

University of the Virgin Islands

Graduate Program

An Investigation into the Success of At-risk Students Who were Enrolled in an
Alternative Education Program in the Virgin Islands.

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by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the success of "At-risk" students who were enrolled in an alternative education program on St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. "At-risk" students who attended these alternative programs were compared to "at-risk" students who attended the traditional education programs. The students were compared on their academic performance, attendance behavior, disciplinary referral behavior, and their attitude toward school.

Methods of data collection included the California Achievement Test/5, the Survey of Pupils' Opinion, and information from the students' cumulative folders. Participants for this study were tested under similar conditions. The data from the California Achievement Test/5 and the results from the students' cumulative folders were analyzed using the independent t-test. The results from the Survey of Pupils' Opinion were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney-U-test. Tables for each set of data were done to show the differences in the group scores.

Results from the different hypotheses revealed the following; there is no significant difference in the academic performance, attendance behavior, and the attitude toward school of "at-risk" students who attended an alternative education program and "at-risk" students who attended the traditional education programs. However, there is a significant difference in the disciplinary referral behavior of "at-risk" students who attended an alternative education program and "at-risk" students who attended the traditional education program.

Among the recommendations offered was the urgent need for a transition specialist to help "at-risk" students make a smooth transition from the alternative education program

back to the traditional education program. It was also recommended that a variety of instructional methods and varying levels of skills be used to motivate these students. Finally, it was also recommended that additional studies be done before a conclusive statement be made about the success of these programs.

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We hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give,
and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.

It is very easy to overestimate the importance of our achievement
in comparison with what we owe others. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

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Chapter

Introduction

Secondary schools face unprecedented challenges in today's world economy. They must prepare students to function effectively in a rapidly changing world. They must equip their students with the requisite knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, and disposition to enable them to engage productively in the workplace and wider community. Similarly, a goal of secondary schools is to produce citizens who are productive and morally efficient in their communities. The National Education Goals of 2000 (Carr, 1995) call for an increase in graduation rates and the attainment of world class standards and opportunities for all students to learn. However, one of the major challenges for schools nationally and locally is how to accomplish this, given the ever increasing rise of students who are labeled "at-risk" for school failure.

Warner and Craycraft (as cited in Chalker & Brown, 1999), define "At-risk" students as those students who are perceived as doomed for failure before they start and with whom basic regular classroom techniques seem to make little difference. Boyd (1993), described these students as those individuals who are in the situation where their family background, the personal characteristics of the child, the school context, and the social behavior of children interact to create conditions that place them at risk of failing to achieve their academic potential. These situations have also increased the possibility of these students dropping out of school or having limits placed on their ability to function as productive adults in society. One legislative mandate termed "at-risk" students as those

who are experiencing difficulty with learning, school achievement, progress through graduation from high school, or preparation for employment due to social, emotional, physical, and mental factors (Rogus & Wildenhaus, 1991). Even though there are many nuances of the term “at-risk”, the major focus is the same.

Carr (1995), reveals that almost a quarter of all 17-years-old students cannot read simple magazines. The number of students who finish twelve years of school, but do not receive a regular high school diploma, as well as students who fail at least one year during high school, amount to 40% of the student population. Millions of citizens in our communities qualify as functionally illiterate (Chalker, 1996).

Similarly, research shows that 40% of all grade repeaters come from the low socio-economic status quartile. Many of these repeaters tend to be male and African-American (Owings & Magliaro, 1998). Further, grade retention significantly increases the probability of dropping out (Chalker, 1999).

Other problems such as youth violence, absenteeism, truancy, social problems, school policies, and school drop-out rate are additional factors that are placing America's youths “at-risk”. Research shows that youths eighteen and younger had a higher percent of arrests than those older than eighteen (Garis, 1998). Truant students are at a higher risk of being drawn into behavior involving gangs, daytime crime and violence, drugs, and/or alcohol. Absenteeism is detrimental to students' achievement, promotion, graduation, self-esteem, and employment potential. Clearly, students who miss school fall behind their peers in the classroom. This, in turn, leads to low self-esteem and increases the likelihood that “at-risk” students will drop-out of school (Schwartz, 2000).

This increase of the “at-risk” population has caused educators to come up with new structures and policies to meet the needs of these children. These include social promotion, non-graded or multi-graded classrooms, and modified instructional services.

The introduction of the new policies and strategies in the traditional school system coupled with many other societal problems have increased the number of students who are identified as “at-risk” of school failure. Thus, due to the increase in this population, there is a need to establish more alternative forms of education programs.

The “at-risk” students need alternative education programs that can effectively meet the needs of students with varying abilities, different learning styles, abused histories, and neglected family backgrounds, without diluting the effectiveness of the schools. Research is showing that alternative education programs with their unique characteristics, such as smaller class size, individualized instruction, curriculum dominated by technology, flexible scheduling, and self-paced mastery skills are more beneficial to these “at-risk” students. Additionally, studies reveal that “at-risk” students experience greater academic, behavioral, and social success in alternative education programs than in the traditional setting (Zeller & Payne, 1998).

Here in the U.S. Virgin Islands, similar problems exist. Eighty-four percent of public schools qualify for free lunches, and one-third of the population is below the poverty level (Parris, 1996). Data acquired from the Virgin Islands Department of Education showed that teen pregnancy is on the rise (Moore, 1997b); and 51% of the crimes committed in the Virgin Islands were done by youths between the ages of 11 and 25 years (Parris, 1996). Further, the highest incidence of violence occurred at the 7th and

8th grade level (Moore, 1997a).

Similarly, the problems of absenteeism and school drop-outs are prevalent in the U.S. Virgin Islands Public Schools. Statistics show that of the 10,241 secondary students enrolled in the Virgin Islands public schools, 633 were absent from school for 21 days or more. Moreover, the highest number of drop-outs were generally found in grades seven and nine, with the male dropout rate for the territory always being significantly higher than the female dropout rate (Josiah, 1998). This research has signaled a trend that is taking education in the U.S. Virgin Islands in the direction of more and more alternative education programs to address the needs of these “at-risk” students who are unable to succeed in the traditional school structure.

Statement of the Problem

Due to late intervention or insufficient alternative education programs in the U.S. Virgin Islands, many “at-risk” students become school dropouts or become involved in other problems. The traditional classroom setting may not be the most appropriate means of meeting their needs. Alternative education programs seem a viable alternative. The unique qualities found in these programs can be implemented to help “at-risk” students in the regular classroom achieve some academic, behavioral and social success. Given the proliferation of students labeled “at-risk” in the U.S. Virgin Island schools, there is a need to find effective ways to help them graduate from high school. This study will investigate whether “at-risk” students who attend alternative education schools have different academic performance, behavior, and attitude, than those “at-risk” who attend the

traditional public schools.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program performed better academically than “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program. It is also to determine if there is a difference in their behavior and attitude toward school.

Research Questions

1. Do “at-risk” students who attend an alternative education program perform better academically than “at-risk” students who attend the traditional education program?
- 2a. Is there a significant difference in the attendance behavior of “at-risk” students who attend an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attend the traditional education program?
- 2b. Is there a significant difference in the disciplinary referral behavior of “at-risk” students who attend an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attend the traditional education program?
3. Is there a significant difference in the attitude toward school of “at-risk” students who attend an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attend the traditional education program?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of ‘at-risk’ students who attend an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attend the traditional education program.
- 2a. There is no significant difference in the attendance behavior of ‘at-risk’ student who attend an alternative education program and “at-risk’ students who attend the traditional education program.
- 2b. There is no significant difference in the disciplinary referral behavior of “at-risk” students who attend an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attend the traditional education program.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude toward school of ‘at-risk’ students who attend an alternative education program and those ‘at-risk’ students who attend the traditional education program.

Definition of Terms

At-risk students: Students who are in danger of not graduating from high school and not acquiring skills needed to function effectively in society (Chalker, 1996). The explicit criteria for a student to be classified as “at-risk” in this study is in Appendix A.

Behavior: In this study, behavior refers to students’ absences and disciplinary referrals

(Cooper, 1990). Behavior for this study will be measured by the number of absences and the number of disciplinary referrals in an academic year.

Attitude: This refers to the predisposition to act in a positive or negative way toward persons, ideas, or events (Cooper, 1990). For this study it will be measured by the Survey of Pupil Opinion (Kilbane, 1972).

Academic performance: This refers to students' score in mathematical and reading skills. It will be measured by the California Achievement Test (CAT), fifth edition, short-form, level 19 (CTB, 1993).

Alternative Education: The modification of a school's course of study and adoption of teaching methods, materials and techniques to provide educationally for those pupils in grades six through twelve who are unable to benefit from the regular course of study and/or environment (Chalker, 1996).

Delimitation/Limitations of the Study

This study is delimited to the "at-risk" students who attended an alternative education program on St. Thomas, VI and their "at-risk" peers who attended two of the traditional schools on the same island.

One limitation to this study is the small number of "at-risk" students who attended the alternative education program. Therefore, all of these students will be targeted for inclusion in the sample. However, "at-risk" students who did not attend the alternative

education programs will be randomly chosen. Also, the three month break between graduation from the alternative school and the attendance at the traditional school may impact the results of the students' attitude toward school, their academic performance, and their behavior. Finally, the achievement instrument is not specifically designed to measure the academic success of "at-risk" students.

Significance of the Study

Many students in our communities are labeled "at-risk". This group encompasses students who display certain characteristics or needs requiring alternative schooling. These needs may range from academic retention in grades, disciplinary expulsion, premature school departure or being identified for potentially dropping out. In addition, complicated economic and social forces have further intensified the problems experienced by these students. As a result, increased special learning needs and more structured remediation through alternative education programs are required.

Alternative education programs recognize that everyone does not learn in the same way and that some students should be taught differently using an innovative curriculum. Thus, they offer students options and learning opportunities that may be more suitable for their needs, values, interest, talents and aspirations. Alternative education programs implement a variety of strategies and learning styles to help children who need more individualized attention, have a short attention span, or may have experienced more success from vocational training rather than the academics. Also, these programs have developed support services that facilitate growth in academic, personal/social, and career

development initiatives. Finally, in the nontraditional school settings that have implemented alternative education programs, students have positive experiences. These include a close working relationship with teachers due to small class size, greater support and encouragement that are less likely to happen in the traditional setting, multifaceted services and approach, improvement in basic skills and self-esteem, and work experience or other type of experimental learning.

This investigation may help educators get information about what curricular models will better serve the “at-risk” population. It may also help to show what strategies can be used to help “at-risk” students achieve academic, behavioral, and attitudinal success in schools, thus, motivate them to stay in school. This investigation may also show if the alternative environment produces better academic, behavioral, and attitudinal performance for students labeled “at-risk.

The results of this study may suggest to educators and administrators how beneficial alternative education programs are to students labeled “at-risk”. It can also suggest the need for more teachers trained in dealing with “at-risk” students. If the results of this study reveal academic success, behavioral success, and/or a positive change in students’ attitude toward school, that information can help to alert administrators, policymakers, and other educators to certain factors that may show that earlier intervention may be even more beneficial. It may help to reveal that more programs or the extension of the current programs may be necessary to help more of the Virgin Islands’ “at-risk” youths. It could suggest that the introduction of these programs in the curriculum of the traditional school may be beneficial to the “at-risk” population as well as

the other students. Also, it can encourage the addition of other areas to the alternative education program that could enhance not only the academic performance of "at-risk" students, but the affective aspect as well. The results of this study may help to suggest the need for more professional development for staff members in order to meet the needs of underachieving children in the traditional school. Finally, the end results may act as a motivator to test to see if smaller class size or an enhanced curriculum will have an impact on achievement outcome of all children.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The number of children who are failing in our educational system is reaching epidemic proportions. Recently, many educators have begun to use the term “at-risk” to describe these children. However, it is extremely difficult to define this category of children, because being “at-risk” is not related to one cause, but rather a group of factors. Students who are “at-risk” are those who on the basis of several factors might not graduate from high school. Some of these at-risk factors are low achievement, retention in grade, behavioral problems, poor attendance, low social economic status/poverty, ethnicity, gender, and crime.

Despite the large sum of money allocated for education, despite extensive research, and despite the refocusing of the nation’s attention on education, a significant proportion of America’s children are “at-risk” of educational failure (Hixson & Tinzmann, 1993). Researchers and educators are now revealing that school factors and family/societal factors are responsible for America’s children being “at-risk.”

School Factors

Meta-analyses and various research show that some students begin to experience academic failure from as early as kindergarten. It is believed that some teachers exhibit negative attitudes toward children from poorer neighborhoods, the curriculum for many of these students is not as motivating as for other students, and many of these students develop a dislike for school as early as kindergarten. In addition, at this early stage many

also develop non-conformity behavior to school rules. They have no attachment to teachers and exhibit low aspiration and interest toward learning. The culmination of these earlier problems are often manifested in poor adaptation to the school environment and a poor attendance pattern (Gregg & Butler, 1995). When a study was done at the California State University tracing a cohort of children from 1987 to 1996, who were one year below their grade average it was estimated that between the ages six to eight 21% of the children were below grade level and by the time they were twelve to fourteen years old the number would increase to 31% (American Federation of Teachers, 1997). Data from the Child Health Survey and National Household Education suggest that by first grade seven to ten percent of students have already been retained in one grade. Two-thirds of all retention takes place between kindergarten and third grade (Feldman, 1999).

Moreover, current researchers believe that children should be able to read by the end of third grade. Many proclaim that they must be able to read, write, and do math before promotion to the next grade (Denti & Gilbert, 1999). Yet, many third and fourth graders receive low aptitude scores, especially in reading and math. The National Assessment of Educational Progress in their recent studies reported that 20% of fourth grade children are classified as dysfunctional readers (Carr, 1995). In addition, results from a 1994 national survey reported that 44% of school children are reading below a basic level of achievement. Further, 70% - 80% of some inner city school students and 30% of suburban school students are reaching intermediate levels being unable to read and understand grade appropriate material (Garis, 1998). Forty percent of thirteen-year-olds and 16% of seventeen-year-olds who are attending high school have not developed

intermediate reading skills (Heizer, 1998).

When the results for the 1999 statewide comprehensive assessment for third grade reading were released, it was reported that 67% of the students passed with advanced or proficient scores, while one third of the third graders (nearly 17,000 students) could not read at grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Denti and Gilbert (1999) contended that poor reading is one of the most common characteristics of school dropouts. The seeds for reading failure are set in the primary grades. Therefore, children who are not taught literacy skills in the primary years have already begun a spiral of failure that often ends in dropping out of school.

Another study done by Clay (as cited in Denti & Gilbert, 1999), on the reading problems of children concluded that early reading skills were linked closely with both school success and graduation and that reading failure is the overwhelming reason for grade retention. It also stated that chronic school failure demoralizes children, destroys their self-esteem, undermines their feelings of competence, and can result in students becoming at-risk of educational failure (Magdol, 1994).

It is noted that academic failure is positively correlated with the risk of drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and delinquency. Academic failure appears to be of greater significance in upper elementary grades, because youths who are failing fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, are more prone to be involved in delinquency in high school. Research shows that students who fail academically often hate school and only attend to socialize. Furthermore, they are often the students who are at elevated risk for educational failure in adolescence (Bogenschneider, Smalls & Riley, 1994). Also, chronic or continual failure,

especially from the earlier stages, causes students to develop a dislike toward school. As a matter of fact, some students who experience chronic failures view school as a place of alienation and failure rather than a place of attachment and learning (Magdol, 1994).

The change from elementary to middle/junior high and from middle/junior high to high school, has also contributed to placing students at-risk of educational failure. Psychologists and counselors are claiming that the transition to junior high school requires the learning of new skills. Students who enter junior/middle schools while facing biological and social changes are at-risk of lowered grades and declining participation in school activities. Similarly, the more complex structure of the high school may cause adjustment problems, leading to academic problems (Magdol, 1994). This belief was later confirmed by the Carnegie Institute of Adolescent Development which conducted research on students during the adolescent stage of their lives. They claimed that many students develop a poor attitude toward school and often make fateful decisions that may culminate in becoming school dropouts. Also, in trying to gain peer acceptance many students become satisfied with low academic achievement and displaying of poor behavior (Bogenschneider et al., 1994).

When eighty-two adolescents were studied (Barone, Deandries, & Trickett as cited by Boenschneider et al, 1994), as they made their transition from middle school to ninth grade it was discovered that there was a decline in their grade point average and school attendance, with changes persisting or worsening over the course of the year. It was also noticed that their academic achievement and extracurricular participation went down. However, feelings of being anonymous went up, and rates of drug use and drug abuse

increased (Bogenschneider et al, 1994). Results from standardized tests on minority students revealed that their scores were not significantly lower until the ninth grade. Statistically, 61% of middle/junior high “at-risk” students drop-out of school before completing the tenth grade claimed McBirdie (1991). The inescapable conclusion is that once a student was identified in ninth grade as “at risk” there was a 90% probability that the student would not graduate (Wong, 1997).

Structural and programmatic barriers in schools have also contributed to students being “at-risk.” For instance, the abuses of tracking and ability grouping of children serve more to separate students on the basis of perceived differences in ability, interest or potential rather than promote or improve educational attainment (Hixson & Tinzmann, 1993). In addition, the placement of students in lower ability groups is associated with increased frequency of delinquent behaviors and a higher rate of dropping out. Furthermore, there is strong evidence to show that expectations for these students are reduced. The curriculum is less rigorous, and less creative instructional techniques are used for students placed in lower ability groups (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1995).

The misuse of test scores has also been used as a vehicle for sorting students. These students are often placed in low expectation classes where the curriculum is narrowed and the teaching practices frustrate them and aid them in becoming disconnected from the basic instructional activities of the school. Also, due to these fixed labels, many students are not motivated to excel or to improve their work standards. Thus, these students who continue to do poorly in school are more likely to drop-out (Bogenschneider

et al, 1994). According to Magdol (1994), poor and failing grades are a strong predictor for dropping out of school. Also, failure and dropping-out are intertwined; three times as many school failures dropout than those who succeed (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1995).

School Factors : Policy Proposals

In recent years, numerous policy proposals have emerged to deal with the problems of the “at-risk” population in America’s schools. Some of those policy proposals are social promotion, retention and non-graded classrooms. Social promotion is a practice that advances students on to the next grade with their peers without meeting academic standards. This practice was first introduced in the 1930's due to changes in attitude about children’s emotional and social development. Many psychologists and educators argue that children should be allowed to advance to the next grade with their peers even though they are not academically prepared. Their argument is based on the premise that holding back a child without changing the instructional strategies is ineffective. Likewise, research is still showing that students who repeat one or more grades usually wind up becoming dropouts (Feldman, 1999).

On the other hand, opponents believe that social promotion has done more harm than good. Feldman (1999) wrote that students who are socially promoted without regards to achievement or are retained, often fall even further behind their classmate. Moreover, those who do not drop out usually finish school without the knowledge and skills expected of a high school graduate.

Recent studies done on incoming freshman at the California State University,

revealed that social promotion has produced countless high school graduates who are unable to do college level work or even hold entry level jobs. Further, many high school graduates are failing the college entrance exams. This failure is attributed to social promotion, retention in one or more classes, or students whose reading level was always below the correct grade level, but were moved on despite being unable to read (American Federation of Teachers, 1997). Statistically, 80% of the social promotees who made it to high school were reading below level as entry freshman (Feldman, 1999).

Retention is being used to help eliminate social promotion. It is estimated that annually 15% - 19% of U.S. students are retained in grade. Then, in large urban districts the percent may be upward of 50 % of students who are retained at least once before graduation (American Federation of Teachers, 1997). According to many educators, this practice of holding back a child to repeat a grade without changing the instruction or teaching strategies is useless. Proponents argue that this practice will motivate students to work harder, give students additional time needed to master skills, and will help them to obtain a diploma of substance. Yet, there are opposing views. The results of several meta-analyses and various research summaries revealed that a strong link exists between retention and dropping out of school (Magdol, 1994). Data from studies show that students who repeat at least one grade have a 40% to 50 % possibility of dropping out of school, while those who are retained two or more times have a 90% possibility of dropping out (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1995). In addition, studies done by the American Federation of Teachers, documented that there are no appreciable long-term academic gains associated with retention. However, what was

definite is that, retention is a definite predictor of educational failure and school dropout in “at risk” students (Feldman, 1999).

The negative effects of grade retention was also confirmed in a 1989 analysis by Thomas Holmes after examining the results of sixty-three empirical studies. These studies were done comparing retained elementary and junior high school students to their low-performing counterparts who were promoted. Holmes found that 54 of the 63 studies resulted in an overall negative effect of retention. The results showed that retention harmed students’ achievement, attendance record, personal adjustment in school, and attitude toward school. Moreover, he also found out that students who were retained did not do as well as those who were promoted (Kelly, 1999).

Similarly, a study done by Reynolds (as cited in Kelly, 1999), with twelve hundred retained, minority students in a Chicago school produced similar results. Poor performers who had been promoted moved ahead in their reading skills eight months over their peers who were retained. Then in mathematics the promoted group gained a seven months lead over their retained counterparts, and by the time the retainees got to third grade they were still working on the second grade level. In conclusion, retention is the single strongest predictor of a school drop-out. Retention harms an “at-risk” population cognitively and affectively (Owings & Magliaro, 1998).

Absenteeism & Truancy

Preventing students from dropping out of school has become a highly important, multi-disciplinary issue. However, many of the “at-risk” population end up becoming school drop-outs. Factors such as absenteeism and truancy have helped to culminate the

process of putting America's children at-risk. Many youths who are habitually truant and experience school failure are the same youths who bring weapons to school, bully or threaten their classmates, or regularly disrupt the school learning environment (Webber, 1999). A study conducted on daily school absenteeism revealed that about 24% of school children were absent from school in a single day. Research has also confirmed that truant students are at a higher risk of being drawn into behaviors involving gangs, daytime crime, and violence. In addition, when a follow up study was done on students who were truant in elementary and high school, it was noted that 75% of those students did not graduate from high school. Also, the majority of truants do in fact make the transition from chronic absenteeism to school drop out (Webber, 1999). Data from Arizona Educational Demographic revealed that 15% of youths who drop-out of high school produce over 70% of America's prisoners (Hodgkinson, 1996). The existence of dropouts drains state wide resources that could be invested in educational enhancement for all children.

Heizer (1998) concluded that students who miss school have a more difficult time in catching up. In fact, research is showing that the frustration or embarrassment associated with poor grades and repeated failures can help to develop inappropriate behaviors in students. This may lead to suspension or leaving school before completing their education. Educational failure via truancy, dropping out of school or both is unquestionably a major gate- way to crime. Statistics from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice disclosed the following: of the juvenile offenders committed to their institution, 44% were regular truants; 16% had dropped out of school; 50% were classified as not achieving academically in school; 8% had been suspended or expelled; and

4.5% were regularly tardy for school (Webber, 1999).

Furthermore, it was found that a strong negative relationship exists between students grade point average and their absenteeism rate. Besides, an examination of the perspective of “at-risk” students disclosed that there is a direct correlation among attendance, self-esteem, and a feeling of self-worth (McBirdie, 1991). It has been a known fact that young people who do not complete high school face many more problems in later life than people who graduate. Also, research is showing that the average level of attendance at a school has a significant positive influence on performance (Webber, 1999).

Unfortunately, it appears that all students do not receive equal preparation in elementary and secondary schools. Jones & Watson (1990), reported that some teachers of high risk students use instructional approaches that tend to be ineffective and many poor and minority students are discriminated against. They may even be characterized by low expectations, inferior resources, and differential treatment. Thus, the negative attitudes and low expectations displayed by teachers can affect students’ self-esteem. Many of these “at-risk” students develop low-self esteem and begin to cooperate with systemic forces resulting in pregnancy, dropping out, and delinquency (Jones & Watson, 1990).

Criminal or Delinquent Behavior

Criminal or delinquent behavior is another factor that is related to school failure. The nature of delinquency puts the adolescent at risk for future failure. The adolescent who continually misbehaves in the classroom to get a reaction from the teacher or to prove independence is at-risk for academic failure. If the adolescent is putting effort into

anti-social behavior, he/she may not develop the necessary math and reading skills required for future successes; therefore, would be limited in skills necessary to obtain a job, limiting future employment of legitimate work (Anderson & Keith, 1997). The results of a study conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension (as cited in Bogenschneider et al, 1994) observed that boys, in particular, who were aggressive at ages five through seven have elevated risk of both delinquent activities and drug abuse, especially when this behavior occur during early adolescence. Statistically, approximately forty of the one hundred children identified as aggressive in the early elementary grades exhibited serious behavior problems in adolescence. These anti-social and aggressive behaviors have contributed to youths being at-risk from an early age. Besides, inappropriate behavior often becomes a formidable barrier to the “at-risk” student’s ability to succeed in the school setting (Whitworth, 1998). The National Educational Goals, in relating to disciplined environment of student learning, declared that school disorder is a major obstacle to academic achievement. Thus, in order for school to be effective and functional the offenders should be removed (Educational Testing Services, 1999). Also, the consensus among many educators and others concerned with “at-risk” youths is that misbehaved youths should be removed from the classroom. However, it is vital for the expelled students to receive educational counseling to help modify their behavior (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1995).

Family/Societal Factors

Family/societal factors have also contributed to placing America’s youths at-risk of educational failure. These family/societal factors encompass areas such as single family

households, poverty, and low-socio-economic status. Adolescents in single parent and step-family households earn lower grades in school than those in two parent households. Adolescents in single parent families are less likely to be in school at the age of 17 and less likely to graduate. Lower income in single parent families is a major factor that hampers the educational process of students.

Research also shows that children who live in female headed single family households have a greater than 50% chance of being poor. They are the ones who are more likely to experience early school problems and less likely to participate in early literacy activities. Generally, the potential for being “at-risk” is higher for students whose parents either dropped out or had fewer years of post secondary schooling. However, when parents set high expectations for their children, especially during adolescence, it has positive effects on their children (Magdol, 1994). Parental involvement and encouragement are important influences on academic success.

This situation is even more calamitous for students of low-socio-economic status. Much of the professional literature indicts poverty as a primary factor placing students at risk of not graduating from high school. Also, the Goal 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 identifies poverty and economic disadvantage as significant “at-risk” factors (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1995).

Resilient “At-Risk” Students

In general, the dropout rate for minority students is higher than any other group. It is the belief that the more exposed young people become to “at-risk” factors the higher will be the possibility for them to follow the unfortunate path. This path too often ends in

school failure and dropout, delinquency, adult crime, and sometimes violence.

Fortunately, the entire “at-risk” population is not leaving school prematurely or leaving without a high school diploma. Despite incredible hardships and the presence of several at-risk factors, there are some students who have developed characteristics and coping skills that enable them to succeed. It is estimated that 19% of “at-risk” students are resilient. These students have developed stable, healthy personas, sound values, high self-esteem, good interpersonal relationships, success in school and positive goals and plans for the future (Westfall & Pisapia, 1992).

A study done comparing “at-risk” students who dropped out of school with “at-risk” students who were successful revealed the following. “At-risk” students who were successful were self-motivated and had goals set for themselves. These children also had parents who were supportive, school teachers with positive attitudes toward “at-risk” students, and a challenging, interdisciplinary school curriculum (U. S. Department of Education, 1998). Researchers are saying that “at-risk” students who are successful despite risk

and adversity amount to about 50% to 70 % of the high risk population. Furthermore, they are not only successful by societal indicators but, they were confident, competent, and caring persons (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995).

Similarly, another study done comparing “at-risk” students who made it to college versus their counterparts who dropped out of high school highlighted the following factors. Family stability, parental involvement in school activities, student’s attitudes about learning, and positive peers encouragement were all instrumental in paving the way

to a college life (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). In conclusion, given the enormous impact that dropping out has at the societal and personal levels, the identification and help of those “at-risk” is crucial.

One in eight students does not complete high school. Minorities, the poor, and the disabled often fare worse. Over 50% of students in a quarter of the nation’s poor urban high schools fail to graduate. Suspension, expulsion, retention, chronic failure, and alienation all have contributed to unacceptable dropout and school failure rates (Soliel, 1999). Thus, educators, policymakers, and the community at large were forced to come up with innovative methods to reduce the dropout rate and increase the school retention and graduation rate. Alternative education programs seemed the best viable solution to this crisis.

Alternative Education Programs

Alternative education is a system’s response to the failure in the traditional schools to address the needs of large group of troubled students. Chalker (1996), defines alternative education as the modification of a school’s course of study. This includes the adoption of teaching methods, materials and techniques to provide educationally for students who are unable to benefit from a regular course of study and/or environment. These programs evolved in the late 1960's and into the 1970's to provide an academic option for students who were not successful in the traditional education program (Sagor, 1999). There are four commonly accepted settings for these programs, namely, the separate alternative school, school within-a-school, continuation school, and alternative classroom setting.

The separate alternative school is a separate self-contained educational facility that uses non-traditional structures or strategies to promote learning and social adjustment. Students who benefit from this type of program include those not able to function within the traditional school setting. These may include potential dropouts, students with average or above average intelligence but, who are deficient in basic skills, low achievers, and those who are chronically absent (Morley, 1991).

The school-within-a-school is another type of alternative education program. This model is a semi-autonomous, non-traditional, or personalized educational program. It is housed within the traditional school system, or in a separate facility that has a strong organizational tie to the parent school. In this setting, students usually attend the program for a portion of the day and then return to the traditional school for electives or a special course. The student body usually consist of low achievers, underachievers, poorly motivated students who are behind in graduation credits, and students who are unable to make it in the traditional classroom setting (Morley, 1991).

Hefner-Packer (1991), describe the third type of alternative education program as the continuation school. This type of program is conducted during the evening, summer, or regular school program. It provides educational opportunities for individuals who no longer attend a traditional program or those who need additional course work. It is designed to provide a less competitive, more individualized approach to learning. Covered under the blanket of continuation schools are dropout prevention programs, dropout intervention programs, pregnant and parenting teen programs.

The last type of alternative education program is the alternative classroom. This

self contained classroom within the traditional school host under-achievers, poorly motivated students, and students who are behind in class work credits. The curriculum for this program uses a variety of methodology, structure, or learning styles to help the students succeed. Some characteristics of an alternative classroom include individualization, competency-based instruction, counseling services and basic skills emphasis (Hefner-Packer, 1991).

However, even though the settings may be different for these programs, their objectives are the same. The primary goal of these programs is to help young people become productive members of society. Regardless of the type of students served, most alternative school programs use non-traditional, innovative curricular, instructional, and support strategies to reach their students (Chalker, 1996).

Success of Alternative Education Programs

Additionally, alternative education programs possess some unique characteristics that help to make them successful. The most easily recognized ones are the school's culture or climate, organizational structure, curriculum and instruction, and links to other programs and services. Successful programs also vary in their specific features because they were designed to meet the need of each member of the student population. These programs give teachers the flexibility in designing strategies and methods that will work for their students. These strategies may range from individual learning, cooperative learning, competency based learning, team teaching, to an absence of tracking. In addition, in alternative education programs parental involvement, community involvement, and access to basic health and social services are important features (Southwest

Educational Development Laboratory,1995). Small class size is another characteristic that makes the alternative education program successful. This feature helps to develop a sense of belonging, sense of family, sense of community, and supportive environment for the students enrolled in this program (Morley, 1991).

Alternative education is recognizing that everyone does not learn in the same way and should not be taught in the same way using a common curriculum. It is accepting that all schools do not have to be alike with the same learning environments. Consequently, it is a means of incorporating variety and choice within the school system in order to achieve success. Proponents for alternative education confirm that this program dramatically improves the academic achievement and behavior of “at risk” students (Morley, 1991). Results from an examination of an alternative learning program revealed that it has a positive effect on students’ self-esteem and students’ motivation. Also, students who completed the program experienced an increase in self-efficacy, goal orientation, and self-esteem. These students also experienced increases in extrinsic motivation such as home, peer, and school self-esteem (Nicholls & Williams, 1998).

Similarly, a well designed, large scale research project in Oklahoma revealed the following. Students in alternative education programs improved on a variety of academic measures, including grades, attendance, number of courses failed, and disciplinary referrals. In addition, the students outperformed similar students not enrolled in an alternative program on these same measures (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory,1995). The results from an alternative school in Texas revealed that after “at-risk” students started attending this program the following were experienced. The average

daily attendance was 92.8%, the dropout rate was 36%, and 96 of the 192 students graduated on time. Moreover, these students became active members of society. Forty-five of these students are now employed, twenty eight are attending college and thirteen are in the military (Garrison, 1992).

An alternative education program adapted at the Buffalo Alternative High School revealed that “at-risk” students can become successful in schools. Students who attended these programs come with a litany of problems, namely, chronic absenteeism, behavior problems, poor academic skills, teenage pregnancies, lack of social competencies and interaction skills, and many more. Many of these students resented authority to the fullest degree. However, after attending these programs the situation changed for them. The end results showed that 65% of the students were able to maintain a 100% attendance rate for as long as two years. They also completed an internship and were able to obtain a high school diploma. In comparing them to other comparable students who remained in the traditional program, it is reported that the graduation rate was much higher (Meyers, 1999).

Research focusing on students who are “at-risk”, concluded that alternative education causes an increase in students’ academic performance, a positive change in their behavior, reduced discipline and strengthened their emotions. Students in these programs also reported a higher level of both satisfaction with school and the confidence that the school will meet their needs than do students in the traditional school (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1995). Finally, the results of a 1990 survey done in Iowa on school drop-outs, who had return to school and graduated from an alternative school revealed that the graduates from the alternative education programs became

productive citizens (Morley, 1991).

In conclusion, alternative education programs are designed to meet not only the academic needs of students, but also their social and future employment needs. These programs have helped “at-risk” students to achieve some academic success. They are prevalent in America’s school and are proving to be the best viable alternative to reduce the “at-risk” crisis. Nicholls & Williams (1998), declare that some note-worthy positive results were experienced from the use of the alternative education programs with “at-risk” students. The positive results are increased attendance, decreased discipline referrals, and academic success.

Chapter 3

Design of the study

Participants

The purpose of this study was to determine if “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program performed better academically than those “at-risk” students who attended traditional education programs. It was also to determine if there were differences in their behavior and attitude toward school.

Participants for this study were chosen from the “at-risk” population of students enrolled at the ninth grade level at the public high schools, Charlotte Amalie High School and Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, on St. Thomas. These students were chosen from this grade for many reasons. First, it facilitated obtaining a larger sample because the students were new graduates coming from the feeder junior high schools. Second, at this point the students had not started to experience the many difficult factors that push them out of high schools. Finally, in the later grades the students may be faced with too many other variables, such as work, that may impact upon the outcome of this study.

Sampling

“At-risk” students were chosen from the population of ninth grade “at-risk” students. All “at-risk” students who attended and graduated from the alternative program at New Horizon Alternative School (NHAS) and Bertha C. Broschulte Middle School (BCBMS) were targeted (approximately thirty-three students). An equal group of “at-risk” students who attended and graduated from the traditional program at Addelita Cancryn Junior High School and BCBMS were randomly chosen. However, from the targeted “at-risk” population who attended NHAS and BCBMS and the “at-risk”

population who attended the traditional program a sample of fifty-two students was obtained.

Setting

Presently, the staff at BCBMS is composed of three principals, seventy-eight teachers, paraprofessional and librarians, and twenty-four support staff members. The staff possesses a mixture of degrees such as Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science coupled with numerous masters degrees in the education field. Similar to the other junior high and senior high schools on St. Thomas, the working day at BCBMS is divided into ninety minutes block periods. In addition, the staff and student bodies are separated in teams that work together for the betterment of the whole school population.

The student body is approximately six hundred eighty-three strong and ranges in age from eleven to sixteen. The ethnic background of the students is mainly Afro-Caribbean. Even though English is the primary spoken language, varying forms of dialect is often used. The students who attend BCBMS are, for the most part, living in single family dwellings, apartments, or government owned projects. The socioeconomic status of these children can be assumed to be low-income to middle-income families as they are bused from areas such as Donoe Housing Project, Annas Retreat Heights and Housing Units, Bovoni and Bovoni Projects, Hidden Valley High Rises, Turn Key, Thomasville, Brookman, Mandahl, Estate Nazareth and Nadir, which are low moderate income communities.

The alternative education program was introduced as BCBMS during the 1992-1993 school year. This program was adopted from a school within a school model. It has

a total of fifty students, four academic teachers and additional vocational education teachers. There is also a counselor assigned to this program. The main teaching tool utilized to help relate information to the "at-risk" students is technology which includes, computer, overhead projectors, video, laser disc, etc., and the exposure to vocational training. Due to the small class size of twelve to fifteen students more individualized instructions takes place (C. Farrow, personal communication, January 15, 2000).

The New Horizon Alternative School is the only alternative education school on St. Thomas. Unlike BCBMS, this school is very small and at present has a school population of about forty-five students. This school was opened in the 1995-1996 school year to cater to the special needs of thirty-six "at-risk" students in the District of St. Thomas/St. John.

It is managed by a staff of fourteen members, namely principal, teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, and support staff. This federally funded program is designed to take "at-risk" children from the traditional public school settings and place them into the supportive environment of New Horizon. Admission is through a selection process and principal recommendation with parental consent.

At NHAS, academic excellence, cultural consciousness and social development are emphasized. This school uses both traditional and innovative teaching methods to create a stimulating and nurturing environment to motivate its students. The curriculum is organized around themes that encompass all subject areas. These real life interdisciplinary topics assist students in mastering skills and concepts in math, science, social studies, technology, the arts, and language arts. In addition, learning is goal oriented instead of

time oriented. Thus, instructional methods are flexible allowing students to work at their own pace to complete basic academic skills curriculum. The teaching methods at NHAS include small group work, cooperative learning, learning centers, real life application and hands-on activities, peer tutoring, etc.

Instrumentation

To measure the academic performance of these students, the California Achievement Test 5,(CAT/5) short form was used (CTB,1993). This norm-referenced test is designed to assess academic performance in the areas of reading comprehension and mathematics concepts and applications. The comprehension component encompasses a vocabulary and comprehension test with the vocabulary test measuring students' ability to use words in context. The reading comprehension section measured the students' ability to use words in context (vocabulary) and students' ability to understand continuous prose (comprehension). These stories were followed with six questions and four possible answers from which students were asked to shade the corresponding letter to the correct answer. It took about forty minutes to administer this test.

The mathematics computation and concept application assessed the ability of students to perform fundamental mathematics concepts, and use a variety of problem solving strategies. The math section consisted of twenty problems that students were asked to solve and then shade the correct answer. Information on the reliability and content validity of this test was obtained from the Thirteenth Mental Measurement Yearbook (Impara & Plake, 1998). Internal consistency reliability (KR-20) ranges from 70-80. The content specifications and test items of the CAT/5 were developed in the late

1980's. The items were chosen after the basic skills and objectives were identified through the review of current curriculum guides, recently published textbooks, and instructional programs.

The students' cumulative folders were used to obtain information for hypotheses 2a and 2b. The folder is a cumulative report or history of students life in school. It contains the results from diagnostic tests done on students or indicates social promotion or grade retention and information about the students' physical and mental condition e.g., if there is a history of abuse or other problems. Cumulative folders give a daily record of students' attendance, behavior, academic performance and general school progress. The daily records of students' attendance behavior and disciplinary referral behavior were used from these folders.

The instrument to measure students' attitude was the Survey of Pupils' Opinion. The Survey of Pupils' Opinion is a thirty question, five point likert scale survey that seeks students' response about themselves (questions 1-10) and their school and teachers (questions 11-30). The scale ranged from A-Always, B-Most of the time, C-Sometimes, D-Hardly Ever, and E-Never. Test-retest reliability is .71. Construct validity was assessed using factor analysis (Kilbane, 1972).

Data Collection

In order to collect the data for this study, two instruments and the students' cumulative folders were used. The short form of the CAT/5, was used to assess students' academic success. The students' cumulative folders were used to acquire information on students' behavior. The cumulative folders were obtained from the schools mentioned for

this study. The Survey of Pupils' Opinion was used to assess the attitude toward school of "at-risk" students.

The instruments were administered at the Charlotte Amalie and the Ivanna Eudora Kean High Schools. Since two different schools were used, a time line of one month was needed to administer the test, conduct the survey, and collect information from the cumulative folders. Assistance was sought from the ninth grade counselors and principals at both schools in administering the tests and survey. Plans were made to administer the CAT/5 at both schools simultaneously. However, some minor changes were made due to delays in permission being granted to conduct the study. The test and survey were conducted at the IEKHS on Thursday, February 6, during home room period. Assistance was sought in advance and obtained from the acting attendance counselor at IEKHS. Thus, the needed information from the students' cumulative folders was obtained the same day the test and survey were administered. At the Charlotte Amalie High School a similar situation took place. The test and survey were administered at that school on Tuesday, March 6, during home room period. The information from the students' cumulative folders was obtained a few days later. Since this study was conducted in the public schools, permission was sought and obtained from the V.I. Department of Education, District Insular Superintendent of schools, and from the parents of the students needed to participate in this study.

Data Analysis

For the first hypothesis, a combined score of math and reading on the CAT/5 was used to measure academic achievement for each group. The data were analyzed using the

independent t-test. The result obtained was used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the academic performance of “at-risk” students who attended an alternative program and the academic success of “at-risk” students who attended the traditional program.

For hypotheses 2a & 2b the data from students’ cumulative folders were examined under the following categories: attendance behavior and disciplinary referrals. The data were analyzed using the independent t-test. For hypothesis 3, the responses on the Survey of Pupils’ Opinion survey were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U-test.

For all hypotheses, a 0.05 level of significance was employed. The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) student version 10 was used for all data analyzed.

Chapter 4

Results of the Study

“At-risk” students who attended an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program were sampled. They were compared on academic performance, attendance behavior, disciplinary referrals, and attitude toward school. The results for this chapter were obtained from statistical analyses of the data. The following hypothesis were tested.

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the academic performance of “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program.

In order to test this hypothesis a combined score of math and reading (CAT/5) was used to measure the academic achievement of each group. The data were analyzed using the independent t-test. The mean score for the “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education setting was slightly lower than the mean score for the “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program (see Table 1).

Table 1

CAT/5 Descriptive Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CAT/5 alternative	26	42.04	11.66	2.29
traditional	26	48.31	12.78	2.51

The difference in the mean scores of the groups is 6.27, which is not a statistically significant difference ($t_{50} = -1.85$, $p > .05$; see Table 2).

Table 2

CAT/5 Independent t-test

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
CAT/5 Equal variances assumed	-1.85	50	.07	-6.27	3.39

In order for the results to be statistically significant, the difference in scores must be at least 6.81, given the sample size and standard deviations of the groups. Therefore, the first null hypothesis was not rejected.

Null Hypothesis 2a

There is no significant difference in the attendance behavior of “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program.

This hypothesis was tested using the daily average reported attendance from students’ cumulative folders. An independent t-test was the statistical test used to compare the attendance behavior of both groups. “At-risk” students who attended an alternative education program had a lower mean of days absent than “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program (see Table 3).

Table 3

Number of Days Absent Descriptive Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
# day absent alternative	26	4.85	2.34	.46
traditional	26	6.40	6.48	1.27

The difference in the means of both groups was 1.55 days, which is not a statistically significant difference ($t_{50} = -1.15$, $p > .05$; see Table 4). In order for the results to be statistically significant, the difference in mean scores must be at least 2.71, given the sample size and the standard deviations of the groups.

Table 4

Days Absent Independent t-test

	t	df	Significance (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Standard Error Difference
# days absent Equal variances assumed	-1.15	50	.25	-1.56	1.35

Thus, null hypothesis 2a was not rejected.

Null Hypothesis 2b

There is no significant difference in the disciplinary referral behavior of “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program.

This hypothesis was tested using the disciplinary referral behavior of the “at-risk” students from their cumulative folders. An independent t-test was the statistical test used to analyze this data. The results revealed that almost 80% of all the students had no disciplinary referrals while the remainder had between one to six referrals (see Table 5). On a group basis, “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program had less referrals than “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program.

Table 5

Disciplinary Referrals for “At-Risk” Students Descriptive Statistics

Groups		0 Referrals	1 or more Referrals	Totals
alternative	Count	24	2	26
	% within Groups	92.3%	7.7%	100
traditional	Count	17	9	26
	% within Group	65.4%	34.6%	100%
total	Count	41	11	52
	% within total	78.8%	21.2	100%

Additionally, the t-test with equal variances not assumed revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the disciplinary referrals of “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program ($t_{26.01} = -2.55, p < .05$; see Table 6). Thus, the null hypothesis

2b was rejected.

Table 6

Disciplinary Referrals Independent t-test

	t	df	Significance (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Standard Error Difference
# disciplinary referrals equal variances not assumed	-2.25	26.01	.02	- .96	.38

Null Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the attitude toward school of “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program and those “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program.

This hypothesis was tested using the scores from the Survey of Pupils’ Opinion (attitude) survey. The range in the two groups were very close as well as the median scores on the Survey of Pupils’ Opinion (see Table 7).

Table 7

Survey of Pupils' Opinion Descriptive Statistics

Group	N	Range	Median	Mean Rank	Sum of ranks
Survey of Pupils' alternative Opinion	26	74-133	111.50	26.25	682.50
traditional	26	74-140	110.00	26.75	695.50

The scores from this survey were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U-test.

When the Mann-Whitney U-test was calculated examining the difference between the mean rank of the "at-risk" students who attended an alternative education program and "at-risk" students who attended the traditional education program the mean rank scores were very close. The results showed no statistically significant difference between the mean rank of the two groups of students ($U = 331.50$, $p > .05$; see Table 8). Therefore, the null hypothesis three was not rejected.

Table 8

Results of Mann-Whitney U-test

	Survey of Pupil Opinion
Mann- Whitney U	331.50
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.91

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study examined the academic achievement, attendance behavior, disciplinary referral behavior, and the attitude toward school of “at-risk” students. A combination of “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program formed one group that was compared to a similar group of “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program. Students from both groups possessed similar “at-risk” characteristics, their ages and sexes were comparable, and they lived in a similar environment.

The CAT/5 was used as the instrument to measure academic achievement. Information from the students’ cumulative folders was used to assess attendance and disciplinary referral behavior, and the survey of Pupils’ Opinion Survey was used to assess students’ attitude toward school. Both groups of students were tested under similar conditions. The scores and information obtained from the areas mentioned were compared to determine if differences existed between the two groups of “at-risk” students who attended two different education programs.

Results from each component of this study found that there were no significant differences between the academic achievement, the attendance behavior, and the attitude toward school of “at-risk” students who attended an alternative education program and “at-risk” students who attended the traditional education program. However, the results from the disciplinary referral behavior section of this study shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups. “At-risk” students who attended an alternative education program have less disciplinary referrals than “at-risk”

students who attended the traditional education program. This may be the result of the one on one or daily counseling received while attending an alternative education program. Although this particular study showed a significant difference in one area only, in order to make any conclusive statements about the success of these programs additional research is essential.

This study was faced with major drawbacks that made it difficult to obtain more accurate results. Many "at-risk" students who graduated from the feeder junior school became school drop-outs either prior to entering ninth grade or shortly after getting there. Thus, the sample size was reduced considerably. Additionally, some "at-risk" students were enrolled in school, but were either out on suspension or were chronically truant. Thus, the majority of students who were tested were those "at-risk" students who are trying to do better. Another issue that may have affected the results of this study was the students' lack of interest or concern for the outcome of their performance on the achievement test since it had no direct impact on their class grade.

Additionally, the testing time and test materials may have also affected the results of this study. First, the majority of standardized test taken by these students (e.g., Terra Nova and National Assessment of Educational Progress) used the letters A, B, C, D as the choices to mark for the answers, but this test was different. The answers alternated between the letters A, B, C, D and F, G, H, J. Many students found this change confusing. It was interesting to note that both groups had a great dislike for reading. During testing this was not only voiced, but was evident in their reading comprehension scores. Their inability to read critically greatly impacted the results of the CAT/5 test. For

instance, the majority of students obtained average or above average scores on the Math section of the test, but the reading scores lowered the overall average.

Second, at both testing sites students were tested during their home room period. This was the only period possible to have all the requested students in the same area. This period was close to lunch time, thus, some students argued about missing lunch. Also, the fear of being labeled may have discouraged some of the better candidates from participating in the testing process. Similarly, repeating ninth grade "at-risk" students did not want to be seen in the same home room as the new ninth grade "at-risk" students. The general fear of test taking or being confined under test taking conditions may have prevented many of the students from performing to their fullest potential.

Transition from the alternative education program back to the traditional education program may have caused the lack of academic growth for many of these "at-risk" students in ninth grade. Students who were assigned to the alternative education school felt comfortable with the small classes and special attention. However, there appears to be no programmatic structure to address these students' needs when they return to the traditional education programs.

Literature on this issue is recommending that a transition specialist is essential at this crucial point in the life of "at-risk" students. They are proclaiming that "at-risk" students need the guidance, close and frequent evaluation, communication, and assistance from the transition specialist to help make the change as smoothly as possible. The literature is also stating that special educators will be of major assistance to these "at-risk" students. It is their belief that these special educators can add individualization,

adaptation, basic skills, and a modified general education curriculum or can provide direct services in a variety of special education setting to help the “at-risk” students achieve success (Denti & Gilbert, 1999).

The quality of education, the expectations and interest level of teachers, resource allocation and condition of school facilities, establishment and consistent enforcement of rules, and a general emphasis on learning and teaching may motivate students to learn. However, the condition of the schools and availability of school supplies may have added to the lack of progress in the school system, which in turn have led to the lack of academic growth of the children. Moreover, teachers of disadvantaged students tend to focus almost exclusively on basic skills using traditional instructional methods such as whole-group lecture, repetitive drill-and-practice, and simple remedial exercises. Using these instructional methods exclusively is uninteresting to all students, but more so to the “at-risk” students. This may result in reduced educational opportunities, which in turn leads to learned helplessness, decreased motivation, and decreased chances of success. Most importantly, “at-risk” students are not given the opportunities to learn the advanced skills needed for problem-solving and critical thinking. All students, but especially “at-risk” students must have opportunities to participate in interesting and challenging education that focuses on advanced skills as well as basic skills. In addition, integrating technology with curricula can enhance the education of “at-risk” students. Technology has helped to reach many “at-risk” students who have been unsuccessful with ordinary instruction (Wheeler, Miller, & Halff, 1999). Unfortunately, in the high schools on St. Thomas, the ratio of computers to students is about 1:10.

Recommendations

In order to obtain more conclusive results for a study of this nature the following guidelines may be helpful. In order to obtain a good sample size, it would be better to test these "at-risk" students at the end of eighth grade rather than ninth grade. At this level students would have been exposed to the alternative program, the sample size would be larger, the students would be more cooperative, and the outside, negative forces that may intervene after graduation or during the summer vacation would not have been present at that point. Also, the results of the test may have been higher if students were tested during a regular class session and by the class-subject teacher. There is the possibility that students would have been more motivated to take the test or would have taken the test with some seriousness and interest.

To policy makers, administrators, and curriculum planners, programs designed to help "at-risk" students succeed in school must focus on the particular needs of the students. These "at-risk" students who attended alternative education programs are students who were failing academically and behaviorally in the traditional school system. On leaving these programs they should not be placed back in a traditional system that focuses only on academics. There is a great need to focus on the transition process for these students. These "at-risk" students need assistance in making the smooth transition from a small school with small class size, increased opportunities for hands-on experiences, support groups, and even individualized instruction to a larger, more anonymous, school setting. Another recommendation is that an evaluation of this program should be done after each grade level, to help indicate the need for improvement, changes

or expansion.

Implications

Since critical reading skills and test taking skills have hampered success in the education of the “at-risk” student population, early and consistent emphasis on these two skills may help to improve students’ academic performance. Research is showing that at-risk students have the potential to succeed if their needs are recognized and addressed (Wheeler et al, 1999). Also, as the number of students dropping-out or suspended from school each year continue to increase, there is a desperate need to come up with new or improved programs to help curtail the drop-out rate. Focusing on at-risk education may help to reduce the magnitude of some social problems, as many of these problems are partially the result of inadequate education. Also, when compared to successful alternative programs in the U.S.A., the alternative programs in the Virgin Islands are missing major components. First, there should be the integration of more technology in the curriculum. This can help to provide authentic learning environments, better opportunities for collaboration, and interesting, innovative learning environments. Finally, students who use technology in school tend to improve their school performance, problem solving abilities and increase their motivation in reading, writing, and mathematics (Wheeler et al, 1999).

In comparing the results of this study with the results of similar studies done in the United States, the following was observed. Alternative education programs in St. Thomas made a difference in the disciplinary referral behavior of “at-risk” students. However, these programs did not make a difference in the children’s academic performance,

attendance behavior, or the attitude towards school. Results of a study done by three researchers from Michigan State University on fifty-seven alternative schools revealed that alternative education tended to have a small positive effect on such things as school performance, school attitude, and self-esteem. The researchers concluded that the results were not significant enough to change students with delinquent behavior. They contributed the results of this study to the fact that many individuals view alternative schools as dumping grounds. Also, the success of many alternative education programs depended on small class size and individualized instruction. Finally, the success of students in an alternative school seems correlated to the organizational format of the schools and the uniqueness of individual students (Kallio & Sanders, 1999).

This study also produced similar results to the well-designed, large-scale research project in Oklahoma. In both studies, the attendance of "at-risk" students in an alternative education program improve their disciplinary referral behaviors.

In conclusion, results of other studies are showing that "at-risk" students who attended alternative education programs have outperformed their counterparts who attended the traditional education programs. The results of this study are not consistent with those studies. The only component of this study that was in agreement with other studies is hypothesis 2b, which found out that alternative education programs caused a change in the disciplinary referrals of "at-risk" students. However, alternative education programs in the U.S. Virgin Islands may be more successful in helping "at-risk" students if they were long-term rather than short-term programs. Further, if there were some follow up programs for these students after they leave the program there might be success in

other areas. Finally, alternative programs in the U.S. Virgin Islands may prove more successful if the “at-risk” students are taught skills to help them deal with real life situations, daily conflicts, and survival skills.

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Appendix APercentage Identification Criteria for At-Risk Students at BCBMS & NHAS

The criteria used to place the “at-risk” students were developed by the administrators, counselors, and teachers at the junior schools on St. Thomas. The information used to determine who were “at-risk” were obtained from the students’ cumulative folders

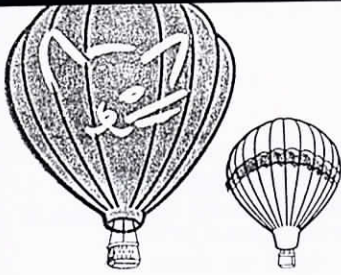
Students in ING three times	1	2%	0	0%
Slow learners identified on the cumulative folders	9	21%	Not recorded	
Recommended for testing	9	21%	4	9%
Student in MIS 1 for three years before being mainstreamed	1	2%	Not recorded	
Students who withdrew	1	2%	1	2%
Student dropout	1	2%	1	2%
Excessive absenteeism	8	19%	7	15%
Excessive class cutting	8	19%	0	0%
Disruptive behavior	4	9%	40	87%
Students with attitude problems	10	23%	Not recorded	
Student engaged in violence	4	9%	11	24%
Student suspended	1	2%	6	13%
Student recommended for expulsion	0	0%	1	2%
Student expelled	1	2%	0	0%
Student transferred	Not recorded		2	4%

Percentage Identification Criteria for At-Risk Students at BCBMS and NHAS on St. Thomas, V.I.
 (BCBMS - number of students =43) (NHAS- number of students =46)

Criteria	BCBMS		NHAS	
	Raw Number	Percentage	Raw Number	Percentage
Student socially promoted once	20	47%	15	33%
Student socially promoted twice	7	16%	5	11%
Student socially promoted three times	2	5%	4	9%
Retention: retained at least one year	27	63%	35	76%
Retention: retained at least two years	20	47%	19	41%
Retention: retained at least three years	3	7%	8	17%
Junior high/middle school student at least two below grade level in reading skills	28	65%	19	41%
Junior high/middle school student at least two years below grade level math skills	26	60%	Not recorded	-----
Overage student for grade level	34	79%	27	59%
Students in the intermediate Non-Graded (ING) Alternative Program-once	12	28%	7	15%
Students in ING -twice	3	7%	1	2%

Appendix B

California Achievement Test/5



Test 1

Comprehension



Sample A

Barry had a small fruit stand in the city. His stock changed with the seasons. In the winter he sold oranges, and in the spring he sold strawberries. His summer stock was peaches and pears. In the fall he sold several kinds of apples.

What did Barry sell in the winter?

- A pears
 - B apples
 - C peaches
 - D oranges
-



In this excerpt from *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates* by Mary Mapes Dodge, some girls are beginning the third and final mile of an ice-skating race. Read the excerpt. Then do Numbers 1 through 6.

This third mile may decide the race. Still if neither Gretel nor Hilda wins, there is yet a chance among the rest for the silver skates. Each girl feels that this time she will accomplish the distance in one-half the time. How they stamp to try their runners! How nervously they examine each strap! How erect they stand at last, every eye upon Madame van Gleck!

The bugle thrills through them again. With quivering eagerness they spring forward, bending, but in perfect balance. Each flashing stroke seems longer than the last.

Now they are skimming off in the distance. Again the eager straining of eyes, again the shouts and cheering, again the thrill of excitement as, after a few moments, four or five, in advance of the rest, come speeding back, nearer, nearer to the white columns.

Who is first? Not Rychie, Katrinka, Annie, nor Hilda, nor the girl in yellow—but Gretel—Gretel, the fleetest sprite of a girl that ever skated. She was but playing in the earlier race, *now* she is in earnest, or rather something within her has determined to win. That lithe little form makes no effort; but it cannot stop—not until the goal is passed!

In vain the crier lifts his voice. He cannot be heard. He has no news to tell—it is already ringing through the crowd. *Gretel has won the silver skates!*

Like a bird she has flown over the ice, like a bird she looks about her in a timid, startled way. She longs to dart to the sheltered nook where her father and mother stand. But Hans is beside her—the girls are crowding round. Hilda's kind, joyous voice breathes in her ear. From that hour, none will despise her. Goose-girl or not, Gretel stands acknowledged Queen of the Skaters!



- 1** What is happening when the excerpt says, "The bugle thrills through them again"?
- A The harsh notes of the bugle set their teeth on edge.
 - B The bugle player is moving through the crowd as he plays.
 - C They are greatly excited as they hear the bugle signal the start of the race.
 - D They are quivering with emotion as they listen to the bugle play the victory anthem.
- 2** What does the excerpt imply about Gretel's performance?
- F She has to struggle to keep ahead.
 - G Her speed appears to be effortless.
 - H She skillfully blocks other skaters.
 - J Her style is powerful, though awkward.
- 3** Which of these does the excerpt suggest about Gretel?
- A that she had always won all previous skating races
 - B that she had not really wanted to win the final race
 - C that she had felt superior to the other girls in the race
 - D that she had not skated to the limit of her ability in earlier races
- 4** How does Hilda seem to feel at the end of the race?
- F jealous because she wanted to win
 - G genuinely happy that Gretel has won
 - H surprised that Gretel could skate that fast
 - J deeply disappointed because Katrinka did not win
- 5** The excerpt suggests that in the past some people
- A looked down on Gretel
 - B thought Gretel was unfriendly
 - C thought Gretel couldn't skate
 - D envied Gretel because of her superior skills
- 6** Which of these describes how Gretel is most likely to feel in the months following the race?
- F bored because she will never have another great challenge
 - G confident because of her victory and the respect it has won her
 - H guilty because all the other contestants want the skates she has won
 - J arrogant because she has proved that the others cannot skate as well as she

page about an honored American doctor. Read the passage. Then do rough 14.

Charles Drew was born in 1904 in Washington, D.C. His mother had graduated from Miner Teacher's College, and his father worked as a carpet layer. In school Drew was an excellent athlete—a star quarterback in high school and a national track champion when he attended Amherst College. But it is not for his accomplishments as a sports hero that he is remembered today. Instead, he is honored as a man whose research in medical science has saved millions of lives.



Drew, who graduated from medical school in Canada in 1933, received a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1938 to study at Columbia University. There he established and worked at the university's blood bank and eventually earned a Ph.D. in medical science. During this period, he made a great discovery that made possible the storage of huge quantities of blood for long periods of time. Until then, all transfers of blood from healthy people to people who were sick or injured had been performed using whole blood. But Drew discovered that just the liquid part of the blood, the *plasma*, could be used. This was an important breakthrough because using plasma had two distinct advantages. In addition to its storage ability, plasma could be given to anyone. This was in contrast to whole blood, which could only be given to someone who had the same blood as the donor.

When World War II began in Europe, the need for Drew's discovery was greater than ever before. In 1940, he organized the first blood bank in London, which saved the lives of many bombing victims in London. Returning to the United States, he was appointed to head the blood bank of the American Red Cross. After doing much valuable work for this project, he resigned when a dispute arose over collecting plasma. Some people at the blood bank project wanted to reject some blood because of its source. Drew's refusal to accept this stand was based on scientific research showing that plasma from all human beings is identical. Because of this controversy, Drew joined the faculty of Howard University in Washington, D.C., and was later appointed chief of staff of the hospital. It is ironic that this brilliant physician who discovered the properties of plasma, died at age forty-six because he did not receive the medical attention following an automobile accident.

7

8

9

10

- What is the author's main purpose in making the statement that Drew's research "saved millions of lives"?
- F Drew joined the faculty of Howard University to practice medicine at Howard University.
 - G Drew worked as chief of staff of the hospital at Howard University.
 - H Drew headed the blood bank of the American Red Cross in London.
 - J Drew's research on blood plasma led to a greatly improved medical treatment.

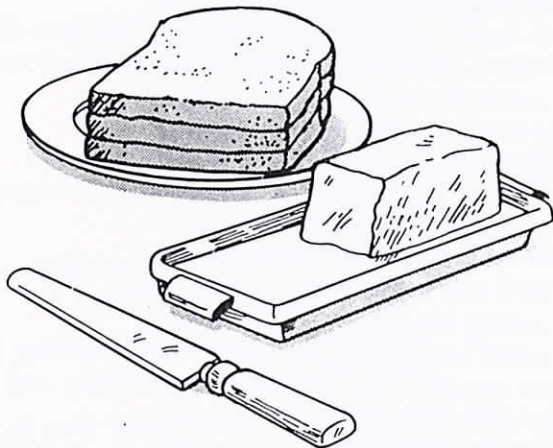
- 7 Drew was all of the following except a
- A brain surgeon
 - B star quarterback
 - C director of a blood bank
 - D national track champion
- 8 According to the passage, which of these events occurred first?
- F Drew went to study at Columbia University.
 - G Drew organized a blood bank during World War II.
 - H Drew became chief of staff at a university hospital.
 - J Drew became head of the American Red Cross blood bank.
- 9 How did Drew demonstrate that he was a man who stood up for his principles?
- A He established a blood bank for Columbia University.
 - B He reported some unethical medical practices to a newspaper.
 - C He refused to follow a practice that was not based on scientific evidence.
 - D He chose to study medicine even though he could have been a professional athlete.
- 10 What is the author referring to in the statement that Drew's work "saved millions of lives"?
- F Drew joined the faculty and taught medicine at Howard University.
 - G Drew worked as chief of staff at the hospital at Howard University.
 - H Drew headed the blood bank for the American Red Cross after World War II.
 - J Drew's research on blood contributed greatly to more successful medical treatment.

- 11 Why did Drew's plasma research become especially important during World War II?
- A Whole blood could now be given to anyone.
 - B Many people were injured and needed blood.
 - C Shipments of blood were halted by enemy attack.
 - D Military doctors were required to do more medical research.
- 12 Drew's important life achievement is most comparable to that of
- F Stephen Gray, discoverer of electrical conductors
 - G Dr. Edward Jenner, developer of the first vaccine
 - H Dr. Luther L. Terry, former Surgeon General of the United States
 - J Jackie Robinson, star halfback at the University of California at Los Angeles
- 13 Which of these statements best summarizes the passage?
- A Charles Drew excelled in college and earned degrees in medicine.
 - B Charles Drew was an outstanding football player, track champion, doctor, and teacher.
 - C Charles Drew saved many lives by organizing a blood bank in England during World War II.
 - D The work of Charles Drew, a doctor with many talents, advanced medical science with a lifesaving discovery.
- 14 The passage can best be described as
- F an essay
 - G a biography
 - H an autobiography
 - J a science article

Here is a passage explaining how to make something that people usually buy already made. Read the passage. Then do Numbers 15 through 18.

If you ever want to make your own butter, you'll need a half pint of chilled whipping cream and a small glass jar with a lid. Fill one third of the jar with the cream. Put the lid on tightly; then, using a figure-eight motion, shake the jar for about twenty minutes.

Now you should see grains of butter about the size of apple seeds in the liquid. Carefully pour off the liquid, called buttermilk, and rinse the grains of butter in cold water. Put them in a plastic or wooden dish and press them together with a wooden spoon. If you like a salty taste, add a little salt. Then mold the butter into any shape you want and refrigerate it. Soon it will be ready to spread on your breakfast toast.



- 15 According to the passage, the main ingredient used to make homemade butter is
- A buttermilk
 - B cold water
 - C cold milk
 - D whipping cream
- 16 What happens to the chilled liquid when it is shaken?
- F It becomes hot.
 - G It changes form.
 - H It becomes sweet.
 - J It changes color.
- 17 According to the passage, the buttermilk should be
- A thrown away
 - B chilled for drinking
 - C separated from the butter
 - D used as an ingredient in baking
- 18 What should you do before you put the grains of butter in a dish?
- F press the grains together
 - G add salt to the grains
 - H rinse the grains in cold water
 - J mold the grains into a shape

Read the next passage. Then do Numbers 19 and 20.

Craters of the Moon is coming soon! More fantastic than last year's hit, *Intergalactic Gardens*, this new adventure movie by director Dolores Woodville will sweep you into a world of blazing light and terrifying darkness—the world of the moon and its ancient secrets. *The Morning Report* calls *Craters of the Moon* “the greatest space epic of them all!” Watch for it!

- 19 This passage would most likely be found in
- A a critical review of a movie
 - B an advertisement for a movie
 - C a news report about space exploration
 - D an anthology of science fiction stories

- 20 Which of these expresses a fact about *Craters of the Moon*?
- F It will sweep you into a world of terrifying darkness.
 - G It is the greatest space epic of them all.
 - H It will be better than last year's big hit.
 - J It is a new adventure movie by film director Dolores Woodville.



4 What is the reciprocal of $\frac{2}{3}$?

F 0

G $\frac{2}{3}$

H 1

J $\frac{3}{2}$

5 The Pep Club wants to make 500 buttons for a pep rally. If each of the 15 members of the Pep Club makes 33 buttons, how many more buttons will need to be made?

A 5 buttons

B 10 buttons

C 15 buttons

D 33 buttons

6 A hiker wants to choose the longest trail shown on the sign. Which trail should the hiker choose?

Windy Creek	$\frac{2}{3}$ mile
Bear's Pass	$\frac{5}{8}$ mile
Clear Water	$\frac{3}{4}$ mile
Kelly's Fork	$\frac{5}{6}$ mile

F Windy Creek

G Bear's Pass

H Clear Water

J Kelly's Fork

7 For which of these equations would $a = 8$ when $b = 3$?

A $a - b = 5$




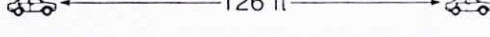
B $a + b = 5$

C $a - b = 8$

D $a + b = 8$

This chart shows safe following distances on the highway at different speeds. Study the chart. Then do Numbers 8 and 9.

SAFE FOLLOWING DISTANCES

Speed	Following Distance
20 mph	 36 ft
40 mph	 72 ft
50 mph	 90 ft
70 mph	 126 ft

Note: Daytime, favorable driving conditions.

8 What is the safe following distance for cars traveling 40 miles per hour?

F 22 feet

G 36 feet

H 64 feet

J 72 feet

9 According to the information in the chart, the safe following distance for a car traveling 15 miles per hour would be

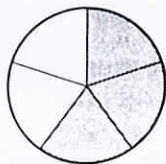
A about 8 feet

B about 18 feet

C about 27 feet

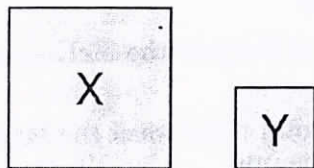
D about 45 feet

- 10 What percent of the circle is shaded?



- F 6%
- G 30%
- H 35%
- J 60%

- 11 The sides of square X are twice as long as the sides of square Y. How many times greater is the area of square X than the area of square Y?



- A 1 times greater
- B 2 times greater
- C 3 times greater
- D 4 times greater

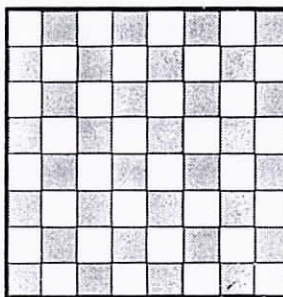
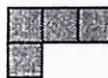
- 12 Beth deposited \$700 in a savings account that pays 9% simple interest per year. How much interest did she earn in 2 years?

- F \$18.00
- G \$63.00
- H \$126.00
- J \$155.54

- 13 A store sells a package of 2 cassette tapes for \$5.50 and a package of 3 cassette tapes for \$8.10. Mrs. Keller bought 6 cassette tapes. How much did she save by buying the tapes in packages of 3 rather than in packages of 2?

- A \$0.05
- B \$0.30
- C \$2.60
- D \$7.80

- 14 How many of the shaded L-shapes would be needed to completely cover the game board?

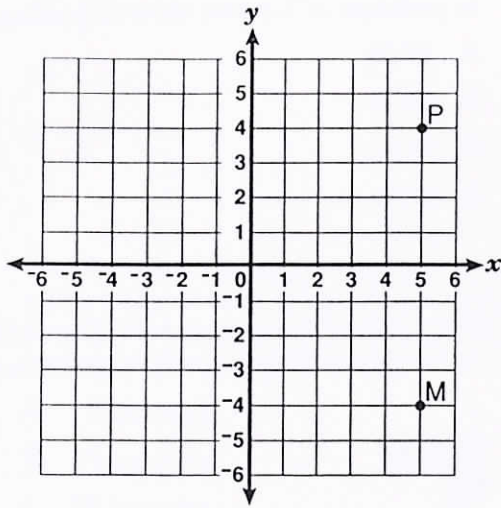


- F 4
- G 8
- H 12
- J 16

- 15 How many 2-letter codes can be made from the letters L-O-C-K if the letters can be repeated in the code (for example, LL)?

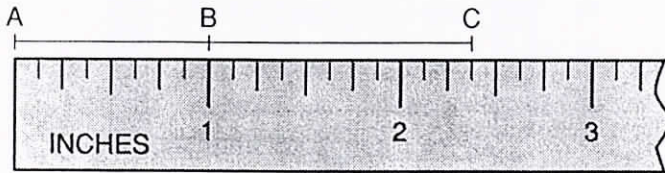
- A 6
- B 8
- C 12
- D 16

- 16 Which of these statements is true about points M and P?



- F The x -coordinates are the same.
 G The y -coordinates are the same.
 H Both points lie above the x -axis.
 J Both points lie on the same horizontal line.

- 17 What is the length of \overline{BC} ?



- A $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches
 B $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches
 C $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches
 D $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches

- 18 The table shows the family rates for the Garden Inn. The McKees stayed at the inn 3 nights in July and made 6 local telephone calls. What information is still needed to determine the McKees' total bill?

GARDEN INN FAMILY RATES		
Summer months	Sun-Thurs	Fri-Sat
	\$65 per night	\$75 per night
All other months	\$55 per night	\$65 per night
	8% sales tax charged \$0.50 per local telephone call	

- F the number of children in the McKee family
 G the percentage of sales tax the Garden Inn charges
 H what time of the year the McKees stayed at the inn
 J which 3 nights of the week the McKees stayed at the inn

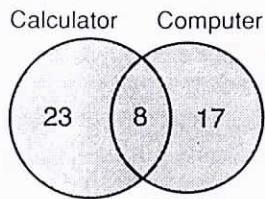
- 19 These squares contain numbers that are related to each other according to the same rule. What number is missing from the third square?

5	11	7	20	?	13
22	6	40	13	26	9

- A 3
 B 4
 C 5
 D 9

20

This Venn diagram shows the number of students who solved a mathematics problem using a calculator, a computer, or both a calculator and a computer. How many students in all used a calculator?



- F 15 students
- G 23 students
- H 25 students
- J 31 students



Appendix C

Survey of Pupils' Opinion

Appendix C

Survey of Pupils' Opinion

Here are some statements about school. Read each statement carefully and then mark the space on your answer sheet that shows how you feel about the statement. There are no wrong answers. Your true opinion whatever it is, is the right answer.

Mark only one answer for each statement. Do not skip any questions. Be sure that the number on the answer sheet matches the question number when you mark your answer. There is no limit. You will be given as much time as you need to answer all the questions. When you finish one page, go on to the next page.

There are five answer spaces for each questions. The answer spaces are lettered from A to E like this: A B C D E.

Use this key to mark your answers

A- Always B- Most of the time C- Sometimes
D- Hardly Ever E- Never Ever

1. Chances are good that I'll succeed in school. ____
2. I like to read. ____
3. Teachers are fair. ____
4. School is a waste of time. ____
5. My parents look at my report card. ____
6. I think school is fun. ____
7. The school rules make sense. ____
8. I have a good time in school. ____
9. Students in this school are friendly. ____
10. I watch the clock during class. ____

Appendix C cont'd

Use this key to mark your answers:

A- Always B- Most of the Time C- Sometimes
D- Hardly Ever E- Never

11. I think I'm doing better in school this year than I did last year. _____
12. I do my assignments on time. _____
13. Teachers expect too much of students. _____
14. I ask my teachers for help. _____
15. My teachers understand me. _____
16. School is boring. _____
17. I take my schoolwork seriously. _____
18. Teachers give me the help I need in school. _____
19. My teachers play favorites. _____
20. I like my teachers. _____
21. My teachers pick on me too much. _____
22. My teachers can take a joke. _____
23. I look forward to my classes. _____
24. Teachers are too strict. _____
25. My parents like my school. _____
26. I get along well with my teachers. _____
27. I wish I could quit school. _____
28. I come to school on time. _____

29. I get along well with other students. _____

30. Teachers are friendly. _____

Altona #107
Charlotte Amalie,
St.Thomas, 00802.
February 26, 2001

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child has been randomly selected to help me in a study. This study pertains to " The Success of Alternative Education Programs on Junior High School Students in the Virgin Islands." This study is being conducted as a requirement for a masters degree in Education at the University of the Virgin Islands.

I am asking your permission for your child to complete a general questionnaire. Your child will not be asked to put his/her name on the questionnaire, thus, his/her identity will not be revealed.

Please complete the permission slip at the bottom, tear it off, and return it to the ninth grade principal or counselor. Thanks for your prompt and willing cooperation.

Sincerely,

Merlene Jones

 I have given permission for my child to complete the questionnaire.

I have not given permission for my child to complete the questionnaire.

Name of child (Please Print) _____

Name of parent (Please Print) _____

Signature of parent _____

Date _____

Appendix F

Research Application

RESEARCH APPLICATION

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation
Department of Education
44-46 Kongens Gade
St. Thomas, USVI 00802

NAME Merlene Jones DATE OF SUBMISSION _____

MAILING ADDRESS: Altona #107, St. Thomas, VI 00802

PHONE: Home 776-2671 Office 775-4222 FAX _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Type requested information in the spaces provided. Enter check marks in appropriate blocks where answer options are provided. All requests to conduct research must be accompanied by one complete **Research Proposal** including a description of a) the purpose, b) benefits to the VI Department of Education, c) the study framework, d) requirements for subjects and/or archival data, e) instruments, equipment and instructional materials, and f) data analysis and interpretation features.

Research requests must also be accompanied by a) copies of **Proposed Instruments** (if applicable), b) **Signature of Approval Sheet**, c) **Statement of Confidentiality and Safety**, and d) **Statement of Non-Disclosure of Release of Education Record Information** (if applicable).

A. IDENTIFICATION OF APPLICANT

1. Your Professional Position (check one)

Graduate Student Professor Teacher Project Director
 School/Central Office Administrator Other _____
(Please specify)

2. Are you employed by the VI-Department of Education? Yes No

If yes, indicate your job title and work site Math Teacher - Bertha C. Boschulte
Middle School

3. Indicate whether you are proposing this study as:

A VI Department of Education project
 In response to a request for proposals (RFP) or grant announcement
 An individual researcher
 An external research organization

4. Are you proposing this study in connection with the degree requirements of a college or a university, for your self or any other person(s)?

Yes (If yes, answer parts "a", "b", "c", and "d" of this question)

No (If no, skip to question "5".)

- a) Which degree requirements?

Masters Doctoral Other _____
(Please specify)

- b) Who is your advisor or committee chairperson?

Name Dr. Suzy Green Telephone Number 693-1327

Institution University of the V.I. Department in Institution Education

- c) Indicate your current degree status:

Non-degree Baccalaureate Master's Doctoral

- d) If you are applying as an individual, briefly describe your area of research specialization and your credentials.

(1) UVI graduate student pursuing a M. A. in education.

(2) Thesis requirement

5. How are the costs of this proposed study being financed?

By applicant

By government foundation, or other research grant

(Identify source): _____

6. List the name(s), position(s) related to this study, institutional affiliations and of all persons who will (to the best of your knowledge) use the data generated by this study for higher education degrees, grant applications, or publication purposes: (Attach additional sheets if necessary)

Merlene Jones, graduate student and researcher (for higher education degree)

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

APPLICANT'S NAME Merlene Jones DATE OF SUBMISSION _____

1. TITLE OF THE RESEARCH

Please see attached

2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Please see attached

3. BENEFITS TO THE VI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Data can be used by the V. I. Department of Education at it desires.

4. STUDY FRAMEWORK

Proposed starting date Feb. 1, 01 Proposed completion date Feb. 28, 01

Area of research

Special Education

School Climate

Instructional Personnel

Drug Education

Multicultural Education

Adolescent Pregnancy

Student Achievement

Other Student behavior & school attendance

(Please specify)

Hypotheses and/or Research Question(s):

Type of school/research site(s) required

Intact classrooms

central office(s)

Other _____

(Please specify)

5. REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT SUBJECTS

Will pupils be required as subjects for this study?

- Yes (If yes, answer parts "a", "b", "c" and "d" of this question.)
- No (If no, skip to question "6".)

a) Enter grade(s) and number of students requested.
Grade(s) 9 No. of Students approximately 80

b) Check and describe any specific criteria for selection of students to take part in the study.

- Ability level (specify) _____
- Socioeconomic level(s) _____
- Ethnic, racial background _____
- Physical characteristics _____
- Clinically identified conditions _____
- History of personal problems _____
- Other(specify) "At-risk" students who attended one of the junior high schools on St. Thomas, VI.

c) Procedures which will be used to gather data from students:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Group testing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Questionnaires
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual testing	<input type="checkbox"/> Observations
<input type="checkbox"/> Interviews-face to face	<input type="checkbox"/> Inventories
<input type="checkbox"/> Interviews-telephone	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

(Specify)

d) Are file data on students required?
 Yes No

If yes, specify tests, scores, type(s) of other information and the period for which data are needed:
Information on attendance behavior & disciplinary referrals behavior
from students' cumulative folders.

6. REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBJECTS OTHER THAN STUDENTS

Will VI Department of Education personnel, parents, or former students be subjects in the study?

Yes (If yes, answer parts "a", "b", and "c" of this question)

No (If no, skip to question "7")

a) Indicate category by number requested

Teachers

Counselors

School-Based Administrators

Parents

Central Office Administrators

Other _____

(Specify)

b) Are file data on staff requested?

Yes

No

If yes, specify and discuss how data will be used

c) Are file data on parents requested?

Yes

No

If yes, specify and discuss how data will be used

7. REQUIREMENTS FOR ARCHIVAL DATA

Will archival data on students or staff be in the study?

Yes

No

If yes, check sources requested

Reports

Research Studies

Charts/Graphs/Tables

Handbooks

Policies

Other _____

(Specify)

8. INSTRUMENTS, EQUIPMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
What tests, observation guides, questionnaires, attitude scales, interest inventories, and other typed or printed instruments will be used? Specify below and enclose copies.

Group Test (specify) California Achievement Test 5th ed.
 Individual Test _____
 Questionnaire _____
 Interview Protocol _____
 Observation Guide _____
 Attitude/Interest Inventory Survey of Pupil's Opinion
 Other (specify) _____

What instructional materials will be used for research purposes?
(Specify or indicate "None".) _____None

None

9. DESCRIBE THE DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
FEATURES OF THE RESEARCH (Include description of
statistical tests, quantitative/qualitative factors,
correlation factors -- where applicable)

For the first hypothesis, a combined score of math and reading will be used to measure academic achievement for each group. The data will be analyzed using the independent t-test. The results obtained will be used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the academic performance of "at-risk" students who attended an alternative education program and the academic performance of "at-risk" students who attended the traditional program.

For hypothesis 2a and 2b, the data from students' cumulative folders will be examined under the following categories: attendance behavior and disciplinary referrals. The data will be analyzed using the independent t-test.

For hypothesis 3, the results of the Survey of Pupils' Opinion (attitude) survey will be analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U-Test.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1. TITLE OF THE RESEARCH

The success of at-risk students who were enrolled in an Alternative Education Program in the Virgin Islands.

2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose is to determine if "at-risk" students who attend an alternative education program perform better academically than "at-risk" students who attend the traditional education program. It is also to determine if there is a difference in the behavior and a change in their attitude toward school.

4. STUDY FRAMEWORK

Hypotheses and/or Research Question(s):

1. There is no difference in the academic performance of "at-risk" students who attend an alternative education program and "at-risk" students who attend the traditional education program.
- 2a. There is no difference in the attendance behavior of "at-risk" students who attend alternative education program and "at-risk" students who attend the traditional education program.
- 2b. There is no difference in the disciplinary referral behavior of "at-risk" students who attend an alternative education program and "at-risk" students who attend the traditional education program.
3. There is no difference in the attitude toward school of "at-risk" students who attend an alternative education program and those "at-risk" students who attend the traditional education program.