



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
Rockville, Maryland

**Study of 1986-87
MCPS Dropouts and
MCPS Efforts to
Help Potential Dropouts**

10-23-90
MFD

122769

December 1989

Harry Pitt
Superintendent of Schools

**Prepared by the
Department of Educational Accountability**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Carver Educational Services Center
Rockville, Maryland

Study of 1986-87 MCPS Dropouts and
MCPS Efforts to Help Potential Dropouts

by

Suzanne M. Raber
N. James Myerberg
David C. Scott

122769

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material in microfiche only has been granted by
Montgomery County Public Schools

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

Joy A. Frechtling, Director
Department of Educational
Accountability

N. James Myerberg, Acting Director
Division of Instructional
Evaluation and Testing

PROJECT STAFF

Instrument Development

Wendy Miller
Suzanne Raber

Dropout Interviewers

Brenda Allen	Paul Pryor
June Bogushefsky	Suzanne Raber
John Foubert	Heidi Snyder
Sonya Gross	Lisa Sprehn
David King	Vicky Stevenson
Peter Larson	Linda Winokur
Wendy Miller	Donny Yuen
Tham Nguyen	

Record Reviewers

June Bogushefsky
Elizabeth Jenny
Wendy Miller
Suzanne Raber
Paul Snyder
Linda Winokur

Staff Interviewers

Jerrilyn Andrews
Suzanne Raber
Leroy Tompkins

Data Preparation and Tables

Brenda Allen
Elizabeth Jenny
Wendy Miller
Suzanne Raber
Paul Snyder
Barbara Wells
Donny Yuen

Program Fact Sheets

Suzanne Raber
Jan Taylor

The authors and the project staff would like to thank the many school staff who provided information for this report--principals, assistant principals, counselors, registrars, and attendance secretaries. We would also like to thank the area office secondary supervisors who assisted in the school staff interviews and the other area office staff we interviewed--directors of educational services, supervisors of special services, and pupil personnel workers. Finally, we would like to thank all the dropouts we interviewed. These young people were, for the most part, very eager to talk to us about why they left school. We really appreciated their cooperation in sharing with us their experiences, problems and frustrations.

Executive Summary

STUDY OF 1986-87 MCPS DROPOUTS AND MCPS EFFORTS TO HELP POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

In the mid-1980's the dropout rate in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) increased from 1.5 percent in 1982-83 to 2.5 percent in 1986-87. Although in absolute terms, this dropout rate is modest compared to other jurisdictions, the increase raised concerns. As part of the MCPS effort to deal with the dropout problem, the Department of Educational Accountability (DEA) was asked to conduct a study that addressed the following issues:

- o How are dropouts defined?
- o How are dropout rates calculated?
- o How do MCPS dropouts compare to other MCPS students in various areas including academic performance, demographics, MCPS enrollment history, and school experiences?
- o Why did MCPS students drop out?
- o What did MCPS dropouts do after they left school?
- o What efforts are being made in MCPS to help students who are potential dropouts?

Responses to the first two questions have already been presented in the DEA Report on Dropout Data and Issues to be Considered in Defining Who is a Dropout that was released in September 1988.¹ The other questions are addressed here. Also included in the present report are recommendations for additional ways MCPS might assist students in danger of dropping out.

Summary of Findings

To some extent our findings confirm the expected: students who drop out show many academic and social signs of being at risk. However, dropouts do not come from any one socioeconomic level nor are they all academic failures. Further, students drop out for a variety of reasons, some which our schools can influence, others which they can do far less about.

We found, through our interviews with dropouts, that these are young people who, while alienated from school, by and large do not see leaving school as a "smart choice." Frequently they express regret at having done so and say

¹MCPS Dropouts are all students who withdraw from school for the following reasons: employment, incompatibility between school and student, marriage, military service, economic reasons other than employment, pregnancy, expulsion, and special cases. Also included in the official MCPS statistics are summer dropouts. However, they are not included in this report because we wanted to talk to students who had been out of school less than a year. The dropout rate is the number of students in Grades 7-12 who drop out divided by the total number of students enrolled in those grades at some time during the school year.

that they would counsel others not to leave. At the same time, MCPS offers a wide range of services to students at risk of dropping out. Still, many students apparently find the available supports and alternatives inadequate. While it is encouraging that 26 percent of the dropouts we followed have completed or are completing their high school educations as of June 1989, there were 74 percent who had not.

Our review of student's concerns, of MCPS programs and policies, and of research done elsewhere, suggests some additional avenues that MCPS might pursue to further support/or recapture these students. While it is clear that the schools cannot do it all, we may be able to do a little bit more or a little bit better. Our specific findings and suggestions are presented below:

Description of Dropouts

As a group, the 1,067 MCPS students who dropped out during the 1986-87 school year differed from other MCPS students in a number of important ways:

- o Dropouts tended to be older for their grade and had been retained more often.
- o The academic performance of dropouts was poorer.
- o Dropouts were more likely to be enrolled in special or vocational education.
- o Dropouts were more likely to have been suspended.
- o The participation of dropouts in nonathletic extracurricular activities was lower.
- o Dropouts had been in MCPS a shorter period of time.
- o The proportion of males was higher for dropouts.

Other characteristics of this group of dropouts include the following:

- o Dropouts came from all socioeconomic levels.
- o Dropouts participated in athletic extracurricular activities at the same rate as nondropouts.

Racial comparisons showed the following:

- o The proportion of Black and Hispanic students was higher for dropouts.
- o Minorities tended to leave school at a lower grade than Whites.

Reasons for Dropping Out

The 1986-87 MCPS dropouts were asked why they left school. The reasons they gave can be placed into eight categories. While problems related to school or schooling predominate, factors beyond the control of MCPS also played an

important role. (Exhibit E.1 shows the percent of students whose primary reason for dropping out fit into each category.)

Dislike of School - school was boring, not challenging (56 percent)²

School Failure - doing poorly in school, failing courses (52 percent)

Family/Emotional/Medical Problems - problems at home, high mobility (45 percent)

Employment - needed to or wanted to work (35 percent)

Discipline Problems - blamed for things they didn't do, couldn't get along with teachers (34 percent)

Social Problems - friends were out of school, didn't get along with other students (29 percent)

Drug/Alcohol Problems - drug/alcohol abuse, in trouble outside of school, social life more important than school (9 percent)

Pregnancy/Lack of Child Care - pregnant, couldn't find child care, got married (8 percent)

Status of Dropouts After Leaving School

The educational status of the 1986-87 MCPS dropouts was checked through June 1989. Follow-up data were available for approximately 60 percent of the group. The students can be divided into those who completed school (26 percent) and those who did not. Specifically, the two groups included:

Dropouts who have completed or are completing high school:

Graduates - Dropouts who later graduated from MCPS through some combination of day, night, and summer school (8 percent)

Stay-ins - Dropouts who returned to MCPS and were still here in June 1989 or transferred to a non-MCPS school before June 1989. We do not know the June 1989 status of those who went to a non-MCPS school. (8 percent)

GEDs - Dropouts who passed the GED exam (10 percent)

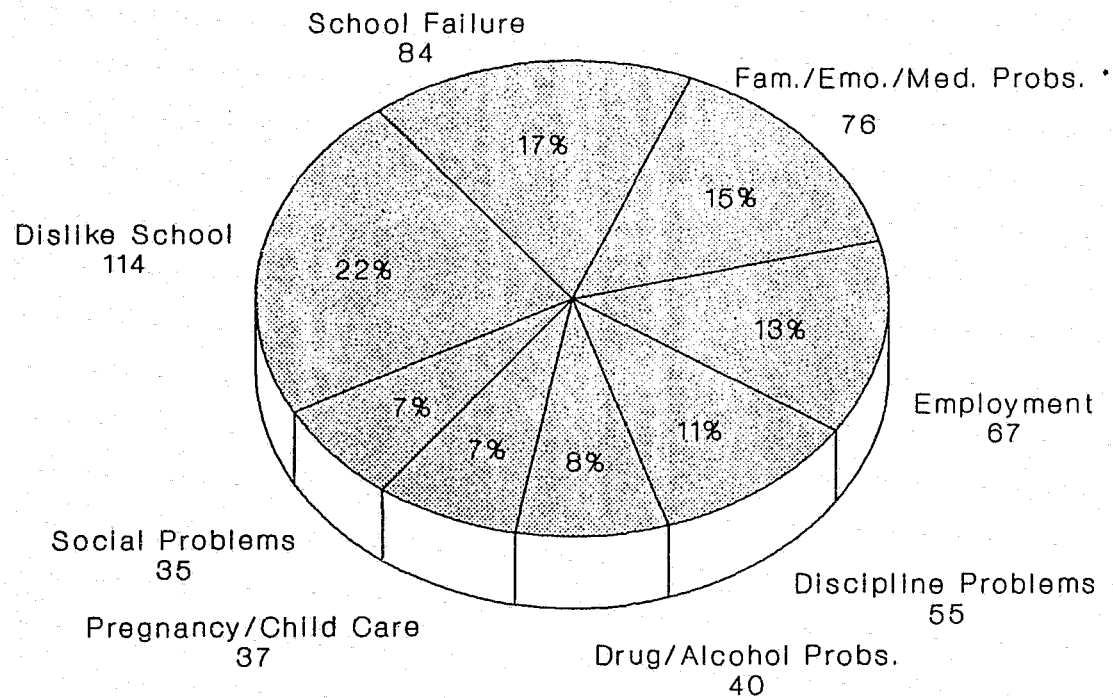
Dropouts who were out of school in June 1989:

Other education - Dropouts who had been in evening or summer school or some other educational program but were not in school and had not graduated in June 1989 (17 percent)

²The figures in parentheses show the percentage of dropouts who listed any reason in that category as a major, although not necessarily the primary, reason for leaving school.

EXHIBIT E.1

Primary Reason for Leaving School For 1986-87 MCPS Dropouts



* Family/Emotional/Medical Problems

Note: Number below descriptor is number of dropouts in that category.

Repeat dropouts - Dropouts who reenrolled in MCPS but left without graduating, transferring or passing the GED exam (14 percent)

Other outcomes - Dropouts whose records indicate involvement with other agencies or institutions (i.e., courts, jail, drug rehabilitation, psychiatric institutions) or who have died (2 percent)

For the remaining forty percent whose status is unknown, the best guess is that they fall into the non-completer group. Based on available records in June 1989, these dropouts had not returned to school or otherwise continued their education, had not taken the GED, and had not had their MCPS transcripts requested. The educational status of the 1986-87 dropouts two years later is shown in Exhibit E.2.

Our analyses also showed that dropouts who later completed or were still attempting to complete school were different from the students who dropped out and stayed out. The completers had higher test scores (both CAT and Project Basic) and were less likely to be overage for grade. Important but weaker predictors were being from a family of higher socioeconomic status and having a higher grade point average.

As part of the follow up of dropouts, we also asked about employment status. The majority of those we were able to interview (71 percent) were employed. However, most had low-skill, low-pay jobs, typically in food services, retail sales, or manual labor; only 12 percent were working in skilled trades.

MCPS Programs and Strategies to Assist Potential Dropouts

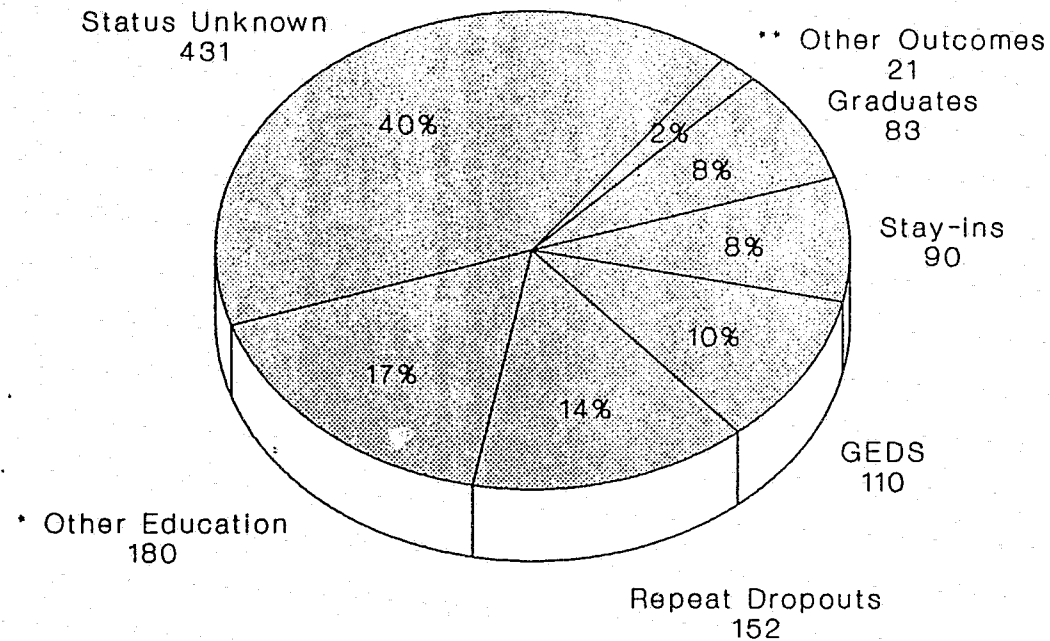
MCPS offers a wide variety of programs and employs many different strategies to assist students who are at-risk of dropping out of school. There are system-wide, area-based, and school-based programs. The system-wide programs fall into four categories:

- o Vocational programs which are centrally administered and exist as program options in most senior high schools
- o Mentoring programs, most of which originated with the Quality Integrated Education (QIE) model and which are available in many schools
- o Programs administered by the Department of Alternative and Supplementary Education which are designed to address specific problems (e.g., drug/alcohol abuse, chronic truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, limited English proficiency)³
- o Evening High School and Summer School Programs, administered by the Department of Adult Education to assist students in need of high school credits for graduation

³The Superintendent has proposed adding an additional alternative program aimed at intermediate school students who cannot function in the regular school environment.

EXHIBIT E.2

Educational Status of 1986-87 Dropouts as of June 1989



* GED preparation, evening or summer school, other training or education programs

** Involvement with non-educational agencies (e.g., courts, jail, drug rehabilitation programs)

Note: Number below descriptor is number of dropouts in that category

The three area offices offer six alternative programs (5 senior high and 1 mid-level) for students who have been unsuccessful in conventional schools. These programs include an academic component as well as addressing the students' social and behavioral problems. The six programs share some basic similarities including individualized instruction, team-building activities, a formalized behavior management system, and a low student-teacher ratio. While some programs provide a full day of self-contained instruction, others utilize a mix of enclosed program-specific instruction and work experiences or mainstreaming in classes for part of the day. These programs are located off-site, although usually close to a school to facilitate the mainstreaming.

In addition to the programs cited above, the area offices help schools identify potential dropouts, develop their own programs for dropout prevention, and follow up on truants.

The school-based programs can be divided into two categories:

- o Comprehensive programs provide participants with intensive instruction or support in core subjects within a small group environment. In addition to academic instruction, several of the programs offer other components; for example, organizational/study skills training, tutorial help, counseling for disciplinary and behavioral problems, career education, work experience, field trips or outdoor activities.

Of special note is the BEST program, a four-year program begun in 1988-89, which is part of the state-wide Maryland Tomorrow program, aimed at supporting students identified as high risk of dropping out.

- o Special needs programs were created in response to the specific academic and social needs of a school's student population. These programs provide, for example, library and teacher availability after regular school hours, career exploration, opportunities for communication between teachers and parents, services and support for pregnant students, and support for students who have drug/alcohol problems or who have family members with these problems.

MCPS Policies and Procedures Related to Dropout Prevention

There are a number of MCPS administrative regulations related to dropout prevention. In addition, the schools we surveyed had, in many cases, adopted additional safeguards aimed at preventing students from dropping out. However, schools vary in their implementation of these practices and may, in some instances, provide follow-up activities which are limited or too late. For example, schools use a variety of practices to follow up with students who have been absent from school for several days or who may be in academic jeopardy because of having five or more unexcused absences from a class. We found some important differences among schools in how aggressively these non-attendees were pursued and the extent to which encouragements were provided to remain in school.

Recommendations

Although MCPS already has many efforts underway to assist potential dropouts, there may be additional steps to assist students at-risk of dropping out or support dropouts in their efforts to return to school. This latter aim is especially important since many dropouts told us that they regretted their decision to leave school and seemed ready to try to continue their education if a supportive environment could be located. These additional steps, which may only require the reallocation of existing resources rather than new funds, include the following:

- o Provide assistance to potential dropouts as early as possible. Most special programs are targeted at the senior high school level. This may be too late. We can use what we know about dropouts to identify students who need special assistance before they reach the senior high schools where they may become completely alienated from school. Consistent with this recommendation is the Superintendent's proposal for a new alternative program for mid-level students.
- o Assign responsibility for identifying and following up on at-risk students. Follow-up activities are sometimes fragmented and/or limited in scope. Assigning this job to one person could make it easier to concentrate and coordinate the necessary efforts.
- o Work at getting dropouts back in school. Most dropouts that were interviewed said they intended to continue their education and many said they regretted dropping out. More aggressive follow-up on the part of schools or county social service agencies may be all that some of them need to come back to school.
- o Provide counseling for potential dropouts by former dropouts who have returned to school. We know that most students who have dropped out feel that leaving school is not a good solution. Peer counseling by students who have gone through the process of deciding to leave school and then returning could be a powerful tool for influencing potential school leavers.
- o Develop more consistent and aggressive procedures for following up on nonattendance. These procedures should be aimed at reaching students who may be on their way to dropping out either intentionally or through accumulated absences. Currently, schools differ in how they handle the question of non-attendance. Developing more consistent and aggressive follow-up procedures may prevent some students from falling through the cracks.
- o Re-examine implementation of the LC policy appeal procedures. In some schools, receiving loss of credit grades (LCs) becomes an impetus for a student to drop out. In others, the policy is implemented with greater flexibility and appeals are encouraged and greeted with a more positive response. The implementation of the LC policy appeal procedures across schools needs to be re-examined in terms of the potential effect on dropouts.

- o Provide special supports and programming for returning dropouts. Students who re-enter school after dropping out may need special supports and/or program modifications if they are to adjust to an environment that they have previously rejected. Efforts should be made to identify returning dropouts and to plan, with each student, a program supportive of the returnee's individual needs. Counseling, as well as academic support, may be essential. These students are saying they want to continue their education and a little extra help might keep them in school.
- o Establish a cooperative program with a local college. Students who drop out because they find high school boring and irrelevant may be more motivated by college courses or, at least, the more mature atmosphere of a college setting. MCPS should explore the possibility of creating a Middle College program like ones that appear to be successful elsewhere to help these students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter 1 - Introduction and Background.....	1
Chapter 2 - Descriptive Profile of 1986-87 Dropouts.....	3
Chapter 3 - Reasons Dropouts Left School and Different Types of Dropouts.....	25
Chapter 4 - Follow-Up Status of 1986-87 Dropouts.....	35
Chapter 5 - MCPS Programs and Strategies to Assist Potential Dropouts.....	48
Chapter 6 - MCPS Policies and Procedures Related to Dropout Prevention.....	58
Chapter 7 - Recommendations.....	62
Appendix A - Dropout Interview Guide.....	65
Appendix B - Development of Dropout Types.....	84
Appendix C - Program Fact Sheets.....	90

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the mid-1980's the dropout rate in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) increased from 1.5 percent in the 1982-83 school year to 2.5 percent in the 1986-87 school year. Although in absolute terms, this drop out rate is modest compared to other jurisdictions, the increase raised concerns. As part of the MCPS effort to deal with the dropout problem, the Department of Educational Accountability (DEA) was asked to conduct a study that addressed the following issues:

- o How are dropouts defined?
- o How are dropout rates calculated?
- o How do MCPS dropouts compare to other MCPS students in various areas including academic performance, demographics, MCPS enrollment history, and school experiences?
- o Why did MCPS students dropout?
- o What did MCPS dropouts do after they left school?
- o What efforts are being made in MCPS to help students who are potential dropouts?

Responses to the first two questions have already been presented in the DEA Report on Dropout Data and Issues to be Considered in Defining Who is a Dropout that was released in September 1988.¹ The other questions are dealt with in this report.

Data Collection

The study looked at the 1,067 MCPS students who dropped out during the 1986-87 school year. Data on these students for this report came from two main sources, the MCPS student database and interviews. (A copy of the interview questionnaire is in Appendix A.) The student database provided information on student demographics, MCPS enrollment history, test scores and course grades. The interviews provided information about the dropout's families,

¹MCPS dropouts are all students who withdraw from school for the following reasons: employment, incompatibility between school and student, marriage, military service, economic reasons other than employment, pregnancy, expulsion, and special cases. Also included in the official MCPS statistics are summer dropouts. However, they are not included in this report because we wanted to talk to students who had been out of school less than a year. The dropout rate is the number of students in grades 7-12 who dropout divided by the total number of students enrolled in those grades at some time during the school year.

school experiences, reasons for leaving school, and experiences since leaving school. We were able to interview 508 of these students during the Summer and Fall of 1987 to gather these data.^{2,3}

In order to supplement what these interviews told us about dropout activities after students left school, we reviewed student records from Spring 1987 to June, 1989. More specifically, to determine the educational status of all the 1986-87 dropouts two years after they had left school, we checked the student database, examined student records for transcript requests, reviewed MCPS evening and summer school records, and reviewed Maryland GED exam records.

Finally, to identify school and area-based procedures, efforts and programs to assist potential dropouts, we interviewed area office staff in the three administrative areas and school staff in nine senior high schools and six mid-level schools. This was done in the schools during the Summer of 1988, and the area offices during the winter of 1988-89.

²The 508 dropouts interviewed were very similar to the 1,067 students who dropped out of school during 1986-87 on most student characteristics. However, Whites were slightly overrepresented in the interview sample. We were unable to contact 559 dropouts despite several recalls and efforts to find new phone numbers and addresses.

³While the interview sample is adequate for addressing most of the questions raised, caution must be used in interpreting racial differences involving Asians and Hispanics. The interview sample included only 20 Asians and 26 Hispanics.

Chapter 2

DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE OF 1986-87 DROPOUTS

This chapter presents an in-depth profile of MCPS students who dropped out during the 1986-87 school year.¹ Specifically, this chapter describes the student characteristics, enrollment histories, academic achievement and school performance of the 1986-87 dropouts. The dropouts we interviewed also provided information about their family background, school experiences and the counseling they received. Where possible, we have examined whether MCPS dropouts differ from dropouts nationwide and from other MCPS secondary students in each of these areas.

It should be noted that the overall picture which emerges shows that, in general, dropouts are students who are characterized by both academic and personal problems. However, dropouts are not all the same nor do they drop out for the same reasons. In Chapter 3 we take a closer look at how dropouts differ among themselves.

Student Characteristics

We examined the basic demographic characteristics of the 1986-87 dropouts and compared them to all 1986-87 MCPS secondary students.

Sex and Race. Exhibit 2.1 presents the number of dropouts and the dropout rate (percentage of enrollment) for 1986-87, broken down by race and sex. With respect to these breakdowns, we found the following:

- o Males were more likely to drop out than females. In Grades 7 through 12, the dropout rate was 2.6 percent for males and 1.8 percent for females.
- o Dropout rates were higher for Black and Hispanic students, especially among males. Almost 4 percent of Black and Hispanic males dropped out in 1986-87, compared to about 2 percent of all Grade 7 - 12 students.

With respect to sex and race, the 1986-87 dropouts resemble MCPS dropouts from other school years that we have studied. Similar sex and race differences have also been found in other area school systems and in national samples of dropouts.²

¹Annual MCPS dropout figures include summer dropouts, that is, those students who were in school the previous June and do not enroll the subsequent September. Summer dropouts were not included in our profile of 1986-87 dropouts.

²See Report on Dropout Data and Issues to be Considered in Defining Who is a Dropout, Montgomery County Public Schools, Department of Educational Accountability, September, 1988 and Dropout Rates in the United States: 1988, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1989.

EXHIBIT 2.1

Number and Percentage of 1986-87 Dropouts by Race and Sex

Grades 7 through 12

Race and Sex	No. of Dropouts ^a	Enrollment ^b	Percentage
American Indian/Alaskan ^c			
Male	1	43	2.3
Female	0	33	0.0
Total	1	76	1.3
Asian			
Male	39	2,554	1.5
Female	24	2,266	1.1
Total	63	4,820	1.3
Black			
Male	142	3,737	3.8
Female	99	3,570	2.8
Total	241	7,307	3.3
White			
Male	408	16,624	2.5
Female	269	16,080	1.7
Total	677	32,704	2.1
Hispanic			
Male	57	1,567	3.6
Female	28	1,335	2.1
Total	85	2,902	2.9
Total			
Male	647	24,525	2.6
Female	420	23,284	1.8
Total	1,067	47,809	2.2

^aThese figures do not include those students who dropped out over the Summer (students enrolled in June, 1986 who did not return to school in September, 1986). Consequently, the percentage of dropouts (the dropout rate) will differ slightly from similar figures reported annually by MCPS.

^bThis is the number of different Grade 7 - 12 students enrolled for all or part of the year (cumulative enrollment).

^cBecause of the small number of American Indian/Alaskan dropouts, they have been omitted from subsequent exhibits.

Age. Dropouts averaged 17.5 years of age at withdrawal from school. Few dropouts were below 16 (5 percent) or over 18 (8 percent) when they left school. Students who drop out of MCPS are slightly older on average than dropouts in other studies, particularly when compared to dropouts from large urban school systems.³ Males and Asians tended to drop out at slightly older ages than females and students from other racial/ethnic groups. Exhibit 2.2 reports the mean ages of dropouts, broken down by race and sex.

Grade Level. Most of the 1986-87 dropouts left school in either Grade 10 (29 percent), Grade 11 (31 percent) or Grade 12 (24 percent). Few students dropped out as ninth graders (15 percent) or in earlier grades (1 percent). Although there were no sex differences in the grade levels at which dropouts left school, we did find some race differences. Minority dropouts tended to leave school at lower grade levels than White dropouts.

The grade levels and ages at which MCPS students drop out are obviously related to Maryland state law which requires students to be in school until age 16 and MCPS policy which requires a superintendent's approval for students under age 16 to drop out or be withdrawn. Recent studies in other school systems have found that many dropouts are leaving school prior to their sophomore year.³ It appears that MCPS dropouts reach a higher grade level before leaving school than their more urban counterparts.

Years Overage. Many studies have found a positive relationship between being overage and dropping out of school⁴. We looked at the student's age in relation to his/her grade level to determine the extent to which dropouts were overage. We found that MCPS dropouts tended to be overage for their grade level, averaging 1.2 years of age older than would be expected, assuming starting kindergarten at age 5 and no retentions.

MCPS dropouts were also more likely to be overage than other MCPS secondary students. The only overage information available for MCPS secondary students is the percentage of students who were older than the typical age of students in their grade level on September 1, 1987 and 1988. We found that 62 percent of the 1986-87 dropouts were overage for their grade level at the beginning of the school year, compared to 15 and 16 percent of MCPS secondary students in 1987-88 and 1988-89, respectively.

³See A Study of Students Who Left: D.C. Public School Dropouts, District of Columbia Public Schools, Division of Quality Assurance and Management Planning, October, 1988; and Dropout Courses and Characteristics, Cincinnati Public Schools. Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 1988.

⁴See Dropout Rates in the United States: 1988, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1989.

EXHIBIT 2.2

Mean Age and Years Overage of 1986-87 Dropouts by Race and Sex

Race and Sex		Number	Mean Age	Mean Years Overage ^a
Asian				
	Male	39	17.9	1.7
	Female	24	17.4	1.5
	Total	63	17.7	1.6
Black				
	Male	142	17.6	1.5
	Female	99	17.4	1.2
	Total	241	17.5	1.4
White				
	Male	408	17.5	1.2
	Female	269	17.3	1.0
	Total	677	17.4	1.1
Hispanic				
	Male	57	17.6	1.7
	Female	28	17.6	1.9
	Total	85	17.6	1.7
Total				
	Male	646	17.5	1.3
	Female	420	17.3	1.1
	Total	1,066	17.5	1.2

^aYears overage is a rough index that compares a student's age at withdrawal to his/her expected age for his grade level. Theoretically, a student would be 0 years overage if he started kindergarten at age 5, was never retained, and completed each grade level in one year. In order to calculate a years overage index, we assumed that students turned 5 years of age by December 31 of their first year in kindergarten. This would make the average student 5.5 years of age on December 31 of his kindergarten year (Grade 0). Therefore, years overage is age at withdrawal from school minus 5.5 years and minus student's grade level. For example, the typical Grade 12 student is 17.5 years of age or 0 years overage (17.5 - 5.5 - 12).

The extent to which dropouts were overage varied by sex and race. Males were slightly older for their grade level than females. Asians and Hispanics tended to be older in relation to grade level than Whites and Blacks. Exhibit 2.2 reports the mean number of years overage for all dropouts, broken down by race and sex.

Family Background

Some studies have found a relationship between family background and dropping out. For example, dropout rates tend to be higher among students from single-parent families and families of lower socioeconomic status (SES).⁵ Dropping out also tends to run in families. We asked our dropouts about these and other aspects of their family backgrounds. Exhibit 2.3 includes a summary of the dropouts' family characteristics, broken down by sex and race. Unfortunately, similar family background information is not available for the general population of MCPS students so we could not compare MCPS dropouts and nondropouts on these characteristics.

Family Structure. Half of the dropouts we interviewed (50 percent) lived with both parents, 38 percent came from single-parent homes and the remaining 12 percent lived with other relatives, with friends or alone. Black dropouts were more likely and Hispanic dropouts less likely to live with only one parent than dropouts from other racial/ethnic groups. Dropouts tended to come from relatively large families--65 percent had 2 or more siblings.

Socioeconomic Status. The dropouts we interviewed came from all socioeconomic levels--14 percent came from lower SES homes, 68 percent from middle SES homes, and 18 percent from higher SES homes.⁶ Female, Black and Hispanic dropouts tended to come from lower socioeconomic families than did males and dropouts from other racial/ethnic groups.

Dropout History. Almost half of the dropouts we interviewed (45 percent) reported that someone in their family had also dropped out of high school--28 percent mentioned one or more siblings, 20 percent mentioned their mothers, and 19 percent mentioned their fathers. There were no significant racial differences in the dropouts' family histories, but females were more likely to have a family member who had dropped out than were males.

⁵ See Dropout Rates in the United States: 1988, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1989.

⁶ Socioeconomic status (SES) was based on the average of three point scales on four indicators: mother's and father's education and mother's and father's occupation. The education levels were coded as follows: 3 = 4+ years of college; 2 = high school graduate or some college; 1 = not high school graduate. The occupation levels were coded as follows: 3 = professional or managerial; 2 = administrative, skilled white collar or skilled manual; 1 = semi- or unskilled manual. An average of 2.5 or greater was considered high SES and less than 1.5 was low SES.

EXHIBIT 2.3

Family Background Interview Responses by Sex and Race

INTERVIEW RESPONSES	Sex		Race				All Dropouts (N=508)
	Male (N=321)	Female (N=187)	Asian (N=20)	Black (N=89)	White (N=373)	Hispanic (N=26)	
% From Single Parent Home	39	35	20	53*	36	15*	38
% Family Member Dropping Out	40	54*	35	46	45	52	45
% Whose Sibling Dropped Out	22	39*	15	27	28	35	28
% Whose Mother Dropped Out	17	26*	33	25	18	27	20
% Whose Father Dropped Out	20	18	7	15	21	15	19
∞ Mean Number of Siblings	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.5	2.9	2.5
Mean SES Level (1=low, 3=high)	2.0*	1.9	2.1	1.8*	2.0	1.7*	2.0

*Where sex differences were statistically significant, the higher percentage or mean is marked. Where the variation among racial/ethnic groups was statistically significant, the percentage or mean marked is either significantly higher or lower than the percentage or mean for all other dropouts. Some group differences appear to be statistically significant but are not, because of the smaller number of cases in that group.

Enrollment History

We examined the enrollment histories of the 1986-87 dropouts to determine during which months they tend to leave school, how long they have been in MCPS, and whether these students have dropped out previously.

Month of Withdrawal. About two-thirds of the 1986-87 dropouts left school during the Spring semester, most often in March (22 percent). Those students who dropped out during the Fall semester most often left school in October (13 percent). The time of year students dropped out of school did not vary by sex or race.

The fact that students most frequently dropped out during the second month of each semester is probably related to the MCPS policy regarding student withdrawals from courses. Students who withdraw from a course before the end of the fifth week incur neither a grade nor credit penalty. However, after the end of the fifth week (25 school days), students must receive a grade for the course, either the average of their performance up to withdrawal or a loss of credit (LC) if the student has not attended the course long enough to earn credit.

Years in MCPS. Some educators have suggested that high student mobility is related to dropout rates. One indicator of mobility is the number of years students have been enrolled in the same school system. We found that the majority of MCPS students who dropped out had spent substantial amounts of time in our schools. About half (52 percent) of the 1986-87 dropouts had been enrolled in MCPS since 1980-81. However, dropouts appear to have been enrolled in MCPS fewer years than MCPS students in general. For example, among 1986-87 ninth graders, we found that 44 percent of the dropouts had been enrolled in MCPS since at least 1980-81, compared to 62 percent of all MCPS ninth graders. We also found racial differences in the number of years dropouts had been enrolled in MCPS before leaving school. White dropouts averaged more years enrolled in MCPS than minority dropouts, especially Hispanic dropouts. These racial differences in years in MCPS are similar to differences found among all MCPS secondary students.

Previous Withdrawals. For many dropouts, leaving school is part of a revolving door pattern; they drop out, return to school, and drop out again. Sixteen percent of the 1986-87 dropouts had dropped out of MCPS in previous years. And 25 percent of the 1986-87 dropouts had left school more than one time, either in the same year or different years. The number of years and the number of times students had previously dropped out was roughly the same for males and females but slightly lower among Hispanics than among other racial/ethnic groups.

Academic Performance

Other studies have found that many dropouts leave school, at least in part, because of their poor academic performance. And, as we will discuss in the next chapter, academic failure is one of the major reasons cited by MCPS dropouts. We examined test scores from the California Achievement Tests and the Project Basic tests, as well as other indicators of school performance such as retention, grade point average, loss of credit grades (LCs), and credits accumulated toward graduation. Overall, the 1986-87 dropouts performed poorer on these variables than MCPS nondropouts for that year.

California Achievement Test (CAT). As a group, dropouts performed less well than did MCPS students on the CAT, regardless of sex or race. Exhibit 2.4 presents the CAT results for those dropouts who had taken the Grade 5, 8 and/or 11 test any time between 1980 and 1986. This exhibit compares the dropouts' mean NCE (normal curve equivalent) scores to the mean MCPS NCE by grade level and year the test was taken. Exhibit 2.5 breaks down the Grade 5, 8 and 11 CAT scores by race and sex. Summarizing these CAT results, we found that:

- o The 1986-87 dropouts averaged NCE scores close to 50, the national average established when the test was developed in 1978.
- o The dropouts' NCE scores showed a slight downward trend from Grade 5 to Grade 11: 50 at Grade 5, 49 at Grade 8, and 46 at Grade 11. A similar trend is found among all MCPS students, especially from Grade 8 to Grade 11.
- o The dropouts' scores are 16 to 21 NCE points lower on average than the comparable MCPS mean scores.
- o Not all dropouts were low achievers; 16 percent of the dropouts scored in stanine groups 7 - 9 on the CAT.
- o The discrepancy between dropouts' scores and MCPS scores was smaller for Black students than for other groups.
- o Dropouts generally showed the same sex and race differences in test scores as MCPS students: females scored slightly better than males; and Asians and Whites performed better than Blacks and Hispanics.

Project Basic Tests. Dropouts passed the Project Basic test in Reading almost as well as all MCPS students; however, they performed poorer on the Project Basic tests in Mathematics, Citizenship and Writing. Exhibit 2.6 compares the percentage of dropouts passing the Project Basic tests as ninth graders in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 to the MCPS Grade 9 passing rate for the same years. Exhibit 2.7 breaks down these comparisons by race and sex. Specifically, we found that:

- o The 1986-87 dropouts performed nearly as well on the Reading test as did typical MCPS students; for example, in Fall 1985, 90 percent of the dropouts passed the test as ninth graders, compared to 97 percent of the MCPS Grade 9 students.
- o The dropouts' passing rates were considerably lower (ranging 22 to 36 percentage points lower) than MCPS Grade 9 passing rates on the Mathematics, Citizenship and Writing Tests.
- o Sex differences in test performance were more pronounced among dropouts than among MCPS students in general. Male dropouts did not perform as well as female dropouts on the Reading and Writing Tests; female dropouts performed poorer on the Citizenship and Mathematics Tests.

EXHIBIT 2.4

Mean NCE Scores on the California Achievement Tests (Total Battery) of MCPS Dropouts and All MCPS Students by Year Taken

	Number of Dropouts Tested	Mean NCE for Dropouts	Mean MCPS NCE
Grade 5 CAT			
1980	174	49	67
1981	63	51	67
1982	15	50	68
1983	1	*	70
Total ^a	253	50	67-70
Grade 8 CAT			
1980	12	39	65
1981	74	47	66
1982	186	50	67
1983	201	49	67
1984	92	49	68
1985	22	48	70
1986	2	*	70
Total ^a	589	49	65-70
Grade 11 CAT			
1983	10	*	65
1984	56	44	66
1985	135	48	67
1986	85	44	66
Total ^a	286	46	65-67

^aThe dropouts' total mean NCE is the average NCE score for all 1986-87 dropouts who took the Grade 5, 8 and 11 California Achievement Tests (CAT), respectively, between 1980 and 1986. For the MCPS total mean NCE, we have reported the lowest and highest mean MCPS NCE for the years in which 1986-87 dropouts took the Grade 5 (1980-83), Grade 8 (1980-86) and Grade 11 (1983-86) CATs, respectively.

* Mean NCE scores are not reported for groups of 10 or fewer students.

EXHIBIT 2.5

Mean NCE Scores on the California Achievement Tests (Total Battery) of MCPS Dropouts and All MCPS Students by Sex and Race

	Number of Dropouts Tested	Mean NCE for Dropouts	Range of Mean MCPS NCEs ^a
Grade 5 CAT			
Asian	4	*	72-75
Black	41	45	51-56
White	199	51	69-73
Hispanic	9	*	57-61
Male	128	49	64-69
Female	125	51	67-71
Total	253	50	67-70
Grade 8 CAT			
Asian	22	53	69-74
Black	130	40	50-57
White	410	52	67-73
Hispanic	26	40	56-61
Male	344	48	64-69
Female	245	50	67-71
Total	589	49	65-70
Grade 11 CAT			
Asian	14	51	67-69
Black	58	37	49-52
White	199	48	60-69
Hispanic	14	39	52-55
Male	185	45	64-65
Female	101	47	66-68
Total	286	46	65-67

^aRange of mean MCPS NCEs is the lowest and highest mean MCPS NCE for the years that 1986-87 dropouts took the Grade 5 (1980-83), Grade 8 (1980-86) and Grade 11 (1983-86) CATs, respectively, broken down by race and sex.

* Mean NCE scores are not reported for groups of 10 or fewer students.

EXHIBIT 2.6

Percentage of Dropouts Passing the Project Basic Tests in Ninth Grade
Compared to MCPS Grade 9 Passing Rates

	Number of Dropouts Tested as 9th Graders	Percentage of Dropouts Passing	MCPS Passing Rate Grade 9
Reading			
Fall, 1983	183	89	97
Fall, 1984	217	94	98
Fall, 1985	116	90	97
Mathematics			
Fall, 1983	186	48	78
Fall, 1984	218	50	79
Fall, 1985	118	56	83
Citizenship			
Spring, 1984	165	32	62
Spring, 1985	201	39	75
Spring, 1986	104	50	81
Writing			
Spring, 1984	180	44	66
Spring, 1985	224	50	73
Spring, 1986	105	58	82

Notes:

1. Project Basic test data prior to 1983-84 are not reported because we could not determine the grade level at which the test was taken.
2. Data from 1986-87 are omitted because of the small number of 1986-87 dropouts tested that year.
3. None of these figures include students receiving special education services, levels 4 through 6.
4. Passing rates for the 1984 Citizenship and the 1984 and 1985 Writing tests may include some students who did not have to pass the test to graduate.
5. The dropout passing rate includes only those students who took the test for the first time as ninth graders, so that the results would be consistent with county passing rates.

EXHIBIT 2.7

Percentage of Dropouts Passing the Project Basic Tests in Ninth Grade
Compared to MCPS Grade 9 Passing Rates, 1983-84 to 1985-86,
Broken by Race and Sex

	Number of Dropouts Tested as 9th Graders	Percentage of Dropouts Passing	MCPS Passing Rate Grade 9
<u>Reading</u>			
Asian	30	67	92
Black	96	92	95
Hispanic	25	84	89
White	364	93	99
Male	287	88	97
Female	229	95	98
Total	516	91	97
<u>Mathematics</u>			
Asian	30	50	88
Black	98	36	58
Hispanic	23	52	63
White	370	54	84
Male	293	54	80
Female	229	46	80
Total	522	51	80
<u>Citizenship</u>			
Asian	23	17	71
Black	91	31	53
Hispanic	25	28	55
White	330	43	78
Male	268	45	75
Female	202	31	70
Total	470	39	73
<u>Writing</u>			
Asian	27	44	74
Black	96	46	64
Hispanic	25	44	62
White	360	51	76
Male	287	42	67
Female	222	59	79
Total	509	50	73

Note: Data were collapsed over three years (1983-84 through 1985-86) to increase the number of Asian and Hispanic dropouts tested and thus to increase the stability of their passing rates. Passing rates for dropouts and for MCPS are averages across the three years, weighted by the number of students tested each year.

- o The race differences in test performance among dropouts were similar to those found among all MCPS students, with the exception of Asian students. White dropouts performed better than minority dropouts on the Project Basic tests. Asian dropouts experienced particular difficulty with the tests; their passing rates were 25 to 54 percentage points lower than all MCPS Asian ninth graders.

Grade Point Average (GPA). Dropouts earned lower grades than other MCPS students. The 1986-87 dropouts had a cumulative GPA of 1.3, earning mostly D's. This compares to an MCPS mean GPA of roughly 2.6, with the typical MCPS secondary student earning mostly B's and C's.⁷ Exhibit 2.8 presents the cumulative grade point averages (GPAs) of the 1986-87 dropouts, broken down by race and sex. GPAs were especially low among Black dropouts, averaging 1.1. Asian dropouts fared better, especially the females whose mean GPA was 2.05.

Loss of Credit Grades. Most dropouts, regardless of achievement level, had received loss of credits grades (LCs) before dropping out. And dropouts are more likely to lose credits than are other MCPS students. Fifty-seven (57) percent of the 1986-87 dropouts had earned at least one loss of credit grade in 1985-86, compared to about 13 percent of all MCPS students that year. Overall, about two-thirds of the 1986-87 dropouts had received at least one loss of credit (LC) grade, either the semester they dropped out or in previous semesters. In fact, these dropouts averaged roughly one LC grade for every seven grades they received since ninth grade.

Exhibit 2.9 reports the percentage of dropouts who had ever received a loss of credit grade, broken down by race and sex. Black and Hispanic males were most likely to have lost credit (74 and 72 percent, respectively), while Asian females were least likely to have lost credit (38 percent). Overall, we found similar sex and race differences in LC grades among dropouts and among MCPS students: males, Blacks and Hispanics were more likely to lose credit than were females, Asians and Whites.

When we looked at dropouts from different achievement levels (CAT stanine groups), we found that roughly the same percentage of students at each level had previously lost credit in a course before dropping out (71 percent of dropouts testing at stanines 1-3, 73 percent at stanines 4-6, and 67 percent at stanines 7-9).

Credits Accumulated/Progress Towards Graduation. Many students who dropped out during 1986-87 were not making significant progress towards graduation, based on the number of credits they had accumulated when they left school. Exhibit 2.10 presents the mean number of credits accumulated by the 1986-87 dropouts, broken down by grade level, race and sex. Dropouts had accumulated on average just enough credits to be in their grade level but averaged 3 to 6 credits less than the number of credits needed to be on schedule to graduate. For example, students who dropped out in Grade 12 had only accumulated an average of 14.8 credits; they needed 20 credits to graduate. These students would have had to successfully complete 10-11

⁷ MCPS does not calculate a cumulative GPA. We tabulated a mean MCPS GPA of 2.63 for 1984-85 and 2.59 for 1985-86, which suggests that on average MCPS students are earning B and C grades.

EXHIBIT 2.8

Cumulative Grade Point Averages (GPAs) of 1986-87 Dropouts by Race and Sex

Grades 9 through 12^a

Race and Sex		No. of Dropouts ^a	No. of Dropouts ^b with GPAs	Mean GPA
Asian	Male	39	36	1.55
	Female	24	21	2.05
	Total	63	57	1.73
Black	Male	141	117	1.11
	Female	98	80	1.10
	Total	239	197	1.10
White	Male	399	356	1.35
	Female	267	249	1.27
	Total	666	605	1.32
Hispanic	Male	57	46	1.35
	Female	27	17	1.36
	Total	84	63	1.35
Total	Male	636	555	1.31
	Female	416	367	1.28
	Total	1052	922	1.30

^aGrade 7 and 8 dropouts were omitted from this table because they do not have MCPS GPAs.

^bSome Grade 9 - 12 dropouts did not have MCPS GPAs because they had not attended school long enough to receive any official grades.

EXHIBIT 2.9

Percentage of Dropouts Who Had Ever Received Loss of Credit (LC) Grades by Race and Sex

Grades 9 through 12^a

Race and Sex		No. of Dropouts ^a	No. of Dropouts with Grade Data ^b	% of Dropouts with LCs
Asian	Male	39	36	64
	Female	24	21	38
	Total	63	57	54
Black	Male	141	117	74
	Female	98	81	67
	Total	239	198	71
White	Male	399	357	67
	Female	267	249	68
	Total	666	606	67
Hispanic	Male	57	46	72
	Female	27	17	53
	Total	84	63	67
Total	Male	636	556	69
	Female	416	368	65
	Total	1052	924	67

^aGrade 7 and 8 dropouts were omitted from this table because LCs are only given in Grades 9 - 12.

^bSome Grade 9 - 12 dropouts did not have MCPS grade data because they had not attended school long enough to receive any official grades.

EXHIBIT 2.10

Mean Credits Accumulated for 1986-87 Dropouts
by Grade Level, Race and Sex

Race and Sex	Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12	
	N	Credits	N	Credits	N	Credits	N	Credits
Asian								
Male	4	2.0*	12	4.8	11	9.3	9	17.4*
Female	3	2.0*	9	6.1*	8	10.4*	1	14.0*
Total	7	2.0*	21	5.4	19	9.8	10	17.1*
Black								
Male	12	1.9	42	5.0	31	10.1	32	15.0
Female	9	2.3*	26	4.8	22	9.1	24	13.6
Total	21	2.1	68	4.9	53	9.7	56	14.4
White								
Male	27	2.0	97	5.3	124	9.6	109	14.8
Female	24	1.6	74	5.4	87	9.8	64	14.7
Total	51	1.8	171	5.4	211	9.7	173	14.7
Hispanic								
Male	10	2.2*	12	5.4	16	9.4	8	15.3*
Female	2	1.8*	3	3.7*	10	8.4*	2	14.0*
Total	12	2.1	15	5.1	26	9.0	10	15.1*
Total								
Male	53	2.0	163	5.2	182	9.7	158	15.0
Female	38	1.8	112	5.3	127	9.6	91	14.4
Total	91	1.9	275	5.2	309	9.6	249	14.8
Minimum Credits ^a Needed		0		4-5		9-10		14-15
Annual Credits ^b to Graduate		5.5 (22)		11 (22)		16 (20)		20

^aMinimum credits needed is the number of credits required to be at specific grade levels; the two numbers given are for students who entered Grade 9 before and after 1985-86.

^bAnnual credits to graduate is the minimum number of credits a student would have to accumulate by the end of each grade level to be on schedule to graduate. The number in parentheses is the number of credits required to graduate for that class; this number changed from 20 to 22 in 1985-86.

*These means are based on 10 or fewer students and consequently, are difficult to interpret.

additional one-half credit courses to graduate. We did not find any consistent sex or race differences in mean credits accumulated among the 1986-87 dropouts, although in most cases, there were not enough Asian and Hispanic males and females at each grade level to obtain stable results.

School Experiences

Our interview of dropouts included questions about the type of program or courses they were taking, their retention and suspension histories, their participation in extracurricular activities, and their work experiences while in school. Exhibit 2.11 summarizes the dropouts' responses to these issues broken down by sex and race. School experience information for MCPS secondary students is included where available for comparison purposes.

Program. A disproportionately high percentage of the dropouts reported enrollment in either vocational or special education programs. Twenty-three (23) percent of the respondents were enrolled in vocational programs (primarily the Work Oriented Curriculum-WOC), compared to about 6 percent of all MCPS secondary students.⁸ And 12 percent of the dropouts interviewed were enrolled in full-time special education programs (primarily Mark Twain)⁹, compared to 5 percent of all MCPS secondary students. Only 8 percent of the dropouts described their program as academic or college preparatory. Finally, 3 percent of the dropouts were enrolled in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and 1 percent were enrolled in alternative education programs, compared to about 4 and 1 percent respectively, of all MCPS secondary students. The remaining 53 percent of the dropouts were enrolled in general courses.

There were a few significant sex and race differences in program enrollment. Male dropouts were more likely than female dropouts to be enrolled in special education programs.¹⁰ Black and White dropouts were more likely to be enrolled in the general curriculum than Asian and Hispanic dropouts. Asians were more likely and Whites less likely than other dropouts to take

⁸ This percentage is based on 1986-87 enrollment figures in the following work experience and vocational training programs: Work Oriented Curriculum (WOC), Cooperative Work Experience (CWE), and Edison Career Center, as provided by the MCPS Department of Career and Vocational Education.

⁹ This finding was confirmed for all 1,067 1986-87 dropouts. The student database indicates that about 13 percent of the 1986-87 dropouts were in full-time or self-contained special education programs (levels 4 - 6) when they left school, and that more than half of these handicapped dropouts were enrolled in Mark Twain, a special school for emotionally impaired youth, when they left school.

¹⁰ Information from the student database confirmed this sex difference in special education participation among all 1,067 1986-87 dropouts and also indicated that Black dropouts were more likely than other dropouts to be in full-time special education. These same sex and race differences in special education enrollment are found among all MCPS secondary students.

EXHIBIT 2.11

School Experience Interview Responses by Sex and Race

INTERVIEW RESPONSES	Sex		Race				All Dropouts. (N=508)
	Male (N=321)	Female (N=187)	Asian (N=20)	Black (N=89)	White (N=373)	Hispanic (N=26)	
% in General Program	50	59	30*	55	56	31*	53
% in Vocational Program	24	21	10	20	25	15	23
% in Special Education Program	14*	8	5	17	12	0	12
% in Academic Program	7	10	25*	8	6*	15	8
% Repeating a Grade	49*	37	35	58*	42	38	44
% Ever Suspended	52*	35	20*	54	46	27	46
20 % Suspended-Serious Offense	28*	13	6	35*	21	15	23
% Suspended-Attendance Problems	24*	16	39	15	23	8	21
% Suspended-Disruptive Behavior	16*	9	0	20*	13	4	13
% Suspended-Substance Abuse	8	4	0	1	8	8	7
% in Extracurricular Activities	36	32	35	43	33	35	35
% Employed While in School	66*	56	50	61	62	77	62

*Where sex differences were statistically significant, the higher percentage or mean is marked. Where the variation among racial/ethnic groups was statistically significant, the percentage or mean marked is either significantly higher or lower than the percentage or mean for all other dropouts. Some group differences appear to be statistically significant but are not, because of the smaller number of cases in that group.

primarily academic or college preparatory courses. ESOL enrollment is essentially Asian and Hispanic--30 percent of the Asian dropouts and 35 percent of the Hispanic dropouts reported being enrolled in the ESOL program when they left school.

Retention. Many studies have found a positive relationship between retention and dropping out of school.¹¹ We have already noted that the 1986-87 dropouts were more likely to be overage for their grade level than MCPS secondary students in general. Similarly, it appears that MCPS dropouts are more likely to have been retained than nondropouts. Almost half (44 percent) of the dropouts we interviewed said they had repeated at least one grade; 7 percent had been retained more than once. MCPS does not tabulate a cumulative retention rate, but the dropout's self-reported retention rate of 44 percent can be roughly compared to the percentage of MCPS secondary students (Grades 7 - 12) who are overage for their grade level on September 1--15 percent in 1987-88 and 16 percent in 1988-89.

Retentions among dropouts were most common in Grades 9 and 10 (22 to 24 percent), followed by Grades 1, 7 and 8 (11 to 13 percent). Black dropouts were more likely than other dropouts to have repeated a grade. MCPS overage figures suggest that MCPS retentions are most common in Grade 9 and that minority students, especially Hispanics, are more likely to be retained than White students.

Suspension History. Studies have also shown a positive relationship between discipline problems and dropping out of school.¹¹ Almost half (46 percent) of the dropouts we interviewed reported that they had been previously suspended; 7 percent said that they previously had been expelled from school. Although MCPS does not tabulate a cumulative suspension rate, the 46 percent of our dropouts who reported that they had ever been suspended is much higher than the annual suspension rate of 5 percent among MCPS secondary students in 1986-87. And as we shall see in the next chapter, many of the dropouts related their discipline problems to leaving school; 34 percent mentioned it as one of the major reasons they dropped out, and 11 percent said it was their primary reason for leaving school.

Dropouts were most often suspended for either fighting (23 percent) or attendance related reasons (21 percent). Male dropouts were more likely than females to have been suspended, regardless of the reason. Black dropouts were more likely than other dropouts to have been suspended, especially for fighting or other disruptive behavior. Asian dropouts were least likely to have been suspended but when they had been, it was most often for attendance related reasons. Similar sex and race differences are found among all MCPS secondary students; males and Blacks are more likely and Asians less likely to be suspended than other students.

Extracurricular Activities. Some educators have speculated that participation in extracurricular activities can encourage students to stay in school. The dropouts we interviewed appeared less likely than MCPS secondary students to participate in nonathletic activities, but their participation rate in athletic activities is very similar to that of

¹¹See Dropout Rates in the United States: 1988, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1989.

nondropouts. Thirty-five (35) percent of the dropouts said that they had participated in extracurricular activities sponsored by the school, 24 percent in athletic activities and 14 percent in nonathletic activities (some dropouts participated in both). This compares to roughly half of all MCPS secondary students (mid-level and senior high school students) who participate in some school-sponsored extracurricular activity, with about one-fourth of our students participating in athletic activities and one-third in nonathletic activities in a given year.¹² There were no significant sex or race differences in extracurricular activity participation among the dropouts.

Employment. Some educators have suggested that employment opportunities can pull students out of school. Although we have no comparable figures for MCPS secondary students, we found that 62 percent of the dropouts interviewed already had jobs when they left school. Male dropouts were more likely to be working while in school than females. Among the different racial/ethnic groups, Hispanics were most likely and Asians least likely to be employed while in school.

Among those dropouts who were employed while still in school, most had part-time (less than 30 hours per week), low skill jobs such as food services or retail sales. However, 39 percent of these dropouts were trying to work 30 or more hours per week while in school and 20 percent were making more than \$5 per hour. So for some of the dropouts, work may have been an economic necessity or an attractive alternative to school. In fact, as we will discuss in the next chapter, 13 percent of the dropouts cited work as their primary reason for dropping out, while 35 percent of the dropouts mentioned work among their major reasons for leaving school.

Counseling Received

We asked dropouts whether or not they had talked to family, friends, or school staff about their decision to leave school. Dropouts most often had spoken to their families (75 percent), followed by school staff (58 percent) and friends (42 percent). While 86 percent of the dropouts had talked to someone about leaving school, 14 percent had not talked to anyone. Whites were more likely and Blacks less likely than other dropouts to have talked to someone about their decision. The percentage of dropouts who received counseling from family, friends or school staff are included in Exhibit 2.12 broken by sex and race, and are summarized below.

Counseling from Family. Most of the dropouts (75 percent) had spoken to their families about leaving school. Among those who had spoken to family members, 63 percent were advised to stay in school, 19 percent were advised

¹²The MCPS figures for all secondary students are estimates, based on Annual Reports on Minority Achievement in Nonathletic Extracurricular Activities produced by the Department of Management Information and Computer Services since 1984-85, and information the Department of Educational Accountability extracted from the student database regarding athletic and nonathletic activities in 1984-85 (see Extracurricular Activity Participation among Handicapped Students, Memorandum to Hiawatha Fountain, February 27, 1986).

EXHIBIT 2.12

Counseling Received Interview Responses by Sex and Race

INTERVIEW RESPONSES	Sex		Race				All Dropouts (N=508)
	Male (N=321)	Female (N=187)	Asian (N=20)	Black (N=89)	White (N=373)	Hispanic (N=26)	
% Who Talked to Family	77	72	85	61*	79*	65	75
% Who Talked to Friends	37	50*	65*	36	41	62*	42
% Who Talked to School Staff	58	59	25*	47*	62*	62	58
% Who Talked to Someone	83	88	85	72*	90*	92	86
% Advised to Drop Out by Staff ^a	43*	30	80	40	38	19	38

^aPercentages in this row are based on those students (N=292) who spoke to school staff about dropping out.

*Where sex differences were statistically significant, the higher percentage or mean is marked. Where the variation among racial/ethnic groups was statistically significant the percentage or mean marked is either significantly higher or lower than the percentage or mean for all other dropouts. Some group differences appear to be statistically significant but are not, because of the smaller number of cases in that group.

to drop out, and 19 percent were given less specific advice (e.g., decision left to student, mixed or no advice). Whites were more likely and Blacks less likely than other dropouts to discuss their decision to leave school with family members.

Counseling from Friends. Not quite half of the respondents (42 percent) had talked to their friends about leaving school. Among those who talked to their friends, 56 percent were told to stay in school, 16 percent were told to drop out, and 29 percent received less specific advice. Females, Asians and Hispanics were more likely to talk to their friends about leaving school than were males and other dropouts.

Counseling from School Staff. Just over half of the dropouts we interviewed (58 percent) said that they had spoken to school staff about their decision to leave school. Whites were more likely and Asians and Blacks less likely than other dropouts to talk to school personnel about their decisions. Among students who spoke to school staff, 48 percent were advised to stay in school, while 38 percent were counseled to drop out,¹³ and 14 percent received less specific advice. More than half (56 percent) of the dropouts also said that some adult at school suggested they continue their education in the future. Combining the responses to these questions, we found that 58 percent of the dropouts who were advised to leave day school were also encouraged to try other alternatives (e.g., GED, night school) or return to school next semester.

Among those dropouts who had spoken to school staff, they most often talked to their counselor (76 percent), followed by teachers (27 percent), and administrators (26 percent). For those dropouts who were advised to continue their education, the most common suggestions were a GED program (34 percent), followed by night school (16 percent) or returning to day school (12 percent). And among those given specific suggestions regarding the continuation of their educations, 70 percent were told how to enroll in the program suggested.

¹³Students saying they were counseled to drop out was confirmed by school staffs. This was done for a variety of reasons including the student being older than schoolmates and the student not attending because of work obligations or family problems. Often such advice is accompanied by a recommendation to take the GED exam or try to return the next semester.

Chapter 3

REASONS DROPOUTS LEFT SCHOOL AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF DROPOUTS

Our interviews with dropouts indicate that students who leave school do so for many different reasons. And as individuals, most dropouts leave school for more than one reason. This chapter discusses the different reasons dropouts gave for their decision to leave school. We also identify eight different types of dropouts, based on a careful review of each dropout's major or most important reasons for leaving school.

Reasons for Leaving School

We approached the question of why MCPS dropouts had left school in two different ways. First, in order to give respondents an opportunity to volunteer their reasons for dropping out without influencing their answers, we asked an open-ended question--what were the most important reasons why you left school? Then, in order to explore some issues that dropouts in other studies have raised, we asked all the respondents to rate a list of 40 items as major, partial or not among their reasons for leaving school. In response to the open-ended question, dropouts volunteered about 80 different reasons for leaving school. These open-ended reasons as well as the 40 rated items were grouped into eight different types of dropouts¹:

- o dislike of school
- o school failure
- o family/emotional/medical problems
- o employment
- o discipline problems
- o social problems
- o drug/alcohol problems
- o pregnancy/child care

The eight types derived from the sample of MCPS dropouts we interviewed are consistent with what other studies have said about dropouts.²

¹Two statistical procedures were used in the development of the eight dropout types. Factor analysis, a method for determining the number and nature of underlying variables among a larger set of measures, was used to identify the eight distinct dropout types. After reviewing the interviews to determine each student's type based on his/her primary reason for leaving school, the dropout types were validated using discriminant analysis. Discriminant analysis predicts group membership based on a set of variables, in this case, responses to all of the questions about why dropouts left school. There is a technical discussion of these analyses in Appendix B.

²See for example, Peng, S. High School Dropouts: Descriptive Information from High School and Beyond. Washington, D.C. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1983; and Ehstrom, R. et al. Who drops out of high school and why? Findings from a national study. Teachers College Record, 87, 307-323.

There was one reason mentioned by many of the dropouts that did not fit into any of the eight categories. About 50 percent of the dropouts rated and 20 percent volunteered poor attendance among their major reasons for leaving school. But poor attendance is more a symptom or precursor of dropping out rather than an underlying reason for leaving school.

Exhibit 3.1 reports the percentage of dropouts who volunteered or rated items in each of the eight reason categories. Generally, the two interview approaches produced similar results; in both cases, dislike of school, school failure, family/medical/emotional problems and employment were among the most common reasons given for leaving school.

When the responses from the two approaches are combined, we found that about half the dropouts cited their dislike of school (56 percent), school failure (52 percent) and family, medical or emotional problems (45 percent) among their major reasons for leaving school.

There were some significant sex and race differences in the reasons dropouts left school (see Exhibit 3.2). Males were significantly more likely to cite discipline or drug/alcohol problems while females more often mentioned pregnancy or other family, medical or emotional problems as major reasons for leaving school.

Whites, more often than other dropouts, gave school failure and their dislike of school as reasons for dropping out, but were less likely than other dropouts to mention pregnancy. Blacks were the opposite, mentioning school failure and dislike of school less often and pregnancy more often than other dropouts. Hispanics also mentioned their dislike of school less often than others as a reason for leaving school. The other race differences involving Hispanics and Asians were not significant, mainly because of their small numbers in the sample. However, Hispanics cited their need to work more often and school failure less often than other dropouts. Asians mentioned social problems and discipline problems more often and dislike of school less often than other dropouts.

Most students had more than one reason for leaving school and it was sometimes difficult to determine their primary reason for dropping out.³ Across all dropout types, 79 percent of the students mentioned major reasons outside their category. Dropouts categorized as having drug/alcohol problems and social problems were the most complex types; all of those with drug/alcohol problems and 94 percent of those with social problems

³For students with multiple problems, it was impossible to determine the underlying cause--that is, what went wrong first. Consequently, most dropouts have been grouped according to what they said was their major reason for leaving school. For those students who offered more than one major reason, a careful review of their interviews suggested one issue as more salient than others in influencing the student's decision to drop out of school. And as the following discussion indicates, there are real and significant differences between these eight dropout types. While the issue of overlapping types is a concern, it is not a significant enough problem to negate the validity of the eight dropout types.

EXHIBIT 3.1

Major Reasons Why Dropouts Left School

Percentage of Dropouts Who Gave Reasons From Different Categories

Reason Categories	Percentage of Dropouts Who:		
	Volunteered Reason	Rated as Major Reason	Volunteered or Rated as Major Reason
Dislike of school	34	47	56
School failure	40	30	52
Family/emotional /medical problems	19	39	45
Employment	16	33	35
Discipline problems	19	28	34
Social problems	9	25	29
Drug/alcohol problems	3	9	9
Pregnancy/child care	7	7	8

Note: Percentages are based on the 508 dropouts we interviewed. Most dropouts volunteered and rated more than one reason as a major reason for leaving school. Consequently, the column percentages total to more than 100 percent.

EXHIBIT 3.2

Major Reasons Why Dropouts Left School

Percentage of Dropouts Who Gave Reasons From Different Categories
Broken by Sex and Race

Reasons for Dropping Out	Sex		Race				All Dropouts (N=508)
	Male (N=321)	Female (N=187)	Asian (N=20)	Black (N=89)	White (N=373)	Hispanic (N=26)	
% Dislike School	59	51	40	46*	61*	35*	56
% School Failure	55	47	45	42*	56*	38	52
% Family/Medical/Emotional Problems	41	52*	55	47	43	54	45
% Employment	36	33	30	33	35	50	35
% Discipline Problems	39*	27	45	39	32	38	34
% Social Problems	29	28	40	20	30	23	29
% Drug/Alcohol Problems	11*	4	5	3	10	4	8
% Pregnancy/Child Care	2	18*	15	18*	5*	8	8

*Where sex differences were statistically significant, the higher percentage or mean is marked. Where the variation among racial/ethnic groups was statistically significant, the percentage or mean marked is either significantly higher or lower than the percentage or mean for all other dropouts. Some group differences appear to be statistically significant but are not, because of the smaller number of cases in that group.

mentioned at least one other major reason for leaving school. Exhibit 3.3 summarizes the extent to which the dropout types overlap; it reports the percentage of dropouts by type who volunteered or rated any reason in each category as a major reason for leaving school.

Exhibit 3.4 shows how the primary reason for leaving school was distributed across the eight dropout types. The largest group of dropouts were those who left school primarily because they disliked it so much (22 percent).⁴ Also prevalent were those students who dropped out because of school failure (17 percent), family/medical/emotional problems (15 percent), employment (13 percent), and discipline problems (11 percent). Less common were those students whose primary reason for leaving school was drug and/or alcohol abuse (8 percent), pregnancy and/or lack of child care (7 percent), and social problems (7 percent).

We have developed descriptive profiles of each dropout type, based on the specific reasons they gave for leaving school⁴ and their background characteristics.⁵ The profiles are presented in Exhibit 3.5 which lists the reasons for each type and those background characteristics on which each type differed substantially from the other dropouts. The data on the background characteristics are presented in Exhibit 3.6.

⁴Exhibit B.2 in Appendix B presents the percentage of dropouts by type who rated each specific reason as a major reason for leaving school.

⁵Information on background characteristics came from two sources. During the interview we asked dropouts about their family background (e.g., parental education and occupation) and school experiences (e.g., suspension history, extracurricular activity participation). The student database provided information on demographics, MCPS enrollment history and academic achievement.

EXHIBIT 3.3

Major Reasons for Leaving School (Categories) Given by Different Types of Dropouts

Percentage of Dropout Type Giving Any Reason in That Category

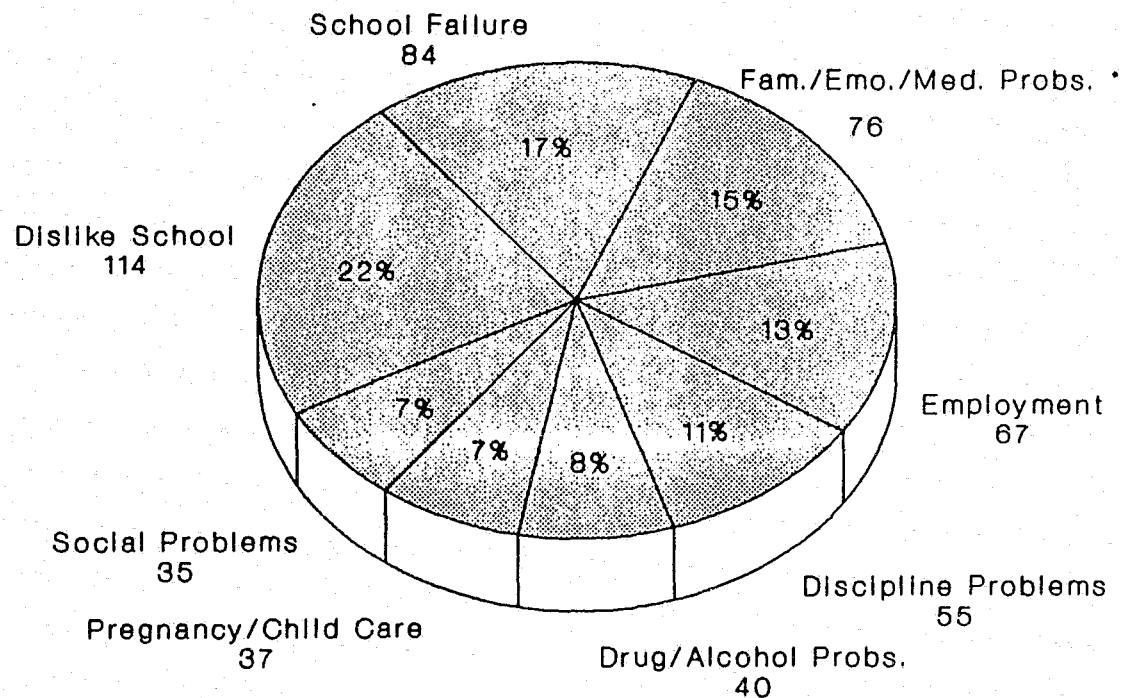
MAJOR REASONS (CATEGORIES)	DROPOUT TYPES								All Dropouts (N=508)
	Dislike School (N=114)	School Failure (N=84)	Fam/Emo/ ^a Med Probs (N=76)	Employ- ment (N=67)	Discipline Problems (N=55)	Drug/Alcohol Problems (N=40)	Pregnancy/ Child Care (N=37)	Social Problems (N=35)	
	PERCENTAGES								
Dislike School	96	43	38	45	44	70	24	57	56
School Failure	50	96	43	33	47	58	38	26	52
Fam/Emo/Med Probs ^a	27	18	99	36	44	48	49	60	45
Employment	30	16	22	100	20	30	27	40	35
Discipline Problems	24	20	26	22	95	60	16	37	34
Drug/Alcohol Problems	0	1	1	2	0	100	0	0	9
Pregnancy/Child Care	0	0	0	2	2	0	100	0	8
Social Problems	21	16	22	33	24	45	11	97	29
Any Other Reasons	78	67	74	79	87	100	76	94	98 ^b

^aFamily, emotional or medical problems not related to drug/alcohol abuse or pregnancy

^bTen respondents did not volunteer a reason for dropping out nor did they rate any of 40 items as major reasons for leaving school. These dropouts were categorized based on those items they rated as partial reasons for leaving school and their responses to other interview questions. Therefore, some of the percentages on the diagonal are less than 100 percent.

EXHIBIT 3.4

Primary Reason for Leaving School For 1986-87 MCPS Dropouts



* Family/Emotional/Medical Problems

Note: Number below descriptor is number of dropouts in that category.

EXHIBIT 3.5

Profiles of Dropout Types Showing How Each Type Differs from the Others

Dropout Type	Reasons for Leaving School	School Achievement and Experiences	Demographics & Family Background
Dislike School	*School is boring *Not learning anything *School is not challenging	Did better on tests *Less likely to participate in extracurricular activities *More likely to have previously dropped out	*Higher percent White *Slightly younger
School Failure	*Not doing well in school Failing courses Lacking credits toward graduation	*Less likely to have previously dropped out Least likely to be enrolled to vocational programs	One of the least likely to have another family member drop out
Family/Emotional/Medical	*Not getting any help at home Moving a lot, changing schools Not getting along with parents	Better test scores *Higher participation in extracurricular activities Least likely to be in special education Lowest rate of retention Lowest percent enrolled in MCPS 7 or more years	*More females *More minorities
Employment	*Wanted or needed to work *Couldn't earn enough if they worked part-time	Highest percent in vocational programs *Lower suspension rate *Highest percent employed while in school	Most years overage for their grade Highest percent of Hispanics

* - Significantly different from other dropout groups

EXHIBIT 3.5

Profiles of Dropout Types Showing How Each Type Differs from the Others

Dropout Type	Reasons for Leaving School	School Achievement and Experiences	Demographics & Family Background
Discipline Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Blamed for things they didn't do "Kicked out" *Couldn't get along with teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Higher suspension rates, fighting and insubordination Lower test scores Most likely to be in special education Lowest grade point average 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Disproportionately male *Younger Most often from single parent families
Drug/Alcohol Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Social life is more important than school *In trouble outside of school *Missing too much school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Higher suspension rates, lack of attendance and substance abuse Lowest participation in extracurricular activities Most likely to lose course credit Most likely to have been in MCPS 7 or more years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Disproportionately male *Disproportionately White *Highest SES families Least likely to have other family member who dropped out
Pregnancy/ Lack of Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Pregnancy *Lack of child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highest grade point average *Less likely to have been suspended *Less likely to have been employed while in school Lower test scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Highest minority group, especially Blacks *Low SES *Older Most likely to have other family members who dropped out Least likely to come from single parent family
Social Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Friends were out of school *Didn't get along with other students School interfered with their social life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least likely to have lost credit Most likely to have been retained 	

* - Significantly different from other dropout groups

EXHIBIT 3.6

Background Characteristics of Different Dropout Types

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS	DROPOUT TYPES								
	Dislike School (N=114)	School Failure (N=84)	Fam/Emo/ ^a Med Probs (N=76)	Employ- ment (N=67)	Discipline Problems (N=55)	Drug/Alcohol Problems (N=40)	Pregnancy/ Child Care (N=37)	Social Problems (N=35)	All Dropouts (N=508)
<u>Demographics</u>									
% Male	68	71	50 *	69	82 *	80 *	8 *	54	63
% Minority	14 *	20	39 *	27	38	10 *	54 *	26	27
% Black	12	11	25	12	27	8	43 *	14	18
Mean Age at Withdrawal	17.3 *	17.6	17.4	17.6	17.1 *	17.5	17.8 *	17.4	17.4
<u>MCPS Enrollment History</u>									
% in Special Education 1986-87	18	12	7	10	22	20	19	11	14
% Ever in Special Education	19	15	8	12	24	20	19	11	16
% Dropping Out in Previous Years	25 *	6 *	9	16	20	18	22	11	16
% Attending MCPS 7+ Years	59	55	46	63	69	70	57	60	59
Mean Years Overage for Grade	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.3	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.1
<u>Achievement^b</u>									
Project Basic Reading (% Passing)	97	86 *	99	91	94	97	94	94	94
Project Basic Math (% Passing)	82 *	65	72	69	67	64	50 *	68	70
Project Basic Writing (% Passing)	69 *	49	80 *	52	41 *	47	64	72	60
Project Basic Citizenship (% Passing)	56	54	61	46	44	53	50	60	53
CAT Total Grade 5 (Mean NCE)	56	49	56	46	45 *	58	41 *	60	52
CAT Total Grade 8 (Mean NCE)	57 *	51	54	52	44 *	52	41 *	56	51
CAT Total Grade 11 (Mean NCE)	44	53	48	44	46	48	43	54	48
% Losing Credit	63	67	62	71	70	74	67	53	66
Cumulative Grade Point Average	1.30	1.37	1.41	1.40	1.12	1.24	1.53	1.43	1.34
<u>Family Background</u>									
% From Single Parent Home	39	39	34	33	47	38	30	40	38
% With Family Member Dropping Out	44	37	47	44	52	35	65	43	45
Mean SES level (1=low, 3=high)	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.2 *	1.7 *	1.9	2.0
<u>School Experiences</u>									
% in Vocational Program	27	14	20	33	22	21	24	23	23
% in Extracurricular Activities	26 *	37	53 *	33	31	25	30	44	35
% Employed While in School	61	70	62	76 *	58	53	38 *	66	62
% Ever Suspended	50	39	37	33 *	69 *	75 *	27 *	40	46
% Suspended-Attendance Problems	21	22	16	20	22	55 *	6 *	14	21
% Suspended-Serious Offense	27	14	20	12	39 *	35	14	23	23
% Suspended-Disruptive Behavior	13	10	12	6	29 *	25 *	3	14	13
% Suspended-Substance Abuse	7	4	3	6	2	28 *	3	9	7
% Repeating a Grade	39	46	36	49	47	46	43	57	44

^aFamily, emotional or medical problems not related to drug/alcohol abuse or pregnancy

^bAchievement data were unavailable for some dropouts. Ns ranged from 145 (Grade 5 CAT) to 468 (Maryland Functional Reading Test).

*Dropout type differs statistically from other dropout types. The percentage or mean reported is either significantly higher or lower than the percentage or mean for all other dropouts. Some group differences appear to be statistically significant but are not, because of the smaller number of cases in that group.

Chapter 4

FOLLOW-UP STATUS OF 1986-87 DROPOUTS

We interviewed the 1986-87 dropouts during the Summer and Fall of 1987, when they had been out of school for less than a year. Most of the dropouts were employed when we interviewed them but most of them also planned to continue their education. Many said they intended to take the GED exam to earn a high school equivalency diploma (43 percent), return to day school (37 percent), or attend evening or summer school (8 percent). We followed-up with all of the 1986-87 dropouts, both those we were able to interview and those we were unable to find, to determine whether they had pursued their education. We reviewed student records during the two years after the original interview, checking whether the 1986-87 dropouts had reenrolled in MCPS or transferred to other school systems, enrolled in MCPS evening or summer school, taken the GED exam, or pursued other educational training.

This chapter reports the extent to which these dropouts had completed or were completing high school as of June 1989, roughly two years after they left school, and identifies the factors that had the strongest relationship to finishing school. This chapter also examines the different educational alternatives pursued by all of the dropouts during the two-year follow-up period. Finally, this chapter briefly discusses the employment status of those dropouts we interviewed.

Dropout Outcomes and Predictors

Based on our interviews with dropouts and record reviews, we were able to trace the different educational alternatives explored by 60 percent of the 1986-87 dropouts¹ as well as determine their educational status as of June 1989, about two years after they had dropped out of school. We found that more than one-fourth (26 percent) of our dropouts had graduated, received their GEDs or apparently were still in high school two years after leaving school. This finding is similar to national trends which indicate that many dropouts later complete high school.²

The remaining 33 percent of our 1986-87 dropouts had not completed high school and were no longer continuing their high school education in June 1989. This group included dropouts who returned to day school and dropped out again and dropouts who tried other educational alternatives but did not graduate or receive their GEDs.

¹We have no follow-up data on 40 percent of the dropouts. We found no record of subsequent MCPS enrollment, GED attempts, or transcript requests.

²A recent national study, following students four to six years after they dropped out, found that about half (46.5 percent) of the sophomores who dropped out between 1980 and 1982 had finished high school by 1986. See Dropout rates in the United States: 1988. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1989.

We compared the background characteristics of dropouts later completing or still attempting to complete high school ("completers") and those who had not to see which factors differentiated these two groups. Exhibit 4.1 presents the differences in background characteristics of these two groups as well as for the group we were unable to trace. We found that when compared to the dropouts who had not completed high school two years later and to those we could not trace, those who subsequently had completed or were completing high school . . .

- . . . were better students. They had higher passing rates on the Project Basic tests, higher averages on the Grade 5, 8 and 11 California Achievement Tests, a higher cumulative GPA, and were less likely to have repeated a grade,
- . . . were less likely to have been in full-time special education.
- . . . were more likely to be White and were from slightly higher SES families.
- . . . were less likely to have a family history of dropping out.
- . . . were slightly younger when they dropped out of school.
- . . . were more likely to have talked to school staff about their decision to leave school.

An additional analysis based on correlations between the factors mentioned above and school completion showed that the strongest of the above factors for predicting whether a dropout will later complete school are test scores (both CAT and Project Basic) and years overage for grade. Slightly weaker in strength are family socioeconomic status (SES) and grade point average (GPA). The correlations³ between the background factors and school completion are presented in Exhibit 4.2.

It should be noted that the factors discussed above are not independent of each other. For example, test scores and GPA are correlated about as strongly with each other as they are with completing school. This means that if you have data on one of them, say CAT scores, having data on another, say Project Basic tests, does not improve your ability to predict very much. Either one will do a good job by itself.

A recent national study by NCES⁴ also found that academic performance and SES were positively related to completing high school after dropping out.

³Correlations have been computed on four different samples of the 636 dropouts for whom we have school completion status. This was done because we had complete data for only 268 dropouts (42 percent of the analysis group). The data included for the other groups was everything except test and grade data (367 dropouts); demographics, MCPS enrollment history, and test and grade data (429); and demographics and MCPS enrollment history (all 636).

⁴Dropout rates in the United States: 1988. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1989.

EXHIBIT 4.1

Comparison of Dropouts Completing and Not Completing High School

BACKGROUND	CHARACTERISTICS	Completed/ Completing HS (N=283)	Not in School	Status Unknown (N=353)	All Dropouts (N=431)
<u>Demographics</u> (N=1067)					
% Male		57	65	59	61
% Minority		30	36	41*	37
% Black		20	25	23	23
Mean Age at Withdrawal		17.2	17.5*	17.6*	17.5
<u>MCPS Enrollment History</u> (N=1067)					
% in Special Education 1986-87		8	13	17*	13
% Ever in Special Education		10	15	19*	15
% Dropping Out in Previous Yrs		13	19	15	16
% Attending MCPS 7+ Years		52	54	50	52
Mean Yrs Overage for Grade		0.8	1.2*	1.5*	1.2
<u>Achievement</u> (N=253 to 929)					
Proj Basic Reading (% Pass)		95	94	88*	92
Proj Basic Math (% Pass)		79	67*	55*	66
Proj Basic Writing (% Pass)		69	51*	45*	54
Proj Basic Citizenship (% Pass)		62	44*	37*	47
CAT Total Grade 5 (Mean NCE)		55	48*	47*	50
CAT Total Grade 8 (Mean NCE)		56	48*	44*	49
CAT Total Grade 11 (Mean NCE)		52	44*	40*	45
% Losing Credit		65	67	70	67
Cumulative Grade Point Average		1.45	1.24*	1.25*	1.30
<u>Family Background</u> (N=504)					
% From Single Parent Home		36	38	38	38
% Family Member Dropping Out		38	44	55*	45
Mean SES Level (1=low, 3=high)		2.1	2.0*	1.8*	2.0
<u>School Experiences</u> (N=504)					
% in Extracurricular Activities		38	37	26*	35
% Employed While in School		65	59	65	62
% Ever Suspended		42	48	45	45
% Repeating a Grade		31	47*	54*	44
% Who Talked to School Staff		67	56*	52*	58
<u>Dropout Types</u> (N=504)					
% Dislike School		23	17	31	23
% School Failure		22	14	14	16
% Family/Medical/Emotional Prob		18	14	13	15
% Want/Need to Work		10	17	12	13
% Discipline Problems		11	12	9	11
% Social Problems		4	8	8	7
% Drug/Alcohol Problems		6	11	5	8
% Pregnancy/Child Care		6	7	9	7

* - Significantly different from completed/completing group.

EXHIBIT 4.2

Correlations^a Between Background Characteristics and Completing High School
for Different Dropout Samples

	Total Sample (N=636)	Achievement Data Sample (N=429)	Interview Sample (N=367)	All Data Sample (N=268)
<u>Demographics</u>				
Sex (0=Male,1=Female)	.08*	.09	.08	.12
Race (0=Minority,1=Majority)	.06*	.02	.06	.06
Age at Withdrawal	-.13***	-.11*	-.08	-.09
<u>MCPS Enrollment History</u>				
Years Overage for Grade	-.21***	-.22***	-.17***	-.19***
Ever in Special Education	-.07	-.11*	-.05	-.09
Dropping Out in Previous Yrs	-.08*	-.11*	-.08	-.12*
Years Attending MCPS	-.02	.02	-.01	.02
<u>Achievement</u>				
	NA		NA	
CAT Total Battery NCE ^b		.24***		.26***
Project Basic Tests ^c		.22***		.22***
Cumulative GPA		.16***		.15*
Ever Lost Credit		-.04		-.07
<u>Family Background</u>				
	NA	NA		
Single Parent Home			-.03	-.07
Family Member Dropping Out			-.06*	-.10*
SES Level (1=low,3=high)			.11*	.16**
<u>School Experiences</u>				
	NA	NA		
Vocational Program			-.01	.00
Extracurricular Activities			.01	.00
Employed While in School			.07	.05
Ever Suspended			-.05	-.10
Repeated a Grade			-.17***	-.13*
Talked to School Staff			.11*	.09
<u>Dropout Types</u>				
	NA	NA		
Dislike School			.08	-.04
School Failure			.10	.17**
Family/Medical/Emotional Prob			.06	.02
Want/Need to Work			-.09	-.11
Discipline Problems			-.02	-.07
Social Problems			-.09	-.07
Drug/Alcohol Problems			-.09	-.09
Pregnancy/Child Care			-.03	.08

^aPositive and negative correlations indicate the direction of the relationship between the predictor variables and outcome. Significant correlations are marked as follows: p<.001 (***), p<.01 (**), p<.05 (*).

^bComposite California Achievement Test score is the Grade 8 NCE score if available, and if not, the Grade 11 or Grade 5 NCE score.

^cComposite Project Basic test score is the number of Project Basic tests passed (Reading, Mathematics, Writing, Citizenship) for those students who had taken any of the tests.

However, NCES found significant grade level and racial/ethnic relationships that were slightly different from our findings; more specifically:

- o NCES found that the higher the grade level when a student drops out, the more likely s/he is to later complete high school. This was a trend in our data that did not reach statistical significance.
- o NCES found that Asian dropouts were most likely and Hispanics least likely to later finish high school, and there were no differences between Blacks and Whites. We found that White dropouts were most likely and Asian dropouts least likely to later complete school, although the difference between Whites and minorities was not significant.

Final Educational Status

We also took a closer look at each dropout's educational status at the end of the two-year follow-up period, breaking down the two larger outcome categories discussed previously into seven different specific educational outcomes:

Completed/completing high school

Graduates: Dropouts who subsequently graduated from MCPS, either by returning to day school, attending evening or summer school or some combination of the three.

Stay-ins: Dropouts who returned to MCPS day school and were still enrolled as of June 1989, or who transferred to another school system--this latter group may have graduated, may still be in school or may have dropped out again--we have no way of knowing their status once they transfer to another school system.

GEDs: Dropouts who passed the GED exam.⁵

Out of school

Other education: Dropouts who either prepared for the GED, enrolled in evening or summer school or some post-secondary training, but who were not enrolled in MCPS as of June 1989 and did not graduate or pass the GED exam.

Repeat dropouts: Dropouts who reenrolled in MCPS and dropped out again without subsequently graduating, transferring to another school system or passing the GED exam.

Other outcomes: Dropouts who apparently have not continued their education but whose records or interviews suggested that they

⁵We included both dropouts who told us they had passed the GED exam and dropouts who appeared in Maryland State GED exam records as receiving a GED. Maryland State records confirmed our interview data for over 90 percent of the dropouts who claimed they had passed the GED.

either have died or have been involved with other agencies or institutions (i.e., primarily the courts or jail, but also social services, drug rehabilitation programs or psychiatric institutions).

Status unknown: Dropouts who based on the information available, have not returned to school or otherwise continued their education. They have not reenrolled in MCPS or taken the GED exam and their MCPS transcripts had not been requested.⁶

About 20 percent of the dropouts pursued more than one educational alternative during the two-year follow-up period. For these dropouts, we placed them first in those categories which suggested that they had completed or would complete their high school education--graduates, stay-ins and GEDS--and second in the other categories--repeat dropouts, other education, or other outcomes. When choosing among the latter categories, we selected the most recent educational alternative that they had pursued.

Exhibit 4.3 shows the number and percent of the 1986-87 dropouts in each of these seven outcome categories and breaks down some of the categories in more detail. The major findings are summarized below:

- o By far, the largest group were those dropouts whose status is unknown. We have no follow-up data on 40 percent of the dropouts. It is unlikely that these students have pursued their high school education elsewhere because their MCPS records have not been requested.
- o On the other hand, 8 percent of the dropouts have since graduated from high school, another 8 percent are apparently still in high school, and 10 percent have passed the GED exam and received a high school equivalency diploma.
- o Another 17 percent of the dropouts have attempted other educational alternatives since leaving school--most frequently GED preparation classes, evening or summer school but also vocational/technical school, community college, the military or job corps training.
- o Finally, 14 percent of the 1986-87 dropouts returned to MCPS day school but dropped out again in 1987-88, 1988-89 or both years.

If we combine those dropouts who have completed or are completing high school (26 percent) with dropouts who reenrolled in MCPS and dropped out again (14 percent), and those who tried other educational alternatives (17 percent), we can estimate that more than half of the dropouts (58 percent) have at least attempted to continue their education during the two-year period since leaving school.

⁶MCPS evening and summer school enrollment, Maryland State GED records and student records were reviewed through September, 1988. It is possible that some dropouts may have attempted educational training since that date, but for each alternative, we found that most students attempted these alternatives within 12 months of dropping out.

EXHIBIT 4.3

Specific Educational Status of 1986-87 Dropouts as of June, 1989

Educational Status	No. of Dropouts	% of Dropouts (N=1067)
Graduated	83	8
Still in secondary school	90	8
Still enrolled in MCPS	34	3
Transferred to another system	56	5
Received GED	110	10
Pursued other educational alternatives	180	17
Prepared for GED exam	101	10
Enrolled in MCPS evening school	51	5
Enrolled in MCPS summer school	15	1
Other training indicated ^a	13	1
Dropped out again	152	14
Dropped out 1987-88	101	9
Dropped out 1988-89	38	4
Dropped out both years	13	1
Other outcome indicated ^b	21	2
No follow-up information	431	40

^aRecord review or interview suggested that student had pursued other training or educational programs (i.e., vocational/technical school (N=8), military (N=2), job corps (N=2), community college (N=1))

^bRecord review or interview suggested that student was involved with non-educational agency or had died (i.e., courts/jail (N=14), social services (N=2), drug rehabilitation programs (N=2), psychiatric institutions (N=1), died (N=2)).

We also examined the background characteristics of the dropouts in the six largest outcome categories.⁷ We explored the demographic, family background, enrollment, school experience, and achievement factors which might be related to the dropouts' specific educational outcomes. We also looked at whether the reasons students dropped out related to their final educational status. The results of these analyses are presented in Exhibit 4.4 which lists the areas in which each outcome group differed from the other groups. Exhibit 4.5 presents the data on which the lists in Exhibit 4.4 are based.

Educational Alternatives Pursued

For those 1986-87 dropouts for whom we were able to find some follow-up data (60 percent of the sample), we explored the different educational alternatives attempted by during the two-year follow-up period, regardless of their final status in June 1989. Exhibit 4.6 reports the number and percentage of the 1986-87 dropouts who attempted each of the following educational alternatives: reenrollment in MCPS day school, GED exam, enrollment in MCPS evening or summer school, or other educational training. Specific findings regarding the different alternatives are discussed below. Percentages are reported for all 1986-87 dropouts and for those we were able to trace. The discussion below deals with the percent of the total since the lack of records for the 431 "unknowns" makes it likely that the great majority of them did not pursue the alternatives discussed.

Reenrollment in MCPS Day School. Returning to day school was the most common educational alternative pursued by the dropouts--26 percent of the 1986-87 dropouts subsequently reenrolled in MCPS day school, 25 percent in 1987-88 and 9 percent in 1988-89 (some students were enrolled in MCPS both years). Among those dropouts who reenrolled in MCPS, about half (50 percent in 1987-88 and 61 percent in 1988-89) stayed in school, either graduating, finishing the school year, or transferring to another school system. However, almost as many of these reenrollees dropped out again--47 percent in 1987-88 and 34 percent in 1988-89.

GED Exam Preparation. Combining our interview information with a review of Maryland State GED exam records, we found indications that at least 22 percent of all the 1986-87 dropouts had prepared for the GED exam and that 12 percent had actually taken the exam. Among the 233 dropouts who prepared for the exam, we found state records to indicate that by September 1988, 56 percent had taken the exam and 47 percent had passed it.⁸ Obviously, many of the dropouts who said they were preparing for the GED, did not follow through to take the exam within the next year. However, the passing rate among those who took the GED exam was relatively high--84 percent.

⁷There were only 21 dropouts in the other outcome category. This was too small a group to include in this analysis.

⁸Additional dropouts may have taken the GED exam after September 1988 or in other states. We reviewed Maryland State records from September 1986 through September 1988 and found that most dropouts took the exam within 12 months of leaving school.

EXHIBIT 4.4

Background Characteristics^a of Group With Different Post-Dropout Outcomes

Outcome	School Achievement	School Experience	Reasons for Leaving	Family Background and Demographics
Graduate	*Higher test scores *Highest GPA *Less likely to lose credit	*Least likely to be re-tained *Least likely to be overage for grade *Least likely to previously drop out Most likely to talk to school staff about dropping out	Least likely to drop out for employment Least likely to drop out for drug/alcohol problems Most likely to dropout because of discipline problems	Least likely to be from single parent family Least likely to have other family member drop out
Stay-in	Less likely to lose credit	*Less likely to be overage for grade *Less likely to previously drop out *Least likely to attend MCPS 7 or more years Most likely to participate in extra-curricular activities	Least likely to drop out because disliked school Most likely to drop out because of school failure Most likely to drop out because of emotional/family/medical problems	*Youngest age at withdrawal Highest percent minority
Earned GED	*Highest test scores Most likely to lose credit	*Least likely to be in special education *More likely to previously drop out Least likely to be suspended	Most likely to drop out because disliked school Least likely to drop out because of discipline problems	*From highest SES families *Lowest percent minority Highest percent female Most likely to be from single parent home
Other Education	*Lowest GPA	*Most likely to previously drop out	*Most likely to drop out because of social problems Most likely to drop out because of employment	*Slightly older age at withdrawal

* - Significantly different from other dropout groups

a. Characteristics listed are those on which the group differed from other dropout groups.

EXHIBIT 4.4

Background Characteristics^a of Group With Different Post-Dropout Outcomes

Outcome	School Achievement	School Experiences	Reasons for Leaving	Family Background and Demographics
Repeat Dropouts		More likely to be in special education Most likely to have been suspended	*Most likely to drop out because of drug/alcohol problems *Most likely to drop out because of discipline *Less likely to drop out because disliked school	Highest percent male *Younger age at withdrawal
Status Unknown	*Lowest test scores	*Most likely to be retained *Most likely to be in special education *Most likely to be over-age for grade Least likely to talk to school staff about dropping out Least likely to participate in extra-curricular activities	*More likely to drop out because they dislike school	Most likely to have other family member drop out *More likely to be minority *From lowest SES families

* - Significantly different from other dropout groups.

a. Characteristics listed are those on which the group differed from other dropout groups.

EXHIBIT 4.5

Background Characteristics of Dropouts with Different Outcomes

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS	DIFFERENT DROPOUT OUTCOMES						
	Graduates (N=83)	Stay-ins (N=90)	GEDs (N=110)	Other Education (N=180)	Repeat Dropouts (N=152)	Status Unknown (N=431)	All Dropouts (N=1067)
<u>Demographics (N=1067)</u>							
% Male	58	61	54	61	66	59	61
% Minority	35	42	17*	36	36	41*	37
% Black	25	27	11	23	24	23	23
Mean Age at Withdrawal	17.6	16.6*	17.4	17.7*	17.1*	17.6*	17.5
<u>MCPS Enrollment History (N=1067)</u>							
% in Special Education 1986-87	8	12	5*	9	16	17*	13
% Ever in Special Education	10	16	6*	11	18	19*	15
% Dropping Out in Previous Yrs	5*	8*	24*	26*	11	15	16
% Attending MCPS 7+ Years	60	39*	55	51	59	50	52
Mean Years Overage for Grade	0.6*	0.8*	1.0*	1.3	0.9*	1.5*	1.2
<u>Achievement (N=253 to 929)</u>							
Proj Basic Reading (% Pass)	99*	88	98*	96	93	88*	92
Proj Basic Math (% Pass)	75	72	88*	70	65	55*	66
Proj Basic Writing (% Pass)	71*	62	71*	61	41*	45*	54
Proj Basic Citizenship (% Pass)	65*	55	65*	41	50	37*	47
CAT Total Grade 5 (Mean NCE)	52	47	64*	51	47	47	50
CAT Total Grade 8 (Mean NCE)	54*	47	63*	51	46	44*	49
CAT Total Grade 11 (Mean NCE)	51	47	55*	48	40	40*	45
% Losing Credit	56*	56	76	71	61	70	67
Cumulative Grade Point Average	1.65*	1.43	1.31	1.18*	1.32	1.25	1.30
<u>Family Background (N=504)</u>							
% From Single Parent Home	27	31	43	39	37	38	38
% Family Member Dropping Out	33	40	39	43	43	55	45
Mean SES Level (1=low, 3=high)	2.0	1.9	2.2*	2.0	1.9	1.8*	2.0
<u>School Experiences (N=504)</u>							
% in Extracurricular Activities	35	50	36	38	34	26	35
% Employed While in School	65	69	64	61	56	65	62
% Ever Suspended	47	41	39	41	57	45	45
% Repeating a Grade	22*	31	37	49	46	54*	44
% Who Talked to School Staff	69	66	67	53	62	52	59
<u>Dropout Types (N=504)</u>							
% Dislike School	20	9	32	19	14*	31*	23
% School Failure	25	31	16	14	14	14	16
% Family/Medical/Emotional Prob	18	22	17	13	15	13	15
% Want/Need to Work	4	9	14	18	15	12	13
% Discipline Problems	18	16	4	9	18*	9	11
% Social Problems	6	3	3	13*	2	8	7
% Drug/Alcohol Problems	2	3	11	5	15*	5	8
% Pregnancy/Child Care	8	6	4	8	5	9	7

*The percentage or mean reported is either significantly higher or lower than the percentage or mean for all other dropouts (2-tailed $p < .05$). Some group differences appear to be statistically significant but are not, because of the smaller number of cases in that group.

EXHIBIT 4.6

Different Educational Alternatives Pursued by 1986-87 Dropouts
During the Two-Year Follow-up Period

	Number of Dropouts	Percentage of Dropouts With Followup Data (N=636)	Percentage of All Dropouts (N=1067)	Percentage ^a of Group
Reenrolled in MCPS in 1987-88	269	42	25	
Graduated	39	6	4	14
Stayed in MCPS	90	14	8	33
Transferred out of MCPS	7	1	1	3
Withdrew-other ^b	7	1	1	3
Dropped out again	126	20	12	47
Reenrolled in MCPS in 1988-89	101	16	9	
Graduated	27	4	3	27
Stayed in MCPS	29	5	3	29
Transferred out of MCPS	5	1	0	5
Withdrew-other ^b	6	1	1	6
Dropped out again	34	5	3	34
Prepared for GED Exam	233	37	22	
Took exam	131	21	12	56
Passed exam	110	17	10	47
Enrolled in MCPS evening school	149	23	14	
Spring 1987	78	12	7	52
Fall 1987	58	9	5	39
Spring 1988	38	6	4	26
Date unspecified ^c	15	2	1	10
Enrolled in MCPS summer school	113	18	11	
Summer 1987	82	13	8	73
Summer 1988	45	7	4	40
Date unspecified ^c	5	1	0	4
Pursued other alternatives	50	8	5	
Community college	23	4	2	46
Vocational/technical school	20	3	2	40
Military/job corps training	10	2	1	20
No follow-up information	431		40	

^aThis percentage is based on the total number of students who pursued alternatives in that category. In some cases, the total is more than 100 percent because students pursued multiple alternatives within one category.

^bOther withdrawals were for reasons that are not counted as dropping out (i.e., evening school, psychiatric placement, illness).

^cSource other than MCPS evening/summer school records; date was unspecified.

MCPS Evening School. Based on our interviews and reviews of MCPS evening school records for Spring 1987, Fall 1987 and Spring 1988, we found that 14 percent of the 1986-87 dropouts had subsequently enrolled in MCPS evening school. Most enrolled in evening classes the semester after they dropped out. Theoretically, it is possible to take as many as five evening school courses in one semester. But most dropouts who pursued evening school enrolled in only two or three courses total over the next three semesters. And as a group, dropouts completed only 34 percent of the evening courses they attempted.

MCPS Summer School. Based on our interviews and a review of MCPS Summer School records for 1987 and 1988, we found that 11 percent of all the 1986-87 dropouts had enrolled in classes one or two summers after leaving school; most enrolled the summer after dropping out of school. A student can take at most two courses during summer school. Most dropouts who attended summer school enrolled in two courses, but as a group, these dropouts completed only 56 percent of the summer courses they attempted.

Other Educational Alternatives. Based on this interview information as well as transcript requests through September 1988, we found that at least 5 percent of all the 1986-87 dropouts were pursuing other post-secondary training. Most of these dropouts were attending community college or vocational/technical schools but a few had entered the military or were participating in job corps training programs.

Employment Status

Finally, we looked at the employment status of the dropouts we interviewed. Most of the dropouts (71 percent) were employed when we interviewed them; 14 percent said that they were looking for a job, but 15 percent had not tried to find a job. Among the unemployed dropouts, the most common reasons were that they had returned or were planning to return to school, that they had not found an acceptable job, or that they were just taking it easy. Among the employed respondents, most had low-skill, low-pay jobs, typically in food services, retail sales or manual labor; only 12 percent were working in skilled trades. Most of the employed dropouts (86 percent) had full-time jobs, working 30 or more hours per week, but the majority (69 percent) were making less than \$6 per hour. Still, 80 percent of the employed dropouts reported being satisfied with their jobs.

Chapter 5

MCPS PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES TO ASSIST POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

MCPS offers a wide variety of programs and employs many different strategies to assist students who are at-risk of dropping out of school. Some of these programs exist system-wide, that is they are available to any MCPS student who needs the services. Area-based alternative programs are available to students in each respective administrative area. The schools have also developed their own programs specific to the needs of their student populations. This chapter will briefly describe the programs available to potential dropouts system-wide and at the area level, list some school-based strategies, and profile a sample of school-based programs. Staff from 9 senior high schools and 6 mid-level schools were interviewed during the Summer, 1988 to provide an overview of the kinds of school-based programs and strategies available to MCPS students. It should be noted that we made no attempt to evaluate these programs.

System-Wide Programs

System-wide programs which are administered at the central office level and which are available to students throughout MCPS fall into four categories:

- o A variety of vocational programs which are administered by central office departments but which exist as program options in many of our senior high schools
- o Mentoring programs, most of which originated with the Quality Integrated Education (QIE) model, and which are available in many of our elementary and secondary schools
- o Programs administered by the Department of Alternative and Supplementary Education, designed to address specific problems which may interfere with a student's ability to function in a regular school setting (e.g., drug/alcohol abuse, chronic truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, limited English proficiency)
- o Evening High School and Summer School Programs, administered by the Department of Adult Education to assist students in need of high school credits for graduation

None of these programs were designed with the singular objective of dropout prevention, but they have been included in this discussion because they address the needs of many of the students that schools have identified as potential dropouts. These programs are briefly summarized below, based on available program descriptions. Program staff were not interviewed because these programs have been well-described elsewhere.

Vocational Programs

MCPS offers a variety of vocational options which are administered by central office departments but which exist as program options in several of our senior high schools. Many of the schools we surveyed identified one of more of these vocational options as alternative programming for students at-risk of dropping out, particularly for students who have lost interest in

the more academic aspects of the curriculum or students who are interested in employment. These vocational options include the following:

Bilingual Career Education Program (BiCEP). This program serves limited-English proficient students who have little or no prior schooling and who are at high-risk of dropping out of school because of their age, lack of academic skills, and their perception that education is unrelated to their immediate needs. Moreover these students have no means of support but bear some responsibility for supplying economic support to their families. BiCEP has four components--vocational ESOL skills, counseling services, employability skills, and vocational skills. The intent of BiCEP is to furnish participants with the vocational and English language skills that will enable them to find and maintain employment and function successfully in American society, with the assumption that some of these students may not stay in school long enough to graduate. Currently, BiCEP is serving approximately 125 students in the following senior high schools: Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Montgomery Blair, Einstein, Magruder, Richard Montgomery and Wheaton.

Work Oriented Curriculum (WOC). Combining the teaching of basic skills with on-the-job training (OJT) experiences, this program is designed for students in Grades 9-12 who need special services to succeed in regular or vocational programs. During the mornings, students take required academic courses in small group settings and at least one vocationally oriented course taught by the WOC teacher. In the afternoons, program participants work in a variety of paid and volunteer positions in the local community, under the supervision of the WOC teacher. WOC programs currently serve about 500 students, and are offered in almost all of the senior high schools.

Vocational Support Service Teams (VSST). Serving students with special needs (i.e., handicapped, academically disadvantaged, or limited-English proficient), Vocational Support Service Teams assist students who are enrolled in business education, cooperative education, industrial education, or home economic courses. Typical services include: one-to-one instruction, remedial tutoring, modifying instructional materials for special needs students, teaching study and test-taking skills, assessment, career counseling and student advocacy. VSSTs are currently located in the six high schools which have the greatest number of vocational programs and which have been designated as vocational mini-centers: Montgomery Blair, Damascus, Gaithersburg, Richard Montgomery, Poolesville, and Rockville.

Other Vocational Programs. MCPS offers other cooperative education programs which combine work opportunities and academics. Some of the schools we surveyed mentioned Cooperative Work Experience (CWE) and Marketing Education/Distributive Education Clubs of America (ME/DECA) as programming options for students at-risk of dropping out, particularly for students from financially needy families and students who want to work while in school.

Mentoring Programs

Quality Integrated Education (QIE) currently sponsors mentor programs in 37 elementary and secondary schools which serve approximately 2,700 students. While tailored to the specific needs of their own student populations, these individual programs share the same general goals and strategies. In each participating school, interested staff serve as mentors to individual

students or small groups of students and work to improve each student's self-concept and attitude toward school. QIE staff assist interested schools in program design and provide in-service training in mentoring skills during the first three years of program implementation; subsequently, schools must maintain the program on their own.

Students are referred to QIE mentoring programs by teachers, counselors, or parents, and some students refer themselves. Students are approached individually by their potential mentor, and the student then chooses whether or not to participate. Schools and mentors vary as to when they find the time for mentors and mentees to get together (e.g., before or after school, evenings, weekends, in-between classes, during class study time, lunch period or planning time).

In addition to the QIE-sponsored mentor programs, a few schools have developed their own mentoring programs with the support of Minigrants or other funding sources. While not originating as QIE-sponsored programs, these school-based programs rely on similar goals and strategies. Appendix C includes more detailed descriptions of both the QIE and non-QIE mentoring programs in the schools we surveyed.

Department of Alternative and Supplementary Education

Some of the programs administered by the Department of Alternative and Supplementary Education are designed to address specific problems which may interfere with a student's ability to function in a regular school setting. For example, Home Instruction Services provide home instruction to students who cannot attend school due to pregnancy, physical or emotional illness. ESOL/Bilingual Programs offers services for students with limited English proficiency.

More comprehensive are the programs administered jointly by Interagency and Alternative Programs and various community agencies.¹ These programs serve youth with a variety of problems (e.g., drug/alcohol abuse, chronic truancy, disruptive behavior, juvenile court or social services involvement). Generally, these are shelter, residential or day treatment programs which include counseling and the following MCPS educational services: evaluation, MCPS Program of Studies, Project Basic, work study, outdoor education and GED preparation. Probably most relevant as a dropout prevention program is the Kingsley Wilderness Project in Clarksburg. This program serves approximately 30 students a year in Grades 9-12 who have been referred by pupil personnel workers (PPWs) for problems such as chronic truancy and disruptive behavior. Instruction focuses on basic academic skills and the program offers supervised work experiences in a wilderness setting.

Interagency and Alternative Programs also administers the Leadership Training Program, a three-day residential program supported by a state grant for disruptive youth. The program provides training for disruptive, underachieving mid-level students in leadership techniques, decision-making, goal-setting and problem-solving. The program teaches students to identify

¹The Superintendent has proposed adding an additional alternative program aimed at intermediate school students who cannot function in the regular school environment.

problems in their home schools and design strategies to solve these problems. The program's intent is that students then take these ideas back to their home schools and act in constructive ways as leaders to affect change, thus enhancing their self-images.

Evening High School and Summer School Programs

The Department of Adult Education offers the Evening High School Program and the Summer School Program as alternatives for students who are in need of credited courses for graduation. Most of the roughly 2,500 students who enroll in evening classes each year are "dual enrollees"--that is, they are simultaneously enrolled in MCPS day school and are taking courses from Adult Education to make up credit in courses which they have previously failed or lost credit. Courses are offered evenings and Saturdays at Northwood and Wootton High Schools. Summer school classes also provide about 7,500 students each year an opportunity to make up lost credits and failed courses. In addition, Project Basic review courses are offered during Summer School for students who have previously failed the Project Basic Tests required for graduation in Reading, Mathematics and Citizenship Skills.

Area-Based Programs and Efforts

The three Area offices offer six off-site alternative programs which are designed to serve students who have been unsuccessful in conventional secondary schools. The six programs are Quest and New School in Area 1, Gateway, Tahoma and Whittier Woods in Area 2, and Journey in Area 3. An overview of these programs is provided below and specific program descriptions are included in Appendix C.

Developed for students who are unable to function in a regular school setting, these six programs provide alternative learning opportunities which address social and behavioral problems that are contributing to student failure. While these are not remedial programs, an academic component is provided within the alternative structure. The six programs share some basic similarities, for example, individualized instruction using the MCPS curriculum, team-building activities, a formalized behavior management system, and a low student-teacher ratio. However, the six programs differ in the range of services they offer. While some programs provide a full day of self-contained instruction, others utilize a mix of enclosed program-specific instruction and work experiences or mainstreaming in required or elective classes for part of the school day. Programs are located off-site, although usually close to an MCPS secondary school so that part-day mainstreaming is feasible. Five of the six programs serve only senior high students and provide essentially educational services. Quest, however, is unique in serving mid-level students and in incorporating county family therapy services into its program.

When schools feel that they have exhausted all school-based options, students are referred to their home school's area-based PPW for alternative program consideration. PPWs, program staff, and in some cases, school staff and/or area supervisory staff determine the appropriateness of the placement. Then students, and in most cases the parents, are interviewed by the alternative program with consensus by all required prior to student placement.

The criteria for placement into these programs include chronic poor attendance, poor academic performance (in most cases this is in contrast to the student's average, or above average achievement potential), and behavioral, or emotional problems. However, several programs specifically exclude those students who have special education needs, are involved in drug or alcohol use, or who have a history of physically disruptive behavior.

In addition to these area-based alternative programs which offer direct services to students at-risk of dropping out, the area offices offer various kinds of assistance and support to the schools related to dropout prevention. For example, the area offices:

- o assist schools in the identification of students at-risk of dropping out
- o assist schools in developing school-based programs for at-risk students
- o allocate funds for school-based minigrant programs, some of which are designed for at-risk students
- o support schools in monitoring chronic attendance problems and promoting good attendance, a PPW responsibility

School-Based Strategies

We surveyed 9 senior high schools and 6 mid-level schools, asking them how they identified students at-risk of dropping out, and what strategies and programs they used to assist these students.

Identification of At-Risk Students. Secondary schools most frequently identified as being at-risk of dropping out those students who demonstrate chronic attendance problems or poor academic performance, and at the senior high level, those who have lost credit or are close to losing credit in one or more courses. Other commonly mentioned at-risk factors were family problems, social/behavioral/discipline problems, substance abuse, psychological problems, and financial need.

Schools have a variety of procedures for identifying students who are at-risk of dropping out, although in some cases the procedures are more informal than formal. Students are identified as at-risk primarily through the articulation process with their feeder mid-level or elementary schools and through EMT and SARD procedures. Students are referred for EMT or SARD usually by classroom teachers and counselors, but also by parents, administrators and the students themselves. In some senior highs, the counselors monitor loss of credit (LC) notices, interim reports, credits accumulated and absenteeism reports to spot students who may be having problems. In schools with special support programs such as the QIE mentoring program, program staff watch for student problems. In some senior highs, each academic department monitors student performance in that domain. In mid-level schools, the grade level or academic teams frequently identify students having problems. Generally, this identification effort is not

coordinated by one person, although a few schools have designated one staff member (e.g., alternative/disadvantaged teacher, resource teacher, department chairperson, assistant principal).

Strategies. Short of formal programs, all of the schools identified various strategies to assist students at-risk of dropping out. Schools generally cited similar approaches to helping at-risk students, mentioning some strategies for all types of at-risk students and others that were more problem-specific. These strategies are listed in Exhibit 5.1, organized by the type of problem students present.

We also asked schools if they had any strategies for assisting students who had already dropped out. This question was prompted by the fact that the majority of dropouts we interviewed said that they wouldn't drop out again and they would advise friends to stay in school. Only one of the schools we surveyed mentioned any follow-up efforts to assist students who have already dropped out of school. The guidance department at Gaithersburg High School refers the parents of dropouts to community agencies such as GUIDE and PACT and sends letters to dropouts over the summer, telling them how to reenroll if they are interested.

School-Based Programs

The 15 sample schools also described several different programs they offered during 1987-88 to help potential dropouts. These programs seemed to fall into one of two categories:

- o Comprehensive: relatively comprehensive programs that provided some kind of alternative scheduling for the participants
- o Specific needs: programs developed in response to specific academic or social/personal needs of students; these programs were less intense in nature

What follows is an overview of these two kinds of programs, focusing primarily on the nature of the programs and how participants are selected. Appendix C contains program fact sheets that cover the following specific issues for those programs surveyed that currently exist²:

- o program participants
- o selection/admission
- o capacity and use
- o staffing and funding
- o program history
- o program monitoring and outcome
- o contributors and barriers to program success

²A few programs have changed significantly in design or have been discontinued since 1987-88 and are not included in Appendix C.

EXHIBIT 5.1

School-Based Strategies to Assist Potential Dropouts

Multiple Problems/General Strategies

- o Parent involvement through phone calls, letters, conferences
- o Referral to guidance counselor
- o Change in student's program
- o Informal mentoring

Chronic Attendance Problems

- o Computerized phone calls
- o Loss of Credit (LC) policy
- o Attendance contracts
- o Peer counseling
- o Home visits, more frequently at mid-level schools
- o Referral to area office Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW)
- o Referral to Protective Services

Academic Problems

- o Tutoring by staff, peers
- o Daily progress reports
- o Performance contracts
- o Referrals to evening school, summer school
- o Conditional grade promotion
- o Referral to GED programs

Financial Problems/Employment

- o Financial help through school's general or PTA's funds, Area funds
- o Material assistance through staff, student donations
- o Free and reduced lunch
- o Work experience program referrals (e.g., Work Oriented Curriculum (WOC), Cooperative Work Experience (CWE), Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), Marketing Education, BiCEP)
- o Abbreviated schedule
- o Assistance in finding part-time job

Discipline/Behavioral/Social Problems

- o Discipline policy
- o Detention
- o In-school suspensions
- o Behavioral contracts
- o Change in student schedule to cut-off problematic associations
- o Referral to school psychologist (area office)

Pregnancy

- o Counseling regarding options, including staying in school
- o Assistance in getting needed medical and social services
- o Referral for Home Instruction Services

Drug/Alcohol Abuse

- o In-school programs (e.g., Students Helping Other Students (SHOP), Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD), Just Say No clubs)
- o Referral to community youth services
- o Referral to Parents and Children Together (PACT)

Comprehensive Programs

A few senior high schools have developed relatively comprehensive programs that provide alternative scheduling for the instruction of at-risk students. Two such programs still exist among the schools we surveyed: Special, Alternative and Remedial Classes (SPARC) at Montgomery Blair and AIM (Apprenticeships, Internships, Managerships) Alternative Program at Richard Montgomery. Six of the mid-level schools have developed school-based alternative programs which provide either self-contained instruction or an extensive resource/support system for students with demonstrated attendance and/or academic problems; three of the mid-level schools surveyed had alternative programs which continue to operate in the same or a similar format: Tilden's Alternative Program (TAP), Julius West's Alternative Support Program, and Parkland's Changing Habits to Offer Individuals Choices in Education (CHOICE).

At both the senior high and mid-level schools, these programs provide participants with intensive instruction or support in core subjects within a small group environment. These programs operate on the premise that such an environment will lead to the type of academic success that helps a student develop a positive attitude toward school, and that through the development of such an attitude, each participant will remain in school and eventually return to a normal classroom structure. In addition to academic instruction, several of the programs offer other components, for example, organizational/study skills training, tutorial help, counseling for disciplinary and behavioral problems, career education, work experience, field trips or outdoor activities.

Students may be placed in these programs upon recommendation of Educational Management Team (EMTs), based on referrals from grade-level teams, individual classroom teachers, counselors or parents. Participants generally exhibit poor academic performance, poor motivation and weak basic skills, and sometimes poor attendance, discipline problems or social/emotional problems. While some of the programs do not have specific performance criteria for selection, the remaining programs consider for participation students who consistently perform 2 to 3 years below grade level in math and reading, or students who score in stanines 1 through 4 on the California Achievement Tests.

Specific Needs Programs

There are a series of programs available in individual county schools that were created in response to the specific academic and social needs of the school's student population. Several of the programs from the surveyed schools that exemplify this school-based approach are listed below.

- o OPERATION PASS (Julius West Middle School) makes the school's library available to students for an extra hour after-school, three days a week. In addition to the library resources, teachers from the school's core subjects are also available to students during each session. During this time, students can receive assistance with homework assignments, test preparation, and long-term reports.

- o The TEEN PREGNANCY SUPPORT MODEL (Gaithersburg High School) is a cooperative effort between MCPS and several county agencies within the Division of Family Services. The purpose of the program is to make available to pregnant girls and young mothers the services and supports necessary to keep them in school as long as possible and help them return to school after giving birth.
- o Funded by the Job Training Partnership Act, PROJECT HIGH HOPES (Montgomery Blair High School) is a career exploration program directed toward economically disadvantaged or physically impaired youth. It provides information about marketable skills and existing career possibilities through mentorships and job-shadowing experiences.
- o PARENTS AS PARTNERS (Damascus High School) is designed to improve the level of communication between teachers and parents of "at-risk" students. During formal meetings, parents are briefed on their children's progress in school, with a focus on helping them improve their parenting skills.
- o THE ALATEEN GROUP (Gaithersburg High School), based on the AA Alateen model, is a support group for students with drug or alcohol problems and for students whose families have drug or alcohol problems. Participants meet with the counselor and nurse weekly.

More Recent Programs

In addition to these school-based programs which existed in 1987-88 and continue to operate today, we are aware of two recent collaborative efforts between individual schools and the community. These programs, described below, are relatively comprehensive programs which were developed in 1988-89, primarily as dropout prevention efforts.

The TRUANCY INTERVENTION PROJECT (Montgomery Blair High School) was developed in 1988-89 to improve the attendance of ninth grade students for whom normal attendance procedures were unsuccessful. The project has two components. The Home Intervention Team, composed of PPWs and trackers from community youth services, make home visits to contact the student and his/her parents and determine the problem(s) interfering with regular school attendance. Then, a Truancy Intervention Plan is developed to address the needs of the individual student--this may entail, for example, counseling, changes in the student's program, job placement, daily monitoring, wake-up calls, home visits, assistance from community agencies, or crisis intervention. Depending on individual circumstances, the following staff may be involved: guidance counselor, interpreter, police officer, tracker, assistant principal, teacher, nurse, school psychologist, or community service provider.

BEST (BE EXCELLENT START TODAY) (Gaithersburg High School) is the MCPS component of the state-funded MARYLAND'S TOMORROW PROGRAM which began in 1988-89. Last year 40 ninth graders, identified as high-risk to drop out of school based on either poor performance on the California Achievement Tests and/or a history of grade retention, were enrolled in a four-year program which includes both school-year and summer activities. During the four

school years, participants receive basic skills remediation (focusing on the Project Basic Tests), training in study and time management skills, QUEST (a life skills course), career awareness/prevocational exploration, and various work experiences such as community service, internships, Cooperative Work Experience/OJT and/or vocational courses. During the summers, this curriculum is supplemented with computer-assisted basic skills remediation or SAT coaching and additional vocational exploration and work experience opportunities, plus job shadowing and job placement assistance or college entrance assistance as students near graduation. The program places a heavy emphasis on regular monitoring of student progress, supplemented by daily contact with program staff, student self-assessment, report card contracts and attendance contracts, and on appropriate motivational incentives such as peer support, recreational field trips (e.g., college basketball games, ski trips), and career exploration trips (e.g., FBI Headquarters). MARYLAND'S TOMORROW also involves an evaluation component which compares the academic performance, attendance and dropout rates of participants to a control group of eligible non-participants.

Chapter 6

MCPS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO DROPOUT PREVENTION

There are MCPS administrative regulations related to dropout prevention. These deal with pupil attendance, loss of credit, and administrative transfers. In addition, the schools we surveyed had the following procedures relevant to potential dropouts: attendance monitoring, withdrawal for nonattendance, and parent notification for poor attendance. This chapter provides a brief overview of these policies and procedures.

Attendance Monitoring

More than half the dropouts we interviewed said they had poor attendance before they left school. MCPS has an attendance policy and secondary schools do a number of things to monitor attendance that are also related to dropout prevention. These efforts are listed below:

- o MCPS regulations require that schools record daily attendance for every student, including attendance by individual classes at the secondary level.
- o MCPS regulations require that parents (guardians) provide a written explanation of each absence. Upon reaching the age of majority (18 years old or married), a student may assume responsibility for absence notes.
- o Schools notify parents (guardians) of student absences, whether excused or unexcused, either through an automated dialing system, by personal telephone calls, or both. Although some schools have noted problems with the automated calls (e.g., lack of personal contact, interception by students, out-of-date telephone numbers), they still use them because they do not have the staff resources to personally contact families of all absent students on a daily basis.
- o Schools follow up on truant students, generally when they have been out of school 3 to 5 days or when they have established a pattern of absenteeism, (sooner if they have a history of attendance problems) with staff telephone calls to the family, letters home, parent conferences, home visits, or referrals to the school's Educational Management Team or the area office Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW).
- o Schools receive the Principal's Monthly Report of Enrollment and Pupil Attendance from the central computer and use it to identify students with an absence rate of 25 percent or more. In most cases, schools are aware of these students before they receive the reports.

Withdrawal for Nonattendance

MCPS does not have a written policy regarding the withdrawal of students for nonattendance. However, the schools we surveyed and the dropouts we

interviewed have reported that under certain circumstances, students are withdrawn from school for nonattendance and counted as dropouts. Most of the schools we surveyed reported 5 or fewer such student withdrawals during 1987-88 but a couple of schools withdrew as many as 70 to 90 students for nonattendance in 1987-88. Schools make several efforts to contact and work with students who have stopped attending school and their parents before resorting to withdrawal; they:

- o Telephone parent(s)/guardian(s) to notify them of the situation and try to determine the problem(s).
- o Schedule a conference with the student and his/her parent(s).
- o Use informal networks within the school and the student's peers to find out what has happened to the student and to contact him/her.
- o Conduct home visits.
- o Refer cases to the area office PPW, and sometimes to Montgomery County Protective Services for follow up.
- o Refer students and or families to relevant community agencies (e.g., PACT, community youth services).
- o Send a registered letter to the parents/guardians warning them that if they do not respond within a specific time period (e.g., 7-14 days), the student will be withdrawn; this letter may accompany a final loss of credit (LC) notice; some schools include in this letter an invitation to reenroll the next semester.
- o Have students sign contracts saying they will regularly attend school. A condition often used in these contracts is that the student will be withdrawn from school if he/she does not adhere to the contract.

To insure the accuracy of our September 30 student enrollment report to the state, any student who has not attended school by that date ("no shows") is removed from the school's rolls. Because of State compulsory attendance laws, students under age 16 are maintained on the schools' rolls and only withdrawn with area office approval. A couple of the mid-level schools we surveyed only withdraw a student with parent permission or at the parent's request. Most schools reported that a student had to be out of school for at least 30 days before he/she is withdrawn for nonattendance.

Loss of Credit Policy

Part of the attendance regulations at the senior high level is the MCPS Loss of Credit (LC) Policy. Students in Grades 9-12 who have five or more unexcused absences per semester in any course, fail and lose credit in that course, subject to a written appeal. About 20 percent of the dropouts we interviewed mentioned losing course credit as a factor in their decision to leave school. Schools make several efforts in their implementation of the LC policy to prevent students from losing credit and potentially from dropping out:

- o After the first and second unexcused absences, teachers counsel students and telephone the home when feasible.
- o After the third and fourth unexcused absences, teachers notify administrators who in turn notify parents by mail and by phone. At this point, counselors and/or administrators usually meet with students.
- o After the fifth unexcused absence, students and parents are notified that the student has failed the course and that credit will be denied for that semester. Students and parents are also advised of the student's right to petition for restoration of credit.
- o Students may petition the teacher for restoration of credit, subject to the principal's final approval. Some schools encourage students to appeal by assisting students in writing these appeals, by sending home an appeal contract with the final LC notice or by granting a conditional restoration of credit, subject to no subsequent unexcused absences. While some schools said that most students appeal and that appeals are generally granted, other schools said that students seldom appeal.
- o Students may also petition the principal for an alternative means of gaining credit.
- o If the student's appeal is denied, the student, parent and the principal or designee must agree on the student's subsequent daily schedule: continuing in the course on an audit basis, dropping the course and enrolling in a study skills class or a non-credit teacher supervised program, or reducing the school day schedule. Schools will generally recommend that a student who has LC'd more than 3 courses attend a conference with his/her parents, and may withdraw the student if he/she does not respond to this request. Such students are usually invited to reenroll the next semester.

Parent Notification

The Maryland State Board of Education has recently (August 1989) passed a regulation requiring schools to insure that parents or guardians are notified if their child drops out of school. This requirement goes into effect in the 1990-91 school year. Prior to this, there was no policy requiring such notification. Despite the absence of a written policy, the schools we surveyed follow similar procedures when students withdraw from school or simply stop attending.

The schools we surveyed said it was much more common for students to stop attending school than to announce their decision to withdraw from school. As we have already noted, parents are notified in the event of student absences through daily telephone calls and by telephone or letter in the event of multiple absences, usually no more than 3 days. For senior high students, the LC policy requires that parents be notified by the third unexcused absence. Schools notify parents immediately when known truants or students whose parents have requested notification are absent, even for 1 day. If

the phone calls are not effective, counselors attempt home visits or refer the cases to PPWs for home visits.

When a student tells the school that he/she wants to drop out, most schools have a withdrawal form which must be signed by the parent if students are under age 18. In addition to the withdrawal form, most schools notify parents first by telephone and then by formal/registered letter. In most cases, the school has already been in contact with the parent regarding the student's problems.

Administrative Transfers

For students having difficulty in a particular school and possibly considering dropping out of school as a result, another strategy available to MCPS schools is to request an administrative transfer of that student to another secondary school. This is a strategy that most schools employ only as a last resort. However, in 1986-87 area offices transferred approximately 200 secondary students to other secondary schools, not as special education placements or alternative program placements but as a change in school. In addition, approximately 70 students were withdrawn as administrative transfers and did not subsequently reenroll in MCPS that same school year. MCPS policy states that such transfer requests can be initiated by school principals but that such requests must be made through the area office, must involve the PPW, and require a conference with the parent (guardian) and the student.

The schools we surveyed said they most commonly recommended administrative transfers in situations where the student would benefit from attending school away from his/her peers such as students with serious behavior or discipline problems, students who pose a danger to themselves, to other students or to staff, or students involved in a serious incident with guns or drugs.

Chapter 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the over 1,000 students who drop out of MCPS each year would probably drop out regardless of any increased efforts to keep them in school. And some of these students may benefit from dropping out, at least temporarily, because being out of school may force them to realize the importance of school and motivate them to continue their educations, either by returning to day school, attending evening school, or taking the GED exam. Still most of the dropouts we interviewed regretted their decision to leave school and would advise other students not to drop out. And many of the dropouts we followed did not return to school or complete their GEDs, at least not within two years of leaving school.

Although MCPS already has many efforts underway to assist potential dropouts, based on the findings of this study, especially the fact that many dropouts regretted their decision, there may be some additional steps we can take to further assist students at-risk of dropping out and possibly prevent them from leaving school. Suggested additional steps are presented in this chapter. These steps may only require the reallocation of existing resources rather than new funds. In addition, dropouts were asked what schools could do to prevent students from dropping out--their suggestions are also included here.

Provide assistance to potential dropouts as early as possible

We found that dropouts differ from nondropouts on several indicators. For example, they do not perform as well academically, are retained and suspended more often, and participate less in nonathletic extracurricular activities. Although we did not examine attendance histories in this study, other studies have shown that poor attendance, as early as the mid-level or elementary grades, is related to students later dropping out of school. These factors could be considered in attempting to identify those students at the highest risk to drop out and getting them involved in appropriate support programs. As we have seen in this report, there are many existing efforts in MCPS to assist at-risk students, for example, the school-based mentoring programs, the area- and school-based alternative programs, and several school-based programs directed at specific student needs. Based on other dropout research, students would more likely benefit from these identification efforts and support programming in the mid-level grades so that they can be helped before they become too alienated from school or experience too much academic failure. Consistent with this recommendation, the Superintendent is proposing a new alternative program for mid-level students who are having problems adjusting to regular school settings.

Assign responsibility for identifying and following up on at-risk students

Among the secondary schools we surveyed, most did not assign any one staff person the responsibility of coordinating the identification of at-risk students or of monitoring their progress. Although students surely benefit from many caring staff being involved in their educations, schools might be more successful in keeping track of at-risk students if one person was given the responsibility and resources necessary to coordinate such activities.

Work at getting dropouts back in school

Most of the dropouts we interviewed indicated their intentions to continue their educations. Many returned to MCPS day school although about half dropped out again. In addition, most of the dropouts we interviewed regretted their decision to leave school and would advise other students not to drop out. These dropouts appear motivated to finish their high school educations, especially after they had left school. Yet among the senior highs we surveyed, only one school made any follow-up efforts to contact dropouts or their families after the students had withdrawn. We recommend that there be more active follow up on students who have dropped out by contacting the students and their parents regarding their educational options once they have left school and how they can reenroll in school. This kind of an effort might best be approached jointly by the schools and social service agencies within the county.

Provide counseling for potential dropouts by former dropouts who have returned to school

As we have reported, many of our dropouts do return to school. And most of the dropouts we interviewed regretted their decision to leave school and would advise other students to stay in school. In addition, when we asked dropouts what they would do to keep students in school, several mentioned the need for additional counseling services. Potential dropouts might benefit from counseling from students who had previously dropped out and returned to school.

Develop more consistent and aggressive procedures for following on up nonattendance

Although schools and area offices are already making many efforts to contact students who are not attending school and their families, more personal contact may be required to effectively address the problem(s) involved. School-based guidance counselors and area-based pupil personnel workers have told us that they do not have the time to make as many home visits as they feel are needed. It should be determined who can most effectively follow up on these cases and adequate resources should be allocated or reallocated. These increased efforts are especially crucial in schools with higher numbers of dropouts; seven of the senior highs had 50 or more students drop out during 1988-89.

Re-examine implementation of the LC policy appeal procedures

About 20 percent of the dropouts we interviewed mentioned the Loss of Credit (LC) policy as a factor in their decision to leave school. Many of the schools we surveyed acknowledged that students who LC multiple courses may in effect be forced to withdraw from school for that semester. Among the schools we surveyed, several promoted and assisted student appeals of LCs. Some schools said that they assist students in writing appeals and allow most students a conditional reinstatement of credit based on no additional unexcused absences, with the final decision made at the end of the semester. Other schools told us that students seldom appeal their LCs or that they are very strict in not allowing students credit who had gone beyond four unexcused absences. Considering these variations in the implementation of the LC policy appeal procedures, it might be appropriate to re-examine some possible negative effects of the policy and its implementation.

Provide special supports and programming for returning dropouts

We found that students frequently drop out, return to school, and then drop out again. Yet the schools we surveyed did not offer any programs specifically designed for dropouts who had returned to school. Dropouts who return to school should be flagged for special attention. These students might benefit from support programs designed especially for dropouts who come back to school.

Establish a cooperative program with a local college

Many of the dropouts we interviewed cited boredom, irrelevancy, and rigid school policies and procedures as reasons for leaving school. These students might benefit from a broader academic program with more freedom than can be offered in high school. Such a program was established at LaGuardia Community College in New York City in 1971 to help potential dropouts. Known as the Middle College, it is a 500-student high school on a college campus. Among the advantages of the program are that the high school students can take college courses, are in a more serious, mature environment than they had in high school, and can earn graduation credits at their own pace rather than being placed in lock-step grades as in regular high schools. It might be a good idea for MCPS to look into developing a similar program.

Student suggestions

When we asked dropouts how they would change the way schools are run to keep students in school, their suggestions ranged from very general to very specific:

- o About 30 percent of the respondents suggested new or modified programs and classes, with 11 percent suggesting that classes should be more interesting and relevant.
- o About 25 percent of the dropouts suggested that the schools offer additional or improved nonacademic support programs; specifically, 17 percent of the respondents mentioned better counseling services.
- o About 20 percent of the respondents recommended improving school climate with 11 percent specifying that staff should be more caring.
- o Seventeen (17) percent of the respondents suggested increasing student responsibility in various ways, for example, by offering students more choices, and by reducing the number and rigidity of school rules.
- o Sixteen (16) percent of the dropouts thought that changes in the school's organizational structure would keep more students in school, most frequently suggesting more flexible school hours.

Appendix A

DROPOUT INTERVIEW GUIDE

This Appendix contains the guide that was used for the telephone interviews of the 1986-87 dropouts.

Department of Educational Accountability
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland 20850

FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF MCPS DROPOUTS

1986-87 Dropout Interview Guide

Date of Interview _____ Interviewer _____

1

Respondent's Name _____
Last First

Student ID No. _ / _ / _ / _ / _

Telephone Number(s) _____

Dropout Status _____

8

CALL RECORD

_____ Check here if the student is not a dropout (i.e., never left school, returned to school during the school year, or graduated).

_____ Check here if the student refuses to participate.

_____ Check here if you are unable to complete the interview due to a language barrier. Indicate the language spoken _____.

Date/Time of 1st Attempt _____ Outcome code _____

Date/Time of 2nd Attempt _____ Outcome code _____

Date/Time of 3rd Attempt _____ Outcome code _____

Date/Time of 4th Attempt _____ Outcome code _____

Date/Time of 5th Attempt _____ Outcome code _____

Date/Time of 6th Attempt _____ Outcome code _____

Outcome codes: 1 = completed 5 = disconnected/wrong number
2 = no answer 6 = refused to participate
3 = busy signal 7 = break off-didn't complete interview
4 = call back 8 = unable to interview-language barrier
9 = didn't leave school/returned to school/graduated

1986-87 DROPOUT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello. My name is [INTERVIEWER'S NAME]. I'm calling on behalf of the Montgomery County Public Schools. May I speak with [STUDENT'S NAME]?

(IF STUDENT IS NOT IN, SAY) Is there a better time to call back?

(RECORD DATE AND TIME) _____

(IF STUDENT IS NO LONGER AT THIS NUMBER, SAY)

Do you have a number where he/she may be reached? _____

(RECORD NUMBER)

(WHEN YOU REACH RESPONDENT, REPEAT PERSONAL INTRODUCTION AND READ FOLLOWING)

The Montgomery County Public Schools is conducting a follow-up study of students who've withdrawn from school this past year. We'd like to find out how the schools might have served them better. Specifically, we want to know why students withdraw from school, what happens to them after they leave school, and whether anything could be done to keep them in school.

We are interviewing all students who withdrew from school during this past school year. First, let me check this information; did you leave school before the end of the school year (June 19, 1987)?

___ No (IF NO, ASK FOLLOWING QUESTION, THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE INTERVIEW)

What school were you attending at the end of the school year?

___ Yes (IF YES, CONTINUE WITH INTRODUCTION)

Then we'd really appreciate your help. If you agree to be interviewed, you won't be identified by name in any report and your responses will be grouped with those of other students who have left school. Of course, you don't have to answer these questions if you don't want to, but your answers may help the Montgomery County Public Schools to serve its students better in the future.

The interview takes about 20 minutes. Would it be convenient to answer some questions now or should I call back at a better time?

(IF CONVENIENT, PROCEED WITH QUESTION 1)

(IF STUDENT SUGGESTS A BETTER TIME, RECORD DAY AND TIME _____)

Will I be able to reach you at this number?

(IF NOT, RECORD NEW NUMBER _____)

Thank you. I will call back [REPEAT DAY/DATE AND TIME].

DROPOUT INTERVIEW GUIDE

PART I: School Experience

I'd like to begin with some general questions about school.

Codes

1. What was the last Montgomery County school you attended?

 / /

9

2. What month did you leave school?

 /

3. Since then, have you returned to school?

 1 = Yes

 2 = No (IF NO, CONTINUE INTERVIEW)

a. (IF YES) What kind of school program did you return to?
(for example, high school, GED program, night school,
summer school, community college)

 /

(IF RESPONDENT RETURNED TO HIGH SCHOOL DURING SCHOOL YEAR, THANK HIM/HER
AND TERMINATE INTERVIEW)

(IF RESPONDENT HAS ENROLLED IN OTHER SCHOOLING (E.G., GED PROGRAM,
NIGHT SCHOOL, SUMMER SCHOOL, COMMUNITY COLLEGE), CONTINUE THE INTERVIEW)

4. What grade were you in when you left school?

 /

5. What type of program were you in (for example, academic/college
preparatory, vocational, or general)? (CHECK ONE)

19

 1 = General

 2 = Academic/College Preparatory

 3 = Vocational

 4 = ESOL

 5 = Special Education

 6 = Interagency/Alternative Education

 7 = Other (SPECIFY:)

(School Experience-continued)

Codes

6. Did you ever repeat a grade?

_____ 20

_____ 1 = Yes

_____ 2 = No

a. (IF YES) Which grade or grades? _____

_____ /

_____ /

_____ /

7. Were you ever suspended or expelled from school?

_____ 1 = Yes

_____ 2 = No

a. (IF YES) How many times were you suspended? _____

_____ /

b. (IF YES) How many times were you expelled? _____

_____ /

c. (IF YES) Would you mind telling me why you were
[suspended/expelled]?

_____ /

_____ /

_____ /

8. Did you participate in any extracurricular activities
sponsored by the school?

_____ 1 = Yes

_____ 2 = No

a. (IF YES) Which ones?

_____ / / /

_____ / / /

_____ / / /

50

(School Experience-continued)

Codes

9. What did you like about school? (PROBE IF NECESSARY)
(e.g., Was there anything you liked about school?)

_____/ 51
_____/
_____/
_____/

10. What didn't you like about school?

_____/
_____/
_____/
_____/

11. Do you believe school was preparing you for the real world? _____

____ 1 = Yes

____ 2 = No

- a. (IF NO) How do you think it could have prepared you better?

_____/
_____/
_____/
_____/ 75

PART II: Reasons for Leaving School

Now I'd like to ask you some specific questions about leaving school. I'd like to remind you that you don't have to answer these questions if you don't want to.

1. I would like to know why you left school? What were the most important reasons? (DO NOT SUGGEST REASONS)
- Codes
- _____ / 76
- _____ /
- _____ /

2. Now I want to read some reasons that other students have given for leaving school. After I read each reason, please tell me whether it was a major reason, a partial reason, or not a reason for your leaving school. (CHECK ONE FOR EACH ITEM)

First, let me read some school-related reasons that other students have given for leaving school.

	Major Reason	Partial Reason	Not a Reason	
	1	2	3	
<u>School-Related</u>				
a. Didn't like school in general.	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Didn't like the school you attended.	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Not doing well in classes.	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Didn't get along with teachers.	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Classes were too hard.	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Classes were too easy.	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Got blamed for things you didn't do.	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Missed too much school because of suspensions or expulsions.	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Didn't get along with other students.	_____	_____	_____	_____
j. Friends were out of school.	_____	_____	_____	_____
k. Skipped school or absent too often.	_____	_____	_____	_____
l. Couldn't do homework at home.	_____	_____	_____	_____
m. Not learning anything.	_____	_____	_____	_____

(Reasons for Leaving School-continued)

	Major Reason	Partial Reason	Not a Reason	Codes
	1	2	3	
<u>School-Related-continued</u>				
n. Teacher or principal had it in for you.	—	—	—	95
o. Didn't pass some or all of Maryland Functional Tests.	—	—	—	
p. School was too boring.	—	—	—	
q. Didn't like school rules.	—	—	—	
r. Didn't like the classes.	—	—	—	
(IF MAJOR REASON) Which classes?				
_____			/ / /	
_____			/ / /	

Now let me read some family-related reasons for leaving school.

Family-Related

a. Didn't get any help from home.	—	—	—	—
b. Needed money to help out at home.	—	—	—	—
c. Couldn't earn enough part-time.	—	—	—	—
d. Couldn't find a part-time job.	—	—	—	—
e. Mother or father said to quit.	—	—	—	—
f. Couldn't work and study at the same time.	—	—	—	—
g. Needed to babysit brother and/or sister at home.	—	—	—	—
h. Family moved a lot and you had to keep changing schools.	—	—	—	—
i. Other family problem(s).	—	—	—	—
(IF MAJOR REASON) Would you mind telling me what the problem was?				
_____			/	
_____			/	120

(Reasons for Leaving School-continued)

Finally, let me read some other reasons given by students for leaving school.

	Major Reason 1	Partial Reason 2	Not a Reason 3	Codes
<u>Medical/Emotional Problems</u>				
a. Had medical problems.	—	—	—	121
(IF A REASON) Were you under a doctor's care?				
— 1 = Yes	— 2 = No			
(IF A REASON) Were you hospitalized?				
— 1 = Yes	— 2 = No			
b. Had emotional problems.	—	—	—	
(IF A REASON) Were you taking medication?				
— 1 = Yes	— 2 = No			
<u>Court Problems</u>				
a. In trouble outside of school.	—	—	—	
(IF MAJOR REASON) Would you mind telling me what the problem was?				
_____				/
_____				/
(IF A REASON) Have you ever been arrested?				
— 1 = Yes	— 2 = No			
(IF A REASON) Were you ever in a juvenile detention center?				
— 1 = Yes	— 2 = No			132

(Reasons for Leaving School-continued)

	Major Reason	Partial Reason	Not a Reason	Codes
	1	2	3	
Social				
a. Pregnant/girlfriend was pregnant.	—	—	—	133
b. Got married.	—	—	—	
c. Had problem finding childcare for my baby.	—	—	—	
d. Had problem with drugs.	—	—	—	
e. Had problem with alcohol.	—	—	—	
f. Social life was more important than school work.	—	—	—	
Alternative Work/Education Goals				
a. Wanted to attend alternative education program.	—	—	—	
b. Wanted to work.	—	—	—	
c. Wanted to join the military.	—	—	—	
d. Wanted to travel.	—	—	—	
3. Did you have a job when you withdrew from school?				
— 1 = Yes				
— 2 = No				
a. (IF YES) What kind of job?				/

b. (IF YES) How many hours a week did you work?	_____ hours			/
c. (IF YES) Would you mind telling me how much money you earned per hour at that time?	_____ per hour			/ / / 151

(Reasons for Leaving School-continued)

Codes

4. Did you talk to your family about leaving school?

_____ 152

___ 1 = Yes

___ 2 = No

a. (IF YES) What did most of your family members advise you to do?

___ 1 = Stay in

___ 2 = Drop out

___ 3 = Mixed advice

___ 8 = Not sure

(COMMENT) _____

5. Did you talk to your friends about leaving school?

___ 1 = Yes

___ 2 = No

a. (IF YES) What did most of them advise you to do?

_____ 155

___ 1 = Stay in

___ 2 = Drop out

___ 3 = Mixed advice

___ 8 = Not sure

(COMMENT) _____

(Reasons for Leaving School-continued)

Codes

6. Think about your friends in school. Did most of them:
(READ RESPONSES)

____ 156

- ____ 1 = Graduate
____ 2 = Stay in school
____ 3 = Drop out
____ 8 = Not Sure

(COMMENT) _____

7. Did you talk to any adults at school about dropping out?

- ____ 1 = Yes
____ 2 = No

- a. (IF YES) Who did you speak to? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- ____ Teacher
____ Counselor
____ Assistant/Vice Principal
____ Principal
____ Other (SPECIFY: _____)

- b. (IF YES) What did [he/she/most of them] advise you to do?

____ 163

- ____ 1 = Stay in
____ 2 = Drop out
____ 3 = Mixed advice
____ 8 = Not sure

(COMMENT) _____

(Reasons for Leaving School-continued)

Codes

8. Did anyone from school suggest that you continue your education in some way (e.g., enter night school, take GED classes)?

164

___ 1 = Yes

___ 2 = No

- a. (IF YES) Who suggested it? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

___ Teacher

___ Counselor

___ Assistant/Vice Principal

___ Principal

___ Other (SPECIFY: _____)

- b. (IF YES) What did they suggest you do?

- c. (IF YES) Did they tell you how to enroll?

___ 1 = Yes

___ 2 = No

9. What would have kept you in school? (DO NOT SUGGEST ANSWERS)

/.
/
/
/

179

PART III: After Leaving School

Now, I'd like to ask you some questions about what has happened to you since you withdrew from school.

Codes

1. What have you done since you left school?

____ / 180
____ /
____ /

2. Have you gone to any school or training program since leaving school (e.g., night school, summer school, GED program)?

____ 1 = Yes (GO TO QUESTION 2a)

____ 2 = No (GO TO QUESTION 2b)

a. (IF YES) What kind of school/training program?

____ /

b. (IF NO) Are you planning to return to school or otherwise continue your education?

____ 1 = Yes

____ 2 = No

(IF YES) In what kind of school/training program?

____ / 191

(After Leaving School-continued)

Codes

3. Have you taken the GED (General Educational Development) exam? _____ 192

____ 1 = Yes (GO TO QUESTION 3a)

____ 2 = No (GO TO QUESTION 4)

a. (IF YES) Did you pass? _____

____ 1 = Yes

____ 2 = No

(SKIP TO QUESTION 6)

4. Are you preparing to take the GED exam? _____

____ 1 = Yes (SKIP TO QUESTION 6)

____ 2 = No (GO TO QUESTION 5)

5. Have you considered preparing for the GED exam? _____

____ 1 = Yes

____ 2 = No

a. (IF NO) What is keeping you from entering a GED program
or taking the GED exam?

/_____
/_____
/_____

201

(After Leaving School-continued)

Codes

6. Are you working now?

_____ 202

_____ 1 = Yes (SKIP TO QUESTION 9)

_____ 2 = No (ASK QUESTIONS 7 AND 8)

7. Have you tried to get a job?

_____ 1 = Yes

_____ 2 = No

8. What is keeping you from working?

_____ 1 = Needed at home

_____ 2 = Child care

_____ 3 = No diploma

_____ 7 = Other (SPECIFY: _____)

(COMMENT) _____

(SKIP TO QUESTION 13)

9. What type of work do you do?

_____ /

10. How many hours per week do you work?

_____ hours

_____ / 208

(After Leaving School-continued)

Codes

11. Are you satisfied with your present job?

209

___ 1 = Yes

___ 2 = No

___ 3 = Mixed response

(COMMENT) _____

12. Would you mind telling me how much money you earn per hour now?

_____ per hour / / /

13. If you had it to do over again, would you still drop out of school? _____

___ 1 = Yes

___ 2 = No

a. (IF NO) Explain why not?

_____/

_____/

_____/

14. Based on your experience, what advice would you give to students who are thinking about dropping out?

_____/

_____/

_____/

15. What would you do, if you could change the way schools are run, to keep dropouts in school?

_____/

_____/

_____/

232

PART IV: Family Background

I just have a few final questions about your family. Your answers to these last questions will help us classify all the information we have obtained throughout the survey.

Codes

1. At the time you left school, who were you living with?
(CHECK ONE)

_____ 233

- ____ 1 = Both parents (including step-parents)
____ 2 = Mother or step-mother
____ 3 = Father or step-father
____ 4 = Grandparent(s)
____ 5 = Brother(s)/Sister(s)
____ 6 = Other relatives
____ 7 = Alone
____ 8 = Other (SPECIFY: _____)

2. How many brothers and sisters do you have? Please include stepbrothers and stepsisters if they have ever lived with you.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| ____ 0 = None (SKIP TO Q. 5) | ____ 5 = Five |
| ____ 1 = One | ____ 6 = Six |
| ____ 2 = Two | ____ 7 = Seven |
| ____ 3 = Three | ____ 8 = Eight or more |
| ____ 4 = Four | |

3. How many of your brothers and sisters are older than you are? Please include stepbrothers and stepsisters if they have ever lived with you.

_____ 235

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| ____ 0 = None (SKIP TO Q. 5) | ____ 5 = Five |
| ____ 1 = One | ____ 6 = Six |
| ____ 2 = Two | ____ 7 = Seven |
| ____ 3 = Three | ____ 8 = Eight or more |
| ____ 4 = Four | |

(Family Background-continued)

Codes

4. Did any of your brothers or sisters leave high school before they graduated? Please include stepbrothers and stepsisters if they have ever lived with you.

_____ 236

_____ 1 = Yes (GO TO QUESTIONS 4a)

_____ 2 = No

- a. (IF YES) How many of your brothers and sisters left school early?

_____ 0 = None

_____ 5 = Five

_____ 1 = One

_____ 6 = Six

_____ 2 = Two

_____ 7 = Seven

_____ 3 = Three

_____ 8 = Eight or more

_____ 4 = Four

5. What was the highest level of education your mother completed?

_____ /

6. What is your mother's current occupation?

_____ /

7. What was the highest level of education your father completed?

_____ /

8. What is your father's current occupation?

_____ / 245

That completes the interview. Thank you very much for your help.

Appendix B

DEVELOPMENT OF DROPOUT TYPES

In order to better understand the students who dropped out of our schools and to simplify all the information we had collected into a meaningful and coherent picture, we attempted to determine whether or not there were distinct dropout types, based on each student's primary reason for leaving school. This Appendix explains how specific reasons for dropping out were categorized and how dropouts were placed in different groups.

Reducing Specific Reasons to Categories

Our interview data suggested that there are many different reasons why students drop out. In response to an open-ended question about their most important reasons for leaving school, dropouts offered about 80 different specific reasons. In addition, we asked respondents to rate 40 items which had been given as reasons for dropping out in other studies, as a major, partial or not a reason for their leaving school. In order to reduce these numerous reasons to a manageable and meaningful set of categories, we used factor analysis, a statistical procedure which determines the number and nature of underlying variables or factors among a larger set of measures. Since all the respondents had an opportunity to rate each of the 40 possible reasons, we subjected these items to a factor extraction technique called principal components analysis. Exhibit B.1 presents the resulting 12 factors, their component items, the factor loading of each item (the correlation between the item and the factor), and the percentage of respondents who rated each item as a major or partial reason for leaving school. These factors represent 12 underlying groups of items or categories of reasons why students left school.

Eight of the 12 factors seemed to reflect concrete and specific reasons why students left school; these factors formed the basis for the eight dropout types¹:

- o dislike school
- o school failure
- o family/emotional problems
- o employment
- o discipline problems
- o drug/alcohol problems
- o pregnancy/medical problems
- o social problems

The remaining four factors represented reasons that were not cited very frequently or were not sufficiently specific to suggest an underlying cause or problem: wanted to travel/join the military, forced to drop out, school

¹To further validate the eight dropout types, we factor analyzed scores on the 12 reason factors with other information considered relevant to why students drop out of school: age relative to grade level, retention history, CAT performance, cumulative grade point average, suspension history, and employment while in school. This analysis resulted in eight similar categories or dropout types.

EXHIBIT B.1

Principal Components Analysis of 37^a Reasons for Dropping Out
(Listwise Deletion & Varimax Rotation N=497^b)

FACTORS AND COMPONENT ITEMS	Rotation Factor ^c Loading	% Responding as Major/Partial Reason
<u>Employment</u>		
Couldn't earn enough part-time	.81	20.1
Needed money to help out at home	.81	18.7
Couldn't work and study at the same time	.79	25.4
Wanted to work	.57	51.5
Couldn't find a part-time job	.36	9.1
<u>Dislike School</u>		
Didn't like the classes	.70	44.4
School was too boring	.64	49.6
Didn't like school in general	.63	48.6
Not learning anything	.60	39.4
Didn't like school rules	.42	31.4
<u>Discipline Problems</u>		
Teacher or principal had it in for you	.80	22.5
Got blamed for things you didn't do	.72	20.0
Didn't get along with teachers	.62	37.4
<u>Drug/Alcohol Problems</u>		
Had problem with alcohol	.88	13.2
Had problem with drugs	.87	13.4
In trouble outside of school	.54	12.8
<u>Family/Emotional Problems</u>		
Had family problem(s)	.78	25.7
Had emotional problems	.69	27.1
Didn't get any help from home	.49	18.4
Family moved a lot/kept changing schools	.32	13.6
<u>School Not Important</u>		
Social life more important than school	.64	30.8
Skipped school/absent too often	.62	73.6
Couldn't do homework at home	.59	25.6
<u>Travel/Military</u>		
Wanted to travel	.72	10.9
Wanted to join the military	.67	6.4
<u>School Failure</u>		
Classes were too hard	.66	19.9
Didn't pass some/all MD Functional Tests	.56	9.5
Not doing well in classes	.45	63.3
<u>Social Problems</u>		
Friends were out of school	.68	30.2
Didn't get along with other students	.59	20.9
Didn't like school attended	.54	40.8
<u>School Not Challenging</u>		
Classes were too easy	.78	21.9
Wanted to attend alternative program	.48	18.7
<u>Forced to Drop Out</u>		
Mother or father said to quit	.64	5.7
Missed school-suspensions/expulsions	.48	13.4
<u>Pregnancy/Medical Problems</u>		
Pregnant/girlfriend was pregnant	.80	7.5
Had medical problems	.50	20.1

^a Respondents were asked to rate 40 items; 3 items were omitted from this analysis because less than 5 percent of the sample rated them as major/partial reasons for leaving school.

^b This analysis included only those respondents who rated all 37 items.

^c Factor loadings are the correlations between the items and the factors.

not challenging, and school not important. These four factors did not seem to be good candidates for defining dropout types. However, the specific reasons that correlated with these four factors were reviewed to determine whether they could be meaningfully grouped under any of the eight dropout type categories. In addition, interviews citing medical problems as a major reason for dropping out were reviewed to determine whether the medical problems were related to pregnancy or drug/alcohol abuse; it was decided to group other medical problems with family and emotional problems.

Exhibit B.2 presents the 40 reasons and how they were categorized. This exhibit reports the percentage of students by dropout type who volunteered each issue (indicated "Open-ended") or rated each specific reason as a major reason for leaving school. Most of the reasons were categorized based on the principal components analysis. However, there were two different kinds of problem items:

- (1) Some of the items did not clearly belong to any of the eight categories and were grouped under "miscellaneous/ambiguous reasons." Two of these items were among the most frequently rated as major reasons for dropping out of school:

Skipped school/absent too often. About half of the dropouts rated this as a major reason for leaving school. But poor attendance is more a symptom or precursor of dropping out rather than an underlying reason.

Didn't like the school attended. Twenty-one percent of the dropouts rated this as a major reason for leaving school. In the factor analysis, this item was most highly correlated with social problems. Yet, for many students, this seemed to be their way of saying that they disliked school in general.

- (2) Some items, based on their content, seemed to belong in one category, but in fact, were more frequently cited by dropouts in another category:

Social life more important than school seemed to reflect a social problem but was more frequently rated as a major reason for dropping out by students with drug/alcohol problems.

Missed too much school because of suspensions/expulsions. We expected this item would be related to discipline problems, but it was also most often rated as a major reason for leaving school by students with drug/alcohol problems.

Medical problems. This item was most often rated a major reason by pregnant dropouts. However, there were several dropouts who had medical problems unrelated to pregnancy or drugs/alcohol. Instead, we grouped medical problems with family and emotional problems.

Categorizing Dropouts into Different Types

Having determined eight categories of reasons for dropping out of school and their defining items, the next step was to review the interviews to

EXHIBIT B.2

Major Reasons for Leaving School Given by Different Types of Dropouts
Percentage of Dropout Type Giving Each Reason

MAJOR REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT	DROPOUT TYPES								
	Dislike School (N=110)	School Failure (N=80)	Fam/Emo/ ^a Med Prob (N=74)	Employ-ment (N=66)	Discipline Problems (N=51)	Drug/Alcohol Problems (N=39)	Pregnancy/Child care (N=34)	Social Problems (N=34)	All ^b Dropouts (N=488)
	PERCENTAGES								
<u>Dislike School (Open-ended)</u>	88 *	20	12	17	10	41	3	35	34
School was too boring	51 *	14	5	21	10	21	6	21	22
Didn't like school in general	42 *	14	14	11	14	26	9	18	20
Not learning anything	29 *	6	7	12	14	23	9	15	15
Didn't like the classes	19	10	12	9	8	5	6	12	11
Didn't like school rules	15	10	7	6	12	13	3	12	10
Classes were too easy	15 *	0	5	5	2	8	3	9	7
<u>School Failure (Open-ended)</u>	33	95 *	35	15	27	54	24	18	40
Not doing well in classes	27	56 *	19	20	22	28	18	12	27
Classes were too hard	4	14 *	1	6	2	3	6	3	5
Failed Maryland Functional Tests	3	3	0	3	6	0	3	6	3
<u>Fam/Emo/Med^a Problems (Open-ended)</u>	3	1	82 *	9	6	10	15	26	19
Had family problem(s)	6	8	45 *	8	10	23	18	38	17
Had emotional problems	5	3	32 *	5	8	13	6	18	10
Had medical problems	5	3	22	8	8	21	26 *	6	11
Didn't get any help from home	5	5	20 *	6	6	3	15	12	9
Couldn't do homework at home	12	6	18	11	16	13	6	9	11
Family moved/kept changing schools	5	3	12	6	8	3	3	12	6
Needed to baby-sit sibling at home	1	1	5	2	0	0	0	3	2
<u>Employment (Open-ended)</u>	4	1	4	92 *	2	10	3	3	16
Wanted to work	25	13	9	70 *	18	23	29	32	27
Couldn't earn enough part-time	8	1	14	41 *	2	8	6	12	12
Couldn't work and study at same time	8	3	12	36 *	2	10	6	9	11
Needed money to help out at home	7	0	9	33 *	2	0	12	12	9
Couldn't find a part-time job	4	3	3	11 *	2	0	0	0	3
<u>Discipline Problems (Open-ended)</u>	12	15	15	6	86 *	23	0	3	19
Teacher/principal had it in for you	5	3	5	6	41 *	13	3	6	9
Didn't get along with teachers	13	8	14	12	33 *	13	12	9	14
Got blamed for things you didn't do	5	3	4	8	25 *	8	6	9	7
Missed school-suspensions/expulsions	5	4	5	3	14	21 *	0	9	7
<u>Drug/Alcohol Problems (Open-ended)</u>	0	0	0	0	2	31 *	0	0	3
Had problem with drugs	0	0	0	2	0	87 *	0	0	7
Had problem with alcohol	0	1	1	2	0	74 *	0	0	7
In trouble outside of school	1	1	7	3	6	23 *	0	18	6
<u>Pregnancy/Child Care (Open-ended)</u>	0	0	3	0	2	0	91 *	0	7
Pregnant/girlfriend was pregnant	0	0	0	2	0	0	79 *	0	6
Had problem finding child care	0	0	0	2	0	0	29 *	0	2
Got married	0	0	3	0	0	0	9 *	0	1
<u>Social Problems (Open-ended)</u>	2	1	4	3	6	13	0	82 *	9
Friends were out of school	10	9	11	15	8	15	6	50 *	13
Didn't get along with other students	4	1	4	8	4	5	6	41 *	7
Social life more important than school	11	6	9	18	6	26 *	6	18	12
<u>Miscellaneous/Ambiguous Reasons</u>									
Skipped school/absent too often	51	53	50	48	65	62	38	44	52
Didn't like school attended	25	23	19	17	20	21	6	32	21
Wanted to attend alternative program	10	5	3	11	10	15	6	6	8
Wanted to join the military	4	0	4	5	4	3	3	6	3
Wanted to travel	2	1	4	3	4	8	3	6	3
Mother or father said to quit	3	3	3	6	2	0	0	3	3

^a Family, emotional or medical problems not related to drug/alcohol abuse or pregnancy

^b Only those dropouts who responded to the open-ended question about why they had left school and who rated all the reasons for dropping out were included in this analysis.

* There is statistically significant variation across dropout types. The percentage marked with an asterisk (*) is significantly higher than the percentage for all dropouts.

determine to which group each dropout belonged. We considered the reasons students volunteered as most important in their decision to leave school as well as their ratings of the 40 possible reasons for dropping out.

Seventy-nine percent of the dropouts cited reasons from more than one category as their most important or major reasons for leaving school. However, a careful review of their interviews suggested one issue as more salient than the others in influencing the student's decision to drop out.² The more salient issues tended to be both volunteered and rated as major reasons for dropping out, or were mentioned in response to other questions during the interview (e.g., What would have kept you in school?).

Two categories tended to override the others when deciding between multiple major reasons: drug/alcohol problems and pregnancy/lack of child care. These problems seemed more specific and more pressing than the other issues these dropouts mentioned. Especially complex were those students who experienced problems with drugs and/or alcohol. All of these students mentioned more than one major reason for leaving school. With very few exceptions, however, those students who either volunteered or rated drug/alcohol abuse as a major reason for dropping out were categorized as "drug/alcohol problems." Less complex were those students who cited pregnancy and/or lack of child care as a major reason for leaving school. But again, with only a few exceptions, these students were categorized as dropping out due to "pregnancy/child care problems."

In addition to carefully reviewing all of the interviews that mentioned drug/alcohol or pregnancy/child care problems, we also took a closer look at the interviews of dropouts that were difficult to classify, that is:

- o dropouts who cited miscellaneous, ambiguous or difficult to categorize reasons (e.g., didn't like school rules, didn't get along with teachers)
- o dropouts who were inconsistent in the issues they volunteered versus the items they rated as major reasons for leaving school
- o dropouts who cited the less concrete reasons for dropping out, namely dislike of school and social problems

After each respondent had been categorized into one of the eight dropout types, group membership was validated using a statistical procedure called discriminant analysis. Discriminant analysis predicts group membership

²For students with multiple problems, it was impossible to determine the underlying cause--that is, what went wrong first. For example, dropouts with drug problems often disliked school, had discipline problems, and were not doing well academically. Did one or more of these other problems cause these students to become involved with drugs? On the other hand, did using drugs affect their interest and performance in school and cause them to get in trouble? We did not attempt to untangle the relationships among these issues during our interviews with dropouts. Consequently, most dropouts have been grouped according to what they said was their most important reason for leaving school.

based on a set of variables, in this case, responses to all of the questions about why dropouts left school. Exhibit B.2 presents the results of this analysis and indicates which items significantly discriminated among the eight dropout types. For the most part, those items used to define a dropout type category, were most frequently cited by students in that category. Interviews of those dropouts who would be grouped differently based on the discriminant analysis, were reviewed to verify group membership. The final grouping of respondents into the eight dropout types agreed with the discriminant procedure for 87 percent of the cases.³

³A generally accepted standard for inter-rater reliability is 80 percent or higher agreement.

Appendix C

PROGRAM FACT SHEETS

This appendix includes fact sheet descriptions of each the programs that existed in the nine senior high and six mid-level schools we surveyed at the end of 1987-88.¹ Also included are program fact sheets for the six area-based alternative programs, based on interviews with area office and program staff during 1988-89. The information for these fact sheets is based on responses to the interview questionnaire which follows and any written material supplied by the programs.

Each of the fact sheets includes information covering the following topics:

- o program participants
- o participant selection and admission
- o program capacity
- o number of students served in 1987-88
- o program staffing
- o program funding in 1987-88
- o program history
- o program monitoring
- o program outcomes
- o contributors to success
- o barriers to success

It should be noted that the responses given to our questions about program monitoring and outcomes were uneven, both in the type and level of information provided. In response to our question about program monitoring, answers ranged from informal monitoring of program participants to formal program evaluation. In talking about program outcomes, few schools had objective data on program effects; rather, most discussed their subjective opinions about the program and its impact.

These fact sheets have been organized according to the types of programs discussed in Chapter 5:

- o Mentoring Programs
- o Area-Based Alternative Programs
- o School-Based Comprehensive Programs
- o School-Based Specific Needs Programs

¹A few programs have changed significantly in design or have been discontinued since 1987-88 and are not included here.

SECTION I:

PROGRAMS AIMED AT PREVENTING STUDENTS FROM DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

(Please complete a separate form for each program.)

Name of Program: _____

1. Briefly describe the program. Do you have anything in writing which describes the program? (If so, please provide a copy.)

2. What type of student is the program aimed at (e.g., chronic truants, students with a history of poor academic performance, students who work more than 20 hours per week, etc.)?

3. How do you decide which students will participate in the program? Specifically:

- a. Do students choose to participate or is there a student selection process?

_____ Students choose to participate (Skip to Q. 3c)

_____ Students are selected to participate

- b. What are the criteria for selection?

c. Is there a limit on the number of students served?

_____ Yes

_____ No (Skip to Q. 4)

d. What is the limit? _____ students

4. How many students are currently served by the program? _____ students

5. How are students informed about the program?

6. How long has the program been in effect? _____ years

7. How is the program staffed?

8. How is the program funded?

9. Has the implementation of this program affected your staffing requirements? If yes, please explain.

a. Have you had to add staff?

_____ Yes

_____ No (Skip to Q. 9c)

b. How many?

c. Have you had to shift staff members' responsibilities?

_____ Yes

_____ No

10. Has the implementation of this program affected the allocation of other resources (e.g., materials, discretionary funds)? If yes, please explain.

11. Do you monitor the effectiveness of the program, either formally or informally? If so, please describe your monitoring efforts.

12. How well do you think the program is working?

13. What factors do you think are most important for ensuring the success of the program?

14. What do you think are the greatest barriers to the success of the program?

MENTORING PROGRAMS

Montgomery Blair High School: Serving as Guides in Education (SAGE) Mentor Program (QIE)

This QIE-sponsored mentoring program provides support and guidance to at-risk students who staff feel would benefit from a mentor relationship. In addition to this general support, the Blair program organizes remedial classes to help at-risk students pass the Project Basic tests.

Program Participants	Students who exhibit: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o severe discipline problemso problems at homeo academic problemso psychological problems
Selection/ Admission	The counselors and the principal identify those students whom they feel would benefit from a mentor relationship. Referrals are also often made by parents. Some students have participated in mentor programs at their feeder schools. In August, potential mentees and their parents attend a meeting describing the program and students decide whether or not to participate.
Capacity	No limit, but only 3 - 4 students assigned to each mentor
No. of Students Served in 87-88	65
Staffing	20 staff volunteers serve as mentors; mentor duty is an acceptable Instructional Related Activity (IRA).
Funding in 87-88	QIE funds for speakers, in-service training and other resources; school funds for refreshments
History	4 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Program monitoring is informal; mentors track their students' activities and progress, while the program co-ordinator monitors student/mentor relationships and provides support as needed.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel the program has had a positive impact on many of the mentees considered most at-risk. However, they feel that program effectiveness is highly dependent on the extent and quality of mentor/mentee contacts.
Contributors to Success	Principal as mentor role model for teachers Support and training from QIE Guidance counselors' support
Barriers to Success	Lack of commitment and available time mentors have to give mentees Inability to contact parents or to obtain their support

Gaithersburg High School: Skills for Living (QUEST)/Mentor Program (QIE)

Gaithersburg's QIE-sponsored mentoring program is a component of QUEST, a social studies course designed to help students increase their self-discipline, sense of responsibility and ability to get along with themselves and others. The QUEST/Mentor Program provides a student support system that includes regular sessions with community-based mental health personnel, counselors from the school guidance department, and mentors who are the students' teachers.

Program Participants	Students taking QUEST as an elective; many of the participants exhibit poor attendance, academic performance below ability, possible involvement with drugs or alcohol, and/or crisis orientation at home or school.
Selection/ Admission	Students and mentors agree to mentoring relationship.
Capacity	80 students
No. of Students Served in 87-88	78
Staffing	Alternative positions and one special education position are used for QUEST teachers. Mentors are teachers who volunteer.
Funding in 87-88	QIE funded original in-service training on mentoring. Local Lions Club funded QUEST training for 2 teachers. Area office provides discretionary funds for student workshops. School budget funds QUEST texts.
History	3 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Program is monitored formally, twice a year (as required by QIE) and through case studies, parent surveys (provided by QUEST National), teacher evaluations of the program, and student surveys.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel the program is "working very well;" specifically they mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Ideal support system for students returning from drug rehabilitationo Students and parents very positive about programo Significant improvement in attendance and self-esteemo Increased parent contact and involvement
Contributors to Success	Program staffing Administrative and area office support Guidance support
Barriers to Success	Staffing problems Lack of money

Richard Montgomery High School: The Advisory (Mentoring) Program (QIE)

In this QIE-sponsored mentoring program, interested staff serve as advisors to selected students in order of increase participants' self-confidence, coping skills, and concern for others. A series of "mini-sessions" is a primary feature of the program. Some of these occur at lunchtime where staff talk about hobbies or experiences; others deal with "life coping skills" and are offered by the Alternative School Coordinator.

Program Participants	Program open to all, but targeted toward Grade 9 students who have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o poor academic performanceo erratic attendance patternso difficult home situations
Selection/ Admission	Most students are recommended through the guidance department, but teachers refer some students and some participants are self-referrals.
Capacity	Depends upon number of advisors available; optimum ratio is 1-to-1
No. of Students Served in 87-88	114
Staffing	Mentors include over 80 staff volunteers, some from supporting services.
Funding in 87-88	Discretionary funds used for refreshments, some mailings, and small tokens for students
History	3 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	After each seminar, participants are asked to list 2 things they learned, and a questionnaire is given to all advisors and advisees at the end of the year.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that program is "working very well in most cases." 20 students were moved from basic to on-level classes; 6 were encouraged to register for honors classes.
Contributors to Success	Enthusiastic, open and dedicated staff Minimum amount of paperwork Administrative support
Barriers to Success	Staff time - program really an out-of-school event which occurs evenings or weekends

Paint Branch High School: Mentor Program (QIE)

The goals and objectives of this QIE-sponsored program are to promote academic achievement and social growth among identified at-risk students and to facilitate better communication among parents, teachers, counselors and students. Mentors meet with students both formally and informally at least once a week.

Program Participants	In-coming ninth and tenth graders with academic, behavioral or attendance problems
Selection/ Admission	Most students are referred by counselors, teachers or parents, but some students choose to participate.
Capacity	Depends on number of mentors; minimum is 2 students per mentor
No. of Students Served in 87-88	27 (using 9 mentors)
Staffing	Interested staff volunteer; mentors include teachers, the career specialist and assistant principal. The assistant principal directs the program.
Funding in 87-88	QIE and school funds for field trips and mentor stipends
History	Program started in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Student grades and attendance are monitored. Mentors keep activity logs reflecting mentor/mentee meetings, mentee progress, parent contacts and mentee problems. Mentors evaluate themselves through monthly meetings.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that the program "is working great." Mentors feel a strong sense of accomplishment.
Contributors to Success	Teachers' caring
Barriers to Success	Lack of time to meet with students Lack of money Lack of time management skills

Sligo Middle School: Working in the Spirit of Helping (WISH) Mentor Program (QIE)

Originally a QIE-sponsored program, Sligo is now running it's own mentoring program. Interested staff serve as mentors to individual students and work to improve each student's self-concept and attitude regarding school. Mentors in the program at Sligo contact students twice a week.

Program Participants	Students who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o have behavior problemso come from single parent homeso are in academic difficulty
Selection/ Admission	Grade Level/Academic Teams recommend potential participants. These students choose whether or not to participate. Participants are then matched with volunteer mentors from the school.
Capacity	25 (capacity based on number of staff volunteers)
No. of Students Served in 87-88	20-25
Staffing	Mentors are staff volunteers.
Funding in 87-88	QIE funds
History	2 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Monitoring is informal. Mentors monitor their own effectiveness and meet monthly with each other to share progress made by students.
Program Outcomes	Program staff feel that the program is "very effective."
Contributors to Success	Committed staff
Barriers to Success	Lack of time; program requires tremendous amounts of staff time

Julius West Middle School: Mentor Program (QIE)

This QIE-sponsored mentoring program helps identified students meet greater school success by providing positive role models. Interested staff work with students on issues such as academic achievement, self-esteem, peer and family relations, behavior and school adjustment. Mentors meet with students during a daily 15-minute reading time; some also meet before or after school, during lunch, or during planning time. Each mentor works with about 5 students, both individually and as a group.

Program Participants	Students with academic or social problems
Selection/ Admission	Confidential lists of students needing help are generated by team teachers, counselors and administrators. Counselors help match mentors with selected students. Mentors discuss the program with their students, and students then choose whether or not to participate.
Capacity	Depends upon number of volunteer mentors; there are 3-5 students per mentor.
No. of Students Served in 87-88	66
Staffing	There are 16-17 mentors, all of whom are staff volunteers. A committee (the principal, two teachers, and a counselor) coordinates the program.
Funding in 87-88	Area office and QIE funds
History	2 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Mentors, counselors and administrators are members of the Mentor Committee which shares program information during regular meetings. Mentors also meet with grade level teams to exchange information about students. Participants and staff evaluate the program in writing.
Program Outcomes	Participants like the program and want it continued. Teachers seek out mentors as an additional resource. Parents have expressed positive feelings about the program.
Contributors to Success	Built-in program time during daily reading time Administrative support Minimal paperwork involved Use of counselors as resources to help mentors with problems
Barriers to Success	Time constraints (15 minutes/day) Some students not selected Mentors' frustration at inability to solve all problems Limited number of mentors because staff also needed for reading classes

Damascus High School: Mentoring Program

The Damascus Mentoring Program follows the QIE model but is not sponsored by QIE. Interested staff members serve as advisors to students having trouble in school. Each mentor seeks information from teachers and counselors and attempts to make daily contact with his mentee. Some staff work on social skills with their mentees. However, this program does not involve after-school or weekend contact.

Program Participants	Students unsuccessful in school, academically or otherwise
Selection/ Admission	The mentors discuss students and decide mentor/mentee "matches". Mentors then explain the program to their potential mentees, and the student decides whether or not to participate.
Capacity	Approximately 30; limit is 1 student per staff member
No. of Students Served in 87-88	30-35
Staffing	Mentors are volunteers from the regular staff, both professional and support staff.
Funding in 87-88	None
History	2 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Monitoring is informal; mentors meet and discuss participants.
Program Outcomes	Program staff feel it is hard to evaluate the program's outcomes.
Contributors to Success	Staff commitment.
Barriers to Success	Lack of staff time - program is additional responsibility for staff

Martin Luther King Junior High School: Mentoring Program

This school-sponsored mentoring program is designed to assist students who have academic, behavior, or social adjustment problems. Interested staff members serve as mentors to individuals or small groups of students. The program is viewed as a preventative measure; it provides services such as one-on-one counseling, group counseling and tutoring. Mentors help students examine alternative ways to handle their problems.

Program Participants	Students who exhibit: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o poor school attendanceo poor peer relationshipso academic difficultieso inappropriate behavior patterns
Selection/ Admission	Referrals come primarily from the guidance counselor, but teachers and administrators submit names also. Students are invited to participate in the program. Participants and parents sign a performance contract.
Capacity	No limit
No. of Students Served in 87-88	65-70
Staffing	Mentors are volunteers from the teaching staff.
Funding in 87-88	Minigrant funds
History	2 years old in 1987-88
Program	Mentors get together informally and discuss how the program is working. The resource counselor acts as a "consultant" to the program and assists in program monitoring.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that the program is "successful, but it varies from student to student."
Contributors to Success	Communication between mentors and other staff or parents Getting students to understand that they have a responsibility to themselves and to the program
Barriers to Success	Limits on meeting times due to school and personal schedules

AREA-BASED ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Area 1 Alternative Program: New School

The New School offers a full-day academic program which seeks to improve academic performance, teach basic communications skills, and increase productive decision-making and leadership skills. Classes, which include the basic academic subjects and physical education, are conducted in small group settings. Students are encouraged to help and support one another in personal and academic areas.

Program Participants	Students in Grades 10-12 who exhibit: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o poor academic performance in spite of average or above average abilityo chronic poor attendanceo personal psychological stress
Students Excluded	Those identified as having special education needs
Selection/Admission	Students are referred through a variety of sources, including principals, counselors, pupil personnel workers (PPWs), teachers and families. The PPW reviews the referral and recommends to family and home school if student is a candidate. Interested students are asked to visit the program and participate in an interview before a placement decision is made.
Location	Piney Branch Elementary School, Takoma Park
Capacity	25
No. of Students Served in 87-88	25
Staffing	Staff include 1 resource and 1 alternative teacher, and 1 instructional assistant.
Funding in 87-88	Area Office funds
History	14 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	A supervisor of secondary instruction and the on-site principal monitor the program.
Program Outcomes	Students remain as long as necessary, but no longer than one year. Very few participants drop out.
Contributors to Success	Good instruction in communication skills Sincere support systems for participants
Barriers to Success	Inappropriate placement of some students due to poor understanding of program model

Area 1 Alternative Program: QUEST

QUEST is a specifically designed treatment program based on family therapy. It serves students who cannot succeed in regular mid-level schools but do not need remedial help. Participants attend their home schools half-day and are bussed to QUEST for highly structured afternoons consisting of group therapy, art classes, physical activities and study sessions. Individual student contracts that clearly state expectations regarding behavior and attendance, are monitored daily. Family therapy is provided by the Montgomery County Department of Addictions, Victim and Mental Health Services.

Program Participants	Students in Grades 6-8 who exhibit some of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o academic performance below abilityo poor attendanceo inappropriate social skills and classroom behavioro involvement with drugs or alcohol
Students Excluded	Those with severe physical or mental handicaps; students with milder handicaps are not excluded
Selection/ Admission	Students are identified by the EMT/SARD process and referred to the area pupil personnel worker (PPW). The PPW arranges an intake interview to include the following: student and parents, the PPW, the home school's principal/assistant principal and counselor, and the QUEST director. Parents and students must agree to accept the program and sign a 9-week renewable contract.
Location	Cloverly Elementary School, Silver Spring in 1987-88
Capacity	20 students
No. of Students Served in 87-88	19
Staffing	The program had 2 teachers in 1987-88.
Funding in 87-88	Area Office funds
History	12 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Written contracts state expectations regarding homework, attendance, and behavior. Academic performance, behavior and attendance are monitored daily at the home school and at QUEST, and successful days are reported to the parents.
Program Outcomes	Most students stay in program 14-20 weeks, but no more than 36 weeks.
Contributors to Success	Parents' participation and weekly involvement Student cooperation and participation
Barriers to Success	Family indifference Lack of administrative support

Area 2 Alternative Program: Gateway

Gateway is designed for students unable to function in a regular high school who are therefore failing. Participants spend the morning in school where academic classes cover the regular high school curriculum but class size is small and instruction is individualized. Counseling, both individual and group, is an important part of the program. Efforts are made to discover students' aptitudes and encourage career interests. Most program participants work in the afternoon. Students who do not hold outside jobs attend afternoon study sessions.

Program Participants	Students in Grades 10-12 who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o average or above average in abilityo chronically tardy or absento emotionally volatileo failing in regular school
Students Excluded	Those who are drug dependent or who are eligible for special education programs
Selection/ Admission	Students are referred and admitted through the SARD/AARD process.
Location	Beall Elementary School (separate building), Rockville
Capacity	32
No. of Students Served in 87-88	35
Staffing	Staff include a full-time instructional assistant and 3.2 teaching positions (a full-time teacher/coordinator and Math/Science teacher, half-time English and Social Studies teachers, and a .2 computer instructor).
Funding in 87-88	Area Office funds
History	9 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Program staff monitor attendance and use the MCPS grading policy and exams to monitor academic performance.
Program Outcomes	Most students stay in program 2-3 years. While 90-95% complete high school at Gateway, 5-10% return to home school classes. After Gateway, 33% go to college.
Contributors to Success	Group counseling Aptitude testing and counseling Individualized help with job interests and search Work experiences which can "turn kids around" regarding actions, attitudes and dress
Barriers to Success	Teachers available to program who sometimes are not interested in nor prepared to work with this type of student

Area 2 Alternative Program: Tahoma

Tahoma is primarily an academic program which offers courses required for graduation in English, math, science, social studies and computer science. Program participants receive individualized attention and support. After attending Tahoma full-time for one semester, students are mainstreamed at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School for as many courses as possible.

Program Participants	Students in Grades 10-12 who exhibit: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o chronic poor attendanceo average or above average abilityo school phobia
Students Excluded	Students eligible for special education services
Selection/ Admission	Students are referred for placement by a pupil personnel worker from the Area 2 office.
Location	Lynnbrook Center, Bethesda
Capacity	25
No. of Students Served in 87-88	25
Staffing	Staff includes 1 alternative teacher, 1 resource teacher, and 2 instructional assistants. The resource teacher also coordinates program.
Funding in 87-88	Area Office funds
History	8 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	The program monitors the percent of students who graduate and/or return to their home school each year.
Program Outcomes	Most students remain 1 year. About 70% of the students graduate or stay in school.
Contributors to Success	Student commitment to finishing school Low student-teacher ratio
Barriers to Success	Lack of systematic and effective standards in dealing with substance abuse

Area 2 Alternative Program: Whittier

All Whittier students take a four-course academic program in the morning and participate in alternative activities during the afternoon. These activities include an on-site art program, non-academic electives at the nearby high school, and a work-study program in which students get their own job and credit is given for satisfactory work. Additionally, everyone receives both individual and group counseling, and all participate in challenging outdoor experiences such as caving and climbing. Based on successful semesters at Whittier, students are increasingly mainstreamed at Walt Whitman High School. The program's goal is to return participants to their home school.

Program Participants	Students in Grades 9-12 who exhibit: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o chronic poor attendanceo poor academic performance despite average abilityo drug/alcohol involvemento social/emotional problems
Students Excluded	Students who are physically handicapped, learning disabled, or have low IQs
Selection/ Admission	Students are referred by the SARD/AARD Committee. Area office pupil personnel workers (PPWs) meet with student and parents to determine appropriateness of the placement. All concerned parties attend an intake conference at Whittier.
Location	Whittier Woods, Bethesda
Capacity	18
No. of Students Served in 87-88	16
Staffing	Staff include 2.3 teachers, (1 resource teacher and 1 classroom teacher) plus 1 instructional assistant. The resource teacher also coordinates the program.
Funding in 87-88	Area Office funds
History	17 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Monitoring includes monthly progress reviews of students by the area office PPW and psychologist, and informal and formal meetings with parents and/or student as needed.
Program Outcomes	Most students remain in program 1-2 years. About 85% of the students graduated or stayed in school in 1987-88.
Contributors to Success	Student commitment
Barriers to Success	Dysfunctional or nonsupportive families

Area 3 Alternative Program: Journey

Journey is primarily an academic program offering individualized instruction and small classes to participants. Students and staff together design performance contracts which specify behavior, attendance and academic goals. These, along with interesting field trips and challenging outdoor activities, help students develop self-confidence and decision-making skills. Career education is part of the program, but lack of nearby public transportation prohibits a work component. There are mainstreaming opportunities on-site at Poolesville Junior/Senior High.

Program Participants	Students in Grades 9-12 who exhibit: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o chronic poor attendanceo poor academic performanceo school phobia
Students Excluded	Students who are physically disruptive, drug/alcohol-involved, or eligible for special education services
Selection/ Admission	Students are most often referred by schools or PPWs but sometimes by parents. Referrals are reviewed by a screening committee and students are admitted on a contract basis.
Location	Poolesville Junior/Senior High
Capacity	20
No. of Students Served in 87-88	23
Staffing	Staff include 1 resource teacher, 1 interdisciplinary teacher, and 2 instructional assistants. The resource teacher acts as an on-site coordinator.
Funding in 87-88	Area Office and federal Civiletti funds
History	4 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	The program monitors attendance, grades, LCs, academic progress, and suspensions. In addition to these aspects of student performance, parent and student questionnaires are used to evaluate the program.
Program Outcomes	Most students stay in the program for 2 years. Almost 90% of the 1987-88 participants graduated or stayed in school.
Contributors to Success	Talent and dedication of staff Supportive environment of Poolesville Jr/Sr High School Parent support Area Office support
Barriers to Success	Lack of resources No on-site counselor or administrator Staff turnover

SCHOOL-BASED COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS

Parkland Junior High School: Changing Habits to Offer Individuals Choices
in Education (CHOICE)

CHOICE is an alternative program designed to help students who have failed in the regular school setting. The program is based on the premise that if underachieving students meet in a small group with a teacher who can help them experience some academic success, they will remain in school. Participants are in self-contained classes for five periods each day, receiving instruction in core academic subjects, help with study and social skills, and guidance in career education. Students are mainstreamed for their elective classes. Instruction is supplemented by monthly field trips and outdoor activities such as rock climbing, canoeing and caving which is sponsored by the Montgomery County Recreation Department.

Program Participants	Students who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o failed Grades 7 or 8o have severe attendance and discipline problemso may be drug or alcohol involved
Selection/ Admission	Students are identified through the EMT/SARD process or by Grade Level Teams. Selected students are notified by the school counselor or program coordinator. Students and parents must agree to program placement.
Capacity	12-14
No. of Students Served in 87-88	17
Staffing	Staff include 1 full-time academic teacher who also serves as the program coordinator, and a teacher and counselor who work with the program part-time.
Funding in 87-88	Community School Grant
History	3 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Attendance, grades and participation in the total school process are informally monitored when students leave the program.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that "the program is working extremely well, especially with the most recent group of students." Specifically, they feel that the program has improved school attendance and academic skills.
Contributors to Success	Modeling academic orientation of program as much as possible after the regular school program Weekly or biweekly contacts with the home Social contacts with students both in and out of class Supportive school staff
Barriers to Success	Nonsupportive home situations

Tilden Intermediate School: Tilden's Alternative Program (TAP)

Tilden's Alternative Program (TAP) tries to increase the academic success of students having difficulty by allowing easy movement in and out of the alternative and regular programs. In addition to basic skills classes, TAP offers tutorial help to students re-entering the regular program and to those already in the regular program who need extra help. TAP also helps other teachers; the alternative teacher sometimes instructs small groups, co-teaches or prepares differentiated lesson plans.

Program Participants	Students in Grades 7-8 who are not doing well academically, as evidenced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o poor grades, CAT stanines of 4 or below, oro weak basic skills in English or math.
Selection/ Admission	Classroom teachers recommend placement in the program. The Educational Management Team (EMT) discusses recommendations and places students. Parents are notified of scheduling changes.
Capacity	No limit
No. of Students Served in 87-88	75
Staffing	The alternative teacher instructs basic skills English and tutors students. Math and science are taught by teachers from the regular program. Peer tutors, the reading teacher and the guidance counselor assist part-time in the program.
Funding in 87-88	School funds for materials and Minigrant funds for minority population materials and trips
History	6 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	The Alternative Team (composed of the alternative teacher, reading specialist, resource room teacher, and alternative counselor) monitors the progress of students in the program.
Program Outcomes	The administration classifies the program as "one that works," and finds that participants achieve and feel good about themselves, and that many students remain mainstreamed because of tutorial support.
Contributors to Success	Commitment from administrators, staff and students Highly flexible scheduling system Shared materials and rooms - participants not singled out Team approach - 3 teachers work together with student
Barriers to Success	Lack of time and resources

Julius West Middle School: Alternative Support Program

The Alternative Support Program is designed to give additional assistance to students who need extra help in their academic classes. Students come to the alternative teacher one class per day to work on assignments from other classes. They receive help with homework and study skills. Emphasis is placed on attendance, organization, and time on task.

Program Participants	Student in Grades 7-8 who are not doing well in school due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o poor organizational skillso poor attendanceo difficult home situations Program also includes ESOL students who need help to succeed in mainstream classes.
Selection/ Admission	Students are referred through academic teams or the EMT. The selection criteria are very subjective; there are no stanine cut-offs. Students' schedules indicate program admission.
Capacity	40 (2 classes of 20)
No. of Students Served in 87-88	40
Staffing	Two alternative teachers make up the program staff.
Funding in 87-88	School funds
History	3 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Monitoring is informal; no objective data are gathered. Participants are asked if they like the program. Attendance is monitored, but changes in attendance patterns are not collected.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that the program helps students who need assistance and support in doing homework and long-term library projects.
Contributors to Success	Small teacher-to-pupil ratio Emphasis on positive feelings and accomplishments Direct involvement of teachers rather than lecturing classes
Barriers to Success	Poor school attendance

Montgomery Blair High School: Special, Alternative and Remedial Classes
(SPARC)

SPARC is designed to provide a range of academic class placement options for low-achievers as well as related supports from guidance and vocational education. Participating students receive specially designed remedial instruction in English, math, science and social studies. Class size is small (8 to 18 students) and materials are appropriate to skill levels.

Program Participants	Students in Grades 9 and 10 with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o special education needso consistent test scores 3 or more years below grade level in reading or matho scores in stanines 1, 2 or 3 on the CAT
Selection/ Admission	Teachers, parents or counselors refer potential participants to the Educational Management Team (EMT); EMT makes placement decisions and parents are notified.
Capacity	No limit
No. of Students Served in 87-88	210
Staffing	SPARC is an alternative staffing model: the Area Office allocates 7.8 SPARC positions which include teachers of the disadvantaged, reading specialists and special education resource teachers. In addition, the school shifts some staff from other positions.
Funding in 87-88	Regular instructional accounts for special texts and materials and Area Office funds
History	6 years old in 87-88
Program Monitoring	The program tracks student performance on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, the Test of Written Language and pre/post Project Basic tests, and monitors student attendance and grades.
Program Outcomes	Students participating in the 1987-88 Reading/Writing Workshop component averaged a gain in reading comprehension of 1.4 years. More than 84% of these same students passed the Project Basic tests in Reading and Writing. In addition, the staff feel that the program has prevented several participants from dropping out.
Contributors to Success	Teamwork among teachers, counselors and administrators Close communication with parents Parental support Funding for special materials Organization, knowledge and commitment of teachers
Barriers to Success	Student and parental apathy Inability to reach some students who have stopped attending school

AIM combines classroom academics and outside employment. Participants work for 2 periods of each 7-period day, attend regular classes for another 3, and receive a combination of seminars, individualized help and field trips in the remaining time. The AIM coordinator assesses individual student needs, conducts workshops related to job performance, visits students on the job, models instruction for other teachers and conducts parent support meetings. Attempts are made to use all possible school resources (both program and staff) to help these students achieve academic and job success.

116

SCHOOL-BASED SPECIFIC NEEDS PROGRAMS

Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School: Athletic Tutoring Program

This program helps students who participate in sports boost their academic skills through group sessions in study skills, goal-setting, memory training and time management as well as individual tutoring if needed. Sessions are held during the time between school and practice.

Program Participants	Students participating in junior varsity and varsity football and basketball
Selection/ Admission	Initial sessions are mandatory for all team members; later sessions are mandatory only for those with academic problems.
Capacity	No limit
No. of Students Served in 87-88	125 (75 in football, 50 in basketball)
Staffing	Media specialist helps teachers set up and maintain the program. Parents conduct evening study halls.
Funding in 87-88	\$3000 Minigrant
History	Program started in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	The coaches informally monitor the students' progress.
Program Outcomes	Staff observed that participants spent more time studying in media center before school, and students reported that study sessions were worthwhile.
Contributors to Success	Coaches' involvement Mandatory participation Business community's support - meal discounts given to participants "Captive audience" aspect - participants studied during time usually wasted while waiting to practice
Barriers to Success	Coaches' perception that the program was an imposition Maintaining student attendance Exclusion of spring sports from program

Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School: Student Resource Center (SRC)

This program, which is based on a resource model, provides participants with one class period each day of guided study time. The SRC teacher meets with classroom teachers to learn assignments and make necessary student accommodations.

Program Participants	Students who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o score at stanines 3 and 4 on the CATo have poor organizational skillso exhibit dramatic school failure
Selection/ Admission	Students are placed by Educational Management Team (EMT) but must consent to placement.
Capacity	60 students (12 students per class, 5 classes)
No. of Students Served in 87-88	55-60
Staffing	Staff includes one QIE disadvantaged position and the reading specialist. Other teachers cover classes during Instructionally Related Activities (IRA) period.
Funding in 87-88	General school funds
History	3-4 years old in 1987-88 (as currently organized)
Program Monitoring	Program monitoring is informal; because the need is greater than the staffing available, students are removed if they don't use the program well.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that the program is working beautifully.
Contributors to Success	Teacher's skills, caring attitude, and commitment to academics Nature of instruction: hands-on academic help rather than classroom lectures Staff knowledge of assignments from regular teachers
Barriers to Success	Inability to serve more kids

Montgomery Blair High School: Project High Hopes
Job Training Partnership Act (JPTA)

Project High Hopes is a career exploration program directed toward economically disadvantaged and physically impaired youth with college aspirations. The program provides information about marketable skills and existing career possibilities through mentorships and job-shadowing experiences.

Program Participants	Poor or handicapped students who plan to attend college
Selection/ Admission	All students who receive reduced-fee or free lunches are invited to apply. The program coordinator visits classes to describe the program to students. Participants must maintain a C average to stay in program.
Capacity	No limit
No. of Students Served in 87-88	36
Staffing	One half-time position coordinates the program.
Funding in 87-88	Federally funded through Montgomery College
History	3 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	School does not monitor the program.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that program is working fairly well.
Contributors to Success	Support of total school staff Business community support, for example, the Adopt-a-School Program
Barriers to Success	Difficulty in obtaining mentorships for some students Complexity of written application to be completed by students and parents Difficulty in recruiting participants Limited English skills of some participants

Damascus High School: Parents as Partners

This program is designed to improve parent involvement and the quality of parent-school communications. At formal group meetings, held every 2 weeks participating parents receive reports on their children's progress in school. Staff volunteers work on parenting skills during these meetings, and occasionally students are invited to work on study skills at a separate location. The program runs one semester, but some parents are invited to participate a second semester.

Program Participants	Primarily parents or guardians of students considered "at risk", but sometimes students are included
Selection/ Admission	Parents of selected students are asked to participate and must make commitment to attend.
Capacity	20 families per semester
No. of Students Served in 87-88	50 families
Staffing	The program is staffed by volunteers which include: 2 guidance counselors, 2 classroom teachers, and 1 special education teacher. Four additional teachers also contributed to program.
Funding in 87-88	Minigrant funds and small amount from community/school source
History	1 year old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Teachers fill out reports twice a month on program participants, to be used in meetings with parents. Staff compare students' grades before parents participate in the program to grades during their program involvement.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that the program has an impact on some students and in some families.
Contributors to Success	Parent commitment to program Staff commitment Money for materials
Barriers to Success	Staff time because program is an added task for staff Workload for staff

Gaithersburg High School: Alateen Group

Although based on the AA Alateen model, this program includes young people with drug or alcohol problems themselves as well as those whose families have drug or alcohol problems. A support group meets weekly during different class periods.

Program Participants	Students with drug or alcohol problems and those with friends or family who have drug or alcohol problems
Selection/ Admission	There is no formal membership in the program. Students hear about the program by word-of-mouth and choose to participate. A counselor, teacher or nurse sometimes suggests the program to a student.
Capacity	30-40 (group meets in nurse's office which limits size)
No. of Students Served in 87-88	30-40
Staffing	School nurse and counselor run program as part of their duties, although the program may impinge slightly on the counselor's individual work load.
Funding in 87-88	No special funding
History	More than 6 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Program monitoring is informal. The nurse and counselor are the only staff who know the participants and check on their progress.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that it has been a viable program for years.
Contributors to Success	Positive relationship between staff and students Open, unstructured nature of group Participation controlled by students themselves; parents not informed
Barriers to Success	Resentment among other school staff as participants leave regular classes to attend group; some teachers feel their classes are missed more often than others.

Gaithersburg High School: Teen Pregnancy Support Model

The Teen Pregnancy Support Model represents a cooperative effort by MCPS and several county agencies within the Division of Family Services to keep pregnant girls in school as long as possible and help them return to school after giving birth. In areas such as job training, medical care, parenting, housing and day care, the school nurse or counselor determines what is needed, explains to each student what is available, and helps make initial contact with the agency involved. A committee of service providers reviews each students' needs and commits services. Follow-up support is also provided. In addition, the school modifies student schedules as needed. A home economics parenting course open to all as well as day care facility adjacent to the school were to be added to the program in 1988-89.

Program Participants	Pregnant students and teen parents of both sexes
Selection/ Admission	Nurse or counselor talks to students individually and students choose to participate. If students are under 18, parental permission is required.
Capacity	No limit
No. of Students Served in 87-88	12
Staffing	The school nurse and a counselor ran the program in 1987-88.
Funding in 87-88	No special funding; the county subsidizes the day care. The program received a state grant for 1988-89.
History	1 year old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	The program is monitored informally, through monthly staff meetings and discussions of student progress.
Program Outcomes	The program has been successful in crossing bureaucratic lines, cutting "red tape," and maintaining good communication among the cooperating agencies. However, the program is too new to measure student outcomes.
Contributors to Success	Good working relationship with county agencies Willingness of staff to "go extra mile" Good communication among cooperating agencies Career and vocational education support Administrative support
Barriers to Success	Lack of up-to-date information on day care Poor communication within families Lack of available and affordable day care and transportation Immaturity of students as parents

Richard Montgomery High School: Supper Club

Two days a week, participants stay after school to do homework. Each student must have a specific assignment from one of his teachers; Supper Club teachers are available to give individualized help. Pizza is served.

Program Participants	Students in need of extra academic help
Selection/ Admission	Most students hear about the program informally through word-of-mouth, from mentors, or school announcements and choose to attend. About 10% of participants are required to attend, sometimes, as an alternative to serving detention.
Capacity	80 per day
No. of Students Served in 87-88	Over 100 students; actual participants vary from day to day
Staffing	About 20 teachers are involved in helping students.
Funding in 87-88	QIE funds for teachers' stipends and discretionary funds for pizza
History	1 year old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	The program is monitored informally; staff monitor each case, looking for academic improvement.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that the program "works for some but not others." They guess the success rate is about 80%.
Contributors to Success	Program staff Classroom teachers who take time to send specific assignment with student Cooperation of janitors and security staff
Barriers to Success	Potential lack of funding

Julius West Middle School: Operation Pupil Assistance for School Success
(Operation PASS)

Operation PASS is an after school tutorial program. Three days a week the school library remains open an extra hour so students can get help with homework, assistance in preparing for tests, or help working on long-term reports. At each session, math, English, world studies and science teachers are available for students and an additional staff person helps with library resources. The program is scheduled on days when activity busses can take students home.

Program Participants	Students in need of academic help whose: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o parents cannot provide academic supporto homework is often not done or incompleteo parents do not speak Englisho access to public libraries is limited
Selection/ Admission	The program is open to all, and no one is required to come. However, teachers identify students who could benefit from the program and encourage them to attend. Students in danger of failing a course are invited to attend through a letter to their parents.
Capacity	No limit; overflow uses classrooms
No. of Students Served in 87-88	250 (approximately 55 per session)
Staffing	The interdisciplinary resource teacher coordinates the program, and a committee of 3 teachers oversees its day-to-day operation. Nine classroom teachers staff the program, with four teachers present at each session.
Funding in 87-88	Minigrant funds, PTA supplement, and activity bus funds
History	2 years old in 1987-88
Program Monitoring	Participation, particularly by minority students, is analyzed at the end of each grading period. Evaluation questionnaires are distributed to involved teachers, students and parents after each semester.
Program Outcomes	Staff feel that the program is highly successful. Minority participation was especially high. Most of the students who attended felt PASS was helpful.
Contributors to Success	A caring staff Help received from students' own teachers
Barriers to Success	Program overtaxed when projects due or letters sent home ESOL population underrepresented