention to students that have been retained, and particularly so in the first, second, eighth or ninth grades. Another interesting insight mentioned by Greene (1966) is that the dropout may spend as many or more years in school than the graduates, suggesting that time is not a factor meriting consideration as much as the students' other needs being met while there.

Affective factors involving the school and the dropout are more difficult to measure, but several factors have been identified as recurring. One of these, reported by many of the dropouts themselves, is feelings of alienation from other students in the school. (Wells, 1990) Potential dropouts do not feel that they "belong" and many times their friends are more likely to be out of school or in another school. (Greene, 1966; Gowan and Demos, 1966) Dropouts have also reported feeling alienated from schools, teachers, peers, homes, neighborhoods and/or society in general. (LAUSD, 1985). Wehlage and Rutter report that these students tend to perceive little interest, caring or acceptance on the part of the teachers and are discouraged by the school's constant reminders to them about their academic failures. In addition, they found that dropouts tend to be resentful of authority and feel that the school's discipline system is unfair and ineffective. (1986)

3. THE COMMUNITY

Community factors influencing the decisions of the dropout are a fairly recent consideration. Although not much research was found in the literature on tying the community to the dropout problem, several programs such as the school-business partnerships (where businesses in the community offer to sponsor activities in the school in their area), and other linkages between school and community services, such as visits by a contact person for drug or alcohol prevention programs, show an interest to reach these students. Wells (1990) however, notes that a lack of sufficient programs such as these is one of the barriers to success of potential dropouts. A particularly important link in the community is the local police department which does what it can to make the travel to and from school safer, bring into school students suspected of being truant , and offer informational meetings to parents on such topics as how to recognize gang activity or organize "neighborhood watches" for their streets, etc. Without these services, many student needs are not met, which suggests that more attention should be given to this area.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

An interesting change in statistics from a study as recent as thirty years ago was that although the earlier books reported more boys than girls dropping out as the norm (Greene, 1966; Gowan and Demos, 1966), dropout rates for males and females were similar for the 1980 high school sophomores studied. (Wells, 1990).

An important statistic to this study involves the dropout rates of the Hispanic student. Wells (1990) reports that the rate for the Hispanic student is not only rising, but is one that has a percentage that is higher than the overall national figures. According to data collected in the U. S. Department of Education "High School and Beyond" study (1983), one in four Hispanic students drop out before graduation, and they are less likely to return and complete their education later. Several recent studies have

addressed the Hispanic student in response to these alarming percentages. Orum (1986) notes that Hispanic students are the most undereducated group of Americans and have been characterized by below-grade-level enrollment, high rates of illiteracy, and low numbers of school years completed. Those students, significantly older than their peers, will experience discipline problems, boredom and low self-esteem. Wells (1990) found several cultural and school experiences of Hispanic students that contribute to their dropping out. She notes that traditionally for Hispanics, learning takes place verbally, many times through storytelling, apprenticeships, and direct experiences. Schools tend to be competitive, where the Hispanic culture is cooperative. She further reports that Hispanic students sometimes perceive that teachers or other school personnel expect them to fail and obviously, this causes them to lose self-confidence and esteem. These perceptions and differences likely cause Hispanics to find themselves at a disadvantage in school.

Where research identifies some school-related factors which can intensify a decision of Hispanics to drop out, Phelan and Gibson (1986) note that "students placed in remedial instructional tracks are more likely to encounter low teacher expectations of academic success." (p. 8)

Finally, several researchers (Fuhriman, et. al., 1996) reported that lack of parental involvement is a problem that is particular among Hispanic families. This brings us to the last general category, and the one most important to this study.

5. THE FAMILY

Low socioeconomic status families typically have one or more children that drop out. (Wells, 1990) High School and Beyond data show that seventeen percent of the low SES high school sophomores dropped out compared to nine percent and five percent of middle SES and high SES families, respectively. (Peng and Takai, 1983). Such families would also tend to have low educational and occupational levels and

frequently have not completed high school themselves. This would give little psychological support to their children to stay in school. In fact, Rumberger (1983) reports that many of these children are encouraged to leave school so that they may contribute to the financial support of their families.

Other indicators include an excessively stressful home life, poor communication between home and school (most times aggravated when English is not the predominant language in the home), frequent family moves, and changing schools. (Association of California Urban School Disticts, 1985).

B. PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Research agrees that when families, educators, and communities all work together, schools improve and students benefit because they receive the quality education they need to lead productive lives. More specifically, evidence indicates that family involvement elevates the academic achievement of students, improves their attitudes and their performances in the classroom, enlightens the parents as to the work being done at school, and helps to unite the community by forming relationships, not only with school personnel, but with parents of their child's classmates. The SST process is perhaps the best tool for meeting these needs on an individual basis. However, it is time-consuming, and when schools have close to 2000 students, it becomes practically impossible to set a goal to use this procedure exclusively to reach all parents. Fortunately, there are other ways that parents can become actively involved in their children's schools; several of these will be briefly explained and evaluated.

1. The Monthly Meeting

Many schools hold general, monthly parent meetings. Often, these meetings are held at night, so that working parents may also attend. Administrators plan these meetings with the goal to "meet" with the parents, make important announcements to them about upcoming school events, and hopefully, "hear" their concerns. Although

no broad statistics were found to denote the percentage of parents that actually attend these meetings (either locally or nationally) , an informal investigation by phone to the schools in Santa Ana showed that in general, the attendance to these meetings was very low, although the attendance tends to be higher in the elementary schools, and lowers as the students progress to intermediate and high schools. Several reasons for this were uncovered in the parent interviews and will be discussed later.

Some schools have formed a PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) where parents and teachers are elected into the offices of president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, etc. This structure adds to the monthly meetings because it gives the parents an active role. Parents not only have a voice in planning the meetings, but those parents in the audience are many times more empowered to speak up because of having another parent at the microphone. Administrators also gain knowledge about the communities they serve as PTA parents make suggestions for speakers they feel will attract other parents to coming to the meetings because of existent needs.

2. Open House or Back-to-School Nights

Another way to bring parents to school is to hold an "Open House" or a "Back-to-School" night. These are nights that the school sets aside to have the parents "attend" the classes of their children, and learn more about the curriculum, the teacher's classroom policies, review the school calendar, etc. They are usually effective because the parents go from class to class and have some time to informally get aquainted with their child's teacher. Parents are encouraged to ask questions and the teacher may involve the parents in a small lesson that uses some of the curriculum and methodology that he is using during the year. Although in the beginning of the school year, the purpose is to communicate with the parents about what they are to expect, the Back-to-School Night is usually held toward the end of the year for parents to review some of their child's work and progress in that class. Since several parents

are in the classroom at the same time, parents should be encouraged to sign up for a personal conference to be held at a later time should they wish to discuss the progress of their child in a more personal and confidential manner.

3. Newsletters and Other Written Communication

Often monthly newsletters are written, either by the teachers or the administrators, for the purpose of school-to-home communication. Sometimes they are of a general nature, and other times they are used for specific communication needs. Although parents usually do not take part in writing the newsletter, it is a passive yet effective way, especially for parents that work, to be involved in informing themselves about the events taking place in the school. If possible, a side-by-side translation should be provided when the demographics of the school community suggest that most parents would not understand something that was written only in English.

4. Home Phone Calls

Phone calls from the school are often dreaded because the parents have been accustomed to receiving a call only if their child is in some kind of trouble. Lately, several administrators have encouraged their teachers to call home to communicate their students' positive work, as well. Parents are usually very receptive and pleased to talk with their child's teacher, and this simple act can begin an important positive relationship between them. When teachers also call after noticing improved academic or behavioral achievements in their classes, it provides reinforcement for all concerned. The parents have received a positive contact from the school and the teacher is happy to have shared success stories from his classes as well as having had the opportunity to receive thanks from a parent. Finally, the student arrives home to receive praise from his happy parent for his efforts at school. Once this process has begun, it is not unusual for the students to begin to ask the teacher to call their homes.

5. Parents' Nights

Sometimes the different departments of the school will plan and hold "family nights" where parents are included in structured activities with their children. The tasks provided give the parents an opportunity to interact in solving problems or building a project with their children. Occasionally, the teacher may create a game-like atmosphere by having families compete with one another. In some cases, a Book Fair is organized to encourage children and parents to purchase books to read at home. The proceeds from these books helps to purchase more books for the school library.

During festive seasons, schools often hold student presentations such as plays or choral presentations. Parents enjoy seeing their children perform and the relaxed atmosphere helps to build positive experiences for the parents' school involvement.

C. MODELS OF HOME AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Although there are many forms of home and school partnerships across the nation, there are three general categories: the patriarchal model, the school-to-home communication model, and the partnership model. In any given school some examples of each of these models can be found, although usually one of the models is predominant there.

1. The Patriarchal Model

S.M. Swap (1993) defines the patriarchal model as using "top-down management" and summarizes it with three major attributes:

(1) parents delegate to the school the responsibility of educating their children;

(2) parents hold the school accountable for the results; and

(3) the schools accept this delegation of authority and take on increasing responsibility for raising children.

The top-down approach of the patriarchal model means that the principal is

considered the "foreman" and in this position, gives the orders to the teachers, who are the "crew". This model then continues to the relationship with the parents, who generally assume that the schools are relatively autonomous institutions. Parents receive feedback about the progress of their children, but it is generally in the form of one-way communication including report cards, back-to-school nights and open house.

The report cards give the parents an assessment of academic and social progress, generally with a letter grade for individual courses and citizenship. There may be an area for teacher's comments, but generally, the parents are asked only to sign it and return it to school.

Even the school events that inform parents about the school are limited in scope. The most common, the open house and back-to-school nights are largely teacher-centered, in that the teacher usually gives a presentation, and parents may ask questions, but they are usually reminded that no time is available during this event to hold individual parent-teacher conferences. If the school doesn't encourage the parents to sign up for a conference at a later date should they so wish, then it is easy to see how the parents get the message that they aren't expected to speak up. Add to this the cultural diversities of many of our inner-city schools where parents are not yet sure just what is expected of them, and the reasons for parent withdrawal become increasingly clear.

Melissa M. Aronson (1995) names four areas that patriarchal schools have taken on increasing responsibilities:

(1) academic, including intellectual skills and knowledge;

(2) personal, emphasizing personal responsibility and creative endeavors;

(3) social and civic, focusing on socialization and citizenship; and

(4) vocational, preparing students for the world of work.

It is alarming to ponder just how much power has been turned over to the schools, since many of the above areas used to be the responsibilities of the parents. Aronson further notes that schools are faced with increasing demands in these areas, and also expected to address the increase of knowledge in the information age, develop computer literacy, social responsibility in an age of increasing violence, and personal education in an age of sexually-transmitted diseases (especially AIDS). Attach to these demands the many added social services of serving breakfasts and lunches, and other health services or child welfare requirements, and it is evident that little time is left to the teacher for what the "traditional" teaching day used to represent. (Perhaps this is why an increasing number of parents have decided to take over completely and school their children at home.) But for those parents that choose to continue to send their children to schools, a shift in organization is overdue in order to address all of these responsibilities adequately.

2. The School-to-Home Communication Model

Somewhat of an increased partnership is presupposed with this model. The administration of the school encourages the teachers to take part in discussions and committees within a prescribed range of authority, although iniciatives for change generally come from the administrators.

As its name suggests, communication between the home and school operates with more openness than the patriarchal model. Swap (1993) again provides a general summary of three assumptions for this model:

(1) a child's academic achievement is assisted with consistent expectations and values between school and home;

(2) educators should identify practices and values in the home and community that contribute to school success; and

(3) parents have a responsibility to reinforce the importance of education through

cooperation with the school.

Although the home is given more responsibility within this model, communication is still largely from school to home, with the school telling the parents what to do and the parents generally complying.

The Open House and Back-to-School night are now enhanced through newsletters that go home to the parents from the principal or teacher, but the expectations for the child's academic achievement are still established exclusively by the school. It is assumed that the parents and the community share the same vision of the goals and the importance of education that the school has set, which is generally that the child should be preparing for college.

The school-to-home model also incorporates a form of parent-teacher conference, although they are generally initiated by the teacher, who is expected to have the agenda. For the most part they are held to discuss a problem that the student is having, or they may be held in conjunction with giving out the report cards. The goals set for the student at these conferences have to do with what can be done at home to support the school, and it is assummed that the parent will comply with the school's directions.

If in enough cases the parents are not able to meet these expectations, then parenting classes are formed to help parents to be better parents. Once again, the curriculum for these classes is left up to the school, and the ultimate goal is to aid the parents in their part of achieving the school's mission.

It is obvious that the school-to-home model is an improvement over the patriarchal model because it opens more channels of communication and offers some elements of two-way communication, but there is still great potential for utilizing parents to a greater degree in schools, and the third model attempts to do just that.

3. The Partnership Model

In this final model, there is an underlying philosophy that the school can be improved in its mission if it has the positive contributions of all. Authority is now shared because the teachers and parents have a substantial say in the direction and administration of the school. School Site Councils are set up, and teachers, parents and students are elected members who vote on and may initiate some of the important decisions for the school. Swap (1993) again gives four underlying assumptions for the partnership model:

(1) communication is two-way between the home and the school;

(2) home and school are interdependent in providing for a successful educational experience for the child;

(3) a common vision exists about the desired outcomes of the partnership; and

(4) the partners agree that the communication model is constantly evolving and improving.

In the partnership model two-way communication is given the importance it deserves in building a true relationship. The school personnel talk to and listen to the parents and the parents talk to and listen to the teachers and administrators. Both parties offer resources to the partnership and own the common goals.

It is important, of course, to understand from the beginning the parameters of the relationship. Regulations from the state, district or federal government are limitations that need to be stated and understood by all, as are the time and economic restraints of the parents. Understanding each other before insisting on being understood is something the former two models were deficient in. It provides the foundation for success in the partnership model.

Since this model is relatively new for many parents and schools, a planning meeting is vital to discuss its establishment. It is important that the chairman of the

meeting encourage everyone to participate with brainstorming new ideas, so that the climate of the meeting be one of active participation for all. The time that the meetings are held should be convenient for both parents and school personnel, and the meeting should be held in an environment that is informal and comfortable.

The three models presented, the patriarchal, school-to-home and the partnership models, provide insights into some of the ways that parents in this study view the schools they have been and are in contact with, both earlier, through their own lives as students, and now through their children.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Two main areas of literature will be reviewed: parental involvement in schools and information pertaining to the increase of dropouts within the Hispanic community.

Parent Involvement in Schools

Many studies have stated that when parents become involved in school activities, consequential benefits follow. Specific benefits include: (a) improved academic achievement (Schaefer, 1972; Walberg, 1984; Henderson, 1989); (b) increased language achievement (Bermudez & Padron, 1990; Henderson & Garcia, 1973); (c) improved overall school behavior (Comer, 1984; Walberg, 1984); (d) sustained achievement gains (Gray & Klaus, 1970); (e) gains in parental self-confidence and expertise (Bennet, 1986); (f) improved parent-child relationships (Henderson, 1989); and (g) improved home-school relationships (Bermudez & Padron, 1990). It is no wonder then that a major focus of professionals, especially those working with at-risk students, has been to involve families in the schools (Bermudez, 1994; Correa, 1989; Walberg, 1984).

However, although the benefits of parental involvement have been evident to the educational community for some time now, how to reach these parents, (especially the language minority parents) has been the topic of more recent studies. Many educators have misinterpreted the parents' lack of participation as a lack of interest, but when parents were surveyed, different conclusions emerged. Petersen & Warnsby (1992) have stated that parents' initial apprehension to becoming involved in school activities is generally the result of feelings of low self-worth and alienation from a system that they do not readily understand. Hispanic parents, for example have so much respect for the teacher that they will blame themselves for their children's problems in school, rather than the teacher, the school, or the academic program

(Carrasquillo & Carrasquillo, 1979). Bermudez & Marquez (1996) denote six reasons that culturally and linguistically diverse families remain alienated from the school system: (a) lack of English skills (inability to understand the language or help with their children's homework), (b) lack of understanding of the home-school partnership (historically, Hispanic cultures view parental interference in the schools as interference with what trained professionals are supposed to do), (c) lack of understanding of the school system (the lack of trust is often the result of misunderstanding the perceived intentions of each party), (d) lack of confidence (feeling alienated from the mainstream, these parents develop a negative self-perception), (e) work interference (in many cases, both parents work which leaves little free time for spending on school-related activities), (f) negative past experiences with schools (whether these are negative memories of their own school experiences or the negative-only reports they receive about their children), and (g) insensitivity and hostility on the part of the school personnel (parents usually wait for the school to iniciate contact with them, and when they do, that contact is not always positive).

Part of the reason for this apparent insensitivity of school personnel however, is because of rapid changes that have taken place in their environments. Nationally, the United States continues to become increasingly heterogeneous. The 1990 census shows a dramatic increase in the numbers of individuals with linguistic, ethnic, and racial minority backgrounds during the proceeding ten years in every geographic region of the country. More than a third of the nation's population increase since 1980 was a result of immigration. During those ten years, Asian and Pacific Islanders more than doubled (from 3,500,439 to 7,273,662) while the numbers of Hispanics rose by 53 percent (from 14,608,672 to 22,354,059) (Vobejda, 1991). Although this country has historically been culturally diverse, such rapidly changing demographics would have profound implications on the local school level. Veteran personnel especially,

would continue to be challenged to comprehend the suddenly different family structures, cultural and linguistic heritages, and family economic conditions. Perhaps the most blatant statement that this review of literature makes however, is that assumptions that have traditionally defined parent involvement in schools in the United States should be redefined (according to the cultural make-up of each school area) and explained repeatedly for a time to all school personnel, so that many of the misunderstandings with these parents could be avoided .

Increase of Dropouts Within the Hispanic Community

A review of literature of Hispanic students at-risk reveals that they face serious obstacles in meeting the current and future occupational challenges of a high-technological society. A study on dropouts by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 1989) indicated that while dropout rates for Blacks and Anglos have declined in recent years, the dropout rate for Hispanics has remained high during the last 15 years. The national dropout rate for Hispanics in 1988 was 22%.

More recently, event rates calculated using the October 1996 National Center for Education Statistics data measure the proportion of students (of all racial bckgrounds) who dropped out between October 1995 and October 1996. These dropouts are 15- through 24-year-olds who were enrolled in high school in October of 1995, but had not completed high school and were not enrolled in grades 10 through 12 a year later. By October of 1996, 5 out of every 100 young adults (5 percent) enrolled in high school in October 1995 left high school without successfully completing a high school program. (NCES, 1989)

The 1996 CPS (Current Population Survey) data are consistent with earlier reports of a strong association between dropping out of school and racial-ethnicity. Specifically, studies of national longitudenal data for American high school students

such as the High School and Beyond survey sponsered by NCES, show that Hispanics and blacks are at a greater risk of dropping out than whites, with Hispanics at a greater risk of dropping out than either white or black students. More recently, analyses of data from the NCES National Education Longitudenal Study, and analyses reported by the White House Panel on Hispanic Dropouts also confirm these patterns. (NCES, 1996))

Data from the October 1996 CPS repeat this pattern, showing an event dropout rate of 9.0 percent for Hispanic students, higher than the rate of 4.1 percent for white students. The estimated rate for black students (6.7 percent) falls between rates for Hispanics and whites, but the differences are not significant.

Although racial-ethnicity is a closely linked factor, others such as socioeconomic background, the ability to communicate in English and the geographic region of residence, also demonstrate a pattern in the dropout decision, and all of these are connected with immigration. 1996 data substantiates that the status dropout rate of 44.1 percent for Hispanic 16- through 24-year-olds born outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia is double the rates of 16.7 percent registered for Hispanic youths with at least one parent born in the United States and 22 percent registered for Hispanic youths with both parents born in the United States. While these dropout rates for Hispanic youths born in the United States are lower than the dropout rate for foreign-born Hispanic youths, they are still higher than the dropout rates regisitered for white or black young adults, leaving a larger share of the group of Hispanic young adults ill-prepared to compete for skilled or technical jobs in today's economy.

Data from 1995 show that over half of the foreign-born Hispanic youths who were counted as dropouts never enrolled in a U.S. school, and 80 percent of these youths were reported as either speaking English "not well" or "not at all". (McMillen, Kaufman and Klein, 1995) Some of the young Hispanic immigrants who do not enroll in school

in the U.S. may have entered the U.S. beyond what is considered "normal" high school age, and some may have come to the U.S. in search of employment rather than education. But the data suggest that language may be a barrier to participation in U.S. schools. Regardless of the reasons that resulted in a large proportion of Hispanic young adults not having a high school credential, the impact is the same; whether they were born in the 50 states and the District of Columbia or elsewhere and whether or not they enrolled in U.S. schools, these young adults do not have the basic level of education that is thought to be essential in today's economy.

Every effort must be made to reach this significant group of students and their families. This paper will present a model of one way to accomplish this.

VI. METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENTS

Knapp (1971) describes descriptive research as being used in the literal sense of describing situations or events. It is the accumulation of a data base that is solely descriptive and not necessarily seeking to explain relationships, test hypotheses or make predictions, but rather serves to meet four purposes: (a) collect detailed factual information that describes existing phenomena, (b) identify problems or justify current conditions and practices, (c) make comparisons and evaluations, and (d) determine what others are doing with similar problems or situations and benefit from their experience in making future plans and decisions.

The theme for this study germinated over working in an predominately Hispanic, inner-city school with strikingly high student transiency rates. Problems of truancy and low levels of motivation for academic achievement were apparent characteristics of the students there. Teachers, administraters and parents alike portrayed frustration over student behavior. But the concept took more form when attempts to include the parents as active team members in their child's education had minimal results.

Literature review, interviews with various parents, teachers and other colleagues in this school identified the need to get closer to the problem. Parents are a decided factor in the academic and emotional success of their children, and models for encouraging their participation are even more important where students are statistically demonstrating a cry for intervention.

A search for existing model intervention stategies uncovered the Student Success Team (SST). It was chosen to become the major focus of parent participation in this thesis work. Models for student identification were also examined, and a survey questionnaire was written to uncover more information behind the parent population concerned.

The anticipated outcome of the research is that by presenting the ethnographic data

of this inner-city school, a clearer profile of the Hispanic student at-risk, his family, and some of the challenges they face will be made clearer. It is anticipated that the detailed explanation of the SST as an intervention strategy will demonstrate a viable solution to several of the challenges met by all members of the school team, (the student, the school and his parents) but particularly the challenge of encouraging more parental involvement in the schools of at-risk students.

The methods used to collect data for this qualitative study were case study, participant observation, and interviewing.

Several instruments were used in the collection of data, although these instruments are not standardized. The first instrument (for the purposes of identification of potential dropouts from the Carr student body) was a checklist of factors shown to be common among students that have already dropped out. Although at this time, no statistics specific to the Santa Ana School District have been supplied, the Los Angeles School District (which has many demographic similarities to Santa Ana) has published studies that provided a basis for the checklist used in this paper. Three checklists are provided as comparisons, although list #1 was chosen (because of teacher peference) as the tool used in this study. (See Appendix A).

The second instrument (to collect data on the reasons behind the low levels of parent-involvement in Carr Intermediate School) was an interview. (See Appendix B- #1 and B-#2 for the English and Spanish versions of this instrument.) . Most of the interviews were conducted during home visits made by myself and another Spanish-speaking school employee after prearranging (where possible) these visits by phone. An attempt was made to tape record each interview after good rapport was established and there was no reason to doubt the truthfulness of the responses. However, given several ethnographic considerations of the parents in this group (particularly that many parents are considered to be illegal aliens) this practice often

caused a lessening of rapport, and it was , therefore, discontinued.

A. MEANS OF IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

Investigations have shown that the act of dropping out is a final step of a process that has been taking place over time. It stands to reason then, that early detection of these students, permitting early interventions, is crucial if we are to curb the number of students at risk in the future. Although the national longitudenal study, High School and Beyond (Peng and Takai, 1983) helped the educational community by identifying significant variables among school dropouts, it is difficult to understand why a system does not yet exist in most districts, (Mizell, 1983) to identify and track these students across grades or across schools so that educational personnel have early access to information on students who deserve special attention. Because a large percent of those who drop out do so in high school, there has been a tendency to view the dropout problem as falling soley within the high school's domain. This attitude, however, is changing as educators develop more sophisicated ways to identify behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive problems, not just in high school, but in junior high and elementary grades as well. And when schools have a set of intervention strategies in place to deal with these needy students once they have been identified, it stands to reason that the potential for rescuing these students is greatly magnified.

California has several programs that have been shown to meet some of the needs of at-risk students. However, perhaps the best tool the author has seen for identification and followup of these students is known as the "SST" (Student Success Team) Procedure, which will be discussed in the next section.

B. THE "SST" -A TOOL FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. HISTORY

In July of 1993, the Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) adopted the SST as "part of the education process for assisting pupils whose parents or teachers have referred them for academic or behavioral concerns." (SAUSD, 1997) Not only have SST's been adopted as District policy, but schools are encouraged to enter each meeting on the District computer network, so that inter-district transient students can be tracked across all the diiferent Santa Ana schools they attend. This fact alone warrented the time given to explain it in more detail, although the increased parent participation because of this process will be evident as well.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SST PROCESS

The SST can best be described as a school site team which includes the administrater or designee, the teacher(s), the parent(s) and the student in a positive, problem solving, intervention process. It helps the student by ensuring that the community and the school are doing everything possible to make students' lives successful. Since students are most successful where there is a strong spirit of cooperation between the home, school and community, this is main goal of the procedure. With this shared sense of responsibility, a meeting is called to hold an SST at school, to explore possibilities and stategies that will best meet the educational needs of student, while, at the same time, support his teachers and parents. Since an important part of the SST philosophy is that the parent and the student be equal partners in the process, the Department of Education in California has stated that "without the parent, student, the student's teacher(s), and the administrative/designee present, a true SST meeting is not taking place." (SAUSD, 1997.) The SST, therefore, is not held with mere recommendations on paper; importance is given to the members of the team, of which both the student and the parent are expected to play a

significant role.

Perhaps the best manner of explaining this process, is to review it from the beginning. In this paper, particular attention should be paid not only to how the student benefits as an active participant, but to the positive role given parents as team members as well.

The student is referred for an SST in several ways. Most of the time, students who are experiencing emotional, behavioral, academic or attendance problems are referred to this process by a concerned teacher, probably because this is the adult that has the closest contact with the student in school. Often though, the parent may come to school with concerns about their child's behavior or academic outcomes and an SST process is begun. Lastly, administrators dealing primarily with more serious discipline problems, or school counselors or nurses to whom the student has been referred may also initiate the process.

Once a student has been identified as having a problem in school that is seriously interferring with his academic progress, an SST Referral form is filled out. (See Appendix C-#1). The person initiating the process fills in the reasons for referral, and then it is given to the student's counselor for background information such as his last academic (standardized) testing results, the number of years he has studied in the district, his primary language, etc. The form is then passed on to the Health Office or school nurse, to review the student's health history. At the same time, the Facilitator of the SST process, (which is a person in the school that has been trained in the SST procedure) will send out "Work and Attitude" forms to the student's current teachers for a report on how the student is doing in each of his classes. (See Appendix C-#2). As these forms are returned to the facilitator, they become part of the pre-SST information search and will be placed in a color-coded (purple) file, which now becomes an important part of this student's record, and will follow him, should he

transfer to another school.

At the beginning of the information gathering, the facilitator will also contact the student's parents and schedule the meeting, which is usually held after school, to assure that all of the teachers can be present. A parent booklet, explaining the process is sent home with a video and a preparation questionnaire, (Appendix C-#3) allowing those parents that are new to the process to familiarize themselves ahead of time with what will take place. (Because of the high percentages of parents that speak only Spanish, the Santa Ana School District currently has these materials in Spanish, too.)

Finally, the meeting takes place, and a pre-determined format is followed. (See Appendix C-#4). The first part of the session is to discuss and record the student's strengths. This immediately addresses several of the potential dropout's needs mentioned earlier..(i.e. low self-esteem, the feeling that the teachers see him only as a failure, the feeling that no teacher cares whether he pass or fail, etc.), as well as starts the meeting off in a positive note. The parents and the student are also asked to contribute to this section, which many times gives the teachers some important insight as to how and why the student views himself as he does. (Sometimes, parents are not able or willing to offer any positive information about their children, which is one of the primary reasons for students' low self-esteem.) For many of the parents, however, this step is an important one, because it emphasizes from the beginning that the team is there not to simply "accuse" their child, but instead because they sincerely want to help him.

The second point to be discussed is the student's background information which often gives the team important and new insights into the problems observed in the classroom. For example, in one case, it was discovered by talking with the child's guardian that the child's mother was a deaf-mute and for that reason, none of her

children spoke much in their native language, Spanish; this, of course, gave a new understanding to their problems of learning English and their extreme quietness in the classroom in general. (Many times, teachers are overwhelmed with the number of students they are given, and these and similar facts pertinent to their students' success remain unknown; the SST process provides an opportunity to uncover these types of details, which are obviously very pertinent to meeting these students'needs.

In the third step, the team begins to share the reasons that they decided to hold the SST, or the concerns they have for the student. Both the student and the parent are asked to contribute with additional ideas or feelings about what is shared. It is important to emphasize that this particular order of events is crucial to the outcome of the meeting. Several times the author has had the opportunity to observe a meeting in which the meeting *began* with discussing the concerns. At these meetings, generally either the parent hung his head already burdened and not surprised to hear that his child still was having problems, or he tightened up and became defensive for his child deciding immediately that the teacher or school was the actually the cause of the problem. In either of these two cases, communication was shut down instead of encouraged. Stating the child's strengths and background gives both the teacher and the parent a chance to put into perspective their common goal, which is of course, the student's success.

Finally, the last section provides for listing the strategies that the team feels will help to answer the concerns they have just listed. For example, if the student has not been doing his homework, the strategies might be to monitor his use of the agenda, or that he attend the after school homework center. Alongside each of the strategies, the person responsible for seeing that the action take place is written, as well as the date the action is to be initiated. It is hoped that most of the members, if not all, become jointly responsible for at least one of the strategies. At the end of the meeting,

everyone is given a copy of what was discussed and a date for the follow-up meeting is set. This date is usually within six weeks, since the primary goal is to ascertain that the intervention strategies for the student's success are what the student needs, and are being carried out. This meeting is also documented and the information is added to the file. Should the student change schools, his CUM file (or comulative school file) will follow him. The SST file is inside his Cum, although in the purple folder, which is readily identified. The new group of teachers can now review what was already done, instead of the student waiting to be "discovered" by those in charge of his new surroundings. Hopefully, if the student was identified early (and many students are now being identified and helped in elementary grades) then, should problems continue, both the student and the parent are already familiar with the process of the SST, and a means for school-home communication has already been established.

Since many studies address the need for early identification of the potential dropout and recommend better communication between schools of their at-risk students, the SST process appears to be an ideal answer to many of these and other student needs. The SST further provides the school and the parent with a positive structure for participation and interaction in the student's life.

C. THE PARENT INTERVIEW

Interviewing was mainly structured using a questionnaire as a guide, although the questions often stimulated free-flowing, unstructured discussions. Interviews are often used in qualitative studies, and they provide a great deal of information. Although their format, at first glance, seems to be a simple one, the creation of the questions and the fieldwork involved require careful, detailed work and planning. The researcher's personality plays an important role in this form of study, since establishing trust and a good rapport is significant to the type of answers the interviewer will receive.

The questionnaire was developed by the author using questions that were grouped

somewhat by topic, with non-threatening questions presented first, and potentially threatening questions presented later, as suggested by Burns and Grove (1987). The beginning of the questionnaire asked general questions about numbers and members of the family in the school. It then progressed into their involvement in the school's activities. (See Appendix B-1 and 2 for the English and Spanish versions of the questonnaire.)

The questions were planned to gather information regarding the background of the families we were working with to gain a perspective of some of the obstacles they might be facing regarding their participation in school. The parents were asked about past school experienes (both personal and as parents), their present feelings about Carr School (both positive and negative), and the types of activities they might have participated in there. They were also asked to give reasons for not attending the monthly parent meetings and suggest ways that the school could encourage their attendance there.

The time element was a consideration in planning the questionnaire. It was intended to be used within one half to one hour, especially considering the time constraints already faced by these working parents. (The actual interviews took about 40 minutes to complete.)

VIII. DATA AND ANALYSIS

A. SUBJECTS

There are two related groups, parents and students, that were used in this study. The students involved were those that entered Carr Intermediate School with the intent to complete an academic year of study but were identified as being in danger of withdrawing (or being expelled) from the school before finishing it. The names of these students were obtained from the school's administraive offices, for the most part, although students were also identified because of academic or emotional problems by school counselors or concerned teachers. Once the students' names were received, their cum folders were reviewed, and information was filled onto the checklist provided (See Appendix A-#1) to further determine the probabilities of this student's identity as a potential dropout. Using this process, fifty students were identified and chosen to be part of this study.

The parents in this study are simply those of these at-risk students identified earlier. Obviously, low parent involvement in Carr Intermediate cannot be classified as a problem pertaining only to families of potential dropouts. However, since this group of students is in the most need of prompt interventions, it was decided that only parents from this selection would be studied at this time. Each of these parents were interviewed, and their responses tabulated; also tabulated are the degrees of participation of the parents after attempts were made to involve them in intervention strategies and other activities of the school.

B. The Students

Of the many students referred for academic, emotional or discipline problems to the administrators, school nurse, or counselors, fifty were chosen after qualifying by showing themselves to be most "at-risk" of dropping out of school. This was determined by filling information that was known about the student onto the

identification checklist mentioned earlier (Appendix A-#1). According to information given by schools with similar demographics, students that have more of these characteristics identified can be predicted as probable future dropouts from the school systems. The following section will describe the information (summarized in Table 1) that was gathered from the students chosen.

Although the gender of students was not considered when deciding which students would participate, 34 of the students were male and 16 were female. This is an interesting observation, particularly because research tells us that there is little difference in gender when considering the total number of dropouts today. (However, perhaps this discrepancy can be explained by the fact that the girls in intermediate grades are less likely to be pregnant, which is one of the primary reasons for female dropouts in later years.) Also interesting, since this fact didn't play a part in the selection of students either, is the grade levels of the students. Nineteen of the students are in the sixth grade, 14 in the seventh grade, and 17 are in the eighth grade. Although statistics generally exist in the literature reviewed for high school students, and many authors talked about the importance of early identification, it is still alarming to find as many as 19 students (sixth graders) recognized at such an early age, that are having to confront so many obstacles on their paths to success.

- Item number one on the checklist questioned whether the student's age was two or more years older than the age group of his classmates. Twenty four of the fifty students were one year older, although none were two years older; this is because the district's policy is to "socially promote" the students, according to their age, if they are more than one year older than the age of their peers. The twenty four students that were one year ahead of their peers are the same twenty four that had been retained a year.

Physical size of the students, (especially in the intermediate schools where the

opinions of peers is important at this age), plays an important role in how the student sees himself. If the student enters puberty at a later age and has not yet begun the growth spurt he sees in his classmates, he is generally made fun of and either will withdraw from the group or be constantly on the defensive. In either case, his attention is not directed exclusively to his studies, and his behavior is usually noted as unusual by his teachers. On the other hand, if a student has been left back and enters puberty as much as a year or two ahead of his classmates, he will also feel like a misfit. The advance of hormones turns his interest to noticing the opposite sex, and yet many of his peers are not ready to share those interests with him. This may cause the student to want to associate with students that are in higher grades, where he will probably be challenged to prove his worth, since they will all know that he is in a lower grade. Again, the student whose physical size is noteably different from that of his peers, whether larger or smaller, causes the student to feel uncomfortable and this, coupled with other difficult circumstances, can be one of the characteristics to look for when identifying potentially at-risk students. Of the students suveyed in this study, six of the boys were smaller than their peers and four were larger in size. Of the girls, three of them were considerably smaller and two were larger.

Problems with health constitute the next important characteristic since those students with poor health are frequently absent from their classes. When students begin a pattern of missing school at an early age, they often become apathetic toward their studies because they are behind their peers so often, they have given up the idea of ever catching up to the rest of the class. Of the students chosen for this study, eight of the students have been absent from school because of recurring or recent, serious health problems. Specifically, some of these problems are asthma, diabetes, and a recurring foot problem (which started out as a broken ankle and then led to infection and to removing of a toenail). Other "illnesses" reported were "stomach problems" and

"colds", although the validity regarding the seriousness of these health issues was sometimes doubtful.

Participating in out-of-school activities is an important indicator of a student's self-esteem (since this gives the student something to feel proud of about himself). Of the 50 students chosen, only one of them was involved in an out-of-school activity that he enjoyed, which was working in his uncle's garage fixing cars. The other students answered that they didn't do anything, or "watched television" , or just "hung around with their friends" in their spare time, outside of school.

Participation in school had similar statistics, although some of the students (three) did attend the PAL (Peer-Assisted Leadership) Club meetings held once a week after school, and some others (14) started attending the homework center to comply with one of the stategies suggested to them in an SST, although they did not do this on their own before being referred there. (One of the reasons for the low attendance, in sports especially, however, is the school's policy that only students with a "C" average or better may participate in sports, or certain other extra-curricular activities.)

The next area on the checklist was the student's grade retardation, and of the 50 students surveyed, it is interesting to note that 24 of them had been retained a grade. The breakdown of retentions per grade level is as follows: 3 students from sixth grade, 7 students from seventh grade, and 14 students who are currently in eighth grade were retained in an earlier grade.

The parent's occupation is relevant because skilled labor usually indicates that the parent attended some form of post-schooling as training for his job. (The survey actually asks for the father's occupation, but 12 of the students did not know, or want to share this information with me because they come from single parent homes. These students, then, were asked about their mother's occupation.) Of the 50 students, 36 of them had parents working in an unskilled job (such as farm workers, gardeners,

janitors or maids, or factory workers. Two of them had a parent working in a skilled job, (as a chauffeur and a car mechanic) and twelve of them were not working. (This number of unworking parents includes those who are currently incarcerated. Three of the students have fathers who are presently serving time in jail.)

The educational level reached by the parents will often give the school insights as to how important the parents view education (although, some of the parents are more adament about studying precisely because they did not have the opportunity to do so when they were younger), but many do not see it as something necessary for survival. Instead, they feel that "getting a job as soon as possible" is the most important message to give to their children, since this is what their own parents had advised them to do. In this group of students, seven of the parents did not finish more than the third grade, 12 finished only up until the sixth grade, and 27 studied beyond the sixth grade, but did not finish to earn a diploma before leaving. Only 11 said that they graduated from high school. None of the parents said that they attended college.

Coming from a large family can be difficult, especially if both of the parents are working and not home to care for the children, (as usually this responsibility is given to another child, which may be the child who is having academic and/or truancy problems). In this group of students, 23 of them came from homes of more than 4 children, although several special circumstances exist. After talking more with some of the students, it was learned that in many of the large families, several of the siblings were still living in Mexico, some with plans to soon join the family. Also, several of the students who had earlier answered that they came from a smaller family were living with another, unrrelated family in the same house, to economize on the rent. In these families many of the students had additional responsibilities of caring for younger children that were not necessarily siblings, but were living in the same house. All of these students lived in crowded conditions and could not identify a quiet place where

they could do their homework at home.

Transiency is a problem because it keeps the student from ever feeling that he belongs to the group or the school. Students move for a number of reasons, and because many of these moves stem from personal, family-related problems, the reasons for the move are not always shared by the parents. However, in several cases, the students later shared such reasons as physical abuse by the father, economic problems (i.e. paying rent), drug-selling by a family member in the house, and parental fears that the student or one of his siblings was getting involved with a neighborhood gang. (Of course, neither the parents nor the students were pressured to share the reasons behind their many moves if they preferred not to.) Twenty seven of these 50 students had more than two transfers from one school to another, some transferring because of moves, to schools within the same district. Thirteen of the students were not born in the United States and first attended a school in another country, and only twenty of the students came to the intermediate school directly from the elementary school.

Although the District policy states that the student should not be absent for more than 3 days per trimester, a pattern of chronic absenteeism (20 or more days per year) could be documented for thirty four of the 50 students. Twelve of these had excused absences (which means that the parent wrote a note and sent it in excusing the absence) and only 22 of the 50 were documented as students with truancies. Several of these students, (particularly the students that had many "excused" absences), have a pattern of being absent that has followed them from the elementary schools. It is believed that many of these excused absences do not actually stem from valid reasons for the student to have missed school, but from parents who are lax about the student's attendance. (This, however, was not part of this study, and only gives insight into some of the factors that influence the at-risk student.)

Although not all of the students' I.Q.'s were available, two students who had earlier interventions of testing for possible special education placement because of poor academic achievement in the classrooom had an I.Q. that was slightly above 90. The I.Q. levels for the rest of the students could not be tested for this study.

California tests the students on the CTBS (California Basic Skills Tests) every year, and those scores are recorded on the student's CUM files. Of the 50 students surveyed, 100% of them tested two or more years below grade level in both their reading and math abilities.

The results of school report card grades are just as disturbing. 100% of the students also have below a "C" average for their most recent grades, and many of them show this to be a pattern for several grades prior to this year, as well.

Forty eight out of the 50 students were referred to the program because of discipline as well as academic problems, which suggests on the checklist that these students reject controls. The other two students were referred to the administrative offices because of other problems, (academic and a health issue), but did not have any discipline problems recorded.

Being accepted by peers is an important factor of success in schools. However, this characteristic is a bit difficult to measure, because several of the students had a close group of friends, but perhaps were disliked or ignored by others because of their behavior. "Acceptance by pupils" therefore, was measured by taking into account the opinions of the student, as well as the student's teachers, who were asked to respond to the same question. Nine of the fifty students were rated as not having a strong group of friends (teachers classified them as "mean" or as "teasers"), and nine were classified as "withdrawn" and therefore not having a positive peer relationship. The rest of the students, thirty two of the fifty, seemed to have a good relationship with a group of their classmates.

Parental attitude toward graduation was not measurable by interviewing the parents since all of the parents said that they wanted their children to graduate. However, since this is obviously the expectation of the school, parents probably responded in a way that they felt they were "supposed" to to this question. In summary, it was not possible to measure the number of parents that were sincerely interested in their children graduating, although all of them verbally espoused to this.

Pupil interest in schoolwork was measured by the teachers' work and attitude reports on each student regarding completion of assignments and attention paid in class. Forty six of the 50 students gave their teachers the impression that they were not interested in their schoolwork, while four of the students gave the impression that they tried to do the schoolwork, but were unable to because of lack of ability.

The last section, the "general adjustment" of the students was graded "fair or poor" if the student had more than 5 areas checked off in the "vunerable to dropping out" column. Of course, all of the students were chosen because of being a probable at-risk student, which means 100% of the students had 5 or more areas checked off, but more specifically, 35 of the students had at least 8 of the characteristics marked. A summary of the most common of these factors can be seen in the table that follows.

Table 1.1 - Checklist of Characteristics of Potential Dropouts

Characteristic	Number of Students	Percentage
1. Age...old for grade group	24	48%
2. Physical size small or larger	15	30%
3. Health problems	8	16%
4. No outside activities	49	98%
5. No school activities	47	94%
6. Grade retardation	24	48%
7. Father unskilled	36	72%
8. Parent education low	39	78%
9. Four or more siblings	23	46%
10. High transiency	27	54%
11. Chronic absenteeism	34	68%
12. Low I.Q.	(not measured)	-----
13. Low reading rate	50	100%
14. Low school grades	50	100%
15. Resents authority	48	96%
16. Few friends	18	36%
17. Parental attitude - graduation	(not measured)	-----
18. Poor general adjustment	50	100%

Other Totals: Males: 34

Females: 16

Grades: 6th—19, 7th—14, 8th—17

From this group of students, the parents were chosen to participate.

C. Parents Interviewed

The parents in this study were those of the fifty "at risk" students identified earlier. Once these students were chosen, the parents were contacted for an interview, and a time was arranged for a visit. In some cases, this was an easy task because one of the parents was home at the time of the call and was open to receiving us immediately. At other times, however, the phone call awoke the parent(s) because they worked a night shift, and time for an interview was much more difficult to arrange. Finally, many of the parents were both working during the day, and no one answered the phone call, or the phone had been disconnected, so phone contact was not possible. In these cases, the student was asked to take a note home, asking the parents to call the school. If contact was not made after a week, then a home visit was arranged either in the late afternoon, or on Satuday. Although this information was not sought after as part of the original investigation, the challenges encountered in contacting the parents provide additional comprehension of what situations exist for the parents at home. Table 2.1 shows these facts more clearly.

Table 2.1 - Results of Contacting Parents by Phone

Outcome of Phone Call	Number of Parents
Parents were at home and interview arranged	13
Phone call awoke parents; interviewed later	5
Someone else answered the phone; message left	6
No one answered the phone; called again in the evening	18
Phone was disconnected	8

In spite of the difficulties of arranging the appointments for the interviews, eventually

all of the parents were visited. For the most part, the parents seemed very pleased to receive people coming from their children's school. Forty three of the parents said that this was the first time that they had had such a visit. Seven of the parents said that someone had visited them when their children were in elementary grades, although in each of these cases the visit was made because of a problem their child was having (which was usually excessive absences).

It is significant to mention that establishing trust and a good rapport with these parents was an important goal of the author, not only because this would help to assure honest answers to the surveys, but it would also help to create the good relationship between parent and school that was ultimately desired.

When asked how many children the parents had attending Carr School, only six of the families had another child studying at Carr, and in two of the cases, both the sets of brothers had been referred and were in danger of leaving the school; in the other four cases, only one of the siblings had been referred, although the other brothers and sister all demonstrated problems with their schoolwork. The intent here was threefold: determine how many students would be affected by working with these parents, see if the factors affecting one sibling were affecting the other as well, and possibly provide further justification for the parents' involvement in the school. Although some of the siblings showed more resiliency than others, all family members demonstrated definite needs in school, both in academic and discipline areas. Later in the study, it will be evident that showing justification or need for involvement was not a motivating factor; many of these parents were not involved more in the school because of other reasons.

When asked if the parents had children attending other schools in the district, the majority (forty seven) answered that they did. The other three had older children that were all out of school at this time, although, not all of them had graduated from their high schools. When asked if they had been given the opprtunity to visit their other

children's schools, 100% of the parents said yes, and forty of them (80%) said that they had participated in some way in their children's elementary school. This lead to an additional question (although not on the questionnaire) of 'Why was there less participation of the parents after the children left elementary school?' The majority of the parents answered that there was less time, although many of them also added that they had more of a necessity to work now that their children were older and needed (and wanted) more things. Some of them said that although their children liked them to participate when they were younger, now that they were older they often expressed embarrassment when their parents came to school (which is a typical response of teenagers). However, many parents also said that they felt that the intermediate schools (and the high schools) were "different" than the elementary classrooms, and that they felt that the teachers in the older grades didn't want them to come to the classrooms anymore. This is an interesting observation and one that will be considered further, later .

When asked about their opinion of Carr School, all of the parents offered different degrees of praise, which was expected since they knew that we worked there. For that reason, the question was followed more specifically with asking them what they especially liked or would like to see changed, if possible, at Carr. In many cases, the demographics of the area became more apparent here, as several of the parents answered that the safety of their children as they walked to and from schools is something that they wanted the school to change. When asked to be more specific, the parents mentioned cases having to do with a recent kidnapping and rape case of student from a different intermediate school in Santa Ana, gang violence and drugs (i.e. bad influences and danger) on the streets. However, several parents also mentioned safety issues within the school, saying that their children had shared with them times that they had been bullied by another student while on campus. Many

parents, however, did not offer any suggestions for improvement, but rather insisted that they liked Carr School the way it is. (Since these same parents are not involved in school activities, it is assummed that they don't know enough about the school to answer this question reasonably. However, after gaining rapport with some of them, it became clearer that many of these parents feel that it is not their place to try and change anything within the school. These parents have apparently accepted the parental role expected in the traditional "patriarchal model" explained earlier.)

When asked if they enjoyed going to school when they were younger, most of the parents said that they did, although several of them went into the difficulties that they had in attaining their opportunities to study and how their children didn't appreciate the opportunity they had of studying now. Many of them also shared stories of how they had to leave their schools to begin work and help support their families, and how this was expected of them. They did not spend a lot of time or effort trying to justify this; rather, it was explained as the most logical progression of events, considering their family's needs.

When asked if they had participated in any of the activities at Carr, only two of the parents had attended a monthly meeting. However, all of the parents had come to school one or more times because they were called in for a parent conference due to their child's behavior. The same two parents had also come to the "Open House", and eight of the parents had attended the English classes held at night, (but these are held at a neighboring high school; the classes at Carr are held during the day.) None of the parents had attended the school fairs, parent classes or any of the other activities.

The two parents that attended the monthly meetings each responded that the meeting was "Okay, but boring" (when that choice was mentioned as a possible answer) , which probably suggests that they did not enjoy it, but didn't feel that it was their place to expect more.

All of the parents gave reasons for not attending the activities at school when the options were mentioned one at a time. Thirty one of the parents said that they had to work. Some of these parents were at work at the time of the meeting (the meetings are held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.) while others said that they or their spouses were just arriving home from work at 6 p.m., and there wasn't time to change and eat before coming. Twenty four of the parents said that they had younger children at home as well and did not have anyone to watch them. Sixteen of the parents lived a good distance from the school and said that they had no way of getting to the meeting. Many times this was coupled with the reason that the streets were too dangerous to be walking home after dark, but when this was offered separately as one of the options, forty two answered that fear for their safety was a reason for not attending more of the meetings or other activities.

When asked if they didn't attend more of the activities because they were "boring", most of the parents laughed, but thirty two of them admitted that that was an additional reason.

When asked if there were any other reasons that played a part, three of the mothers being interviewed in absence of their working spouses said that their husbands wouldn't attend and did not want them to attend either. (The reasons they gave for their husbands' non-involvement was their feeling that the meetings were boring (irrelevant), or the fact that they were either just arriving or having to leave for work. Their wives said that they were expected to be at home, taking care of things there.)

Question number nine asked if there was anything that the school could do to help the parents take part in the meetings, and many times this question was first met with a quizzical look. Added onto that question, then, was, "Would you like to attend more of the activities at Carr?" After hesitation, twenty one of the parents answered affirmatively, while the other twenty nine offered one or more of the excuses that they

had given earlier. It was then asked if Carr School could do anything to encourage more of their participation, and then the options were given, one at a time.

Thirty of the parents thought that child care should be provided at school during important school activities. Although this question was answered affirmatively by six more parents than answered that the lack of childcare was a reason for not attending, these six parents said that they had considered taking their smaller children with them to the meeting before being given this option.

Most of the parents responded enthusiastically to the option suggesting the provision of transportation to the meeting. Although only sixteen parents had answered that the lack of transportation was a reason for not attending the meeting, forty eight of the parents said that having bus transportation would encourage them to come.

Providing food at the meeting was also answered with enthusiasm. All of the parents thought that this was a good idea, but when followed by the question, "Then, if food were provided, you'd come?", many repeated other obstacles mentioned earlier.

Although forty one of the parents said that they never knew when the meetings were to take place, only nineteen of the parents felt that calling them to remind them of the meeting would be beneficial, probably since several of them had phones that were disconnected, and many others worked or slept during the day.

Twenty one of the parents thought that a meeting during the day would allow them to come (all of these were female), and although thirty two of them had mentioned that they thought that the meetings were boring, none of them had suggestions for alternative topics. After suggesting several alternatives, however, such as discipline in the home, how to help your children study, how to recognize gangs in the neighborhood, all of the parents expressed interest.

When asked how many people they knew in Carr, forty five of the parents were

able to name the person that contacted them and asked them to come in because of the problems their children were having in school; five of the parents didn't know the name of that person. When asked if they could name others in the school, such as their child's teachers, only three of them could name one of the teachers, and one person named the vice principals' secretary, but no other names were known. Table 2.2 , on the following page, summarizes these findings.

After interviewing the parents, and learning the reasons behind the almost non-existence of parent involvement in Carr School, a more specific plan was made to encourage their participation. Since these parents have children who are at risk of leaving school before graduating, a more structured and active role of the parents in their child's school life was seen as the first priority. Each of the parents was invited, then, to participate in an SST. The parents were given the video and the booklet, explaining the process, and a date and time was set for the parent and child to meet with all of their child's teachers, the counselor and the vice principal. Since the SST is so structured, (for review of the form, see Appendix C-#4) and strategies for future success are written down with the persons responsible for carrying them out, (plus the date for this to begin happening), both the parents and their child were actively committed to be involved at this meeting. To further assure successful involvement, before the meeting was adjourned, a follow-up meeting was scheduled (usually within six weeks) to evaluate the team's success. At the follow-up meeting, new information was added and the results of the original plan were evaluated. Since these are students who have been identified as at-risk, a date for a second folllow-up meeting was set, regardless of the outcome of their previous SST. However, if the student was still demonstrating serious problems, the plan was modified. A synopsis of the outcomes of this plan follow on page 44, in section #3.

Table 2.2 - Results of Parent Questionnaire

Areas Questioned	No. of Parents
1. Previous visit from school personnel	7
2. More than one child attending Carr	6
3. Participated in another S.Ana School - (sibling)	50
4. Opinion of Carr School (a)Would like to see neighborhoods safer	36
(b)Would like to see school campus safer	22
5. Enjoyed school when younger	40
(a)Stated positive memory...(particular teacher, opportunity)	22
(b)Stated negative memory...(difficulties in learning, teacher)	36
6. Have participated in Carr School activities.....(a) monthly meetings	2
(b) When called in for a problem with my child	50
(c) All others (Fairs, District meetings, Classses for parents)	0
7. Rated monthly meeting as "ok, but boring"	2
8. Reasons for non-participation.....(a) because of work	31
(b) meetings are "boring"	32
(c) childcare needs	24
(d) transportation needs	16
(e) dangerous; too late	42
(f) Unaware of meetings	41
(g) husband says no	3
9. Ways to Encourage Parents to Come .....Provide:	
(a) childcare	30
(b) transportation	48
(b) phone call reminder	19
(d) daytime meetings	21
(e) relevant topics	50
10. Parents know name of at least one person at Carr	45
(b) Know the names of two or more people at Carr	4

D. Parent Involvement with the SST

All fifty of the parents agreed on their time for an SST meeting at school. The ideal situation would have been to have both parents present at the conference, but only in three cases did both parents attend. Of the remaining forty seven, forty two mothers and five fathers attended the meetings by themselves. In many of the cases, the absent spouses were working; in others (twelve), those attending were single parents.

In all of the SST's, the parents were assigned to be jointly responsible for at least two of the strategies. These usually were to monitor the student's use of his homework agenda at home, and check for completion of homework assignments. (If the student has written an assignment in his agenda and says that he has finished his homework in school, then he should be able to show his parent the work that corresponds to what was written down in his agenda.)

If the at-risk student had been completing his homework assignments but was in danger of failing because of an extremely low reading levels, then the tasks might be to monitor an hour of daily, quiet reading at home and see that the student is checking out books from the library.

If the problem was both academic and behavioral, then in addition to the agenda, the parent might be asked to check a "behavior card" that the student had to have all of his teachers sign after each class, during his school day, to help monitor the behavior at home. Each of the success plans were written in accordance with the individual student's needs, so the parent strategies were unique to each child.

At the follow-up meeting, the team would evaluate the changes that took place since the last SST, and a second follow-up meeting would be scheduled, after a new set of strategies was written. In this way, the parents were asked to remain involved as an important member of their child's school team. In the majority of cases, these

meetings were successful interventions for the students. Forty five of the students improved in the areas that were originally causes for concern. This is not to say that their negative behaviors disapeared altogether. Students with failing grades still showed difficulty with many of their courses, but the teachers noted that there were immediate improvements in their work habits both in the classroom and in completing their assignments at home, and this was encouraging for everyone involved. Those students that had previously been referred repeatedly to the vice principal's office for disruptive behavior, now were either rarely sent, or not sent at all.

In only five of the cases, the students left the school and are still considered particularly at-risk. In one of these cases, the parents separated and each one of them wanted to dominate the meeting. A true success plan was difficult to determine, since the parents would not agree on the strategies suggested during the meeting. Unfortunately, although it was against the mother's wishes, the father eventually came in and transferred his son to another school.

In another case, the SST was held with the student's grandfather, since the mother was deceased and the father was incarcerated. Before the plan was fully operating, however, this father was released from jail and also signed his son out of school and moved with him to a new area (outside the district).

In three of the cases, the parents had lost the respect of their children, and were not able to follow through with the plans set at the meeting. The students continued to defy authority both in the school and at home, and were eventually expelled from the school.

Although for the purposes of this study, only ffty students were closely followed (out of the nearly 2000 students at Carr), the SST process was not limited to merely these students. For the past year, the school has attempted to meet the needs of as many of these at-risk students as possible, holding many more than the SST's reported in this

study, and achieving similar results.

Also, although personally contacting parents by visiting their homes was not possible in all cases because of time constraints, many home phone calls were made by other parents to remind families about the monthly meetings. Other improvements were to serve coffee and cookies at the meetings and to choose several different themes, with parent interest in mind. The results of these changes show an unmistakeable improvement in parent attendance to these meetings.

Although much more work remains, the average parent attendance at the monthly meetings of thirty parents has now grown to one hundred fifty. The school used to hold these meetings in the library, but had to move them to the auditorium so that everyone could be seated.

However, the most remarkable change is noted for the rate of transiency, which was 519 for the 1994-1995 school year, and 549 in the 1995-1996 school year, and now has dropped to 306 for the 1996-1997 school year. Although this number is still high, it shows a significant decrease from the previous two years.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Although the transiency rate for Carr Intermediate School remains higher than it should be, (306 students left the school before completing their year of studies there) and much more needs to be done to further lower that rate, this investigation showed that a significant decrease in transciency could be attained by increasing the parent involvement in their child's school.

Recommendation: Schools should be actively pursuing the involvement of more of their parents in schools. It should be written into the school's mission, be one of the goals included the school's budgeted expenses, and be encouraged in the individual classrooms.

2. Although many of the parents of inner city schools face definite economic, physical, and emotional challenges today, their concern for their children is as strong as parents without these obstacles. Lack of parental involvement does not necessarily mean lack of concern. This study has shown what countless studies have proven earlier: parental participation makes a positive difference in their child's educational success.

Recommendation: School Districts of inner city schools should actively pursue the participation of their parents by providing such things as: funds for the creation of early evening school bus routes so that parents are not only offered a safe trip to their children's school meetings, but made to feel that their presence is important enough to help them to get there. Also, worthwhile speakers should be invited to share topics of interest to the community at these meetings, and childcare should always be available.

3. Although many of the parents chosen for this study participated in their children's elementary schools, they perceived that they were not expected to do so at

the intermediate level. Futhermore, several of the parents said that their children no longer wanted them to come to school (which is typical for the young teen).

Recommendation: The Intermediate Schools should become sensitive to the non-verbal messages they are sending out, and encourage all staff members to invite parents to participate more in school. The correlation between this involvement and student achievement is evident. Also, since this is an age that young teens are particularly aware of what their friends do, if the norm is to have many parents involved, then having parents on campus will be more accepted by all of them.

4. Many parents are only able to portray to their children what they have experienced themselves, and many of them are still not aware of the benefits of staying in school and graduating.

Recommendation: A theme that should be recurring and given a lot of publicity at several of the monthly meetings is the benefits of schooling for eventual job-hunting and future salaries.

5. Several of the parents showed much more confidence in attending other school activities after being involved in an SST. Several of them accepted volunteer jobs of phone calling other parents to tell them about a future meeting, or helping to serve the coffee at the meetings, or attending a school site council meeting when asked.

Recommendation: There are many ways to get involved in school, and schools should not underestimate the simpler tasks, since this tends to lead to more involvement eventually. The parent may gain confidence at school just because he is able to identify someone at that school. All school personnel should go out of their way to introduce themselves to parents and make them feel welcome.

Finally, this investigation showed that there is a lot more areas left to explore.

What would the outcome be for the school if many more home visits and parent interviews were realized? How would the communities change if parents became more organized and united their efforts to assure safety for their children as they walked to and from school? Are grants available for providing funds for bussing parents to early evening meetings? As the occurences of the SST's held in school continue to increase, will the transciencry rate continue to decrease? Are there reasons for transciency that we are not addressing at the moment? (What are they and how can we address them?)

One of the joys of working in education is the joy of discovery. Much research has been done that proves the importance of our parents' participation in their children's education, and yet in all schools, the area of parent involvement can be improved. This investigation has provided the key to one door, and yet, as this door opens and gives a little more light, it reveals another door behind it. I look foward to the journey.

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Appendix A

Dropout Identification Checklists

CHECKLIST FOR IDENTIFYING THE POTENTIAL DROPOUT

Note: This list is taken from the report of the Juvenile Delinquency Project, William C. Kvaraceus, director, *N.A.A. of the U.S., Vol. 2, Principals and Practices*, pp. 101, 102, 959, where it is "reproduced by permission of the University of the State of New York."

FACTOR	VULNERABLE TO DROPPING OUT	FAVORABLE TO COMPLETING SCHOOL
1. Age	[ ] Old for grade group (over 2 years)	[ ] At age for grade group
2. Physical size	[ ] Small for age group [ ] Large for age group	[ ] No size demarcation
3. Health	[ ] Frequently ill [ ] Fatigues easily	[ ] Consistently in good health
4. Participation in out-of-school activities	[ ] None	[ ] Planned and reasonable
5. Participation in school	[ ] None	[ ] Planned and reasonable
6. Grade retardation	[ ] One year or more retarded	[ ] At grade or above
7. Father's occupation	[ ] Unskilled [ ] Semiskilled	[ ] Professional [ ] Semiprofessional [ ] Managerial
8. Education level achieved by:		
Father	[ ] Grade 7 or below	[ ] Grade 10 or above
Mother	[ ] Grade 7 or below	[ ] Grade 10 or above
9. Number of children in family	[ ] Five or more	[ ] Three or less
10. School-to-school transfers	[ ] Pattern of "jumping" from school to school	[ ] Few or no transfers
11. Attendance	[ ] Chronic absenteeism (20 days or more per year)	[ ] Seldom absent (10 days or less per year)
12. Learning rate	[ ] IQ below 90	[ ] IQ above 100
13. Ability to read	[ ] Two or more years below grade level	[ ] At or above grade level
14. School marks	[ ] Predominantly below "C"	[ ] Predominantly "B" or above
15. Reaction to school controls	[ ] Resents controls	[ ] Willingly accepts controls
16. Acceptance by pupils	[ ] Not liked	[ ] Well liked
17. Parental attitude toward graduation	[ ] Negative [ ] Vacillating	[ ] Positive [ ] United
18. Pupil interest in school work	[ ] Little or none	[ ] High
19. General adjustment	[ ] Fair or poor	[ ] Good

Source: California State Department of Education, *California Curriculum News Report*, October 1986.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF A POTENTIAL DROPOUT

Check only those areas that apply to the named individual.

NAME_____ GRADE_____ DATE_____

NON-SCHOOL-RELATED FACTORS

[ ] Poor social adjustment, perhaps socially and emotionally disturbed

[ ] Low perceptual performance

[ ] Low self-concept/low level of self-esteem

[ ] Immature, suggestible, easily distracted, lack of future orientation

[ ] Frequent health problems

[ ] Alcohol or drug problems

[ ] Unable to identify with peers, teachers

[ ] Friends are outside of school, usually older

SCHOOL-RELATED FACTORS

[ ] Early absenteeism/truancy

[ ] Frequent tardiness

[ ] Achievement below grade level; failing classes/low test scores

[ ] Verbal deficiency

[ ] Failure in one or more schools

[ ] Disruptive behavior and/or rebellious attitudes

[ ] Classified as slow learners (IQs of 75-90)

[ ] Lack of basic skills

[ ] Has repeated at least one grade

[ ] Older than classmates

[ ] Limited extracurricular participation

[ ] Lack of identification with school; feeling of not belonging

[ ] Failure to see relevance of education—uninterested

[ ] Dissatisfaction with teachers

[ ] Feelings of rejection by school—feelings of alienation

[ ] Unable to tolerate structured activities

[ ] Friends are outside of school

FAMILY-RELATED FACTORS

[ ] Communication between home and school is usually poor

[ ] Absence of father/mother from home

[ ] Non-English speaking home

[ ] Frequent residential changes

[ ] Family violence (physical or sexual abuse)

[ ] Siblings or parents have been dropouts

[ ] Family disturbances

[ ] Tend to come from low-income families

Source: *The Prevention of Truancy: Programs and Strategies That Address the Problems of Truancy and Dropouts*, Los Angeles County Office of Education, 1986 (out of print).

DROPOUT IDENTIFICATION SURVEY

Respondent's District

Lower Elementary [ ] Upper Elementary [ ]
Junior High/Middle School [ ] High School [ ]

Factor	School	Home	Com-munity	Grade Level	Source of Identification
Academic Difficulty (especially reading)					
Grade Failure					
Need Money					
Get Married					
English Language Difficulty					
School Discipline Problem					
Poor Attendance					
Peer Pressure					
Alienation/Isolation					
Boredom/Lack of Interest					
Pregnancy					
Dislike School					
School Seen as Unimportant					
Home Stress					
Substance Abuse					
Health Problems					
Feel Harassed by School					
Single Parent Family					
Poor Self-Concept					
Emotional Problems					
No Participation in Extra-curricular Activities					
Family History of Dropouts					
Frequent Moves					

Source: "Dropout Prevention Survey," Oakland County Schools, Pontiac, Michigan, May 1985.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR PUPILS?

The following list contains many characteristics of pupils who have dropped out of school. Please check (X) those characteristics that describe high risk pupils and dropouts in *your* school district. Check all that apply.

- [ ] poor grades overall
- [ ] low math scores
- [ ] failed in other schools
- [ ] low perceptual performance in one or more areas
- [ ] verbal deficiency
- [ ] gifted and/or talented abilities, but bored with school
- [ ] been retained a grade
- [ ] expressed feelings of not belonging in school
- [ ] poor social adjustment
- [ ] fails to see relevance of education to the life experience
- [ ] frequent health problems
- [ ] acts socially or emotionally disturbed
- [ ] general unacceptance by school staff
- [ ] father/parent absent from home
- [ ] generally not accepted by his/her peers ("a loner")
- [ ] low income family/serious economic problems
- [ ] low or inappropriate self-concept
- [ ] frequent truancy
- [ ] low reading scores
- [ ] no future orientation
- [ ] immature, suggestible, easily distracted behaviors
- [ ] inability to identify with others
- [ ] inability to tolerate structured activities
- [ ] lack of identity with school
- [ ] inability to relate to authority figures
- [ ] disruptive behaviors
- [ ] inability to function properly within traditional classroom
- [ ] been emotionally neglected
- [ ] rebellious attitudes toward authority
- [ ] friends who are mostly older and out of school
- [ ] non-English speaking home
- [ ] siblings or parents who have been dropouts
- [ ] has moved more than other students
- [ ] frequent contacts with police

Source: *The Prevention of Truancy: Programs and Strategies That Address the Problems of Truancy and Dropouts*, Los Angeles County Office of Education, 1986 (out of print).

Appendix B

Parent Interviews

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE - ENGLISH

NAME_____PHONE_____

ADDRESS_____

1. Have you had a visit from school personnel before?_____(When?)_____

2. How many children do you have attending Carr Intermediate School?_____

3. Do you have children attending another school in the district?_____(Which one?)

4. What is your opinion about Carr?_____

   a). What is something you like about Carr?_____

   b). What is something that you'd like to see changed at Carr?_____

5. Did you like to go to school when you were younger?_____

   a). What is a good memory you have about going to school?_____

   b.) Do you have any bad memories?_____

6. Have you participated in any of the activities at school?_____(Which ones?)

   a.) Monthly meetings (b).When called in...discipline (c). Open House
   d.) District meetings (e). Carnivals or Fairs (f). Parenting Classes
   g.) English Classes (h). Literacy Classes (i). other_____

7. If yes,...what did you think of the activity(s)?_____

8. If no, why haven't you attended?
   a.) Meetings are boring (b). I work (c) Child Care
   d.) Lack of transportation (e.) Time is too late (f.) Dangerous to be out
   g.) Husband won't go (h.) Unaware of meeting (i.) other_____

9. What is something that Carr could do to help you take part in activities there?
   a.) Provide...child care....transportation.....dinner.....other_____

   b.) Call about the meeting.....(c). hold morning meetings.....(d). early afternoon....

   e.) Vary the themes....(My preference would be.....)

10. How many people do you know at Carr School?_____

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE - SPANISH

NAME_____PHONE_____
ADDRESS_____

1. Han tenido antes una visita de parte de la escuela de sus hijos?.....(Cuando?)

2. Cuantos hijos asisten a la Escuela Carr?_____

3. Tienen hijos que asisten a otra escuela en el distrito? (Ha tenido oportunidad de visitar esa escuela? Como?)_____

4. Cual es su opinion de la Escuela Carr?_____
   _ Nombra algo que le gusta de Carr._____
   _ Que le gustaria cambiar en la Carr?_____

5. Le gustaba irse a la escuela cuando era joven?_____
   _Cual es un buen recuerdo que tiene de la escuela que asistio?
   _Tiene algunos males recuerdos?_____

6. Ha participado en algunas de estas actividades en la Escuela Carr? (Cuales?)

   a) reuniones del mes (b) cuando me llame(disciplina) (c) "Open House"

   d) reuniones del distrito (e) Carnavales o Ferias (f) clases para padres

   g) clases de ingles (h) clases de alfabetizacion (i) Otros_____

7. Si ha participado, como le parecio la actividad?_____

8 Si no, por que no ha participado?
   a) por mi trabajo (b) las juntas son aburridas (c) cuidado de mis hijos

   d) falta de transporte (e) la hora; peligroso (f) mi esposo no quiere

   g) no me da cuenta de las reuniones (h) Otros:_____

9. Que es algo que la Escuela Carr podria hacer para facilitar su asistencia a las actividades alli?_____

-(Proveer.....cuidado de ninos.....transporte.....cena.....otro.....)

-Avisar por telefono.....-cambiar la hora de las juntas para la manana.....tarde.....

-Cambiar las temas.....(Me gustaria saber de.....) -Otro idea.....

10. Cuantas personas conoce actualmente en la Escuela Carr?_____

Appendix C

SST Forms

Santa Ana Unified School District
Student Success Team (SST) Referral

I. General Information: (see cum and consult with parent) Cycle: A B C D Traditional (Circle one)

STUDENT _____ I.D. # _____ GRADE _____ SCHOOL _____ DOB _____ M/F _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____ PRIM. LANGUAGE _____ ( ) LEP ( ) FEP ( ) E O

IPT Level

II. Date of Enrollment in SAUSD: _____ Years in U.S. _____ Redesignation Date: _____

Date of prior SST meetings: _____ Date of last parent conference: _____

Educational History Concerns: Attendance ( ) Punctuality ( ) Retention ( ) Transiency ( ) Behavior ( ) Academics ( )

Additional Comments: _____

III. Health Screenings: (see nurse/health records)

Vision Screening date: _____ Results: _____

Hearing Screening date: _____ Results: _____

MEDICAL (Describe)

_____

_____

MOTOR (Please indicate areas of concern)

( ) gross motor

( ) fine motor

IV. Date of Referral: _____ Person Initiating Referral: _____

Reason for Referral: Specifically state the concern you have. Give specific examples of this behavior and attach work samples if appropriate. _____

V. Strengths: _____

_____

_____

VI. Please Indicate Areas of Concern: Mark box only if applicable.

READING

Instruction Language _____

Current Level _____

( ) decoding

( ) comprehension

Last test scores and date:

_____

SABE, CTBS, OTHER- Specify)

ORAL COMMUNICATION

	L1	L2
listening	( )	( )
language confusion	( )	( )
understanding	( )	( )
expression	( )	( )
voice quality	( )	( )
sound production	( )	( )

other: _____

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

( ) Language of Instruction: _____

( ) grammar ( ) punctuation

( ) spelling ( ) expression

Last test scores and date:

_____

SABE, CTBS, OTHER-Specify

SOCIAL / EMOTIONAL

( ) behavior/relationship problems:

( ) with adults

( ) with peers

( ) feelings about self

MATH Current Level _____

( ) computation

( ) concepts

Last test scores and date:

_____

(SABE, CTBS, OTHER-Specify

COPING SKILLS

( ) concentration / attention

( ) efforts

( ) independence

( ) task completion

VII. Interventions to Date: (check those used and specify language of instruction)

( ) ESL/BRT ( ) SARB; PPC ( ) Migrant Education ( ) GATE

( ) Remedial Math ( ) Community Worker Involvement ( ) Other: _____

( ) Remedial Reading ( ) Informal consult with: _____

VIII. Additional Comments: (including previous Spec. Ed. such as speech/language, RSP)

_____

_____

_____

FIRST DAY OF STUDENT SUSPENSION: _____

SST ____
SARB: ATTENDANCE CONCERNS ____
PPC: ADJUSTMENT CONCERNS ____
EXPULSION RECOMMENDATION ____
INDEPENDENT STUDY ____
HORIZON/SUMMIT ____
SPEC. ED. ASSESSMENT ____

THE INFORMATION ON T
FORM IS URGENTLY NEEDED
THE ADMINISTRATION. PLEA
RETURN THIS FORM TO T
PERSON INDICATED BELOW:

_____

DATE NEEDED: _____

SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION
STUDENT PROGRESS AND ATTITUDE REPORT
(CONFIDENTIAL)

PUPIL'S NAME: _____ DOB: _____ GRADE: _____

TEACHER: _____ SUBJECT: _____ PERIOD: _____

ATTENTION TEACHERS: When tabulating the total number of student absences, tardies, and non-suits, include ONLY days prior to the first day of the student's suspension indicated at the top of this page. Grade points should not be deducted because of absences occurring after the above suspension date.

1.0 CHECK ONLY CHARACTERISTICS WHICH APPLY:

___ Cooperative ___ Courteous ___ Leader ___ Withdrawn ___ Mature

___ Uncooperative ___ Defiant ___ Follower ___ Aggressive ___ Immature

2.0 PLEASE COMMENT BRIEFLY:

Attitude toward classmates: _____

Attitude of classmates toward pupil: _____

Attitude toward school and work: _____

Attitude toward teachers and authority: _____

3.0 HOMEWORK: *(If not assigned, indicate in proper space)*

___ Always on time ___ Usually on time ___ Never turns in

___ Frequently late ___ Always late ___ Not assigned

4.0 GRADES: *(For current grading period to date of above suspension)*

ACADEMIC GRADE: _____ CITIZENSHIP GRADE: _____ WORK HABITS: _____

5.0 COMMENTS ON ABOVE GRADES: _____

_____

6.0 ABSENCES: *(Total number for current semester to date of above suspension)* _____

7.0 TARDIES: *(Total number for current semester to date of above suspension)* _____

8.0 NON-SUITS: *(For P.E. only, for current semester to date of above suspension)* _____

9.0 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: _____

_____

_____

INSTRUCTIONS TO SCHOOLS: *Because this form will be reproduced for the Board of Education, i must be typewritten, with teacher signature in either blue or black ink.*

_____ DATE _____ SIGNATURE

PARENT PREPARATION FOR (SST) STUDENT SUCCESS TEAM
PREPARACION DE PADRES PARA EL (SST) EQUIPO DE EXITO ESTUDIANTIL

Student's Name:_____ Grade:____ School:_____ Date_____
*Nombre del alumno:*_____ *Grado:*____ *Escuela:*_____ *Fecha:*_____
Birthdate:_____ Age:_____ Teacher's Name:_____
*Fecha de nacimiento:*_____ *Edad:*_____ *Nombre del maestro/a:*_____

NOTE: Please complete this sheet and bring it with you to the SST Meeting.
NOTA: Favor de completar esta forma y traerla con Usted a la conferencia de "SST".

1. Things I really enjoy about my child (his/her STRENGTHS) are:
   Las cosas que me gustan de mi hijo/a (sus CONCENTRACIONES FUERTES) son:

   _____
   _____

2. Activities I think my child likes best are:
   Las actividades que yo creo le gustan más a mi hijo/a son:

   _____
   _____

3. My concerns about my child are: *Lo que me preocupa de mi hijo/a:*

   a. At school *a. En la escuela*

   _____
   _____

   b. At home b. *En la casa*

   _____
   _____

   c. Other c. *Otras cosas*

   _____
   _____

4. Types of discipline I find to be most effective with my child are:
   Las formas de disciplina que encuentro más efectivas con mi hijo/a son:

   _____
   _____

5. Expectations I have for my child are: *Las esperanzas que yo tengo para mi hijo/a son:*

   _____
   _____

Parents' Names:_____/_____
Nombre de padre(s): _____/_____

SST SUMMARY FORM

STUDENT: _____ SCHOOL: _____ TEAM: _____ DATE OF INITIAL SST: _____

PRIMARY LANGUAGE: _____ GRADE: _____ BIRTHDATE: _____ PARENTS: _____

STRENGTHS	KNOWN		CONCERNS	QUESTIONS	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS		
	Information	Modifications	Prioritize		Brainstorm	(Prioritize)	Who	When

Follow Up Date: _____ ***Invite:*** _____

Team Member's Signature/Position:

1. Parent _____
2. Student _____
3. Administrator _____
4. Referring Teacher _____
5. _____ / _____
6. _____ / _____
7. _____ / _____
8. _____ / _____