THE EFFECTS OF A PEER TUTORING AND GROUP COUNSELING PROGRAM

ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND BEHAVIOR OF AT-RISK

JUNIOR HIGH MALES

Except where a reference is made to the work of others, the work described in this dissertation is my own or was done in collaboration with my advisory committee. This dissertation does not include proprietary or classified information.

_____
Monica Hunter

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL:

_____	_____
Debra C. Cobia	Renée A. Middleton, Chair
Professor	Associate Professor
Counselor Education, Counseling	Counselor Education, Counseling
Psychology and School Psychology	Psychology and School Psychology

_____	_____
Margaret E. Ross	Stephen L. McFarland
Associate Professor	Dean
Educational Foundations, Leadership	Graduate School
and Technology	

THE EFFECTS OF A PEER TUTORING AND GROUP COUNSELING PROGRAM

ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND BEHAVIOR OF AT-RISK

JUNIOR HIGH MALES

Monica Hunter

A Dissertation

Submitted to

The Graduate Faculty of

Auburn University

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama

August 8, 2005

THE EFFECTS OF A PEER TUTORING AND GROUP COUNSELING PROGRAM

ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND BEHAVIOR OF AT-RISK

JUNIOR HIGH MALES

Monica Hunter

_____

Signature of Author

_____

Date

iii

VITA

       Monica Renee Hunter, daughter of Saundra Tate and Booker Tate, was born on July 31, 1976, in Detroit, Michigan. She graduated from McGill-Toolen High School in Mobile, Alabama in May 1994. She attended Alabama State University, majored in Elementary Education, and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in May 1998. Upon graduation, she started her career as an elementary teacher at W.D. Robbins Elementary School in Prichard, Alabama. While teaching, she pursued her graduate degree in School Counseling at the University of South Alabama. She graduated with her Master of Education degree in December 2000. In 2001, she began her career as an elementary school counselor in Mobile, Alabama. In July 2003, she started working with Auburn City Schools as a school counselor at the junior high school level. She married Marcus Bernard Hunter on June 21, 2003.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF A PEER TUTORING AND GROUP COUNSELING PROGRAM

ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND BEHAVIOR OF AT-RISK

JUNIOR HIGH MALES

Monica Renee Hunter

Doctor of Philosophy, August 8, 2005
(M.Ed., University of South Alabama, 2000)
(B.S., Alabama State University, 1998)

100 Typed Pages

Directed by Dr. Renée A. Middleton

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of the Student Success Team

program on the behavior and academic achievement of at-risk junior high male students.

This study included academically at-risk male students in grades eight and nine who had

received two or more disciplinary office referrals from their teacher and had below a 65%

average in at least one core class during the 2004–2005 school year. Small group

counseling and peer tutoring are interventions that will be utilized in this study.

Combined, they make up the Student Success Team program. The program will function

as the independent variable. The academic and behavior outcomes of the interventions

will be examined. The grade reports and number of discipline referrals will function as

the dependent variables in this study. The ages of the subjects ($N = 24$) in the sample

ranged from 14–16 years, with an average of 15.25 years. There were 15 eighth grade

students and 9 ninth grade students. The students were randomly assigned to participate

in one of the following four groups: Group 1—peer tutoring and behavior group, Group 2

—peer tutoring only, Group 3—behavior group only, and Group 4—career group only

(control group).

A series of two repeated measures ANOVAs was used to determine if there were

statistically significant group difference among the independent variable (peer tutoring

and group counseling intervention) and the dependent variables (discipline office

referrals and grade average). The results indicated a significant improvement in

academics and behavior with the peer tutoring and behavior intervention group.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"**…**those who **trust in the LORD** for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak."

Isaiah 40:31

I want to first give thanks and praise to my Heavenly Father who has given me wonderful opportunities and placed amazing people in my life.

I want to thank Dr. Renée Middleton for the support she has provided me while at Auburn University. This dissertation and degree would not be possible without her guidance, encouragement, and prayers. She has been more than an advisor to me. She is a person that I admire and respect for her genuineness and her dedication to her faith.

With great appreciation, I want to thank my committee members for their support and flexibility in helping me meet my deadlines.

I want to thank my husband, Marcus Hunter, for his encouragement throughout this process. I am blessed to have a wonderful and understanding husband and friend.

With appreciation to my family and friends, especially my sister, Shanell and best friend, Jennifer, who have provided a lot of love, support, and prayers.

Last, but definitely not least, I wish to acknowledge my mother, Saundra Tate. Throughout my life, she has ALWAYS been there for me and my sister. She is my #1 role model. I respect her for her demonstration of excellence as an educator, mother, and

Christian. I am grateful to not only call her my mother, but also one of my best friends. Without her love, prayers, guidance, and encouragement, I would not be able to achieve any of my goals. I am very blessed that God chose me to be the daughter of such a phenomenal person.

Style manual of journal used: Publication Manual of the American

Psychological Association, 5th edition

Computer software used: Microsoft Word, the Statistical Package for the

Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0 (2001)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study will be discussed, accompanied by a brief overview and background information related to academically at-risk junior high males. This chapter will also discuss the research questions and hypotheses relative to this study, as well as expected benefits to the school counseling profession and the limitations of the study.

Statement of the Problem

Keys and Bemak (1998) indicated that many of the children in our nation develop in dysfunctional communities afflicted by violence, drugs, poverty, and family problems. The community in which a child develops can impact his or her choice of friends, access to resources, and the adult role models the child encounters. There are growing numbers of children that are developing in distressed neighborhoods. Distressed neighborhoods can be characterized as neighborhoods that have high levels of poverty, single-parent families, high school dropout rates, and high unemployment rates. Children growing up in distressed neighborhoods may later reflect the characteristics of their environment. They are at-risk for developing and demonstrating low academic achievement, behavior problems, and low self- esteem within the educational setting.

Approximately twenty-five percent of our nation's youth drop out of high school (Edmondson & White, 1998). The consequences for children growing and developing in

1

an unstable environment do not end within the school system. Other negative effects, such as unemployment and crime, can be seen in our society among academically at-risk students who do not receive intervention (Griffin, 2002).

Stanard (2003) explained the differences in the labor market among high school graduates and high school dropouts. The technological shift in the job market creates a demand for highly skilled workers. The jobs that are available require workers to receive training in order to possess specialized skills. High school dropouts lack the skills needed to obtain better paying jobs as a result of their leaving the educational system early. In 2000, fifty-six percent of high school dropouts were unemployed as compared to only sixteen percent of those that received a high school diploma (Stanard, 2003). Even when high school dropouts obtain employment, they make less money than their counterparts who are high school graduates.

Research has shown that eventually our nation will have to bear the cost of not educating dropouts. Those costs will likely be allocated to welfare programs and the criminal justice system (Barr & Parrett, 2001, McWhirter et al, 1993; Stanard, 2003). When our government decides to cut funding for intervention programs, such as mental health, eventually more tax dollars will be required to fund the criminal justice system. This is born out by the fact that over 75% of the prison population is made up of high school dropouts (Edmondson & White, 1998). Moreover, the same literature reveals that dropouts usually head their households when they have children. As heads of households, they may repeat the cycle of poverty, academic failure, and low self-esteem with their

children. If academically at-risk students are not identified and assisted, the ripple effect may be seen in our schools and in society at large.

It is important to understand the experiences which may lead at-risk students to eventually decide to drop out of school. Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, and Hawkins (2000) indicated that poor academic achievement is a core factor in understanding why students drop out of school. Academically at-risk students perform below grade level as compared to other students in their class, especially in the reading and math areas (West, 1991). Academically at-risk students may experience feelings of shame and isolation because of their inability to succeed academically. Consequently, these students try to avoid their schoolwork in an effort to dissuade others from paying attention to their skill deficits. Some academically at-risk students may demonstrate inappropriate behaviors as a defense mechanism. Inappropriate behavior may lead to discipline referrals or possible suspension.

An accumulation of failing grades results in retaining students within their grade. Retention is a common practice that has been used in the educational process to deal with academic failure. Barr and Parrett (2001) suggested that the practice of grade retention can have negative effects with students. Grade retention can increase the probability of academic failure and behavior problems. The greatest effect of repeating a grade can be seen with at-risk students' developing low self esteem. Low self-esteem often leads to at-risk students giving up. "Dropouts are five times more likely to have repeated a grade than high-school graduates" (Barr & Parrett, p. 54).

Discipline referrals are issued to students for disrespectful, disruptive, and inappropriate language and actions. Discipline referrals are handled by designated administrators. School administrators decide the consequence for the referrant behavior. Administrators may use a variety of disciplinary methods including student conferences, parent conferences, detention, in-school suspension, out of school suspension, or expulsions. If students continue to demonstrate inappropriate behavior, they may receive out of school suspension. Once students are separated from the school environment, they are more likely to be unsupervised and have problems in our society. Teen pregnancy, drug abuse, and crime are examples of problems suspended students may experience. Being separated from the school environment can make at-risk students feel isolated and disconnected. Once at-risk students begin to feel disconnected from the school, they may consider dropping out of school. Barr and Parrett (2001) cite that many dropouts have been suspended at least once before leaving school.

Not all students coming from distressed communities and families have academic and behavior problems. Some students coming from these environments are able to overcome these barriers. School counselors have an important role in making a positive change in the lives of our at-risk youth. According to the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), school counselors' primary responsibility does not involve disciplining or punishing students. ASCA's guidelines urge school counselors to implement programs to assist at-risk students with their academic and behavior problems (ASCA, 2002).

The ASCA (2002) describes the role of the school counselor and the school counseling program. School counselors should provide direct services to all the students the majority of the time. The school counseling program should be preventive and comprehensive in addressing the three developmental domains: academic, career, and personal/social. The emphasis is on academic success for every student, not just those students who are motivated, supported, and ready to learn.

"School counseling programs help all students achieve success in school and develop into contributing members of our society" (ASCA, 2002, p. 12). In order to foster success for all students, counselors address the concerns of academically at-risk students through responsive services. This component of the comprehensive program includes small group counseling sessions to foster resilience in students who are at risk for academic failure. Therefore, school counselors should consider the characteristics that resilient students possess and utilize those strengths to the benefit of the student and programs implemented.

Christiansen and Christiansen (1997) describe the following characteristics of resilient students: (1) approach problems proactively — having strategies for solving problems, (2) often receive positive feedback from adults for their ability to interact well with others, (3) goal oriented and have the ability to turn obstacles to their advantage, and (4) feel a sense of control over their lives which provides structure, understanding their choices lead to consequences. Resilient students' life experiences helped to develop these positive skills and traits. Based upon these characteristics, it would seem appropriate and practical for school counselors to consider designing their goals for small groups around

the research on traits of resilient students. McWhirter (1999) described how effective and beneficial group counseling can be for improving the behavior of at-risk students. The students that participated in the small group improved their behavior in the classroom and developed better problem solving skills.

ASCA (2002) supports counselors utilizing peers in the responsive services component. Utilizing peers is a developmentally appropriate and effective intervention since adolescents rely on their peers for support. School counselors can implement a peer tutoring program to assist at-risk students with their academic achievement. Tutors are responsible for teaching specific skills to the academically at-risk student. Research (Brady, 1997) has indicated that peer tutoring is beneficial for both the tutor and tutee. The benefits of peer tutoring extend beyond academic achievement and can also improve social skills. School counselors can develop interventions that can be incorporated in the school counseling program that will assist at-risk students with improving their behavior and academic achievement.

Expected Benefits to the Counseling Profession

The purpose of this research is to examine the outcomes of peer tutoring and group counseling delivered as part of a comprehensive school counseling program on the behavior and academic achievement of at-risk junior high males. This research is an outcome-based study which plans to extend the knowledge for school counselors to incorporate successful practices with at-risk students.

Previous research with at-risk students focused specifically on academic achievement or improving behavior. Since behavior problems and academic achievement have been linked as major concerns with at-risk student, this research seeks to identify an intervention that fosters resiliency which would yield the greatest effect on academic achievement and behavior. Peer helping programs are an intervention that school counselors can implement to meet the national standards endorsed by ASCA (2002) and to meet the needs of the at-risk students. By assisting at-risk students with their academic and behavior problems, school counselors may help improve the current conditions of students and help students develop more hopeful, optimistic futures. We can see the impact of students experiencing support and success in school. Students decide to continue their education and obtain their high school diploma. The positive experience may encourage students to obtain additional skill training through a technical college or institution of higher education. Increasing the level of education provides students the opportunity to obtain jobs that provide better wages. Increased income helps students to be able to provide a better standard of living for themselves and their families. The implications for this study extend beyond the counseling field to our society.

Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated as part of this study.

1.   Do at-risk students receiving both peer tutoring and group counseling perform academically better after intervention than at-risk students who receive peer tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control group)?

2.   Do at-risk students receiving both peer tutoring and group counseling receive fewer referrals for behavior problems after intervention than at-risk students who receive peer tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control group)?

Hypotheses

HØ1. There will be an increase in the grade average of students that receive both the peer tutoring and group counseling when compared to the groups peer tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control group).

HØ2. There will be a reduction in the frequency of disciplinary referrals for the students that receive both peer tutoring and group counseling when compared to the groups peer tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control group).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of a peer tutoring program and group counseling on the academic achievement and frequency of disciplinary referrals for at-risk junior high males. Peer helping programs are an intervention that is developed around developmental aspects of adolescents. Peer helping programs involve students assisting students. Group counseling and peer tutoring are two interventions which have proven useful in assisting at-risk students (Edmondson & White, 1998). This study will focus on combining both interventions to address the total development of the student.

Limitations of the Study

The students for this study will be from one junior high school in east central Alabama; therefore, the findings from this study will be limited in relation to generalizing interventions for other at-risk students throughout other parts of the country. Given the nature of the group, the size will necessarily be small for maximum impact. Thus size will necessarily increase the potential for Type I error. Therefore a follow-up analyses will be conducted to control for Type I error. The population of this study will focus only on eighth and ninth grade male students. This restricts the generalizability of the findings to other grades and developmental stages.

The length of the treatment in this study may also be a limitation. The intervention will be conducted two times a week for six weeks. Six weeks is the average length of time for group intervention. A follow up will be conducted four weeks later when the students have their progress reports. Other studies may extend the intervention time and follow up to include a full grading period to yield better results.

Definition and Acronyms

At-risk students — This term describes students that engage in "risky" behavior, such as drug abuse or violent behavior, etc. (Barr & Parrett, 2001).

Academically at-risk students — A term used in a predictive nature to describe students that are in jeopardy of dropping out of school (Swanson, 1991).

Detracking — The process of not placing students in separate groups based upon their perceived abilities (Ascher, 1992; Olsen, 1997; Wells, 1989)

9

Expulsion — The permanent removal of a student from the school environment (Barr & Parrett, 2001).

Retention — A term used to describe students that have failed their current grade and have to repeat and remain in that grade level the following school term (Barr & Parrett, 2001).

Resilience — This term describes the ability to respond actively and positively to life conditions, stress, and trauma (Christiansen & Christiansen, 1997).

School Counselor — A member of the school faculty that designs, implements, and manages the school counseling program by addressing the three developmental domains: academic, career, and personal/ social (ASCA, 2002).

Tracking — The practice of grouping students according to their ability level. Usually the grouping is based upon standardized tests, grades, and/or teacher evaluation (Barr & Parrett, 2001).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will discuss literature relative to the definition and characteristics of academically at-risk students. A brief overview of the problem and factors contributing to a student being described as academically at-risk is discussed. Additionally, the chapter will provide an overview of academic and behavior concerns, standard academic and disciplinary methods for at-risk students, and counseling interventions.

The Academically At-Risk Student

The term at-risk is a common one used in the education field today. Our country began to take a closer look at the term "at-risk" when the U.S. Department of Education disseminated its report, "A Nation At Risk" (1983). This report describes at-risk students as a growing population that historically has been ignored. The report alerted consumers of the national crisis of at risk students, as well as called the attention to our educational system, and society at large. The term "at-risk" is broad in nature according to its use in practice. The "at risk" concept included fields that spanned beyond education, such as the medical field. At risk was used to describe the conditions that increased the chances for someone to experience adverse consequences (Finn & Rock, 1997). As this concept began to relate more to the education field, earlier terms were used to describe the conditions that resulted in low academic performance, such as disadvantaged,

disenfranchised, and deprived (West, 1991). The educational literature began defining

risk according to academic outcomes. Academically at-risk describes students that have

unsatisfactory academic achievement outcomes (Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999;

Kronick, 1997; Morris, 1992; Pianta & Walsh, 1996; Sanders, 2000; Wehlage, 2001).

Jimerson et al. (1999) conducted a longitudinal study on students from the first grade to

age 16. The study included at-risk students and examined factors that contributed to

changing academic achievement outcomes for academically at-risk students. The factors

included years in special education, socioeconomic status, quality of home environment,

and parent involvement. The results of the study suggested socioeconomic status,

parental support and participation in the educational process were the factors that had a

strong impact on student achievement.

The term at-risk also has been used in a predictive nature (Battin-Pearson,

Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catatlano, & Hawkins, 2000; Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice,

Tremblay, 2000; Pungello, Kupersmidt, Burchinal, & Patterson, 1996; Swanson, 1991).

Janosz et al. (2000) created a classification system called typologies in which they tried

to predict the different types of high school dropouts. The typologies were based upon a

variety of academic performance and behavior styles of academically at-risk students.

The results of their investigation stressed the importance of examining the contextual

factors that could possibly influence at-risk students to potentially drop out of school.

This study concluded that school experience, family experience, peer relationships,

leisure activities and beliefs, and deviant behaviors were the variables used to create the

typologies which predicted high school dropouts.

12

Battin-Pearson et al. (2000) conducted a study that examined the variables that predicted early high school dropout. The study included students that attended schools that served high crime neighborhoods. The following theoretical models were used to predict the potential for early disengagement from school: academic mediation theory, general deviance theory, deviant affiliation theory, poor family socialization theory, and structural strains theory. The premise for this study is that poor academic achievement is not the only variable that impacts whether or not students decide to disengage from school. There are other variables that interact with poor academic achievement. Academic mediation theory describes the association other variables, such as, antisocial behavior and dropout status are related to poor academic achievement. The general deviance theory describes the relationship deviant behavior and attitudes have on students' potential for dropping out of school. Students that decide to drop out of school may have friends that possess deviant attitudes and engage in deviant behavior. Deviant affiliation theory explains how the social constructs of adolescents can impact their academic achievement and eventually influence their decision about remaining in school. Positive or negative early educational experiences provided by parents can impact the academic future of their child. The parent's own educational background and the parent's expectations of the child's educational success are factors described in the poor family socialization theory that may influence a student's decision about staying in school. Structural strains theory describes the influence demographic and individual characteristics, such as socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity, have on the decision

13

of staying in school. The results indicated that general deviance, bonding to antisocial peers, and low socioeconomic status predicted the likelihood of dropping out of school.

Pungello et al. (1996) also conducted a study examining environmental factors that could potentially impact academic achievement, specifically reading and math achievement. The study included at-risk students in grades 2 through 7. The results from this study indicated that low family income and minority status were the factors that had more predictive quality of academic achievement. Pungello et al. (1996) challenged educators to further examine the environmental experiences of at-risk students to assess how they might influence academic achievement. Environmental factors have been used to describe the likelihood of students that could be in jeopardy of failing classes, being retained in their grade, or eventually dropping out of high school (Slavin, Karweit, &, Madden, 1989).

Many at-risk students have been unsuccessful in achieving the goals set forth by the educational system. Academically at-risk students may demonstrate patterns of underachievement that can contribute to their not completing high school (Kronick & Hargis, 1998; West, 1991). This pattern of failure could possibly extend beyond high school and into their adult lives. Therefore, it is important to examine the characteristics that may place a student at-risk for academic failure.

Characteristics of Academically At-Risk Students

Research on academically at-risk students reveals key characteristics of this population. Understanding the characteristics of at-risk students can assist in the

14

identification process. The literature (Lakebrink, 1989; Wells, 1990; West, 1991) reveals

twelve characteristics associated with the at-risk student:

1) Grade retention — Grade retention is the practice of requiring a student

   demonstrating unsatisfactory academic achievement to remain in the same

   grade level the following school year. Grade retention has been shown to

   predict long term failure, such as dropping out of school (Germinario,

   Cervalli, & Ogden, 1992; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Kronick & Hargis,

   1998; Owings & Magliaro, 1998; Rodney, Crafter, Rodney, & Mupier,

   1999).

2) Truancy problems — High rates of absenteeism and excessive tardiness is

   another characteristic of the at-risk student. This is often a result of the

   student feeling alienated by the school environment and deciding not to

   come to school, thus poor attendance is demonstrated. Truancy problems

   are often an early indicator of students being dissatisfied with the school

   system and later possibly deciding to never return to school (Barr &

   Parrett, 2001; Germinario et al., 1992; Kronick & Hargis, 1998 McWhirter

   et al., 1993; West, 1991).

3) Single family home — Many students that have been identified as being

   at-risk have come from families where there is only one parent present in

   the home. The literature indicates that many single parent homes are

   headed by a female (Barr & Parret, 2001; Pungello et al., 1996;

   McWhirter et al., 1993; West, 1991). Single parent homes headed by a

female is not in and of itself a risk factor. Indeed, there are many examples

of successful students that come from single parent homes. However, it

becomes more of a risk factor when it is interrelated to other

characteristics such as the parent having a negative attitude toward school.

4) Low socioeconomic background — Students that come from poverty

stricken environments are more likely to be identified as at-risk. Students

from these environments are more likely to be exposed to stressful life

events. They are also likely to attend schools that are at-risk where

resources for learning are limited and teachers are not always as skilled as

those who teach in high-income areas. Research on at-risk students has

found poverty to have a negative impact on student achievement (Battin-

Pearson et al., 2000; Ceballo, Dahl, Aretakis, & Ramirez, 2001; Jimerson

et al., 1999; Kronick & Hargis, 1998; Pungello et al., 1996).

5) Behavior/discipline problems — Students that have behavior problems

have been linked to academic failure (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000;

Germinario et al., 1992; Rodney et al., 1999). The student may engage in

inappropriate or disruptive school behavior that results in further

disciplinary action, such as office referrals or suspensions. If a child is

suspended, learning is not taking place; therefore, suspension often

exacerbates the problem of educating the academically at-risk student.

6) Low motivation — Many at-risk students have had negative experiences

in the educational setting. Feelings of frustration and a disconnect from the

school environment may be present. Research indicates that this often leads to the students not feeling really motivated to learn and may lead to the development of a negative attitude toward school, with eventual dropping out increasing significantly (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Kronick & Hargis, 1998; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Murdock, 1999; Wehlage, 2001; Wentzel, 1997).

7) Low academic achievement — Many at-risk students are performing below grade level in at least two academic areas, such as reading and math. These students also have an overall low performance rate on standardized tests (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Barr & Parrett, 2001; Bell, 2002; Brown, 1999; Nunn, 1995; Washington, 2001; Wells, 1990)

8) Poor peer relations — Some at-risk students lack the social skills needed to develop positive peer relationships with classmates. Classmates may form an opinion about the at-risk student based upon the teacher's perspective of the at-risk student. If the teacher has a negative perspective that is demonstrated either overtly or covertly, intentionally or even unintentionally, the teacher's behavior places the at-risk student in a low social status among their peers (Murdock, 1999; Wells, 1990; West, 1991).

9) Non participation in extracurricular activities — Some at-risk students may feel disconnected and socially isolated from the school environment and may not participate in extracurricular activities. Research has

indicated that extracurricular activities can reduce the chances of at-risk students deciding to drop out of school early (Finn & Rock, 1997; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997).

10) Ethnic/Racial group status — The literature has indicated that students of color have higher dropout rates than White or European American students. This is largely due to the systemic disparities in society that are reflected in the bias practices in our educational system. Students of color are more likely to be retained and receive disciplinary infractions, such as office referrals and suspensions (Kronick & Hargis, 1998; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Schwartz, 2001). Students from historically underrepresented groups, particularly African Americans and Latino students, are more likely to be placed on a lower academic track containing a less challenging curriculum (Ascher, 1992; Wells, 1989).

11) Poorly educated parent — The parent of the at-risk student is likely to have a low educational background and may in fact be a high school dropout. Research shows that the parent's attitude and expectations toward education is more a predictor of dropout than is educational level. If the parent had a negative school experience, developed a negative attitude toward education, and eventually dropped out of school, they are more likely to pass that perspective to their children (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000; Wells, 1990; West, 1991). However, many parents having a lower educational level value education and pass this value on to their children.

18

12)   English as a Second Language — Students' early language experiences

can impact their academic achievement. Students that come from non

English backgrounds where English is not the language spoken in the

home may experience difficulty in learning from the standard school

instruction (Barr & Parret, 2001, Washington, 2001).

When identifying characteristics of at-risk student, often the focus is on the

negative aspects of at-risk students. However, many of these students are highly resilient.

At-risk students often possess positive characteristics. Focusing on research of resilient

students and the protective factors they possess is especially vital to the purpose of this

study.

Resilience and the At-Risk Student

Christiansen and Christiansen (1997) describe resilience as the ability to respond

actively and positively to life conditions, stress, and trauma. Finn and Rock (1997)

conducted a study in which they compared the academic outcomes of students from

similar backgrounds. For instance, being a minority from a low-income home was an

example of a risk factor. The students that were successful were described as being

resilient and the students that were unsuccessful were described as being at-risk. The

results of the study showed that engagement behaviors, such as good school attendance

and class participation, were vital components that distinguished whether a student was

at-risk or resilient.

Christiansen and Christiansen (1997) describe how resilient students possess

protective factors which contribute to success in schooling and learning. Resilient

students have an inner strength that keeps them motivated. Positive characteristics of resiliency were identified as follows:

1) Internal locus of control — Resilient students have a strong sense of self and internal locus of control (McMillan & Reed, 1994). They feel a sense of control over their choices that can impact their future. They possess strategies for solving problems more proactively. This assists them in maintaining order and control in their lives (Christiansen & Christiansen, 1997).

2) Over achievers — These students challenge themselves by being exposed to an academic curriculum and taking more challenging classes (Cappella & Weinstein, 2001).

3) Good social skills — Theses students utilize their good-nature when interacting with their peers and other adults. They receive positive feedback which helps to reinforce the appropriate communication skills when interacting with others (Christiansen & Christiansen, 1997).

4) Sense of humor — This is another resource resilient students incorporate when interacting with other students and adults. They appropriately utilize humor according to the context. This coping skill assists them in getting along with others and dealing with their own challenges (Christiansen & Christiansen, 1997).

5) Healthy support system — Their support system may include family members and/or someone outside their family that takes a special interest

in them, such as a mentor (Christiansen & Christiansen, 1997; McMillan & Reed, 1994). Their support system maintains high expectations for the resilient student and encourages the student to do their best.

6) High level of engagement — Resilient students participate in high levels of engagement within the academic setting. The levels of engagement include behavior, such as attending school regularly, participating in class discussions, and participating in extracurricular activities.

It is not adequate to identify a student as being at-risk based upon isolated characteristics. The literature notes the importance of not only identifying the characteristics of at-risk students, but also obtaining knowledge on the etiology of at-risk students in order to understand the factors that contributed to the problem. Therefore, it is vital to analyze the context in which the at-risk student develops. The family, community, and socioeconomic environment are all factors that play a part in impacting the development of the academically at-risk student.

Environmental Factors and the At-Risk Student

Family Environment

The literature (Burt, Resnick, & Novick, 1998; Farrell, 1994; McWhirter et al., 1993; Pianta & Walsh, 1996) describes the importance of the family's role in child development. Farrell (1994) describes the family as transmitters of culture that influences the socialization process. Through utilizing child rearing practices, parents pass down their values to their children (Farrell, 1994; McWhirter et al., 1995). Child rearing

21

practices can encourage or discourage the development of socialization, learning, motivation, self-esteem, and communication (Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Key parenting practices include support, monitoring, and discipline. These practices can impact the adjustment and development of children.

Amato and Fowler (2002) describe the following parental support behaviors that yield positive results: giving children compliments, assisting children with their daily problems, and showing affection. Parental monitoring would include supervising and maintaining information in relation to their children's activities, school work, and friends. Parenting practices that yield negative outcomes would include harsh and coercive forms of discipline, such as yelling and corporal punishment. Amato and Fowler (2002) conducted a study that investigated the effects of parenting practices on students' self-esteem, academic performance and behavior problems across varying family contexts. The parents varied in ethnic racial background, educational level, socioeconomic status, and marital status. The results of this study indicated when parents were highly engaged in supporting and monitoring their children and avoided harsh punishment, the children exhibited higher self-esteem, performed better academically in school, and engaged in less problem behaviors, such as truancy, drinking alcohol, and using drugs.

There are many obstacles at-risk students have to overcome. The challenges begin early for this population. Many of the obstacles at-risk students face early in life are beyond their control, such as family structure. According to the literature (Kronick, 1997; Waggoner, 1991), most families of at-risk students have been affected by poverty and come from low socioeconomic homes. Many at-risk students are raised in a home headed

by a single parent (Kronick, 1997; Lakebrink, 1989; Wells, 1990; West, 1991) The single parent is typically a female often with a poor or limited formal educational background (Wells, 1990). Despite the many challenges single parents face, there are many single parents that possess characteristics that encourage their children to be academically successful.

The literature indicates that being a single parent does not automatically hinder children from achieving (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Ricciuti, 1999). A study conducted by Ricciuti (1999) investigated the maternal characteristics of mothers from single parent and two parent homes and the effects these characteristics had on school readiness. The results of the study showed that positive and supportive parenting influenced a child's school readiness and achievement.

The other half of Amato and Fowler's study (2002) examined the outcomes of self-esteem, academic achievement, and problem behavior across varying family contexts. The results of the second part of the study indicated the parent's marital status, race, and socioeconomic status had no effect on positive student outcomes. It was the parenting style that affected the outcomes. In fact, the single parents had a higher rate of parental monitoring which yielded positive outcomes in adolescent functioning. Even though one parent is the head of the household in single parent homes, many single parents incorporate extended family members as a means of a support system for the family. This is a common practice among racially/ethnically diverse minority families. Single parents do not automatically represent risk factors, but can be great role models of resiliency to encourage their children.

At-risk students may come from families that are mobile. McWhirter et al. (1993) explains that the number of low income families has increased, but the number of low income housing has decreased. This limits the housing choices for low income families and often leaves the family with the option of living with family or friends for a limited time or being homeless. This causes at-risk students to experience frequent changes in schools because of their family's repeated relocations (McWhirter et al., 1993; Wells, 1990). The frequent relocations force students to have to quickly adjust to a new environment. Frequently relocating has an additional affect on the students' academic achievement. Relocating can place low achieving students even further behind academically (McWhirter et al., 1993; Wells, 1990).

Community Factors

Keys and Bemak (1998) describe how some at-risk students live in a community that is under distress because it is afflicted with violence, drugs, family instability, and poverty. An at-risk student's community environment can reinforce inappropriate behaviors and can affect their psychological well being (Ceballo, Dahl, Aretakis, & Ramirez, 2001; Paige, 2001). A study conducted by Ceballo et al. (2001) examined the effect exposure to community violence had on children. The sample used in this study represented children from various ethnic/racial backgrounds that were from low socioeconomic communities. The children were exposed to various high levels of violence in their community, such as regularly hearing sounds of gunfire, being assaulted or threatened with a weapon, and witnessing a homicide. The results indicated that children that were exposed to violence in their community had greater psychological

24

distress, such as posttraumatic syndrome and externalizing behaviors. The results also support the need for community interventions to assist with these problems. Often times these communities are not receiving needed community-based interventions.

Government policies can also create barriers for at-risk students and their families. Not only are there still policies in place that keep the working poor below the poverty line, but there are policies that have cut community resources for many low-income families (Magnus, Cowen, Wyman, Fagen, & Work, 1999; Polatnick, 2000). Consequently, these communities often lack resources needed to provide the proper support and services needed to help this population and their families, such as preventive programs and responsive services (Wells, 1990).

Socioeconomic Factors

The socioeconomic environment is another predictive factor that has been used to identify at-risk students. Research (Biddle, 2001; Kronick, 1997; Wells, 1990; West 1991) has linked poverty as one of the vital risk factors in identifying at-risk students because it has been positively correlated with school failure. Impoverished students lack the resources needed to be successful in school. The effects of poverty can also impact education being a priority in the home. Education may not be a priority in the home because the family may focus on other things related to meeting their daily basic needs.

Poverty can be a reality for some single parent mothers. Single mothers are at the greatest risk of poverty (McWhirter et al., 1993). Single parent mothers have to rely on one salary to meet the needs of the family and women, on average, still make less than their male counterparts in our nation (McWhirter et al., 1998). Many single parents

25

constitute the working poor. Mothers may have to work long hours to make ends meet

which leaves little time for them to spend with their families (Polatnick, 2000). If the

parent has a poor formal educational background, the parent may not know of effective

activities they can do with their child to stimulate the early literacy and language skills

needed for academic success in school (McWhirter et al., 1993, Washington, 2001).

Poverty can also impact the educational resources, such as reading materials, computer,

calculators, and educational games needed to stimulate and further intellectual

development. A lack in the educational resources may increase the deficit in the basic

skills needed in order to develop a readiness to benefit from the standard school

instruction provided in our school systems. The changes in our economy have negatively

impacted low-socioeconomic families. While there are more Whites who live in poverty,

there are more African American who fall below the poverty line. Thus, there is a

disproportionate number of people of color who have lower earnings and are jobless

(McWhirter et al., 1993). Job loss and a family's economic status can have an affect on a

parent's attitude, stress level, and interaction with their child. Research (McWhirter et al.,

1993) has shown a greater "risk" of neglect with children that come from poorer families.

Low socioeconomic status significantly limits families' access to quality healthcare,

housing, childcare, educational materials, and nutrition (Biddle, 2001).

According to Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs, people are motivated to try

and meet their basic needs before trying to satisfy their higher needs. Many families

living in poverty are concentrating on meeting the physiological needs (Daniels, 1992).

Physiological needs are the basic needs we have such as food, clothing, and shelter.

When these needs are not satisfied, one may become frustrated, experience sickness or discomfort. Once the physiological needs are satisfied, people can move to the next level, safety. Safety needs revolve around obtaining stability and security (Daniels, 1992). As stated earlier, some at-risk students may live in communities where they don't feel physically safe. At-risk students also need psychological safety and security of a caring family. The next level is the need for love and belongingness. This level is especially important to adolescents that have the desire to belong and be accepted by their peer groups. The next level is the esteem need. Students need the attention of others and the validation of their competence of certain skills (Daniels, 1992). The last level is self-actualization. Self-actualization is the need to continue to improve their potential and participate in activities that are self-fulfilling. At-risk students sometimes never have the opportunity to reach this level because their low socioeconomic status limits them only to trying to achieve their physiological needs. All these involuntary factors imposed on the child means that students that come from impoverished homes are more likely to be behind grade level, have lower standardized test scores, be retained in grade, labeled as behavior problems, absent, truant, and are more likely to eventually drop out of school (West, 1991; Wells, 1990).

These described environmental factors have a negative affect on a child's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, social, communication, and problem solving skills development. The result for some at-risk students is beginning school with a deficit of the basic skills.

27

Impact of Risk Status on Success in Schools

Academic Problems in the School Setting

It should not be assumed that at-risk students will automatically perform poorly in school. However, some at-risk students entering the school system may feel frustrated in the pursuit of academic achievement. They may lack the prerequisite academic, social, and emotional skills needed to be successful in school. When this occurs, they are likely to be behind grade level in reading and math areas (Capuzzi & Gross, 1989).

Low expectations or a teacher's inability to keep the student motivated to learn increases the academic challenge. If the at-risk student has experienced frequent moves, for example, like migrant families often do, the challenge of adjusting to a new social and learning environment places students that are already behind academically even further behind for their grade level. At-risk students are susceptible to experiencing a variety of feelings, such as shame, depression, and isolation (Aronson, 2001). At-risk students may develop attitudes of avoiding school work because they feel it is boring and doesn't matter since they won't do well anyway. This leads to low self-esteem and a lack of motivation to try.

Behavior Problems in School Setting

The feelings and emotions of academically at-risk students can sometimes be linked to their interactions with their teachers and classmates. At-risk students' attitudes and feelings lead to them demonstrating observable behaviors as defense mechanisms. Defense mechanisms are used by students to help cope with anxiety inducing situations. Being behind academically and not understanding concepts, when everyone else around

28

you appears to understand, can be an anxiety-inducing event. Some students, as a defense mechanism, will seem to develop an anti-social attitude, oppose authority, and disrupt the order in the classroom and school (Kronick, 1997).

Lane, Gresham, MacMillan, and Bocian (2001) emphasize that students exhibiting antisocial behavior have limited interpersonal skills and low academic achievement because they spend less time engaged in academic activities. Other students' behavior toward them also impacts at-risk students (Hovland, 1996). As a result, at-risk students may experience what they perceive as discrimination and rejection from their classmates, teachers, and administrators, which may lead to even more disruptive behavior (Hovland, 1996). This behavior places at-risk students in a low social status. At-risk students ultimately feel that they have no support systems at school to assist them (Kronick, 1998).

Influence of the School Environment on Behavior and Academic Success

The school environment can have a great impact on at-risk students (Kronick & Hargis, 1998). Montague and Rinaldi (2001) define classroom dynamics as "a complex and multifaceted phenomenon having to do with classroom climate and the behavior of teachers and students" (p. 75). Classroom dynamics can affect whether or not students will experience positive or negative academic and behavior outcomes. The school environment can either embrace students and encourage them to achieve their educational goals or make them feel rejected and disconnected. The rejection and disengagement could eventually lead to students choosing to drop out of school. Bruskewitz (1998)

29

explains that the root of academic and behavior problems stems from the mismatch between the students' needs, teaching method used by the instructor, and the requirements of the curriculum.

Bruskewitz (1998) notes that the teacher's expectations of the student's abilities, based upon the cultural background of the student, can increase the chance for bias and misinterpreting the student's perspective. Research on teacher expectations shows the impact it can have on students' behavior and academic achievement (Lumsden, 1997; Montague & Rinaldi, 2001; Reyna, 2000; Tauber, 1998; Washington, 2001).

Reyna (2000) describes educators' expectations as being either a bridge or a barrier for at-risk students. The literature explains that educators demonstrate their expectations of students through their verbal and nonverbal behavior (Lumsden, 1997; Reyna, 2000). This can lead to students eventually internalizing the expectations teachers have about their ability.

Washington (2001) conducted a study on the early literacy skills of African American children. This study focused on the impact of poverty and early home literacy experiences on the academic achievement of at-risk students. The results of this study also noted the effect of teacher expectations on at-risk students. Teachers tended to reflect their personal bias through their interactions with at-risk students in the classroom. Teachers in this study had less interactions and positive feedback with at-risk students. Teachers expected at-risk students to perform at a lower level than the rest of their students based upon their low socioeconomic status and cultural dialect. This resulted in at-risk students performing to the expectations of their teachers.

Tauber (1998) noted the need for teachers to be aware of their biases. Teachers often based their expectations on how well a student will perform in their class on external factors, such as appearance and socioeconomic level. Reyna (2000) explains how stereotypes of at-risk students are harmful because they restrict the academic achievement of at-risk students by trying to predict and explain what at-risk students will be able to accomplish. This self fulfilling prophecy can be harmful because students begin to internalize the negative expectations. This can have a negative effect on the student's behavior and academic achievement.

Montague and Rinaldi (2001) conducted a study which investigated the teacher's expectations, students' perceptions of their teachers, and as a result the students' perceptions of themselves. The at-risk group was composed of students that were at risk for developing learning, emotional, and behavior disorders. The findings from the study showed that the teachers had low expectations and had negative interactions with the at-risk students. At-risk students had fewer positive interactions with their teacher than the non at-risk students. The at-risk students were more aware of their teacher's negative attitude toward them which resulted in the students having lower expectations and negative views of themselves. This negative self perception resulted in the at-risk students having a low academic achievement and experiencing behavior problems in school. The results of this study showed that not only can the bias expectations about at-risk students have an effect on how at-risk students are treated in school, but also have a negative affect on how these students view themselves.

31

Wentzel (1997) investigated students' motivation and their perceptions of caring teachers. The results indicated students felt caring teachers demonstrated the following: (a) fair interaction styles, (b) positive expectations for all students despite their differences, (c) demonstrated a "caring" attitude, and (d) gave students constructive feedback.

Anderman and Midgley (1998) investigated further the impact of student motivation to achieving in school. They focused on students' beliefs about their educational experience. The results indicated if at-risk students believed that their failure is due to factors out of their control, they are more than likely to give up. Anderson and Keith (1997) found a strong link between student motivation and academic success with at-risk students.

The literature indicates in order to motivate at-risk students to perform better academically and improve their behavior, educators must improve the school experience of at-risk students by creating a school and classroom environment that promotes success of all students (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Brown, 1999; Concoran, 1998; Rossi, Stringfield, 1995). At-risk students must feel connected to the school. Literature indicates students that had a positive connection to the school had improved self-esteem and were less likely to engage in inappropriate behavior (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClellan , 2002). The school must build a sense of community among the faculty, staff, and students (Rossi & Stringfield, 1995). At-risk students must feel that educators have a vested and genuine interest in them. They need to feel cared for and respected. Open communication and a shared vision helps to build a sense of trust among the students and educators

(Rossi & Stringfield, 1995). Corcoran (1998) recommends for educators to build upon the strengths of at-risk students and focus on their assets. Brown (1999) suggests school counselors can impact academic achievement and improve students behavior by taking an active role in improving the school climate. By serving as advocates for at-risk students, school counselors can help at-risk students feel a caring connection to the school environment, thus improving their educational experience to promote academic success.

Traditional School Responses to At-Risk Students

Throughout the years research has examined the schools response to at-risk students academic performance and behavior. The literature (McWhirter et al., 1993; Pianta & Walsh, 1996; Richardson, Casanova, Placier, & Guilfoyle, 1989; Tanner, Krahn, & Hartnagel, 1995) discussed the importance of the school environment on influencing at-risk students. Common school practices currently used to address the academic and behavioral needs of at-risk students include expulsion, retention, and tracking programs.

Expulsion

Expulsion is a disciplinary practice implemented with students that have committed severe violations of the school policies, such as possession of drugs or weapons (Paige, 2001). Many school systems have a "zero tolerance" policy in regards to these violations. When a student is expelled, he or she is removed from the school environment. Expulsion has been linked as a factor associated with at-risk students dropping out of school. Barr and Parrett (2001) identify expulsion as an ineffective

33

practice used to respond to the behavior violations of at-risk students. It keeps students

further away from the academic setting and involved in settings where problem behavior

is likely to occur. They found that once at-risk students are expelled, they are often

unsupervised. No supervision then leads to other negative behavior, such as drug abuse

and crime. Expulsion further isolates students that already feel alienated by school

officials and their peers.

Retention

Retention is a common practice used with at-risk students. "Grade retention —

also known as nonpromotion, flunking, being retained, being held back — refers to the

practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full school year

to remain at that same grade level in the subsequent school year" (Jimerson & Kaufman,

2003, p. 622). It is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of students are retained at grade level

(Barr & Parrett, 2001; Lakebrink, 1989). Retention is a factor in identifying at-risk

students (Swanson, 1991; Wells, 1990; West, 1991). Research has identified retention as

an ineffective practice that is still widely used (Campbell & Bowman, 1993; Jimerson,

2001; Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). Once a

student has experienced early academic failure, such as grade retention, the student is

likely to experience long term failure, such as dropping out of school (Jimerson &

Kaufman, 2003). There is a 50% chance a student will drop out of school if the student

has been retained once (Swanson, 1991). Jimerson and Kaufman (2003) noted in their

research that there really was not a difference in regards to intelligence with retained

students and other low achieving students. The more the parents were involved in the

34

school, the less likely the student would be retained. The lower the IQ of the parent made a difference if the student would be retained. Retained students' parents were perceived to have a lower IQ than the low achieving students' parents that were promoted. There was also a difference between the behavior displayed in the classroom between retained and non-retained students. Retained student displayed more inappropriate behaviors, less class participation, and lower self-esteem when compared to other low achieving students.

Literature in this area also indicates that males and minority students are more likely to be retained. The results of this research indicated other factors of a biased nature played a part in whether or not a student was retained instead of the student's achievement and intelligence. Besides having a negative effect on a student's academic achievement, retention can also have negative consequences on a student's emotional well being. Students that have been retained develop low self-esteem and lack the motivation to learn. Jimerson and Kaufman (2003) explained that adolescents feel that being retained is an extremely stressful event. They compare it to being just as devastating as losing a parent. If retained students experience academic improvement the following year, the academic improvement has not been shown to be maintained over time.

Low self-esteem and lack of motivation lead students to dropping out of school. Retention is a practice that has been ineffective and harmful to the academic and emotional well being of at-risk students. Campbell and Bowman (1993) recommend for school counselors to advocate for these students by helping other educators understand

the cognitive, social, and emotional effects retention can have with students. The results of their pilot support group indicated that small groups can help students cope with the emotional and social challenge of being retained.

Tracking

Tracking is another common practice that is used with academically at-risk students. Tracking separates students based upon their ability level. Tracking is used in the majority of high schools in the United States (Barr & Parrett, 2001). Most students that have been identified as "academically at-risk" are usually placed on the lower ability track based upon the perspective of the teacher of whether or not a student meets the characteristics of at-risk students discussed earlier, such as, grade retention, low academic achievement, behavior/discipline problems, and low socioeconomic background (Wells, 1989). Ascher (1992) explained that standardized tests are sometimes used to determine which track a student will be placed in.

Similar to a teacher's perspective possibly being biased, standardized tests can be biased as well. Standardized tests usually compare students to a norm. The sample commonly used to create the norm usually includes White middle class students. The sample that is used to norm the standardized tests are not representative of the total public school population. Teachers of the lower level track classes often have lower expectations for their students. Teacher expectations can influence student achievement (Lakebrink, 1989).

With tracking, students may develop a poor self image because of the stigma associated with the lower track. Once placed on a lower track students usually have little

opportunity to advance to the higher track. According to Wells (1989), low income

African American and Latino students are usually placed on the lower track, while

middle class White students are placed in more advanced curriculums. Tracking further

segregates students and reinforces the stereotypes among minority and White students

(Wells, 1989). It can convey the message to all students that White students are smarter

and higher achievers than ethnically diverse students. Swanson (1991) noted that

grouping students by ability has not been shown to increase student achievement.

The literature notes that detracking is an effective strategy for assisting at-risk

students (Ascher, 1992; Olsen, 1997; Wells, 1989). Detracking is the process of not

placing students in separate groups based upon their perceived abilities. Olsen (1997)

shared her experiences of teaching inmates in a state prison. She attributes her success to

detracking and believing that all of her students could learn regardless of their

circumstances. Her high expectations motivated her students to believe in their own

abilities. Her students have had the highest GED passing rates for nine years straight. She

describes detracking as providing students access to a challenging curriculum. Tracking

limits this access by setting lower expectations. She explains that detracking requires

teachers to be creative with teaching methods that support higher order thinking skills.

Ascher (1992) notes one of the benefits of detracking is that it is more inclusive. It allows

for cooperative group experiences, interdisciplinary curriculum, and hands-on

experiences. Wells (1989) also agreed that cooperative learning allows for students with

varying abilities the opportunity to work together in a group to obtain a goal. Cooperative

groups are developmentally appropriate for adolescents because it allows them to work with their peers and utilize their social, cognitive, and communication skills.

There is a need to examine the current structure, practices, and policies of our schools. Some of our schools implement practices such as expulsion, retention, and tracking that are counterproductive to fostering student success. These practices often lead to the student experiencing psychological burn out, feelings of shame, intimidation, alienation, rejection, and frustration (Aronson, 2001). Kronick and Hargis (1998) describe how most at-risk students decide to drop out because they are pushed out. Brown (1998) shares the following views from at-risk students of why they decided to leave school: (1)they were unable to relate the curriculum to the real world, (2) they felt there wasn't a need to try since they were going to be unsuccessful in school, (3) their friends shared similar views and decided to drop out of school too, (4) they did not feel their classes were not interesting, (5) they did not comprehend their assignments, and (6) they did not have a connection or bond with the faculty and staff and felt the faculty and staff did not care about them.

Current policies and practices should be reevaluated. There is a need for effective programs to be developed in order to help at-risk students feel connected to the school environment and help them be successful. Effective programs are developmentally appropriate in nature. It is important to examine the development stages of the students the program is intended for in order to address students concerns and needs.

38

Understanding the Impact of Psychosocial Development on Adolescents

According to Erikson's psychosocial stages of development, adolescence is a vital period of identity formation. Adolescents are transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Adolescents want to understand, define, and clarify their role in society. They identify and refine the unique abilities and skills they possess. It is crucial for adolescents to feel a sense of competence (Harris, 1995). Students have a need for independence, freedom, and autonomy, but still try to keep the benefits of childhood. Students at this stage of development are experiencing dramatic physical and emotional changes. Adolescents are learning to cope and accept these changes. Adolescents are learning life long lessons that will help them develop their value system. They are learning to accept themselves and others. Erikson identifies the failure to achieve a sense of identity results in role confusion (Harris, 1995). Sometimes adolescents are in conflict as they struggle to discover their own identity. They are learning responsibility of the decisions they make. The consequences of their decisions not only could affect themselves, but others. School counselors can be some of the leading forces to face the challenge of assisting at-risk adolescents by incorporating effective interventions into their guidance program. School counselors and their interventions can meet a multitude of needs of at-risk adolescents in order to help them achieve.

Brief History and Role of the School Counselor

Cobia and Henderson (2003) provide the background on the history of school counseling. Today what is known as the school counseling profession stemmed from the

guidance movement in the early 1900s. During the industrial revolution, our society

changed from an agrarian culture set in rural communities to an industrialized culture set

in larger cities. There was a need to obtain information on individuals' specialized skills

and provide them information on their future careers that were compatible to their skills.

During World War I and II, assessment instruments were created to further assist this

process. There was another movement with the establishment of the National Defense

Education Act to place school counselors in high schools to encourage talented students

to pursue post secondary degrees at colleges and universities. Through the establishment

of the American School Counselor Association in 1958 and the Council for the

Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, the credentials and the

requirements needed to enter the school counseling field evolved to the national standards

we have today for the school counseling profession.

The role of the school counselor, as defined by the American School Counseling

Association (2002), is to coordinate and implement a comprehensive school counseling

program that fosters the personal/ social, academic, and career development of all

students to promote and enhance the learning process. The following four components

represent the delivery system in which counselors will implement the comprehensive

program: school guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services,

and system support. Individual student planning component focuses on individual

students developing their personal goals and future plans. The responsive services

component responds to the students' immediate concerns. For this component the

counselor may need to engage in crisis counseling and consultation with parents, school

faculty members, or community service agencies. The indirect management activities counselors engage in through the system support component can impact the comprehensive counseling program. This would include collaborating with faculty members on support teams, test interpretations, and task force teams within the school system and community. The Alabama State Plan (2003) for comprehensive guidance programs describe school guidance components to include "… structured experiences presented systematically through classroom and group activities" (p. 6). The school guidance curriculum should address three developmental domains: personal/social, academic, and career. There are differences among elementary, middle/junior high, and high school counselors in regards to the time allotted to fulfill the comprehensive program components. The differences are based upon the developmental needs of the students at each level. This study will focus on students at the junior high school level. The Alabama State Plan (2003) describes the following primary function of the junior high school counselor: "Provides a comprehensive counseling and guidance program for junior high school students; consults and collaborates with teachers, parents and staff to enhance the effectiveness in helping students; and provides support to other middle school educational programs" (p. 38).

There are differences among the different grade levels with the time distribution outlined in the ASCA National Standards (2002). The middle/junior high level will spend a large percentage of time in the responsive services component. The guidance curriculum component follows next, then individual student planning, and ending with system support receiving smallest percentage of time.

41

School counselors are encouraged to utilize a variety of interventions and strategies to meet their students' needs, such as classroom guidance, group/individual counseling, and peer facilitation (ASCA, 2002). Thompson (2002) identified the following early adolescent topics school counselors should address: formulating educational goals and exploring career options, dealing with peer pressure, being accepted by peers and adults, building positive peer relations, increasing self understanding, developing problem solving and decision-making skills, and enhancing social, emotional, and cognitive skills. These topics are related to the three developmental domains. School counselors should emphasize these topics with at-risk students because these topics are relevant to their needs.

Intervention Strategies Used by School Counselors

Peer Helping Programs

Peer helping programs incorporate many of the characteristics identified in other effective programs for a-risk students. Foster-Harrison (1995) describes peer helping programs as an intervention that is developed around developmental aspects of adolescents. Peer helping programs promote students assisting their peers. Peer helping programs are particularly effective with adolescents because students in this stage of development focus on obtaining support from their peers. Adolescents value their peers' opinions, therefore they have a major influence on them. Seeking peer support reaches its height during this stage of development. Studies show that adolescents prefer communicating with their peers on various topics, rather than with their own parents

(Branwhite, 2000). Adolescents turn to their peers as resources for advice and personal support.

Peer helping programs may incorporate group counseling and peer tutoring which are two interventions which have been found to have been useful in assisting at-risk students (Edmondson & White, 1998). Combining both interventions helps to address the total development of students.

Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring is an alternative instructional strategy in which students serve as instructional tools for other students (Harper, Maheady, Mallette, & Karnes, 1999). During this instructional process, the tutor is teaching a specific skill to another student Brady, 1997). Studies (Edmondson & White, 1998) have shown that peer tutoring improved the academic achievement of at-risk students.

When starting a peer tutoring program, school counselors must consider the following issues: (1) selection of tutors (2) training of tutors (3) monitoring the progress of the program. These three considerations are described in more detail in the section that follows.

Selection of tutors. School counselors must give the selection process for peer tutors serious consideration. A prospective tutors' attitude, behavior, and level of academic competence need to be considered when trying to select the appropriate tutor (Gaustad, 1993). Prospective tutors could serve in the mentoring capacity by modeling the appropriate behavior to at-risk students. School counselors can use a variety of data to assist with the selection process, such as standardized test scores, grades, teacher

recommendations, and interviews. School counselors need to assess the prospective

tutor's commitment to the program, desire to help others, and interpersonal skills in order

to match the tutor with the best student.

Training. Once the tutors have been selected, they should participate in training

sessions before the tutoring begins. Systematic training is vital to maintaining an efficient

program (Krueger, 1990). The literature (Krueger, 1990; Morris, 1992; Van Zant &

Bailey, 2001) outlines the following goals of training: 1) enhancing communication

skills, 2) providing positive feedback, 3) explaining directions, 4) correcting tutees, 5) the

importance of confidentiality, 6) making efficient use the session time, 7) responding to

situations that may arise, 8) understanding the role and expectations of the tutor, 9)

assessing the tutee's progress after each session, and 10) maintaining records of the

tutee's progress.

Monitoring and evaluating the program. School counselors should work closely

with the tutors and tutees to supervise their progress. School counselors should conduct

debriefing sessions with the tutors to assess the climate of the tutoring relationship and

discuss some of the challenging issues that may arise during a particular session. Tutors

need continuous support and input from other tutors, as well as, the school counselor on

how to handle situations within the tutoring relationship.

Research has indicated the benefits of a peer tutoring program extend beyond the

academic achievement for the at-risk students. Peer tutoring has also had positive effects

on improving at-risk students' social interactions (Brady, 1997). At-risk students

sometimes have poor social skills based upon their previous experience in school. These

students likely feel alienated from the school environment. Peer tutoring creates a positive school climate for these students to grow and have positive, nurturing interactions with other. Thomas (1993) discusses how peer tutors also benefit from the tutoring relationship. Peer tutors benefit from the service learning component the intervention offers. Tutors assess the academic needs of students in their school community and decide to contribute to the helping process. They connect service to the curriculum (Fertman, White, & White, 1996; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). They also learn how to model positive skills and how to build supportive relationships with others. Peer tutoring is an effective intervention that can enhance the learning environment of all participating students.

Group Counseling

Group counseling is another effective intervention that incorporates the use of the peer culture. It is an essential component of the school counseling comprehensive programs (Richardson, 2001). Group counseling promotes the development of healthy relationship skills (Carty, Rosenbaum, Lafreniere, & Sutton, 2000). At-risk students have the opportunity to learn and practice interpersonal skills within a supportive environment (Hagborg, 1991). The group process helps at-risk students to address the anger and anxiety they feel about issues that have caused stressed and negatively impacted their academic achievement (Baca & Koss-Chioino, 1997). Group counseling can effectively address the interpersonal and peer related concerns of at-risk students (Rose, 1998). Students are able to observe and obtain an understanding of behavioral skills needed to develop supportive relationships. Social competence and interpersonal skills are needed

for reaching academic goals (Richardson, 2001). Group counseling incorporates motivational strategies to assist at-risk students with interpersonal, behavioral, and academic skills needed to reach academic goals (Horne & Kiselica, 1999). The goals of group work address the following concerns of at-risk students: increasing school attendance, positive interpersonal skills, anger management training, problem solving skills, communication skills, and improving academic performance (Rose, 1998).

Incorporating group counseling as an intervention within a peer helping program requires the school counselor to consider the following processes: (1) setting goals for the intervention, (2) selecting group members, (3) conducting pre-group interviews, and (4) utilizing group counseling strategies to meet goals (Waterman & Walker, 2001).

Setting goals for group counseling. The overall goal is for school counselors to improve the academic, behavioral, and interpersonal skills of at-risk students. Each group has different needs based upon the variety of students that are participating in the group. School counselors must then determine specific goals for their group. School counselors should consider the needs of at-risk students and the issues that are most salient to them as a foundation for the goals for group counseling (Horne & Kiselica, 1999). Waterman and Walker (2001) describe the following specific goals for group counseling with at-risk youth: (1) providing a trusting and supportive environment to facilitate a positive climate, (2) building competence in certain skills by teaching anger management, communication skills, etc., and (3) incorporate activities that stimulate discussion of issues of concern to the students, such as academic goals and family relationships.

Selecting group members. School counselors need to think about the individual

personalities of the students they are considering for the group (Brown, 1994). The goal

is for members to support skill development and not to hinder it. Therefore, school

counselors should not include students that are extremely disruptive or those that have

current conflicts with each other. These students might benefit from individual

counseling. The group can be heterogeneous and be comprised of males and females, but

there should be an equal number of each. The group can be homogenous and be

comprised of only males or only females. The ethnic composition of groups can vary as

well depending upon the goal of the group. It is recommended that a group should

contain students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This gives students the opportunity to

interact and practice their social skills with a variety of students. Some groups are

targeted to specific ethnic groups based upon the concerns (Horne & Kiselica, 1999).

Belonging to a minority group is a factor that place students at-risk for academic failure.

For example, Baca and Koss-Chioino (1997) created a group that was successful for

specifically at-risk Mexican American male students. Students participating in the group

should be in the same grade range (Hagborg, 1991). The smaller the grade ranges the

better due to the various developmental levels of adolescents. The literature (Hagborg,

1991; Waterman & Walker, 2001) recommends for the group size to be determined by

the characteristics of the group members. The ideal group size for at-risk junior high

students is 5–8 students (Waterman & Waterman, 2001).

Pre-group interviews. The counselor should meet with each student individually.

During the interview, the school counselor can find out the at-risk student's views on

participating in a group. The student's willingness to participate in a group increases the chances of the group's effectiveness with the student (Brown, 1994). The school counselor should also try to obtain information on the student's background, such as the life stressors and current barriers. The purpose of the pre-group interview is to provide the counselor with information so he or she can develop an understanding of the at-risk student's views on the current situation (Brown, 1994).

Utilizing group counseling strategies. It is important during the initial session for the school counselor to review the rules for the group. School counselors must make each student understand and agree to confidentiality. This is crucial to building trust among the group members since personal information will be shared in the group. Group leaders must engage the students in activities that foster group cohesion (Hagborg, 1991). The members can generate a name for the group and also have input on the rules and consequences that members will abide by. The group leader needs to engage the members in open discussions that require students to reflect and share their experiences. Group members will develop a sense of universality in knowing that they have some issues in common with the other members (Hagborg, 1991). Group members should model the appropriate social interactions and responses to group members' experiences (Carty, Rosenbaum, Lafreniere, & Sutton, 2000). Group members should work on problem solving activities that require them to assess a situation and the choices surrounding it. These activities should enhance their decision-making skills. The group leader should also address goal setting. Members should have the opportunity to apply goal setting to their personal and academic situations.

Group counseling is an intervention that has had a positive influence in the lives of at-risk students. Group counseling has been effective in promoting a sense of belonging and competence among at-risk students (Malekoff, 1997). The group process empowers students to address their barriers in a positive way (Baca & Koss-Chioino, 1997).

Evaluating the Program

Formative and summative evaluations need to be conducted throughout the program to assess the positive impact the peer helping program has had on the at-risk students. Evaluations document the activities and services conducted through the program. Depending upon the goal of your program the following resources can be used to assess the effectiveness of your intervention, such as standardized test scores, class test scores, records of completed class and homework assignments, classroom observation of on task behaviors, interviews, surveys, open-ended questionnaires, and published instruments (Kreuger, 1990). Recent legislation, such as, *No Child Left Behind*, emphasizes the need for educators to use standardized test scores and grade reports to assess the effectiveness of programs. Evaluations are crucial in assessing the impact the peer helping program has had in relation to goals and objectives.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes the procedures that will be used to investigate the effects of a peer tutoring and group counseling on the students' academic performance and discipline referrals. According to Sexton, Whiston, Bleuer, and Walz (1997), there is a lack of empirical research in school counseling. This outcome study intends to increase the knowledge base of effective interventions school counselors can incorporate in their school counseling program to assist at-risk students in improving their behavior and academic achievement. This study will investigate whether peer tutoring and group counseling will reduce the frequency of discipline referrals and increase the grades of at-risk junior high male students.

Review of the Problem

Although African American students only make up approximately 30% of the school population, over 80% of the office referrals consist of African American students. African American students make up over 70% of the total number of students failing courses at the end of the 1st semester. Many African American students are academically successful and do not have office referrals. Also, students from other racial/ethnic groups have received office referrals and are currently failing courses. This study will pull from the African American male population due to the disparity between other students in

50

office referrals and academic achievement. The purpose of this study is to extend the

research on effective school counseling practices with at-risk students. Previous research

focused only on academic achievement or improving the behavior of at-risk students.

This research seeks to identify an intervention which would yield the greatest effect on

academics and behavior with at-risk students.

Selection of the Sample

The participants in this study will be drawn from a population of junior high

males in the eighth and ninth grades who have received multiple discipline referrals from

their teachers and are failing at least one core subject area during the 2004–2005 school

year. The majority of the referrals received during the school year were for noncompliant,

disrespectful, and oppositional behavior. These behaviors were reported by the teacher on

the Discipline Office Referral Form and submitted to the assistant principal. Male

students that have at least two (2) office referrals and have below a 65% average in at

least one (1) core class are included in this study.

The location of this study will be a junior high school located in east central

Alabama. The city's population is approximately 42,000. The largest known racial/ethnic

groups living in the community in which the school is located consists approximately of

Caucasian Americans (77.8%), African Americans (19.9%), and Asian Americans (3%).

The school is comprised of 372 eighth grade students and 371ninth grade students for a

total of 743 students. Approximately 48 students receive reduced lunch and 182 students

that receive free lunch. Students receiving free or reduced lunch account for

approximately 30% of the enrollment. Approximately 9.5% of the students receive

special education services and 1.3% are classified as English Language Learners (ELL).

The sample will be pulled from a population which includes 380 male students in the

eighth and ninth grades. This school was selected (1) for its access to the researcher, and

(2) based upon the number of male students failing courses and receiving discipline

referrals. This study will include 24 male students. According to the literature (Waterman

& Walker, 2001), adolescent groups can range from 5–10 students. The criteria for

inclusion in the group are as follows: (1) received two or more discipline referrals during

the 2003–2004 school year, (2) male student, (3) enrolled in the eighth or ninth grade,

and (4) below 65 average in one or more core subjects. Six students will be randomly

assigned to participate in each of the following groups: (1) peer tutoring only, (2)

behavior group counseling only, (3) peer tutoring and behavior group counseling, or (4)

career group (control group).

Collection of Data

This study will utilize an integration approach based upon the researcher's

experience and a documented program that has been endorsed by the local school system.

The two components for the intervention are small group counseling and peer tutoring.

The intervention will be identified as the Student Success Team because each component

requires the participants to interact with their peers and use them as positive resources.

The first component will utilize the *Second Step* curriculum, a violence prevention

program (Beland, 1997) for the small group counseling sessions. This curriculum is

designed to help students learn prosocial skills and reduce impulsive-aggressive behavior. The curriculum is based upon the following goals: (1) to increase students' abilities to identify other's feelings, take others' perspectives, and respond empathically to others, (2) to decrease impulsive and aggressive behavior in students through recognizing anger warning signs and thoughts that contribute to anger, using anger reduction techniques, applying problem-solving strategies to social conflicts, and practicing behavioral social skills to deal with potentially problem situations.

The *Second Step* curriculum has received recognition as an Exemplary Program by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. The *Second Step* curriculum was created as a means of prevention in response to the school violence and high-risk behaviors in which students were engaging. This program was originally piloted in 1989–90 and was revised in 1995–96. Students that participated in the pilot study of this curriculum were less likely to view aggressive behavior as a response to conflict, reported greater confidence in their social and emotional skills, and improved positive attitude. This curriculum incorporates skill training, modeling, role plays, and homework.

The second component is peer tutoring. The peer tutoring component of this study was developed by the researcher and is based upon the National Peer Helpers Association Programmatic Standards (2002). The following standards have been recognized as essential parts of a quality peer program:

1) Planning: The purpose of planning is to identify the purpose, goals, and objectives for peer tutoring. For this study, the researcher has identified

the problem with at-risk male students. The goal for the peer tutoring

component is improve the participating at-risk students' academic

achievement. The tutors will meet weekly with their tutee to reinforce the

skills the student is concerned with in the core subject he is failing.

2) Commitment: Active involvement is required for all participants. For this

   study, all participating students (tutors and tutees) and their parents will be

   required to complete a consent form indicating their commitment to peer

   tutoring.

3) Training: Peer helpers that have been selected should be provided with the

   knowledge and skills needed to be effective peer helpers. For this study,

   peer tutors will engage in two training sessions.

4) Supervision: Peer helpers should be monitored and receive ongoing

   regularly scheduled supervision sessions. Peer tutors will participate in

   weekly meetings with the researcher.

5) Evaluation: Data is used to assess the process impact and outcome of the

   peer helping program in relation to achieving the identified goals and

   objectives. Students' grade average in their core subject from the progress

   reports and report cards will serve as data to assess the outcome of the

   peer tutoring.

The tutors and tutees participating in the peer tutoring component will engage in

training. The goal of the training for the tutors is to help them gain the skills and

knowledge needed to be effective peer tutors. The training will take place over two

sessions. The researcher will discuss the following topics during the two sessions with the tutors: 1) purpose of the peer tutoring program, 2) qualities of an effective tutor, 3) communication skills, 4) learning styles, 5) teaching strategies, 6) paper work, 7) schedules, and 8) supervision meetings. Tutors will be taught the following communication skills: 1) active listening, 2) clarifying, 3) questioning, 4) summarizing, and 5) problem solving. During the last training session, the tutors will have the opportunity to work in dyads to role play and practice how to handle challenging situations that may arise during the tutoring experience. The tutees will also participate in an introduction to peer tutoring training session to make them aware of the purpose of peer tutoring. During the introduction training session, the researcher will review the purpose of peer tutoring, discuss the rules, review the paper work, and establish academic goals for each student. Once the peer tutoring sessions have started, the tutors will meet weekly as a group for their supervision sessions. At this time, the researcher will review and reinforce the skills taught in the training session and address any concerns. The supervision meetings will also give the researcher the opportunity to receive feedback from the tutors on the progress of the peer tutoring component.

<div align="center">Measures</div>

Discipline Office Referrals

Discipline referrals provide a systematic way of identifying the inappropriate behavior of students at school. Sometimes students have a difficult time in transitioning from middle to high school. The data collected from the research conducted by Murdock,

Anderman, and Hodge, (2000) explains how the behavior conducted in middle school can be a predictor of the behavior students will display in ninth grade. Participants in this study will be selected based upon receiving two or more discipline referrals during the 2003–2004 school year. The mean number of discipline referrals from the second semester of 2003–2004 will be compared with the mean number discipline referrals after the intervention from the second semester of 2004–2005. The purpose is to identify the effect peer tutoring and group counseling had on the number of discipline referrals students participating in the study received. The number of referrals for each student will be checked periodically throughout the study.

Grade Reports

The purpose of grade reports is to assess the progress of students' academic achievement. The participants in this study will be selected based upon having below 65 average in one or more core courses after the first semester. Core courses do not include electives. Core courses consist of the following classes: language arts, math, science, and social studies. The grade average in the failing courses will be compared with the grade average the participants earn after the intervention to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. Tests grades will also be checked periodically throughout the study.

Variable Selection

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of the Student Success Team program on the behavior and academic achievement of at-risk junior high male students. Small group counseling and peer tutoring are interventions that will be utilized in this

study. Combined, they make up the Student Success Team program. The program will function as the independent variable. The academic and behavior outcomes of the interventions will be examined. The grade reports and number of discipline referrals will function as the dependent variables in this study.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SSPS) data analysis system was used to analyze the data. Repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be used to evaluate the effects of the intervention on the population. A series of two repeated measures ANOVAs will be used to determine if there were statistically significant group differences (peer tutoring and group counseling program) based on discipline office referrals and grade average (the dependent variables). The nature of group counseling with at-risk students requires that the number of students participating in the group be reduced to approximately five to ten students. It is recommended for researchers to examine the effect size when dealing with a small sample size instead of inferential testing (Sexton, Whiston, Bleuer, & Walz, 1997). Effect size is a more useful indicator of an intervention success because it allows the researcher to examine the relationship between the variables. The larger the effect size indicates the stronger the relationship among the variables.

The results from this action research can be used in a preventive and proactive manner by helping counselors to understand what techniques are useful for their time in yielding the greatest successful outcome with at-risk students.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section presents an overview of the study. This chapter also consists of an
analysis of the statistical results of the study.

Overview

This study included academically at-risk male students in grades eight and nine
who had received two or more disciplinary office referrals from their teacher and had
below a 65% average in at least one core class during the 2004–2005 school year. The
majority of the office referrals received during the school year were for noncompliant,
disrespectful, and oppositional behavior. These behaviors were reported by the teacher on
the Discipline Office Referral Form and submitted to the assistant principal. The site for
the study was a junior high school in east central Alabama.

The school is comprised of an enrollment of 372 eighth grade students and 371
ninth grade student for a total enrollment of 743 students. The sample size of 24 students
were randomly assigned to one of the following four groups: (1) peer tutoring only, (2)
behavior group counseling, (3) peer tutoring and behavior group counseling, or (4) career
group (control group). The intervention group utilized peer tutoring based upon the
National Peer Tutoring Standards and behavior group counseling which utilizes the
Second Step curriculum. The Second Step curriculum is a violence prevention program

that is endorsed by the local school system. This curriculum is designed to help students learn prosocial skills and reduce impulsive-aggressive behavior.

A sample size of 24 male students were selected for the study. These students were taken from a population of 380 male students in the eighth and ninth grades. The ages of the subjects in the sample ranged from 14–16 years, with an average of 15.25 years. There were 15 eighth grade students and 9 ninth grade students. The students were randomly assigned to participate in one of the following four groups: Group 1 — peer tutoring and behavior group, Group 2 — peer tutoring only, Group 3 — behavior group only, and Group 4 — career group only (control group).

A repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted using the SPSS statistical package on the dependent variables (discipline referrals and grade averages) to determine a statistical difference in support of the hypotheses. The repeated measure procedure was selected as an appropriate multivariate procedure to identify a comparison within groups. The strategy for data analysis involved 2 levels of each dependent variable (initial and at the end of the intervention) X 2 levels (academic and behavior). A series of two repeated measures ANOVAs was used to determine if there were statistically significant group difference among the independent variable (peer tutoring and group counseling intervention) and the dependent variables (discipline office referrals and grade average). Sexton, Whiston, Bleur, and Walz (1997) recommend for researchers to examine the effect size when using a small sample size. Effect size allows the researcher to examine the relationship between the variables which is a more useful indicator of an intervention success. The higher the effect size indicates a stronger

59

relationship among the variables. Green, Salkind, and Akey (2000) recommend a less

restrictive alpha (.05) be used when dealing with low power levels.

Results

The age and grade demographics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Half (50%) of the participants were 15 years old. Over half of the participants were in

the eighth grade (62%). This indicates that some of the participants were older than

average age for their grade level. This may have been due to them being retained in a

previous grade.

Table 1

Demographic Distribution of Subjects by Age and Grade Level

Age	N	Percentage
14	3	12.5%
15	12	50%
16	9	37%
TOTAL	24	

Grade Level	N	Percentage
8	15	62%
9	9	37%
TOTAL	24	

Research Question 1

Research question asked, "Do at-risk students receiving both peer tutoring and group counseling perform academically better after intervention than at-risk students who receive peer tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control)?"

Hypothesis 1

There will be an increase in the grade average of students that receive both the peer tutoring and group counseling than those who receive peer tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control group).

An omnibus test for the two way repeated measures ANOVA was first conducted to evaluate if the overall effects were significant. The results for the ANOVA indicated that the only significant effect was the interaction between academics and the groups (see Table 2). The means and standard deviations for the grade averages are presented in Table 3. Figure 1 shows the effect the intervention had on all the means of each group.

Table 2

Interaction Between Academics and the Groups

	F	df	Sig.
Academics & Groups	7.78	(3, 20)	*.001

Alpha < .05

Table 3

Grade Average by Group

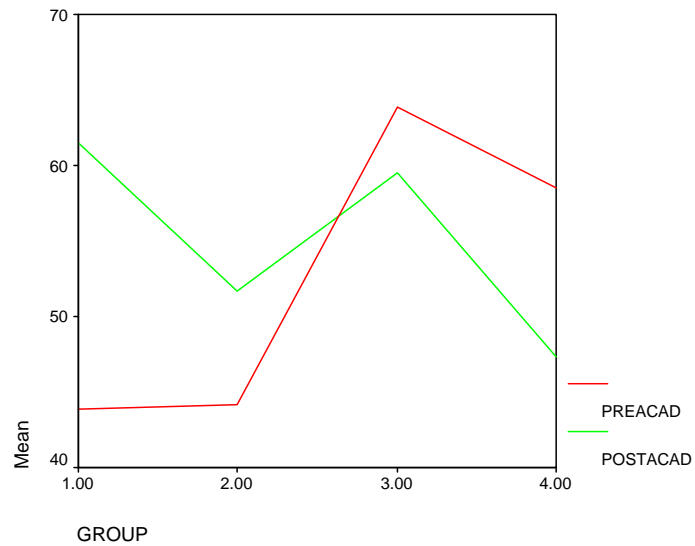|	Before Intervention		After Intervention	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Group 1 — Peer Tutoring and Behavior Group	43.83	17.50	61.50	7.86
Group 2 — Peer Tutoring	44.16	17.23	51.66	17.24
Group 3 — Behavior Group	63.83	15.74	59.50	17.22
Group 4 — Control Group	58.50	19.37	47.33	26.15

Figure 1. Effect of the Interventions on Academics for each Group

Because the interaction between academics and the four specified groups was significant, follow up tests were conducted to compare the pre and post intervention difference within each of the four groups to determine which intervention group had the greatest effect on improving academics. Table 4 indicates groups 1 and 4 had significant effects on academics. The peer tutoring and behavior group (Group 1) had the greatest effect on improving academics. The effect size was large (.637) which indicated a stronger relationship between academic achievement and the peer tutoring and behavior group intervention. The control group (Group 4) indicated a significant negative effect on academics.

Table 4

Follow up Tests Comparing Groups

	F	df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group 1 Peer Tutoring and Behavior Group	5.95	(1,20)	*.024	.637
Group 2 — Peer Tutoring	2.68	(1,20)	.117	.776
Group 3 — Behavior Group	.897	(1,20)	.355	.400
Group 4 — Control Group	5.95	(1,20)	*.024	.389

Alpha < .05

Research Question 2

Do at-risk students receiving both peer tutoring and group counseling receive fewer referrals for behavior problems after intervention than at-risk students who receive peer tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control)?

Hypothesis 2

There will be a reduction in the frequency of disciplinary referrals for the students that receive both peer tutoring and group counseling than those who receive tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control group).

The means and standard deviations for the number of discipline referrals before and after the intervention were examined (see Table 5). Figure 2 shows the effect the intervention had on all the means of each group. Two way repeated measures ANOVA indicated the only significant effect was the interaction between discipline referrals documenting student behavior and the four specified groups (see Table 6), $F(3,20) = 3.45$, $p = .036$. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported. The frequency of discipline referrals received by the experimental and control groups were significant.

Table 5

Frequency of Discipline Referrals

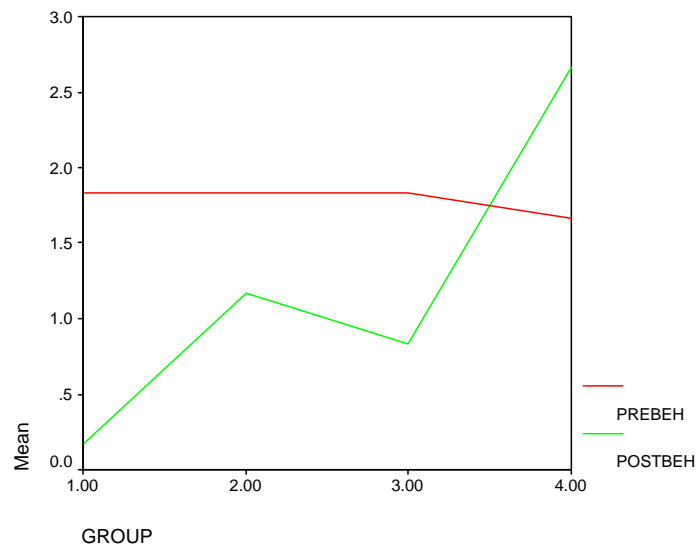|	Before Intervention		After Intervention	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Group 1 — Peer Tutoring and Behavior Group	1.83	1.16	.16	.40
Group 2 — Peer Tutoring	1.83	.75	1.16	.98
Group 3 — Behavior Group	1.83	.75	.83	1.3
Group 4 — Control Group	1.66	.81	2.66	1.75

Figure 2. The Effects of the Intervention on Discipline Referrals of Each Group

Table 6

The Effects of the Interaction between Discipline Referrals and the Groups

	F	df	Sig.
Discipline Referrals & Groups	3.45	(3, 20)	.036

Alpha < .05

Because the interaction between behavior and the groups was significant, follow up analysis were conducted to examine which intervention had an effect on the frequency of disciplinary referrals (see Table 7). The peer tutoring and behavior group had a significant impact on lowering the frequency of discipline referrals. The effect size indicated there was a strong relationship (.694) between the frequency of disciplinary referrals and the peer tutoring and behavior group counseling intervention.

Table 7

Follow up Test Comparing Groups

	F	df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group 1 — Peer Tutoring and Behavior Group	7.46	(1,20)	*.013	.694
Group 2 — Peer Tutoring	1.19	(1,20)	.288	.333
Group 3 — Behavior Group	2.68	(1,20)	.117	.231
Group 4 — Control Group	2.68	(1,20)	.117	.333

Alpha < .05

V. DISCUSSION

This section presents the purpose and overview of the study. The final chapter also consists of a discussion of the research findings, limitations of the study, and implications. Additionally, recommendations will be made for future outcome research studies in this area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a peer tutoring and group counseling intervention on the academic achievement and behavior of at-risk junior high male students. The results of the study suggested that peer tutoring and group counseling in combination can be effective in increasing the grade averages and reducing the number of discipline referrals at-risk students received.

The following research questions were investigated in this study:

1.   Do at-risk students receiving both peer tutoring and group counseling perform academically better after intervention than at-risk students who receive peer tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control)?

2.   Do at- risk students receiving both peer tutoring and group counseling receive fewer referrals for behavior problems after intervention than at-risk students who receive peer tutoring alone, group counseling alone, or no intervention (control)?

Discussion of the Findings

The results for the repeated measure ANOVA revealed significant findings for both of the hypotheses. The researcher's hypothesis suggested that the grade averages for the peer tutoring and group counseling intervention would be significantly different from the other groups after the intervention. In regards to academic achievement, this was true. The grade averages increased more for the combination peer tutoring and group counseling intervention. There was also an increase in grade averages when peer tutoring alone was provided. The control group (no intervention) had a decrease in grade averages. Therefore indicating if school counselors don't design specific programs to address at-risk students' needs, there is a possibility at-risk students' academic achievement could get worse.

The researcher's hypothesis suggested that the frequency of discipline referrals for the peer tutoring and group counseling intervention would be significantly different from the other groups after intervention. In regards to behavior, this was true. There was more of a decrease in discipline referrals for the peer tutoring and group counseling intervention. There was also a decrease in discipline referrals for the behavior group counseling alone intervention. These findings are supported by previous research (McWhirter et al., 1999) that interventions that address one concern of at-risk students, such as behavior group counseling only, has been effective.

The combination peer tutoring and behavior group counseling intervention utilized in this study focused on promoting positive aspects of the participants based upon the strategies described by Christiansen and Christiansen (1997) of resilient students.

Students today come to school with a variety of difficult issues. That is why it is vital for school counselors to promote resiliency with at-risk students in order to help them to overcome their obstacles and to be successful. This study utilized the following resiliency strategies with the combination peer tutoring and behavior group in order to enhance the participating students' behavior and academic achievement: (1) decision making skills, (2) a sense of control with their choices, (3) proactive approach to problems, (4) support system, (5) setting goals. The behavior group counseling assisted the participants with decision making. First, by examining the actions of others during session activities, students were taught their choices have consequences. Based upon the choice they make, they have control over the consequences being a positive or negative result. Students had the opportunity to role play and discuss strategies for solving problems. Students were encouraged to approach problems proactively. Peer tutoring helped students overcome their obstacles by establishing short and long term goals. For example, a student established getting a "B" on his next math test as a short term goal. The student decided on passing the math course as a long term goal. The student decided and planned the necessary steps needed to achieve both goals. The structure of the intervention and positive feedback students received from their peer tutors and from the researcher encouraged the students to achieve the short and long term goals. The behavior group counseling and peer tutoring intervention made an impact on behavior and academic achievement of the participants because it addressed their concerns by promoting resiliency characteristics.

Limitations of the Study

The generalizability of applying the results of this study to other regions and settings must be considered. This sample was taken from a town in east central Alabama. This study was restricted to only male students in the eighth and ninth grades. This may limit the application of the study to being used with female students and students in other grades.

The number of students that comprised the sample (N = 24) for this study may be seen as a limitation. Based upon the criteria needed to classify male students as at-risk and the nature of group counseling, a small sample was needed in order to be effective. As stated earlier, the effect size was used to examine the strength of the intervention. Effect size could be another limitation of the study because it could be misleading. Even though, effect size was utilized, the researcher still needed to look at the relationship of the intervention to the outcome measures.

Another limitation of this study dealt with the effects of the time factor on the intervention. This study took place during the last quarter of the school year. This could have had an effect on the motivation level of the students. Also, the time factor restricted the length of the intervention and limited the possibility of examining the follow up. A follow up period may have shown the impact more sessions had on the results of the study.

Recommendations for School Counseling Practice

As a result of the findings of this study and professional experience, the researcher offers the following recommendations for implementing a multidimensional program:

1) In order for school counselors to be effective with at-risk students, they should design programs to address at-risk students' specific needs. School counselors should not assume that all at-risk students have the same problems. School counselors should examine the school data to identify areas of concern. Then, they need to do an assessment of the at-risk students needs by interviewing the students and/or having them to complete a survey.

2) School counselors should try to provide individualized instruction for at-risk students that are experiencing academic problems. Some at-risk students have not been successful with the standard instruction. Each student may have problems in a variety of subjects or variety of topics within one subject, such as, math. One student may not understand integers and another may understand integers, but have trouble with graphing. Peer tutors provided individualized instruction in this study. Individualized instruction assisted in time efficiency for the student and peer tutor.

3) School counselors should design a program that promotes the positive aspects of at-risk students. As discussed earlier, this study incorporated resiliency strategies described by Christiansen and Christiansen (1997). School counselors need to encourage students to develop problem solving strategies and good social skills to

assist at-risk students in developing a strong sense of self as well as assist them in being more proactive.

4) School counselors should design programs that provide a positive support system for at-risk students. Many times at-risk students feel they are being pushed out of school because no one cares. In this study the school counselor, as well as, the peer tutors provided a positive environment by communicating to the at-risk students on the things they were doing well and encouraging them that they could achieve.

Recommendations for Future Research in School Counseling

The researcher offers the following recommendations for future research:

1) School counselors should incorporate additional parent participation. Counselors can have the parents to complete a needs assessment to gain a greater understanding of the concerns from the parent's perspective. A needs assessment could also provide a starting point of how the counselor can try to meet the parent's needs. For example, the school counselor may need to provide informational workshops.

2) School counselors should incorporate the teachers into the program. School counselors can consult with the teachers concerning the progress of the students. Counselors can facilitate team conferences in which the student, parent(s), and teachers are participants. This would help the

72

student realize the support he or she has in being successful in school. This would also help all parties be on one accord.

3) Counselors should provide mentors, if possible same gender, for each student. Mentors could volunteer to visit and check on the students during or after school. Mentors can encourage students to stay focused on their academics and to demonstrate the appropriate behavior at school.

4) Counselors should coordinate group extracurricular activities for the students. At-risk students need to feel a positive connection to the school. Motivational speakers, intramural school sports, cultural trips, and field trips to universities and businesses are examples of activities that may enhance the school experience for at-risk students.

Outcome research has become increasingly vital to the school counseling profession. School counselors have had a long standing ethical obligation to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions. Current legislation, such as *No Child Left Behind*, has mandated for the sake of the job security and financial support for future programs, for school counselors and other educators to demonstrate through research the effectiveness of their programs. Outcome research functions as one of the ways school counselors effectively achieve this requirement.

Academically at-risk students are becoming a growing population in schools. School counselors can serve as advocates for students and be some of the leading forces to assist at-risk students. The needs of academically at-risk students can be very complex. Counselors must examine the contexts of the concerns of at-risk students at their school

in order to design and implement effective interventions. Previous studies have addressed

one aspect of the at-risk students' needs, for example only academics or only behavior.

The results of this study demonstrate that a program can be established to address the

multiple needs of at-risk students which can yield significant positive outcomes in

multiple areas for at-risk students. Establishing effective interventions for at-risk students

can demonstrate that school counselors are not just an additional unit to a school faculty,

but a vital link to at-risk students overcoming their obstacles and achieving their goals.

REFERENCES

Alabama State Department of Education (2003). *Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance Model for Alabama Public Schools.* Montgomery, AL: Alabama Department of Education.

Amato, P., & Fowler, F. (2002). Parenting practice, child adjustment, and family diversity. *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, *64*(3), 703–717.

American School Counselor Association (2002). *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs.* Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.

Anderman, L., & Midgley, C. (1998). Motivation and middle school students. (ERIC Document Service Reproduction No. ED421281).

Anderson, E., & Keith, T. (1997). A longitudinal test of a model of academic success for at-risk high school students. *Journal of Educational Research*, *90*(5), 259–268.

Aronson, R. (2001). *At-risk students defy the odds: Overcoming barriers to educational success.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Ascher, C. (1992). *Successful detracking in middle and senior high schools.* (ERIC Document Service Reproduction No. ED 351 426).

Baca, L., & Koss-Chioino, J. (1997). Development of a culturally responsive group

      counseling model for Mexican American adolescents. *Journal of Multicultural*

      Counseling & Development, *25,* 130–142.

Barr, R., & Parrett, W. (2001). *Hope fulfilled for at-risk and violent youth: K-12*

      programs that work. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Battin-Pearson, S., Newcomb, M., Abbott, R., Hill, K., Catalano, R., & Hawkins, J.

      (2000). Predictors of early high school dropouts: A test of five theories. *Journal*

      of Educational Psychology, *92*(3), 568–582.

Beland, K. (1997). *Second step, middle school/junior high*. Seattle, WA: Committee for

      Children.

Bell, L. (2002). Strategies that close the gap. *Educational Leadership*, 32–34.

Biddle, B. (2001). *Social class, poverty, and education: Policy and practice*. New York:

      RoutlegeFalmer.

Brady, N. (1997). The teaching game: A reciprocal peer tutoring program for preschool

      children. *Education & Treatment of Children, 20,* 123–130.

Branwhite, T. (2000). *Helping adolescents in school*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Brown, D. (1998). *Dropping out or hanging in: What you should know before dropping*

      out of school. Chicago: VGM Career Horizons.

Brown, D. (1999). Improving academic achievement: What counselors can do. (ERIC

      Document Service Reproduction No. ED 435 895)

Brown, N. (1994). *Group counseling for elementary and middle school children.*

      Westport, CT: Praeger.

Bruskewitz, R. (1998). Collaborative intervention: A system of support for teachers

     attempting to meet the needs of students with challenging behaviors. *Preventing*

     School Failure, *42*, 3.

Bumpus, M., Crouter, A., & McHale, S. (1999). Work demands of dual-earner couples:

     Implications for parents' knowledge about children's daily lives in middle

     childhood. *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, *61*(2), 465–476.

Burt, M., Resnick, G., & Novick, E. (1998). *Building supportive communities for at-risk*

     adolescents: It takes more than services. Washington, DC: American

     Psychological Association.

Campbell, C., & Bowman, R. (1993). The "fresh start" support club: Small group

     counseling for academically retained children. *Elementary School Guidance &*

     Counseling, 27(3), 172–186.

Cappella, E., & Weinstein, R. (2001). Turning around reading achievement: Predictors of

     high school students' academic resilience. *Journal of Educational Psychology,*

     93(4), 758–771.

Capuzzi, D., & Gross, D. (1989). *Youth at risk: A resource for counselors, teachers, and*

     parents. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and

     Development.

Carty, L., Rosenbaum, J., Lafreniere, K., & Sutton, J. (2000). Peer group counseling: An

     intervention that works. *Guidance & Counseling*, *15*, 2–8.

Ceballo, R., Dahl, T., Aretakis, M., & Ramirez, C. (2001). Inner-city children's exposure to community violence: How much do parents know? *Journal of Marriage & the Family, 63*(4), 927–941.

Christiansen, J., & Christiansen, J. (1997). Using protective factors to enhance resilience and school success for at-risk students. *Intervention in School & Clinic*, *33*(2), 86–90.

Cobia, D., & Henderson, D. (2003). *Handbook of school counseling*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Concoran, J. (1998). Solution-focused practice with middle and high school at-risk youth. *Social Work in Education, 20*(4), 232-244.

Daniels, J. (1992). Empowering homeless children through school counseling. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 27*(2), 104–113.

Edmondson, J., & White, J. (1998). A tutorial and counseling program: Helping students at risk of dropping out of school. *Professional School Counseling*, *1*(4), 43–48.

Farrell, E. (1994). *Self and school success: Voices and lore of inner-city students*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Fertman, C., White, G., & White, L. (1996). *Service learning in the middle school: Building a culture of service*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

Finn, J., & Rock, D. (1997). Academic success among students at risk for school failure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *82*(2), 221–234.

Foster-Harrison, E. (1995). Peer helping in the elementary and middle grades: A

    developmental perspective. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, *30*, 94–

    105.

Gaustad, J. (1993). Peer and cross-age tutoring. *Emergency Librarian*, *21*(1), 34–36.

Germinario, V., Cervalli, J., & Ogden, E. (1992). *All children successful: Real answers*

    for helping at-risk elementary students. Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing

    Company.

Gervais, J., Tremblay, R., Desmarais-Gervais, & Vitaro, F. (2000). Children's persistent

    lying, gender difference, and disruptive behaviours: A longitudinal perspective.

    International Journal of Behavioral Development, *24*(2), 213–221.

Green, S., Salkind, N., & Akey, T. (2000). *Using SPSS for windows*. Upper Saddle River,

    NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Griffin, B. (2002). Academic disidentification, race, and high school dropouts. *High*

    School Journal, *85*, 4.

Hagborg, W. J. (1991). Group counseling with adolescent special education students:

    Challenges and useful procedures. *Adolescence*, *26*, 103–109.

Harris, S. (1995). Psychosocial development and black male masculinity: Implications

    for counseling economically disadvantaged African American male adolescents.

    Journal of Counseling & Development, 73, 279-287.

Harper, G., Maheady, L., Mallette, B., & Karnes, M. (1999). Peer tutoring and the

    minority child with disabilities. *Preventing School Failure*, *43*, 45–52.

Horne, A., & Kiselica, M. (1999). *Handbook of counseling boys and adolescents males: A practitioners guide.* Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications.

Janosz, M., LeBlanc, M., Boulerice, B., & Tremblay, R. (2000). Predicting different types of school dropouts: A typological approach with two longitudinal samples. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *922*(1), 171–190.

Jimerson, S., Egeland, B., & Teo, A. (1999). A longitudinal study of achievement trajectories: Factors associated with change. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *91*(1), 116–126.

Jimerson, S. (2001). Meta-analysis of grade retention research: Implications for practice in the 21st Century. *School Psychology*, *30*(3), 420–438.

Jimerson, S., Anderson, G., & Whipple, A. (2002). Winning the battle and losing the war: Examining the relation between grade retention and dropping out of high school. *Psychology in the Schools, 39*(4), 441–457.

Jimerson, S., & Kaufman, A. (2003). Reading, writing, and retention: A primer on grade retention research. *The Reading Teacher*, *56*(7), 622–635.

Keys, S., & Bemak, F. (1998). Transforming school counseling to serve the mental health needs of at-risk youth. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *76*(4), 381–389.

King, K., Vidourek, R., Davis, B., &McClellan, W. (2002). Increasing self-esteem and school connectedness through a multidimensional mentoring program. *Journal of School Health, 72*(7), 294-300.

Kronick, R. (1997). *At-risk youth: Theory, practice, reform.* New York: Garland Publishing.

Kronick, R., & Hargis, C. (1998). *Dropouts: Who drops out and why — and the recommended action.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

Kruger, L. (1990). *Promoting success with at-risk students: Emerging perspectives and practical approaches*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.

Lakebrink, J. (1989). *Children at risk*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

Lane, K., Gresham, F., McMillan, D., & Bocian, K. (2001). Early detection of students with antisocial behavior and hyperactivity problems. *Education & Treatment of Children*, *24*(3), 294–308.

Lumsden, L. (1997). Expectations for students. *Emergency Librarian*, *25*(2), 44–46.

Magnus, K., Cowen, E., Wyman, P., Fagen, D., & Work, W. (1999). Parent-child relationship qualities and child adjustment in highly stressed urban black and white families. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *27*(1), 55–71.

Mahoney, J., & Cairns, R. (1997). Do extracurricular activities protect against early school dropout? *Developmental Psychology*, *33*(2), 241–253.

Malekoff, A. (1997). *Group work with adolescents: Principles and practice*. New York: Guilford Press.

Maughan, B., Rowe, R., Messer, J., Goodman, R., & Meltzer, H. (2004). Conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder in a national sample: Developmental epidemiology. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 45*(3), 609–621.

McMillan, J., & Reed, D. (1994). At-risk students and resiliency: Factors contributing to academic success. (Clearing House Document Reproduction Service No. 00098655).

McWhirter, J., McWhirter, B., McWhirter, A., & McWhirter, E. (1993). *At-risk youth: A comprehensive response.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

Montague, M., & Rinaldi, C. (2001). Classroom dynamics and children at risk: A follow-up. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *24*, 75–83.

Morris, R. (1992). *Solving the problems of youth at-risk: Involving parents and community resources.* Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publication.

Murdock, T. (1999). The social context of risk: Status and motivational predictors of alienation in middle school. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *91*(1), 62–75.

Murdock, T., Anderman, L., & Hodge, S. (2000). Middle grade predictors of students' motivation and behavior in high school. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 15*(3), 327–351.

National Peer Helpers Association. (2002). National programmatic standards, 1-11. Retrieved from www.peerhelping.org/publications/standards

Nunn, G. (1995). Effects of a learning styles and strategies intervention upon at-risk middle school students' achievement and locus of control. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, *22*(1), 34–40.

Olsen, S. (1997). Detracking helps at-risk students. *Education Week*, *16*(37), 45.

Owings, W., & Magliaro, S. (1998). Grade retention: A history of failure. *Educational Leadership*.

Paige, M. (2001). *The effects of a behavioral intervention on discipline referrals and school suspension*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Auburn University, AL.

Pianta, R., & Walsh, D. (1996). *High-risk children in schools*. New York: Routledge.

Polatnick, M. (2000). Working parents. *National Forum*, *80*(3), 38–42.

Pungello, E, Kupersmidt, J., Burchinal, M., & Patterson, C. (1996). Environmental risk
　　　factors and children's achievement from middle childhood to early adolescence.
　　　32(4), 755–767.

Reglin, G. (1998). *Mentoring students at risk: An underutilized alternative education
　　　strategy for K-12 teachers.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

Reyna, C. (2000). Lazy, dumb, or industrious: When stereotypes convey attribution
　　　information in the classroom. *Educational Psychology Review, 12*(1), 85-110.

Ricciuti, H. (1999). Single parenthood and school readiness in white, black, and hispanic
　　　6 and 7 year-olds. *Journal of Family Psychology, 13*(3), 450–465.

Richardson, B. (2001). *Working with challenging youth: Lessons learned along the way.*
　　　Philadelphia: Brunner-Routledge.

Richardson, V., Casanova, U., Placier, P., & Guilfoyle, K. (1989). *School children at-
　　　risk*. Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Rodney, L., Crafter, B., Rodney, H., & Mupier, R. (1999). Variables contributing to
　　　grade retention among African American adolescent males. *Journal of
　　　Educational Research, 92*(3), 185–190.

Rose, S. (1998). *Group work with children and adolescents: Prevention and intervention
　　　in school and community systems.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rossi, R. & Stringfield, S. (1995). What we must do for students placed at risk. *Phi Delta
　　　Kappan, 77*, 1.

Sanders, M. (2000). *Schooling students placed at risk: Research, policy, and practice in the education of poor and minority adolescents.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Schwartz, W. (2001). School practices for equitable discipline of African American students. (ERIC Document Service Reproduction No. ED 455 343.)

Sexton,T., Whiston, S., Bleuer, J., & Walz, G. (1997). *Integrating outcome research into counseling practice and training.* Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Slavin, R., Karweit, N., & Madden, N. (1989). *Effective programs for students at risk.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Skiba, R., Michael, R., Nardo, A., & Peterson, R. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment. *The Urban Review, 34*(4), 317–342.

Stanard, R. (2003). High school graduation rates in the United States: Implications for the counseling profession. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *81*, 1.

Stanton, T., Giles, D., & Cruz, N. (1999). *Service learning: A movement's pioneers reflect on its origins, practice, and future.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Swanson, M. (1991). *At-risk students in elementary education: Effective schools for disadvantaged learners.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Tanner, J., Krahn, H., & Hartnagel, T. (1995). *Fractured transitions from school to work: Revisiting the dropout problem.* Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.

Tauber, R. (1998). Good or bad, what teachers expect from students they generally get!

    (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 426 985)

Thomas, R. (1993). Cross-age and peer tutoring. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service

    No. ED 1993 0101)

Thompson, R. (2002). *School counseling: Best practices for working in the schools.* New

    York: Brunner-Routledge.

Totten, S., & Pedersen, J. (1996). *Social issues and service at the middle level*. Needham

    Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

U.S. Department of Education (1983). *A nation at risk*. Washington, DC: Author.

Van Zant, S., & Bailey, E. (2001). Unlocking peer potential for tutoring. *Middle Matters*,

    10, 44–45.

Waggoner, D. (1991). *Undereducation in America: The demography of high school*

    dropouts. Westport, CT: Auburn House.

Washington, J. (2001). Early literacy skills in African American Children: Research

    considerations. *Learning Research & Practice*, *16*(4), 213–221.

Waterman, J., & Walker, E. (2001). *Helping at-risk students: A group counseling*

    approach for grades 6–9. New York: Guilford Press.

Wehlage, G. (2001). At-risk students and the need for high school reform. *Education*,

    107(1), 18–28.

Wells, A. (1989). Middle school education: The critical link to dropout prevention.

    (ERIC Document Service Reproduction No. ED 311 148)

Wells, S. (1990). *At-risk youth: Identification, programs, and recommendations.*

> Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press.

Wentzel, K. (1997). Student motivation in middle school: The role of perceived

> pedagogical caring. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *89*(3), 411–419.

West, L. (1991). *Effective strategies for dropout prevention of at-risk youth.*

> Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers.