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**ELIMINATE DROP OUTS BY 2,000:  
THE 4R's STRATEGY TO INCREASE  
HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES**

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U.S. Department of Justice  
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Senator John D. Perry  
Chairman  
Senate Minority Conference  
December, 1987

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THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK

JOHN D. PERRY  
54TH DISTRICT

REPLY TO:

☐ DISTRICT OFFICE  
500 HELENDALE ROAD  
SUITE 150  
ROCHESTER, NY 14609  
716-654-8080

☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
ROOM 506  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247  
TELEPHONE 518-455-3575

CHAIRMAN TO MINORITY  
CONFERENCE

COMMITTEES

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SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

December 22, 1987

Dear Senator Ohrenstein:

Last Spring you asked me to examine the extent and nature of the problems which put large numbers of New York State's children and youth at-risk of dropping out of high school and to recommend possible courses of action to address this problem.

As a result of extensive research and numerous discussions with people around the nation familiar with the youth at-risk problem, I have developed the enclosed draft report which I believe lays out the extent and very serious nature of the problem and its consequences and makes some sound recommendations for addressing it. I am issuing this report as a draft so the Democratic Conference, educators, business leaders, labor unions, parents' organizations and other interested parties can give their input on the report's recommendations. I would like the Democratic Conference to adopt the final recommendations of this report as a Conference position.

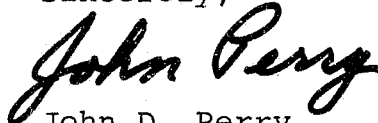
If I might share with you some of my most pertinent findings, I would first like to stress the vast magnitude and scope of the drop-out problem, where every year more than one in four children fail to graduate from high school, entering a labor market where their chances of success are minimal and their chances of dependency are great. The resulting shortage of well-prepared employees is increasingly convincing our business leaders to take a far more active interest and role in public education than they have traditionally. There is a growing consensus that improving our educational system, particularly as it serves the children and youth most at-risk, is the single most important and beneficial action we might take in terms of promoting the State's economic health.

In all candor, the financial commitment these proposals entail will be great, but I believe the cost of failing to act will be far greater, not only in terms of the resulting costs of public dependency, but also in terms of lost productivity and foregone tax revenues. The savings attributable to early intervention efforts have been well documented, with each dollar invested resulting in a savings of approximately four dollars in future public expenditures.

The class which will graduate in the year 2000 entered school this past Fall. It seems to me that we could make no wiser investment as we prepare to enter the next century than ensuring that every one of those children now in kindergarten receives a high school diploma and has the chance to become a fully productive citizen.

I would like to thank the following members of my staff and the Senate Minority Program Office for their assistance in preparing this report: Thomas Cetrino, Mark Tarr, Patricia Wilcox, Lisa Sills, Sarah Browne, Maryjane Maguire, Margo Milne, and Marilyn Gallagher.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Perry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John D. Perry  
54th S.D.

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D R A F T

December 22, 1987

**Executive Summary**

Every citizen of New York State should be alarmed! We generously spend over \$15 billion annually on elementary and secondary education (over \$6,500 per student), and yet more than one out of four students do not graduate from high school. Each year, approximately 44,000 students leave high school without a diploma.

In our current high-tech world economy these youth are condemned to insurmountable obstacles in trying to be productive citizens, and our state is condemned to less growth and more tax expenditures for dependency.

All children who do not graduate from high school will suffer into their adult years, and their children are likely to face the same fate. But it is all of society which is affected by this problem because it means maintaining extensive systems of welfare, Medicaid and prisons for people who have not been provided the tools necessary to avoid dependency, foremost of which is education.

We need these children for the economic future of New York and the nation. The Committee for Economic Development, a research group funded by major corporations, has recently estimated that there will be a shortage of 23 million Americans willing and able to work by 1990. The critical word in this statement is able. The people will be unable to work because of a lack of skill development necessary for our modern economy. This serious labor shortage will have drastic effects on New

York's prosperity as well, as our economy continues to shift away from its historic reliance upon heavy manufacturing.

Sentencing more than one-quarter of our children to a permanent underclass status is intolerable and unnecessary. But to change this direction will take a dramatic effort because we must completely rethink attitudes toward failure and re-examine the scope and role of schools in society.

The first thing that must be done is that instead of accepting as inevitable that a certain percentage and type of children will fail, we must make it an article of faith that every child has the ability to make it. We as adults and providers of educational services must take the responsibility to insure that every child graduates and is well prepared to become a productive participant in our social, economic and political life. We must stop blaming children for failure. **Schools and children must be provided the resources necessary for the attainment of a 100% high school completion rate by the year 2000.**

The second change necessary is the creation of systems that enable schools to serve all youth from birth to age 21. Schools are now organized to serve primarily those youth who are in school. If children are of pre-school age, mobile transients, or dropouts, schools are not organized to serve them. This must change!

Schools currently serve our children for only a relatively small fraction of their childhood, a few hours a day, five days a week, one hundred eighty days a year. In the case of children at-risk this is simply not enough. Far more continuity is

necessary. In recent years we have recognized a similar need by handicapped children for continuity. It is time to allow our schools to play a greater role in the educational, health and social development of children at-risk. Schools as presently operated can not possibly address the multiple needs of children most at-risk.

The reality of the tragedy to our children and our economy cannot be ignored. It calls for a revolution. To start this revolution in New York State, we offer a comprehensive program that will provide for the **New Four R's: Readiness** -- programs beginning with pre-natal care, parenting education, and greatly expanded prekindergarten; **Recognition** -- awareness of developing school adjustment and achievement problems and early intervention programs in elementary school; **Retention** -- intense programs for at-risk youth in adolescence; **Re-entry** -- programs which welcome back those who have left school.

The dollar outlays today and for many years are great but these dollars will provide for an equal start for all youth, and combined with a change of expectations, the expenditures will provide manifold benefits.

Every dollar invested in these programs will save significant public expenditures in the future and will fulfill a major goal of our society - an equal educational opportunity for all. The Committee for Economic Development (CED) estimates that every dollar spent on programs for youth at-risk will save government between \$3.00 and \$4.75 in future public assistance, health, job training and criminal justice expenditures. And besides, it is the right thing to do.

Highlights of our specific proposals include:

### **Equal Start**

- o The proposed "Equal Start" program is based on a proposed federal program known as Even Start. Targeted at pregnant teens, teenage parents and socio-economically disadvantaged parents and their children, (prenatal through age three, at which time the children would enter prekindergarten programs) the program's intent is twofold: to provide a **comprehensive range of educational and other services to help the parents become more involved with their child's development and education and to provide a nurturing and positive environment for their young children.**

Equal Start is estimated to cost **\$48 million** in its first year, if all those in the initial target population of those most in need, consisting of teenage parents and their children, participate, with a total cost of **\$144 million** over three years, at which time children would be referred to a prekindergarten program.

### **Pre-Kindergarten**

- o Various pre-kindergarten programs have been offered to preschool children at-risk for approximately twenty years, in the form of Head Start, New York State's Experimental Pre-Kindergarten and others. Available research, including various longitudinal studies, indicates the effectiveness of these programs in greatly increasing the school readiness of these young children as well as dramatically increasing their later chances of academic success in school and future employability. Despite our efforts in recent years to make pre-kindergarten programs more widely available, the number of children in need who are actually being served remains low. Although the financial commitment will be great, **pre-kindergarten programs should be available in all districts in the State, to serve three and four year old children living in poverty and those lacking English proficiency.** Following implementation of this measure, pre-kindergarten programs should be provided for **all** three and four year olds whose parents wish them to participate.

The cost of implementing pre-kindergarten for children at-risk is estimated at **\$325 million** annually. The total cost of providing universal pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds in the State is estimated at **\$1.3 billion**. Obviously, the timing of the phased-in implementation of universal pre-kindergarten will be dependent on the State's ability to pay.



## Tracking and Identification

- o In addition to the lack of a comprehensive strategy to address the dropout problem, a major obstacle is the lack of reliable information on the extent and nature of the problem. Different sources often provide far different estimates as to the dropout rate. We believe that an important element in reducing the dropout rate is the improvement of the information collection system. **First, we must adopt a clear and uniform definition of a dropout. Secondly, we must implement a computerized tracking system based upon a student's Social Security number.** Such a system would not only increase our understanding of the dropout problem in New York State but could aid in other ways such as facilitating the transfer of student records electronically and permitting schools to locate and reach out to students who have left the educational system.

The sum of \$10 million should be made available for the implementation of a statewide computerized tracking system.

## Case Management

- o Trained staff persons shall act as case managers, responsible for either fifty at-risk students on a full-time basis or twenty-five such students on a part-time basis for the **purpose of overseeing each of these students' academic, health and emotional development.** Case managers shall maintain daily contact with each student and frequent contact with the student's classroom teacher and parent. Case managers will provide positive adult role models for pupils at-risk, act as advocates for tutorial programs and social or health services and provide a link between home, school, community and outside service providers. Case managers, to the maximum extent possible, should be drawn from the same community and background as the children who comprise their caseloads.

While case managers could provide needed services for children at-risk in grades kindergarten through twelve, perhaps the greatest need exists at the junior high school level. Accordingly, the case management system should be phased-in first for grades seven and eight. The estimated cost for such a phase-in is \$70 million.

## Area Learning Centers

- o Recognizing that the traditional school setting may not be the most appropriate for every student, **area learning centers should be provided as an alternative**

**educational experience.** Such centers would be a cooperative endeavor between the State, local school districts, post-secondary systems, community organizations and the business community. Such centers could be established through Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) or directly by a board of education in the case of the Big 5 school districts, for students in grades seven through twelve. This proposal will require a reallocation of existing resources as much as a commitment of new resources.

The State of Minnesota is in the process of establishing area learning centers through the provision of planning and implementation grants. We propose to offer twenty planning grants of \$5,000 each, from which five proposals will be selected and awarded an implementation grant of \$100,000 each, for a total cost of \$600,000.

### **Youth Employment**

- o The youth of today are faced with a variety of problems caused partially by changes in today's economy. More and more poor or minority youth are confronted with the dilemma of either staying in school and thereby foregoing a need to help supplement their families' income, or dropping out of school to earn a salary. Information provided by the State Department of Labor shows that most of these students choose the latter of the two options due to economic pressures. Once students have dropped out of school they are at a disadvantage. Their employment skills are incompatible with requirements necessary to fill most of the jobs available. Currently, the State has in effect a School to Employment Program (STEP). This program serves youth ages sixteen to eighteen who are either considered to be at-risk of dropping out of school or have already dropped out and lack the skills necessary to obtain gainful employment. Thus, the program has two major components: in-school and out-of-school. STEP's purpose is to increase employment readiness, basic skills and the likelihood that those still in school will complete their education, and those who have left will either return to school or obtain a high school equivalency diploma. In the three years the program has been in effect it has realized some impressive results. However, as made evident in the interim report on this program by the State Department of Labor, only a fraction of the eligible population is now being served. It is for this reason that **expansion of this existing program to meet the needs of the total eligible pool of youth is necessary.**

However, as the program is expanded, efforts must be made to strengthen its commitment to be part of a continuum of education and training services for youth. The STEP Program is presently funded at \$8 million. The program should be expanded five-fold, for a total of \$40 million.

### **High School Equivalency Program (HEP)**

- o Currently New York State administers a large number of General Education Development (GED) tests each year. Less than half of the examinees meet the scoring requirements and are awarded high school equivalency diplomas. In contrast, the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) administered by the U.S. Department of Education Bureau of Migrant Education has a passage rate almost double that achieved through the GED process. **Intensive, comprehensive, residential GED preparation programs that go beyond simply preparing a student to take the equivalency test should be developed, based upon the HEP model.** This model shall provide remedial education and career development necessary for those who are likely to drop out or who have already left the educational system.

A total of twenty HEP centers should be funded initially, with ten upstate and ten downstate. Each center would serve three hundred students annually for a total of six thousand students statewide. We estimate the total cost of this program to be **\$13.2 million.**

### **State Inter-Agency Coordinating Council**

- o The four basic components of Readiness, Recognition, Retention and Re-entry all lead to the one goal of assisting youth at-risk and preventing dropouts. The components however, span a variety of State agencies and require the involvement of local school districts to carry out all sorts of different programs. There is a great need to not only coordinate all the efforts being made presently to address this issue, but to develop comprehensive, coordinated programs in the future. Recognizing that a number of the proposals advocated in this report will be costly to implement, there may be no need to increase spending in some other areas, but rather to stop the piecemeal approach that the State is presently using. Accordingly, **a State Inter-Agency Coordinating Council consisting of representation from state agencies involved in combatting the various problems confronting youth at-risk, as well as representatives of parents should be established.**

### **Parental Involvement**

- o Recognizing that ongoing, active involvement by parents in the education of their children is as important as anything the child experiences in the classroom, it is suggested, and in some cases mandated, that parents be actively involved and/or served by virtually every one of our proposals. In addition, parents should be represented on the Inter-agency Coordinating Council serving youth at-risk.

### **Quality Assurance**

- o The quality of education experienced by our children varies widely from one district to another, no doubt reflecting the great disparity in per pupil expenditures. Children attending school in over age, dilapidated buildings, using out-of-date textbooks and materials, and taught by the least experienced teachers do not have the same chance for success as children attending school in clean, well-equipped buildings with current textbooks and experienced faculties, particularly if they did not begin school with the advantages enjoyed by children of more affluent families. The Council of Chief State School Officers recommends that states take action to guarantee quality assurance for **all** students. We endorse this concept for New York State.

**Dimensions of the problem: Youth at-risk Demographics**

During the 1987-88 school year, approximately \$184 billion will be spent on public and private elementary and secondary schools nationally, according to the U.S. Department of Education. In New York State, aid to education accounts for the largest single portion of the State budget, approximately \$7.3 billion. When the local contribution is added, over \$15 billion will be spent on elementary and secondary education in New York this year.

Not only has the dollar amount spent on education risen dramatically in recent years, but the percentage of total education expenditures borne by the State has increased to an estimated **45%** for the current school year, which represents steady progress towards the **50%** State share favored by most public education organizations and advocacy groups. Per pupil expenditures, however, still vary widely from one school district to another.

At the same time, education policy has also undergone significant revision. Since the release of "**A Nation at Risk**" in April 1983, which warned of a rising tide of mediocrity in America's schools, a wave of reform or discussion of reform has touched virtually every aspect of public elementary and secondary education. Much of the education reform movement has been concentrated at the state level, as governors, state legislators and chief state school officers have been active on the education policy front.

In terms of policymaking, much of the states' efforts have focused on increasing graduation requirements. In New York State, this effort took the form of the Regents Action Plan, adopted by the Board of Regents in March 1984. The Action Plan, when completely phased-in, will significantly increase the academic requirements for all students by requiring additional units in various subject areas and increasing the overall number of credits needed for graduation. While the goal of increasing standards has generally been lauded by most concerned parties, several important criticisms of the Action Plan have been made consistently since its adoption: the greatly increased costs to local school districts; the crowding of students' schedules with required courses, to the exclusion of other course offerings, most notably occupational programs; and the impact on students who had difficulty meeting the less stringent standards in existence prior to implementation of the Action Plan.

Most troubling of all, despite the raising of minimum standards and the greatly increased financial support of public education, the dropout rate in New York State remains alarmingly high. Approximately **25%** of all high school students in New York State drop out before graduation, entering a workforce where increasingly a high school diploma is the minimum requirement for most jobs. The federal Department of Education, which calculates a graduation rate rather than a dropout rate, ranks New York State **45th** among the states, with a graduation rate of **62.7%**. (This rate is adjusted for migration, but does not include private school graduations, which in New York could significantly impact on our standing nationally, given the State's relatively

high private school enrollment, approximately 17% of all students).

Among minority youth the dropout rates are even higher. A recently issued working paper of the Board of Regents entitled **"Increasing High School Completion Rates: A Framework for State and Local Action"** estimated that minority students made up 46% of all dropouts in New York in 1984-85, even though they constitute approximately 33% of the total public school enrollment in the State. Approximately 51% of all Black students in New York State and 56% of all Hispanic students drop-out of high school. (These figures are based on the holding rate, which tracks students from grade 9 through grade 12 but does not calculate graduation rates.)

The extent of the dropout problem may be even worse than the above figures indicate. Many children, particularly in the larger urban districts, leave school before grade nine and are therefore never included in the official dropout statistics compiled by the high schools. In addition, the extremely high mobility rate, again in the larger urban districts, allows many high school students to fall through the cracks and be left out of the official dropout counts.

In the absence of appropriate corrective action, we can expect the dropout problem to grow worse, since the proportion of minority children and children in poverty in the under 18 population continues to increase. According to the Exxon Education Foundation's **"Mainstreaming Educationally At-Risk Children and Youth"** (March 1986), minority children constituted 14% of the under 18 population in the United States in 1950, 27%

in 1980, and are expected to represent **38% or more** of Americans under age eighteen by the year 2000.

Minority students are heavily concentrated in the Big 5 cities: **81%** of all Black students in New York State and **89%** of all Hispanic students attend school in one of these five districts (New York City alone accounts for **71%** of all Black students and **86%** of all Hispanic students in the State). **Seventy percent (70%)** of the total Big 5 enrollment is comprised of minority students (**39%** Black and **31%** Hispanic).

The dropout problem in New York is also heavily concentrated in the State's largest cities, given the concentration of both poor and minority students who are at increased risk of dropping out. According to SED, New York City alone accounts for **58%** of the total number of dropouts statewide. When the other four largest cities are added, **nearly two-thirds** of all dropouts in the State are from the Big 5 cities, which enroll roughly **40%** of the 2.6 million pupils in New York.

Aside from large concentrations of minority students, the Big 5 cities also enroll large numbers of other student populations thought to be at increased risk of dropping out. **Fifty percent (50%)** of pupils with handicapping conditions and **86%** of pupils with limited English proficiency reside in one of the Big 5 cities. Almost **65%** of all Pupils with Special Educational Needs (PSEN) remedial funds, which are driven by pupils scoring below the Statewide reference points on standardized test measures, are channeled to the Big 5, based on the demonstrated need for remedial services. Recognizing the special need for remediation in the State's largest school



districts, the Legislature authorized a new remedial funding stream of \$35 million in 1987, known as PCEN, Pupils with Compensatory Educational Needs.

A report authored by Harold Hodgkinson for the Institute for Educational Leadership entitled, **New York: The State and its Educational System**, in reviewing social, economic and educational trends in New York State, concluded that "the most vulnerable children will increasingly be located in the most economically vulnerable parts of New York." As increasing numbers of higher-paying jobs move to suburban areas, increasing numbers of inner-city at-risk youth will be relegated to the lowest paying jobs or unemployment lines unless they are adequately prepared to compete and participate in the workforce.

Not only are students as prospective employees are at-risk; employers are becoming increasingly aware of the shortages of qualified workers they will face unless measures are taken to strengthen the educational system, particularly for those students most vulnerable to dropping out. For example, the **Report of the Commission on the Year 2000**, chaired by Robert Wagner, Jr., found that nearly **90%** of the jobs which will be created in New York City's economy by the turn of the century will require a high school diploma. At present, the percentage of ninth graders who complete the requirements and graduate from City high schools does not begin to approach **90%**.

The Committee for Economic Development (CED), in its report **Children in Need: Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged**, quoted some sobering statistics in calling for increased investment in our system of public education,

particularly as it serves the **30%** of the school-age population CED defines as educationally disadvantaged. By 1990, private sector employment nationally will require in excess of 156 million workers, yet we will experience a **shortage of more than 23 million people** able to fill those jobs.

A recent study funded by the federal Department of Labor, **Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century**, provides more detailed information on this education gap between the future needs of employers and the anticipated supply of qualified workers in the future labor force. While at the present time, only **22%** of all jobs require a college degree, more than **50%** of the new jobs created by the year 2000 will require at least some post-secondary education. While the current job market requires a median of 12.8 years of education, the new job market will require 13.5 years of education. Worse still, of the fastest growing occupations, most will require education levels above the median. Of those occupations projected to grow most slowly or experience net declines, none require more than the median education.

At the same time that education requirements are rising rapidly, the population and labor force will be growing very slowly over the next 15 years, with the labor force increasing by only **1%** annually by the year 2000.

The composition of the labor force, however, will be changing significantly. The pool of younger workers (ages 16-24 years) entering the labor market will shrink. This age group comprised **20%** of the work force in 1985 but will represent only **16%** of the total by 2000. As the number of young workers

declines, the average age of the work force will rise from 35 to 39 by 2000.

The work force will become increasingly female and minority. By 2000, **47%** of the work force will be female, with **60%** of all women of working age employed. By 1990, one of every five new entrants to the work force will be a minority youth.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, minority workers have accounted for **all** net labor force growth in the past ten years in New York City. Nonetheless, there is an increasing disparity between the educational requirements of most new jobs and the skills and education possessed by the people entering the labor force, with 42% of the City's Black population over age 25 and 60% of the Hispanic population over 25 lacking a high school diploma. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' New York regional office, most employers in the City are requiring that employees over age 25 have not only a high school diploma, but at least a year of college as well.

In addition to the foregone productivity, dropouts cost our society in a variety of other ways. CED estimates that for **each year's one million dropouts**, our nation loses more than **\$240 billion** in earnings and taxes over the course of their lifetimes. Resulting social service, health and criminal justice expenditures are also costly. For example, the New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) Office of Academic Education estimates that **over 75%** of the more than 40,000 persons in its custody are high school dropouts, a percentage which has remained fairly constant over several years. The basic cost to the taxpayers of keeping these inmates in custody is over \$19,000

per inmate per year. When other costs such as the aid paid to localities for boarding prisoners are factored in, the annual cost rises to approximately \$26,000 per inmate. While the Department offers a variety of academic and remedial programs for inmates, it would be far more cost effective to improve and expand early childhood and elementary and secondary school opportunities and experiences. This would reduce the likelihood of later criminal activity and incarceration, which is far more costly, and given recidivism rates, far less effective, as well as a waste of human potential.

Information provided by the University of Miami's Center for Dropout Prevention indicates that a majority of the nation's unemployed population consists of people who have dropped out of high school and lack basic skills.

### **The Need for Early Intervention**

Youth at risk is a widely used term to describe children victimized by a variety of social, educational, health and economic factors. It is the youths' inability to cope with these stressors that affect their school performance and attendance.

In 1985, a study published by the National Association of School Social Workers, **The Human Factor: A Key to Excellence in Education**, identified the following specific barriers to school achievement for at-risk youth.

#### **Family:**

- o child abuse and neglect
- o divorce/separation
- o parental apathy
- o family crisis

- o poverty

**School:**

- o lack of positive, cooperative relationships between and among students, staff, parents, and administrators
- o inadequate discipline policies and/or procedures
- o lack of alternative schools/programs to meet needs of "at risk" groups
- o lack of collaborative teamwork among school and community professionals

**Personal:**

- o low self-image
- o problems with parents and/or other family members
- o truancy/absenteeism
- o disruptive behavior

**Community:**

- o lack of community support services
- o lack of links between school and community services
- o lack of preventive mental health programs, such as those which address drug, alcohol, or family problems

In order to successfully combat these problems, the State must reach out to these youths in their earliest years.

According to the CED report and the Wisconsin "**Resource and Planning Guide for Children at Risk**", research studies indicate a clear need to place greater emphasis on preventing problems among at-risk children from prenatal care to age five. Such preventive approaches require the active participation of both the children and their parents because the parents are often young, poor and in need themselves. The root of the problem is in the early

years of social and intellectual development, which strongly influence later academic performance and work skills throughout the child's education experience.

### **The Four R's: A Comprehensive Strategy**

In order to increase the likelihood that all of our children have a positive educational experience, from before the point of entry into the formal school system until the point of exit at the secondary level with a high school diploma, we propose a comprehensive, targeted program ranging from a child's earliest years until age 21 in the case of those youngsters who have left school before graduating.

This comprehensive proposal is comprised of the four R's: Readiness, Recognition, Retention and Re-entry.

Under the Readiness component fall two major proposals, Equal Start and expanded Pre-kindergarten programs. First, we propose a new program known as Equal Start, serving parents and their children, particularly those from a low-income background. Equal Start shall be family-centered, focusing on parent(s) and child as a unit, enabling parents to become active in their children's development and also providing an increased level of educational attainment for the parent. It is the intention of the Equal Start proposal to address the problems of children most at-risk, along with their parent(s), at the earliest possible age by bringing them into contact with the services and programs necessary to permit them to begin their educational experience with an increased chance at success.

Prekindergarten experience can benefit all children, but probably none are more in need than the children of poverty and

those whose primary language is other than English. Large numbers of these children enter the educational system already lagging far behind their middle-class counterparts in terms of school readiness. While we believe that schools should ultimately offer a prekindergarten experience to all three and four year old children in the State, those living in poverty, as defined by the Census Bureau, and those lacking English proficiency should be given such an opportunity first, recognizing their greater need and the level of financial resources such a commitment will require. Accordingly, we propose a phased-in expansion of pre-kindergarten programs, beginning with all three and four year old children in the targeted population, to be made available in all districts in the State. Thereafter, all three year and four year olds should be offered an opportunity for participation in such programs.

While many districts in the State have large concentrations of pre-school children who are poor or whose primary language is other than English, there are other districts where the number of such children is relatively small. These children, however, are no less at-risk than those who live in areas where poverty is widespread and should not be denied access to prekindergarten programs. Districts with small numbers of at-risk pre-school children could be permitted to contract for the provision of prekindergarten programs if it is determined that this is a more feasible approach to making this opportunity available than direct provision of the program by the district.

Currently, we estimate that approximately 25% of all three and four year old children in New York State live in poverty.

These are the children most at-risk and should be those who receive pre-kindergarten programs immediately, along with children whose primary language is other than English and children of migrant agricultural workers as defined by federal statute.

### **Equal Start Program**

According to the New York State Department of Social Services, in 1985-86 an estimated 64,000 teenagers became pregnant, which resulted in approximately 28,000 live births. An overwhelming majority of these adolescent pregnancies and births are unplanned. Once pregnant, the entire existence of an adolescent is changed. Pregnant teens are faced with the responsibility of both bringing a child into this world, and providing for its necessary care. These young parents do not know what type of care is needed and are ill equipped to deal with parenting. Research reveals that it is the adolescents who are defined as being "at risk" who stand a much greater chance of becoming pregnant.

At-risk youth can be defined as school-age individuals whose educational progress or success and subsequent employment are adversely affected by such factors as abuse and neglect at home, family mobility, poverty, lack of success in school with a resultant loss of self-esteem, alcohol or drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy. The results are often alcohol and drug dependency, youth suicide, unemployment, homeless and runaway youth, cyclical poverty, chronic absenteeism, academic failure and under-achievement, dropping out of school, and eventually becoming a drain on the economy. Reaching out to help youth at



risk is a multifaceted process, ranging from the improving of a person's parenting skills to providing intervention programs to increase the basic skills through remediation.

Currently there are a myriad of programs and resources available designed to reach the at-risk youth. However, the rising statistics on dropouts, pregnancy, poverty and alcohol and/or drug abuse show us that there is an urgent need to develop an integrated, comprehensive range of services and program activities which will address factors correlated with youth at-risk. Such a program called "Even Start" had been introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Goodling in 1986. The intent of the program is to combine adult basic education for parents with limited skills and school readiness training for their young children into a single program. This proposed program and components of the Head Start program are the models for our proposal for an "Equal Start" program for New York State. **"Equal Start, as we see it, would be a place and a program where young parents-to-be or eligible parents and their children will come to learn about a better way of life."** These multi-service centers, based in targeted areas, will serve these eligible parents and their children through age three.

"Equal Start" is targeted to both teenage parents and low income families with eligibility based on either the federal poverty level or by using other state or federal eligibility guidelines implemented for similar programs. Below are federal poverty guidelines:

1987 Federal Poverty Income Guidelines by  
The Department of Human and Health Services

<u>Family Size*</u>	<u>100% Poverty</u>
1	\$ 5,500
2	7,400
3	9,300
4	11,200

\* for each additional person add \$1,900

The "Equal Start" program will have two basic characteristics:

1. It must be family centered, focusing on both family and children as a unit, with services taking place in the home when possible; and
2. It must help parents become active in their own children's development, allowing the parent to become the child's first teacher and become more literate in the process.

Involving parents in their children's education is a key component of creating a better learning and life experience for both the parent and child. The proposed "Equal Start" program is intended to incorporate the educational processes for both the parent and child into one comprehensive, multifaceted program which will work to accomplish the following goals highlighted below.

**Equal Start will meet the needs of this special population.**

The Equal Start program is intended to service the growing number of pregnant teens, teenage parents and their children, as well as parents and children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families regardless of the parents' age. Parents will be taught and involved with the implementation of specific and necessary

information on aspects of two major components of their child's development, health care and nutrition.

The nutritional needs of a child are vital for healthy growth. It is important for parents to learn the necessity of providing good nutrition to their baby. The educational information on nutrition will range across the prenatal, neonatal and early years of a child. The nutritional program and information provided through "Equal Start" will allow parents to become more aware of what both they and their children are eating, with the hope that eventually they will develop a regular healthy diet from the information gained. In addition, there will also be an emphasis placed on the importance of seeking health services.

The health services information available to the parents and their children at Equal Start will be taught through various mechanisms. Parents will learn the necessity for basic health care for themselves and their children. They will also be made aware of the various programs and facilities that exist to provide the services they need. The intent of Equal Start is to provide a central facility to which parents and their children could come to learn about the tools to make a happier and healthier life for themselves.

According to the CED report, the benefits of providing prenatal care would result in a reduction in prematurity, low birth weights and infant mortality. The cost benefits of providing such programs would be a savings of \$3.38 in the cost of care for low birthweight infants for every dollar invested.

**Equal Start will provide day care for those eligible parent(s) in or going back to school.**

Providing on-site day care centers is one variable that can **help ensure** a student's achievement of his or her educational goals. According to the CED report, as a society, we need to rethink the relationship of school and the community. The availability of such center, would both add to the child's early life experience and retain the parent as a student.

**Equal Start will provide parent training services.**

The key to a happy relationship between young parents and their infants or children, is the parents' ability to understand the needs of their children. Once parents are able to comprehend the nature of a child's needs, they will be better equipped to provide necessary care. Parents will be shown different and effective ways to communicate and play with a child. These tools will enhance the quality of the parental impact on the child's learning experience. Therefore, the goal of parent training is twofold: to better the parents' effectiveness through an understanding of their young children; and to provide the children with a loving and constructive growth experience.

According to the CED report, the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs notes that despite changes in family demographics, today's infants and toddlers have exactly the same needs that babies have always had:

- o adequate nutrition
- o safe shelter
- o appropriate health care and supervision
- o nurturing by familiar adults who are responsive to the

uniqueness of the individual child from the moment of birth

Pediatric experts know that the attachment of infant to mother is a biological mechanism for survival. These bonds help individuals develop a sense of personal worth, the ability to interact with others in a mutually supportive environment, and the ability to form attachments apart from the mother. Mothers who are overstressed may have difficulty caring for or accepting their infants, and their children may have serious difficulty satisfying their deep psychological need for attachment. This situation is compounded when several children in the home are competing for inadequate parental or caretaker attention.

Under most circumstances, parents are the best care-givers for their children. Parents want the best for their children, even when they themselves lack adequate parenting skills, as is the case with most unmarried teenage mothers and fathers. By providing appropriate education in care-giving for parents, society may circumvent some of the problems that children from deprived homes generally bring with them to school.

**Equal Start will provide adult basic education for young parents.**

Young parents or pregnant teens are certainly at risk, if they have not in fact already dropped out. The Equal Start program will work with these individuals to prevent them from losing interest in completing their education. Establishment of instructional programs to promote adult literacy and remedial services to parents will be a major component of Equal Start. In order to accomplish this goal, it will be necessary to ensure that day care is available, either through direct provision at

the Equal Start site, or through referral to an existing day care facility. Provisions of related support services such as day care may be one of the aspects addressed by an Interagency Coordinating Council recommended later in this report.

The adult education services provided will be coordinated with programs assisted under the Adult Education Act, the Job Training Partnership Act, the Head Start program, volunteer literacy programs and other relevant programs that are available. **Equal Start will consist of home-based components involving parents and children.**

The varied components of this program are geared towards involving parents in the educational and physical health of their children. Equal Start's goal is to encourage parents to maintain a responsible commitment to their children in both the school and home environments. To assist parents with developing home-learning experiences it will be necessary to implement a variety of instructional programs, possibly coordinated by services provided by other home-based programs. These home-based programs will be monitored by Equal Start.

**Equal Start will be coordinated with related services and programs.**

There is a critical need to identify and coordinate all local/state/federal programs that exist to service the participants of Equal Start. A major task of the Equal Start program will be to assemble information on the varied existing programs and coordinate the necessary services for an individual with both Equal Start and other related programs available.

### **The Benefits of Equal Start**

The Equal Start program will provide essential life skills to a special population of young children and their parents who otherwise would be deprived of a necessary learning experience. This experience would have a substantial positive impact on the children's future ability to succeed and remain in school. The skills learned at the Equal Start Center will also improve the quality of life for the adult participants and at the same time produce persons better equipped to make positive contributions to their respective communities.

The range of young children brought through the program (prenatal through age three) will take with them a learning experience that will stay with them throughout their lives. As the CED report points out, a positive early childhood experience is vital to the overall health of a child. As the CED report further notes, the earlier the intervention, the less costly and more likely it is to meet with success. By providing a constructive learning experience for these young people at a very early age, we can assure them that they will have a greater chance for a brighter future. The planning proposal for the Equal Start program is attached as Appendix A.

### **PreKindergarten**

Government traditionally has been reluctant to take responsibility for preschool education or child care. Politicians generally believe that "the American social system presumes that barring economic disaster or health crisis, a family should and will care for its children without public intervention."

A number of factors came together in the early 1960's to make the time ripe for government intervention in the form of early childhood education:

- o the outcome of studies which showed that intelligence was modifiable with early education;
- o the federal government's commitment to fight poverty, beginning with the Kennedy Administration and followed by the Johnson Administration's "War on Poverty"; and
- o the Civil Rights movement.

This realization came at the same time as government became increasingly aware of and concerned about the disparity of wealth in the country. Michael Harrington received wide attention with his book **The Other America - Poverty in the United States**. He stated that the poor constituted **25%** of the total population and warned of an unending, generational cycle of poverty within this population. In the intervening 25 years, children have become the poorest segment of our society. Children are seven times as likely to be poor as those over 65 years of age. More than **20%** of children under eighteen and **25%** of those under age six live in families below the poverty level. Although the majority of poor children are White, minority children are far more likely to be poor.

At the same time, a by-product of civil rights activism of the early 1960's was the realization of the need for economic as well as racial equality.

In this climate, Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. One of the programs implemented under this Act was Project Head Start. It was finally officially recognized that



early childhood education could be a way to break the cycle of poverty.

#### **New York State Experimental Prekindergarten Program**

The New York State Experimental Prekindergarten Program was started in 1966. Its purpose was to determine whether organized education experiences can help overcome potential education deficits in the backgrounds of economically disadvantaged children. The program was originally funded at a level of \$5 million during the first year and reached a peak funding level of \$10.6 million during the mid 1970s. Funding for several years thereafter had been \$9.46 million annually until it was increased in the 1984 SFY budget to \$14.0 million, to \$22 million in the 1986 SFY and finally to \$27 million in 1987.

Nationally, pre-school programs for the disadvantaged serve fewer than 20% of eligible children. CED estimates that there are an estimated 730,000 four-year-olds nationwide who can be considered at risk, and that the cost of serving all of them with quality preschool program would range from \$2.6 billion to \$3.1 billion. In 1986, approximately \$1 billion was spent nationwide educating children under age five.

During the 1986-87 school year, New York State experimental pre-K programs served approximately 10,400 children (3 and 4 year olds) in a total of 82 (vs. 50 districts in 1982-83) school districts or BOCES districts around the State. More than twice as many four-year-olds attend private pre-K as attend public pre-K. According to the State Education Department, a total of 18,783 children attended public pre-K during the 1986 school year.

and 41,713 children attended private pre-K for a total of 60,496 children in pre-K in the State in 1986.

The under age five population in New York State is steadily increasing. The number of live births in the State increased from 233,000 in 1978 to 263,000 in 1986. The population projection for three and four year olds made by the New York State Council on Children and Families shows that population steadily increasing through 1995. The Council estimated a total of 473,322 three and four year olds in the State in 1986 and 500,522 in the year 1995. Only a small percentage (7.8%) of all three and four year olds in New York were being served by a pre-K program as of 1986.

The State Education Department does not yet have exact figures available, but it expects to serve between 1,500 to 2,000 more children this school year in experimental pre-K programs with the additional \$5 million budgeted by the Legislature in the Spring of 1987.

While all preschool children can benefit from a quality pre-kindergarten program, children most at-risk, including those from families in poverty, those whose primary language is other than English, and those whose parents are migrant agricultural workers, will derive the most benefit. Accordingly, pre-kindergarten programs should be offered in all districts in the State for children from these populations. Once all such children have been offered this opportunity, pre-kindergarten should be made available on a universal basis to all three and four year old children whose parents wish them to participate. Districts with relatively small numbers of pre-school children

at-risk might be permitted to contract out for the provision of a pre-kindergarten program.

State Education Department statistics also show that the full- day kindergarten population has increased dramatically. In 1981, four times as many public school children attended half-day kindergarten as attended full-day kindergarten. By the Fall of 1986, 35,000 more public school children attended full-day kindergarten than attended half-day kindergarten. **Efforts should be made to ensure that children who comprise the target population for the proposed Equal Start and expanded pre-kindergarten programs are among those who receive full day kindergarten.**

## Recognition

Programs incorporated in this component attempt to recognize at the earliest possible time in a child's school experience problems in school achievement and adjustment. The importance attached to this component is based upon the belief that dropping out of school represents the culmination of numerous forces and events over an extended period of time in the child's academic career rather than reaction to a single event or set of circumstances at the time he or she actually leaves school.

The population generally targeted in this set of proposals is comprised of children in the elementary grades, most often thought of as K-6, remembering that there is considerable variation in the way in which districts combine grades within a school building, e.g. K-6, K-4, K-8, etc.

In the earlier grades, when little data based upon achievement measures is available to predict whether children should be considered at-risk, income and/or lack of English proficiency will often have to be employed as the indicators. Retention in grade might also be used as an indication of a child's potential to be considered at-risk. As achievement measures become available, such as PEP test scores and reference points, these may be used in combination or in lieu of poverty-based measures. Sufficient leeway should be provided so that a principal could deem a child to be at-risk, based upon teacher and staff evaluation. Most importantly, the parents should be consulted and involved in the decision to consider their child to be at-risk.

### Identification and Tracking

One of the most basic obstacles to successfully combatting the dropout problem is the lack of a clear and uniform definition of who constitutes a dropout. The Council of Chief State School Officers recommends the following definition: Any student who (for any reason other than death) leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school/institution. While this is very similar to the working definition used on SED's Basic Educational Data Systems (BEDS) forms, we endorse the Council of Chief State School Officers' proposal that it be placed in statute.

The first step which must be employed is the development of a reliable method of tracking students. **We propose that a computerized tracking system based upon a student's Social Security number be utilized.** With the recent federal income tax reform, increasing numbers of very young children are being assigned Social Security numbers at age five, since Public Law 99-514, Section 6109e requires that dependents claimed on an IRS tax form who are at least age five must have a Social Security number. Parents could be asked to supply this number on a **voluntary basis** to the child's school district. This proposal would allow use of a single assigned numbering system which remains constant throughout not only the child's schooling but his or her entire life. Adequate safeguards must be put in place to prevent misuse of this tracking system.

We perceive this proposed tracking system as potentially meeting a number of needs. First, while SED collects some data with respect to dropouts, none of this information is able to track individual students. The tracking system would give us

information on dropouts in greater detail and with increased accuracy, with the hope that this additional information would assist in better understanding and combatting the dropout problem.

Secondly, this system could be helpful in expediting the transfer of a student's records, particularly in the larger urban districts where student mobility is extremely high. Evidence exists that some schools experience more than a 75% rate of turnover in student population in as little as a single school year.

Finally, this information could be of use to districts in locating and reaching out to students who have dropped out. We believe that schools must make far greater efforts to retrieve students who have left the educational system and offer them another opportunity to graduate with a diploma.

#### Case Management

Students who are identified as at-risk based upon the above mentioned indicators should receive the services of a case manager. Case management is a system whereby a trained staff person would be assigned either fifty at-risk students on a full-time basis or twenty-five such students on a part-time basis for the purpose of overseeing each student's academic, health and emotional development, based upon **daily** contact with each student and frequent contact with the student's classroom teacher and parent(s). The case manager would act in a variety of roles on the child's behalf, including that of a positive, consistent and caring adult role model, an advocate for needed tutorial programs and social or health services, and a linkage between home, classroom and outside service providers. Wherever possible,

efforts should be made to ensure that a case manager would be drawn from the same community and background as the children who comprise his or her caseload. Such managers, in our view, could start their task at a distinct advantage in terms of knowledge and ties to the community and would have the innate cultural sensitivity we believe is necessary to be highly successful.

#### Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is an important factor in ensuring that all children have a chance to succeed. A child attending school in a dilapidated building, using out-of-date textbooks and never being exposed to the most experienced teaching staff simply does not have the same chance for success as his counterpart in a clean, well-equipped building with up-to-date textbooks and a stable, experienced faculty. Various attempts are being made to address these issues such as the Excellence in Teaching program, Teacher Resource Centers, recent increases in textbook aid, limited financial support for staff development, innovative contracts in selected school districts which permit the flexibility to assign the most experienced teachers to the schools most in need, and increased teacher input into decisions regarding curriculum and materials. Some limited training and staff development has been provided for principals, but we believe this program must be greatly expanded particularly if the schools with the highest concentrations of youth at-risk are to reduce their dropout rates. In addition, the New York City Board of Education is developing a detailed plan to address its vast capital needs. Not only will the City's capital needs require

billions of dollars, but school districts throughout New York State, particularly older urban systems, have tremendous capital reconstruction needs.

While these various developments are encouraging, we believe that **all students are entitled** to an assurance as to the quality of such factors as building condition, textbooks and materials, staff standards and parental involvement as part of their right to a public education. Such assurances will help offer the necessary inducement for those responsible, including the Legislature, to provide that what is promised to our children in terms of a quality education is actually delivered on an equal basis to all.



## Retention

Accepting as a basic premise that all students are capable of learning and graduating with a high school diploma, we believe that in many cases it is the school or program which must be adapted or changed rather than the student himself.

Large, impersonal high schools operating in the traditional fashion, where no single person has close contact with a small group of students, are incapable of meeting the educational needs of students most at-risk. This type of school is even less equipped to address the relevant, though non-educational problems of these students, such as alcohol and substance abuse, chronic health problems, day care for their children, the need for some students to work and contribute to family income, etc. Academic under-achievement or failure is only one of many reasons why students drop out of school.

The Committee for Economic Development, among others, has called for a restructuring of schools as they serve students at-risk. **Specifically, we call for smaller, alternative schools or programs, with low student-staff ratios which serve the entire range of these at-risk students' needs.**

### Area Learning Centers

Area Learning Centers, formed by a Big Five school district or B.O.C.E.S. in collaboration with local community colleges, are intended to provide coordinated education programs and related services for youth and young adults in need of basic educational and social services and for dislocated workers under age 21. The centers will provide an educational alternative to learners who have dropped out or are being unsuccessfully served by

traditional educational programs. Students eligible for an area learning center would be youth or young adults who over a period of time have had difficulty with learning and/or developing. Learning Centers could serve seventh and eighth graders as well as high school students in grades nine through twelve who are considered to be at risk and unlikely to be retained in a traditional school setting.

In addition, eligible students would also include young adults who left the educational system without completing their learning program, pregnant teens, teenage parents, adjudicated youth and other educationally disadvantaged youth. Any student who has not been successful in a traditional school setting could be a candidate for a learning experience in an Area Learning Center.

Funding for area learning centers is intended to be a cooperative venture among the State, local school districts, post secondary systems, interagency community resources and businesses. These funding sources could also include:

- o JTPA funds for job skills training for various groups served and the eight percent education set-aside
- o resources from State and local DSS
- o private foundation grants
- o grants from the business community

Population Served:

Secondary Students

- o chemically dependent
- o not likely to graduate from high school based on poor academic performance and/or retention in grade
- o in need of assistance in vocational and basic skills
- o can benefit from employment experience
- o need assistance in transition from school to employment

Adults

- o dislocated workers
- o in need of basic education as well as social services

Focus of Programs and Services

- o Academic and learning skills
- o Trade and vocational skills
- o Work experience
- o Transition service

Programs and Services Provided:

- o dropout prevention
- o education and services for persons who have dropped out of school
- o teenage parent programs
- o programs for students who are disruptive in the regular school environment
- o substance abuse programs for teenage students
- o part-time jobs and work experience
- o programs for adjudicated youth
- o programs to enhance self-concept
- o an advocate to assist students with other governmental agencies
- o programs and services that develop the student's competency to use what has been learned
- o transition services to assist clients in moving from school to work
- o basic education for the functionally illiterate
- o high school diploma or GED preparation programs
- o basic job skills retraining for displaced workers
- o educational programs for institutionalized persons who are dropouts.

**Development of Area Learning Centers**

The State Education Department (SED) will be the lead agency and will dispense up to 20 planning grants of \$5,000 each to existing alternative programs to become Area Learning Centers. The grants will be used to plan for the expansion or redesign of existing services which will be required to already service secondary students or young adults and have an outreach component. SED shall review the results of the 20 Area Learning Center proposals and select 5 centers which are geographically distributed throughout the State in areas of greatest need. The five designated centers shall each receive a \$100,000 grant for the operation of approved programs. These five centers shall

provide the expertise and leadership for alternative demonstration programs allowing eventual development of area learning centers throughout the state.

This proposal is based upon similar legislation in Minnesota passed in 1987 as part of the Education Omnibus Act. The twenty planning grants have been awarded, and proposals are now being reviewed by the Minnesota SEA. The four centers to be funded are expected to be announced in early 1988.

The City University of New York (CUNY) has operated a number of programs similar to our proposed learning centers for approximately fifteen years, most notably, Middle College/LaGuardia Community College.

School To Employment Program (STEP)

The need to identify effective ways of improving the basic skills of disadvantaged youth has become an increasingly urgent and widespread concern throughout American society.

This concern has been accentuated by the impact of major demographic changes that are taking place: while youth are becoming a smaller segment of our total population, the number of youth in poor families is growing. According to statistics provided by Private/Public Ventures on its national STEP program, about one in five teenagers nationwide are living in poverty. Each year, a large number of these youth enter the labor market without basic skills. Their deficiencies in many ways are attributed to their lack of a high school diploma.

Research has identified poor academic performance and teenage pregnancy as important contributors to dropout behavior and subsequent difficulties in the labor market. Research has

also noted that the early adolescent years are critical to a youth's school progress, and that the summers are times when disadvantaged youth tend to slow, halt and even regress in that progress.

A programmatic vehicle selected for addressing these needs in New York State is the School to Employment Program (STEP) under the auspices of the Department of Labor, in cooperation with the State Education Department and the Department of Social Services. STEP addresses the needs of economically disadvantaged youth aged 16-17 who are either deemed at risk of dropping out of school, with an emphasis on youth receiving public assistance, or youth ages 16-18 who have already dropped out and are unprepared for employment, with a special emphasis on homeless youth and AFDC recipients. By combining a work experience with a learning experience, it seeks to increase employment readiness, basic skills and the likelihood that those still in school will complete their education. The youth are employed in partially subsidized or unsubsidized jobs which provide them with income, and increase their career awareness and work maturity. The majority of jobs are in the private sector. The program provides the participants with the opportunity to work while continuing their education, in-school, or striving toward GED out-of-school.

The program is funded by the State and coordinated between Labor, SED and DSS. Eligible grant organizations include public agencies, private businesses, unions, non-profit and community based organizations.

During 1987 (the program's third year of operation) STEP operated in 28 locations around the State, offering 2,556 youths

either partially subsidized or unsubsidized jobs, primarily in the private sector. The program has been a success; it has served a total of 7,659 youths and has placed 5,736 in jobs during its three years of operation.

Statistics cited in the Preliminary Report of STEP III 1986-1987 show that the programs have achieved a good deal of success:

- o Ninety-six percent (96%) of last year's in-school participants graduated or returned to school after the summer vacation, in marked contrast to the high dropout rates associated with the participating schools.
- o Eighty-eight percent (88%) of last year's out-of-school participants completed with positive results, ie. returned to school, obtained unsubsidized employment, obtained a high school equivalency (GED) diploma, or enrolled in additional vocational training.
- o Thirty-six percent (36%) of the seniors in the in-school program who graduated, went on to college, either full or part-time.

While STEP appears to have achieved some impressive results, it is only serving a small fraction of the eligible population. The introductory section of the interim report, in answering the question as to whether New York State does indeed have a youth problem, cites the following statistics:

- o the unemployment rate among youth ages 16-19 was 14.4 percent (14.4%) in early 1987, down from twenty percent (20%) in the first quarter of 1986;
- o the rate of unemployment for minority youth during 1986 was approximately thirty-five percent (35%), more than double the rate for all youth and almost six times the overall unemployment rate;
- o there are **64,000** youth ages 16-19 in New York State who are unemployed this year, which the report claims comprise only the tip of the iceberg, since it calculates that the dropout figure in the State at any given time is **175,000**;

- o sixty percent (60%) of all Hispanics and fifty-four percent (54%) of all Blacks enrolled in high school in New York State do not graduate, while the figures for Whites and Asians are twenty percent (20%) and less than ten percent (10%), respectively.

This program appears to effectively serve both in-school and out-of-school youth, retaining them or allowing them to re-enter the educational system as well as increasing their chances at gainful employment. Integration with the educational system appears to be a key element in the program's success, as well as other exemplary youth job training programs.

According to the State Department of Labor's 1987 interim report on STEP, almost all of the existing programs provide services to numbers of "unplanned participants." This fact clearly shows that the need for this program is greater than the existing resources. According to the State Department of Labor, the total number of youth in poverty between the ages of 16-19 statewide is 370,500. However, the total of eligible persons served by this program was 2556.

We recommend that the current STEP program be expanded to meet the growing needs of this population.

## Re-entry

At the present time, little or no affirmative effort is being made to retrieve those students who have dropped out of school. We believe that these former students deserve a second chance at completing their secondary education. These students offer proof that the education system as it presently exists does not meet the individual needs of all people. It will require the development of innovative programs to successfully reach and retrieve these former students and achieve our goal of ensuring that all people enter the labor force with at least a high school diploma.

### High School Equivalency

Re-entry into the education system is difficult particularly if it failed the student during his or her youth. For those who left the education system before completing their learning program, obtaining a high school equivalency diploma is the most common method of re-entry into the system. New York State administers more General Education Development (GED) tests than any other state in the nation. According to the American Council on Education, last year, 88,040 people took the exam yet only 43.8% met the score requirements necessary to receive a high school equivalency diploma.

### General Educational Development (GED)

In New York State, a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma is granted to individuals who meet eligibility requirements and satisfactorily complete the GED test. The GED test is a standard test developed by the American Council in Education, which is used in the fifty states, the territories and



Canada. The GED includes five tests: Writing Skills, Social Studies, Science, Reading Skills and Mathematics.

The test is administered during a two day period and each section has a timed allotment for completion.

In 1986, New York State administered 88,040 examinations, the largest number per state, followed by Texas with 59,045, California with 48,148 and Florida with 41,100. The average age nationwide of those taking the test was 26.5 years. Over twenty-eight percent of the examinees, however, were age 19 or younger. The average level of schooling was 9.8 years. Nationally, there has been a four percent increase since 1985 in the number of GED tests taken.

In New York State, tests were administered at 73 official GED centers, with approximately 63,000 people taking the test for the first time and approximately 25,000 people being retested from prior years. A total of 41,272 or 46% of those taking the test met the scoring requirements. The average age of New York State examinees was 25.7 years. Approximately 56% of those meeting the GED requirement planned further studies.

There is no cost to the individual for taking the test or scoring. In New York State there were 1197 classes for New York State High School Equivalency Diplomas offered by public schools and BOCES last year. The classes are offered through continuing education programs.

While only 44% of those taking the GED test in New York State last year met the necessary scoring requirements, approximately **85%** of the participants in the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) funded through Title IV of the Federal

Higher Education Act successfully completed the GED test. The Program is administered by the Bureau of Migrant Education within the Federal Department of Education.

The HEP program consists of three components: home-based training, residential, and community. The program mandates instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics, communication skills and other subjects necessary for success beyond high school and in preparation for examination for a certificate of high school equivalency. Students also receive tutorial services and career planning, along with personal and group counseling.

HEP has moved from the traditional classroom learning situation to creating flexible programs and individualized instruction in a residential setting. The State University of New York College at New Paltz received a \$210,000 HEP grant in FFY 1986-87. The residential component of the program enrolled 87 students - 73 of whom were retained, with 70 students awarded a GED diploma. This is an outstanding success rate considering the average student in the program had an 8th grade reading level upon entering the program.

The utilization of dormant state college campuses is an attractive, relatively inexpensive way to provide GED preparation and basic remedial education in a residential setting to students in the State. Modeling a state program after the Federal HEP program seems a good way to transfer success.

#### **State Interagency Coordinating Council**

Students drop out of school for a variety of reasons: academic, physical, economic, social and others. It is important

to recognize that just as there is no single reason or cause for students failure to complete high school, there is no single solution to the problem either. A wide range of services and programs is necessary to reduce significantly the dropout rate.

In addition, we must recognize that the actual point of separation from school is most likely a culmination of many factors occurring over an extended period of time in the child's life.

The four basic components, Readiness, Recognition, Retention and Reentry all lead to the one goal of assisting youth at risk and preventing dropouts. These four steps together span the life of an individual thought to be at-risk from Pre-K to programs which provide a comprehensive review in order to obtain a G.E.D.. In order to minimize overlapping, gaps in services and piecemeal policies and practices, and to provide continued funding and resources, a State interagency coordinating council should be created. The development of such a coordinating council would insure a comprehensive approach to the problem of youth at risk. Representatives of parents would also serve on the proposed Council.

The coordinating council should consist of the Governor's appointees with the chair being appointed by the Governor. The council should be composed of commissioners or their appointees of the following state agencies: State Education Department, Social Service, Division for Youth, Department of Health, Department of Correctional Services, Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Office of Mental Health, Division of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, Division of Substance Abuse

Services, Department of Labor, and Council on Children and Families, along with representatives of parents.

The council should be charged with developing and implementing a comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary interagency program for youth at risk. Its duties would include recommending policies to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated service delivery system for youth at-risk from all relevant state and local agencies. The council should address how to incorporate each agency's services into a unified state and local system. The council would review current services, programs and funding sources for all statewide programs for youth at risk, and facilitate the development of local or regional multi-agency teams to address present and future needs of the at-risk population.

The council should meet on a regular basis and be required to submit its recommendations to the Legislature and Governor within a designated time period.

**APPENDIX A****Planning for the Equal Start Program****Funding**

Local agents must submit a proposal for a planning grant to SED, which will distribute money appropriated for the purposes of this program.

**Eligibility**

It will be necessary to develop eligibility criteria for both the locality and participant. The proposed federal Even Start program included the following:

**Eligible Participants**

- o parent(s) eligible for participation in an adult basic education program under the Adult Education Act; and
- o the child or children (prenatal through age 3) of any eligible parent(s) who reside in a school attendance area designated for participation in programs under part of the Adult Education Act.

**The Program**

The programs devised by the local agents must incorporate the stated goals of the program listed below.

- o They must be family centered, focusing on both family and children as a unit, with services taking place in the home when possible.
- o Help parents become active in their own children's development. Help the parent become the child's first teacher and become more literate in the process.

To meet these goals effectively it will be necessary to incorporate essential elements into the program to provide:

- o services to special populations,
- o adult education services,
- o parent training,
- o home-based programs involving parents and children,
- o coordination with related local/state/federal services and programs, and
- o training of related personnel in appropriate skills areas.

#### **Program Elements**

- o identification and recruitment of eligible children;
- o screening and preparation of parents and children for participation, including testing, and referral to necessary counseling and related services;
- o design of programs and provisions of support services, (scheduling location of services, child care, transportation);
- o establishment of instructional programs to promote adult literacy, training parents to support the education and growth of their children, and preparation of children for success in regular school programs;
- o provide special training to enable staff to develop the necessary skills to work with parents and young children in the full range of instructional services;
- o provision and monitoring of integrated instructional services to participating parents and children through home-based programs;

- o coordination of Even Start programs with programs assisted under the Adult Education Act, the Job Training Partnership Act, the Head Start program, volunteer literacy programs and other relevant programs; and
- o provision of day care for children of eligible parents.

#### **Application**

- o a Local Educational Agency (LEA) shall submit an application to the State Education Agency (SEA) which documents that the LEA has personnel qualified to run the Even Start program;
- o the LEA shall develop and submit a plan for the program describing the goals, activities, services and target population;
- o the plan must state how the programs will serve special populations, and will encourage participants to remain in the program long enough to meet their goals; and
- o describe how the program will be coordinated with other relevant programs such as those operating under the Adult Education Act, the Job Training Partnership Act, and Head Start.

#### **Award of Grants**

- o State educational agency shall appoint a review panel, that will award grants on the basis of proposals which are most likely to be successful in meeting the goals of this program, on the basis of:
  - demonstrating the greatest degree of coordination between a variety of relevant service providers;

- serving areas of the State in greatest need;
- submitting budgets which appear reasonable, given the scope of the proposal;
- demonstrating the LEA's ability to provide additional funding for the program;
- representing urban and rural regions of the State; and
- showing promise for providing models which may be transferred to other LEAs.

### **Review Panel**

- o The proposed federal Even Start Program recommended a seven member review panel consisting of the following:
  - an early childhood education professional;
  - an adult education professional;
  - a representative of parent-children education organizations;
  - a representative of community based literacy organizations;
  - a member of a local board of education;
  - a representative of business and industry with a commitment to education; and
  - an individual involved in the implementation of similar programs.

### **Evaluation**

- o The Commissioner of Education shall provide for the annual independent evaluation of programs to determine their effectiveness in meeting the defined goals of the program which are to provide:



- services to special populations;
- adult education services;
- parent training;
- home based programs involving parents and children;
- coordination with related personnel in appropriate skill areas.

This report shall be submitted to the Legislature and governor annually.

## APPENDIX B

### Pre-kindergarten

Until the 1940's it was widely believed that intelligence was an inherited, fixed capacity. During the 1940's, influenced by Jean Piaget, a leader in the study of intellectual development, educators began to recognize that intelligence was not a fixed capacity and that it could be influenced by environment. J. Hunt in **Intelligence and Capacity**, 1961, argued that intelligence was not determined solely by heredity. He said that "both environmental deprivation and enrichment have been shown to have measurable, sometimes massive, effects on a child's development."

Also, by the 1950's "there was abundant evidence that children of low income families tended to perform poorly on many kinds of academic achievement tests."

In deciding which pre-K programs to fund, SED looks at the quality of the proposal as well as demographic data and existing community services in the school district.

Unlike most programs targeted towards the economically disadvantaged, families do not have to meet a strict income eligibility guideline, but rather must demonstrate evidence of one or more of the following criteria: low income, large families, history of chronic illnesses, (particularly, though not necessarily limited to, mental illness), low school achievement by parents or older siblings, and difficulties with the law. Eligibility for and/or receipt of Medicaid, Public Assistance, Food Stamps or free or reduced-price school lunches are sometimes

considered as indicators of poverty. Some children attend by virtue of a court order in child abuse cases, and foster children are automatically eligible. Some districts screen children by administering various education aptitude tests, but most prefer to simply observe and/or interview the children. Apparently, the standardized tests currently available for administration to three and four year olds are of such questionable validity that most districts prefer to have an experienced teacher make an informed professional decision as to the individual need for a pre-K placement.

Each program must offer four components: a developmentally oriented, individualized educational program; comprehensive health services including physical, mental, dental and nutritional health, social services intended to increase families' ability to function independently; and involvement of parents in the education of their children through employment in the program, home visits by staff, parent visits to school, parent meetings which focus on child-rearing practices and parenting skills, and participation in decision-making.

In 1975, the Legislature mandated a statewide evaluation be undertaken, in response to pressure from participating districts for continuation and expansion and from other, nonparticipating districts for inclusion in the pre-K program. The purpose of the study was to establish a basis for a policy decision regarding public education for children under five. The State Education Department formed a Special Prekindergarten Evaluation Unit which conducted a five year, longitudinal study which traced children who entered pre-K programs in the fall of 1975 through their

completion of the third grade in June 1980. These children were compared against a control group who were similar in all respects with the exception that they had not attended pre-K. The final report was issued in February 1982. Among the major findings:

- o The program was most effective for those children who most needed it, i.e., children whose mothers had the least education and children who scored lowest on one or more of the pretests (all children included in the study, other than the control group, were administered pretests; as noted earlier, this is not a universal practice in regular admissions procedures).
- o Benefits derived from the program by the children increased with the degree of parental involvement in the program.
- o Gains made are more likely to persist into the primary grades when there is a conscious effort made to assure continuity in teaching approach through the primary grades.
- o Pre-K children were **far less likely to repeat a grade or to be referred to special education classes** than were their non pre-K counterparts.
- o Pre-K children derived a "strong favorable effect" as tested by three cognitive measures (general reasoning, school-related knowledge and skills, and knowledge of verbal concepts) and three dimensions of noncognitive/behavioral development (task orientation, extraversion and verbal facility) as compared to the control group children.

- o Money invested in pre-K is either recouped or realized in savings in one form or another, including:  
 projected increase in lifetime earnings of children who participate, increased earnings by parents as a result of more time free of child care responsibilities, and decreased costs to school districts in terms of the need for special education, retention in grade, or compensatory education. CED estimates that every \$1 invested in quality preschool education returns \$4.75 due to lower costs for special education, public assistance, criminal justice, etc.

In addition, pre-K children are generally better nourished and in better health. Many medical problems which develop later in life are attributable to poor health care and nutrition in early childhood years. In addition, cognitive development, physical growth and school achievement are all linked to good health and proper nutrition during early childhood years.

#### Other Studies

Studies of other prekindergarten programs have shown similar results. Perhaps the best known of these studies is the Perry Pre-school Study. This project, begun in 1962, focused on Black children from low-income families in Ypsilanti, Michigan, who were at risk of failing in school. The study divided a total of 123 children at ages three and four into two groups: the experimental group (58 children) which received a high quality preschool program and the control group, (65 children) which received no early childhood education. Annual information gathering on these children up to age 11 and again at ages 14,

15, and 19 included an assessment of family demographics, child abilities, attitudes and scholastic accomplishments, involvement in delinquent and criminal behavior and in later years, the use of welfare assistance, the incidences of teenage pregnancies and employment. The chart below illustrates the findings from the age 19 - young adult interview:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Preschool Group</u>	<u>Non-Preschool Group</u>
Employment	59%	32%
High School Graduation (or equivalency)	67%	49%
College or Vocational Training	38%	21%
Ever Detained or Arrested	31%	51%
Teenage Pregnancies, per 100 (49 females responding)*	68	117
Functional Competence APL Survey: Possible Score 40 (109 responding)**	24.6	21.8
Percent of years in Special Education (handicapped) (112 responding)	16%	28%

\*There were 17 pregnancies reported by the 25 women who attended preschool; 28 pregnancies were reported by the 24 women who had not attended preschool.

\*\*The Adult Performance Level Survey (APL) is a multiple-choice test that was developed for students in adult education programs.

It was designed to assess skills needed for education and economic success in modern society. The functional competencies measured by the APL involve the application of five specific skills to five knowledge areas.

**APPENDIX C****High School Equivalency**

Candidates wishing to take the GED test must meet the following requirements:

1. Have residency in New York State for at least one month
2. Have not received a high school diploma or a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma
3. Age Requirements, as follows:
  - a. The candidate must be 19 years of age or older, or
  - b. The candidate must be at least 17 years of age and either has not been regularly enrolled in a full-time high school program of instruction for at least one year or was a member of a high school class that has graduated, or
  - c. The candidate must be at least 16 years of age, must have been enrolled in an approved alternative high school equivalency preparation program, and must be referred for testing by his/her program coordinator, or
  - d. The candidate must be at least 17 years of age and must be a resident of a narcotic addiction control center, or an inmate of a correctional institution, or a resident patient in a hospital in New York State. In addition, acquisition of the high school equivalency diploma must be an integral part of the candidate's educational rehabilitation program.

Candidates who took their first exam prior to September 1, 1985 must score 35 or more on each section of the test and have a total score of 225 or more on all five sections of the test. Candidates who take their first exam after September 1, 1985 must score 40 or more on each section and obtain a total score of 225 or more. Candidates may retake the test as many times as



necessary to pass, but must wait at least two months before retesting. Credit will be given for the highest scores earned.

Since the GED is a standardized test nationwide there is reciprocity between states. Therefore, if a candidate has taken the exam in another state at an official testing site he or she may apply for a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma.

Individuals who have successfully completed 24 credits at an approved institution of higher education may apply for a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma without taking the GED test. Documentation of necessary credits is often difficult to obtain. According to SED, this is the result of candidates taking courses at a large number of different institutions over protracted periods of time.

Special accommodations can be made for disabled persons, including such assistance as interpreters, audio cassettes and large print exams. If necessary and documented an applicant is allowed twice the regularly allotted time to complete an exam.

Effective January 1, 1986 a written essay was added to the writing skills portion of the exam. This was in reaction to the Regents Action Plan's increased requirements for high school diplomas. Effective January 1, 1988 the American Council on Education will include an essay as part of the exam. As of September 1, 1988 New York State will begin using the standard essay created by the Council.

**APPENDIX D****Estimated Costs of the Four R's Proposal**

- o Equal Start - the cost per family unit is estimated to be \$1,600, based upon the cost budgeted by the Beethoven Project in Chicago. Approximately 30,000 families would be served in the first year of the program's operation, based upon the estimated number of live births to teen mothers in New York State annually.
- o Pre-kindergarten - the cost per pupil is estimated to be \$2,600. Approximately 125,000 three and four year old children in poverty should receive the opportunity to participate in pre-kindergarten programs.
- o Case Management - during the 1986-87 school year the seventh and eighth grade public school enrollment statewide was 180,834 and 174,025 respectively. Using the CED estimate that approximately 1/3 of all students are at-risk, we calculate that as many as 117,000 seventh and eighth grade students are at-risk in New York State. Since each full-time case manager would be responsible for a case load of 50 at-risk students, we estimate that approximately 2,342 case managers would be necessary at an annual salary of \$30,000, for a total estimated cost of approximately \$70 million.
- o Youth Employment - the State Department of Labor has estimated that additional funding in the amount of \$240 million would be necessary to serve the entire eligible population.