THE EFFECT OF ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES ON THE ATTITUDES OF
AT-RISK STUDENTS TOWARD CURRICULUM

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

Traci Danielle Davis

School of Education
University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio
December 1996
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES................................................................. iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS......................................................... v

DEDICATION................................................................. vi

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM................ 1

  Purpose of the Study............................................. 1
  Problem Statement.................................................. 2
  Hypothesis............................................................ 3
  Assumptions......................................................... 3
  Limitations........................................................... 3
  Definition of Terms.............................................. 4

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE............... 6

  Challenges Facing At-Risk Students.......................... 6
  Factors Influencing At-Risk Students Academic Success... 11
  Enrichment Activities Designed to Help At-Risk Students.. 14

CHAPTER III: PROCEDURE.............................................. 20

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.................................................. 27

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS .......................................... 32

APPENDICES:.............................................................. 35

BIBLIOGRAPHY.......................................................... 39
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE I: Mean Attitude Scores of JTG Students........................................ 27

TABLE II: Significance Levels of Increases in Mean Attitude Scores.......... 29
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for giving me the opportunity to pursue my degree and the perseverance to complete it. I would also like to thank my family for supporting me in all of my endeavors.
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to all the young people labeled at-risk, who have been lost in the social and educational institutions of our country. I pray that the continued efforts of educators like the ones discussed in this study will open doors of opportunity, and that God gives you the self confidence and encouragement you need to enter them.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The breakdown in our moral and value systems have left many of our children without direction. Living in communities entrenched with violence, that promote drug use and promiscuity, many of our youth are making destructive decisions based on pressure, lack of knowledge and a sense of hopelessness. The residual effects of these circumstances have impacted all of our children, but those who live daily in these conditions have multiple barriers to overcome. These are the youth we have labeled at-risk.

The growing numbers of at-risk students is a major concern in education today. These students demonstrate consistent patterns of under achievement and social dysfunction that, without intervention, eventually lead to failure. Some large urban areas such as Detroit, Chicago, or New York are reporting drop-out rates ranging from 40% - 60%. (McMillan and Reed, 1994)

The educational system has traditionally viewed the failure of these students as a result of their own deficiencies. In the past this has lead many school systems to view the at-risk population as non salvageable. However, as educators we are no longer able to ignore the struggles faced by these students. As the numbers of students failing have
increased we have been forced to address their concerns. Educators across the country are faced with the question, how do we help these students succeed?

The answer to that question is not an easy one. Education is the best tool we have to help students make positive choices for their lives. Unfortunately, in today’s environment, simply making education available is not enough. Motivating students to accept and seek knowledge is also critical. It is necessary for us all to take responsibility for finding solutions to these problems. We must first by change student perceptions, and then fight apathy within them and us.

The attitudes of learners is believed to be crucially important to the outcomes of their work. There is research to support the belief that improved attitudes will eventually result in improved performance. It is important to remember that student attitudes not only affect their level of success, but their behavior effects the atmosphere of the classroom. (Howard, 1988)

A variety of programs are being used as intervention methods for the at-risk student and some of those methods are highlighted within this study. The author’s experience with high school seniors has led her to believe that by beginning a course with icebreakers and incorporating other enrichment activities throughout the course, students attitudes about the curriculum will change. This study seeks to test this belief.

**Problem Statement**

The intent of this project will be to assess the effectiveness of enrichment activities on the attitudes of at-risk secondary students toward curriculum.
Hypothesis

1) There will be no significant difference between the mean pre and post test attitude scores toward curriculum of students who have engaged in enrichment activities.

2) There will be no significant difference between the mean pre and post test attitude scores toward curriculum of students who have not engaged in enrichment activities.

Assumptions

In order to carry out this study the author must make the following assumptions. A semantic differential will be used to measure the attitudes of students about JTG. The author assumes that the test will measure what it is designed to measure. The author also assumes that the responses of students will be honest, and that each student will fully participate in the independent variable (enrichment activities).

Limitations

The author finds several limitations associated with the design of this study. The greatest limitations involve threats to internal validity. In the absence of randomization the threat always exists that some unknown uncontrolled factor is contaminating the post test data. While the use of a control group helps insure against mistaking effects of maturation and pre-testing for the effects of X, other limitations such as history, selection and instrumentation can be of concern. In relation to external validity, although all students must meet certain requirements they are only selected from a voluntary population. This means that they may be more highly motivated than the
general population the author is assessing them with. There must be careful monitoring to ensure that all in session activities are the same except for the independent variable.

**Definition of Terms**

**At-Risk Students**

Students who are faced with multiple barriers that result in under achievement and place them in danger of failure. Students in this study have 3 or more barriers.

**Barriers**

Social and economic problems that block students ability to succeed. They include but are not limited to the following:

- weak academic performance (D average or below)
- suspension, expulsion or probation’s
- poverty
- pregnancy or parenthood
- physical or learning disabilities
- racial minority
- history or alcohol or drug abuse

**Enrichment Activities**

These are activities outside of the normal curriculum which are designed to grab students attention, give the curriculum meaning in the students lives, and help the students better understand curriculum. They include getting to know you activities which help students feel comfortable with each other and the educator. Life skills activities such as budget games which help students apply math skills to activities they must do everyday. They also include field trips which help turn classroom instruction into reality for students.
They also include expressive activities which encourage students to express ideas about what they are learning and how it will effect their lives. The specific enrichment activities which will be used in this study will be discussed in more detail within Chapter III.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Challenges Facing At-Risk Students

At-risk is a label that has been given to many students who face a variety of barriers effecting their abilities to succeed within the educational system. I was not able to determine the original source of the term at-risk. However, during a review of related literature, I noted that prior to 1988 a variety of terms were used to describe this segment of the population. These terms included educationally disadvantaged, cultural deprivation, genetic deficit, and socially handicapped. These "deficit theories" were originally generated to describe the underlying reasons for the apparent failure of minority students to succeed in educational settings. These terms are rarely used now largely because they tend to stereotype minorities by focusing on internal deficiencies as the reasons for their failure. (Geary, 1989)

In 1988, The United States Congress defined the term "at-risk" as students who because of learning deficiencies, lack of school readiness, limited English proficiency, poverty, educational or economic disadvantage, or physical or emotional handicapping conditions, face greater risk of low educational achievement and have greater potential of becoming school dropouts. The literature published after this point seemed to use the term "at-risk" almost exclusively when referring to this student population. (Garard, 1995)
Researchers and educators have varying opinions on how to best define at-risk students. Knapp and Means contend that students labeled at risk come disproportionately from poor families. They state that ethnic and linguistic minorities also make up a large portion of these students. Newberg and Sims believe that youth who are challenged to overcome abandonment and neglect by their families are also labeled at-risk. These problems along with barriers such as drug abuse, teen pregnancy and physical abuse are factors used to define at-risk students.

While all students face difficulties and problems of some type, the existence of one of these barriers does not automatically justify the label at-risk. It is the combination of these problems that create situations which eventually overwhelm students. For the purpose of this study, the author defines at-risk students as those who face three or more of the barriers listed in Exhibit A. The factors highlighted are believed to disproportionately place these students at-risk of failure during school as well as in the work force. There have been many studies that examine the effectiveness of various intervention methods, though few studies have been done to prove that specific barriers actually place students at risk of failure. This is in large part due to researchers inability to place students in laboratories and control their environment perfectly. There is always the possibility that some factor unique to that students situation, other than poverty, abuse, ethnic background, etc., has contributed to that students failure. However, the consistent difference between the achievement levels of students facing these barriers and their counterparts suggests that these factors increase students risk of failure.
For example, a longitudinal study of 2,795 women was completed between 1979 and 1991. The study focused on several aspects of adolescence, however, while focusing on parenting, researchers found that early childbearing lowers the educational attainment of young women. Having a child before the age of 20 reduces schooling attained by almost 3 years. Lack of education and job skills carries the risk factor over into the workforce. Those mothers who had their children before the age of 20 had an average annual income almost $10,000 less than the mothers who had their children after age 20. (Klepinger, Lundberg, & Plotnick, 1995)

The U.S. Department of Education suggests that poverty is a factor in success. The overall national drop out rate of those students considered low income was 25% compared to 10% for middle income and 3% for high income level students. (Dept. of Education, 1994) While the pregnant teens or the drop out teens were not involved in controlled studies, the significant difference in the statistics lead researchers to accept these and other barriers as risk factors contributing to failure.

There are increasing numbers of young people who are being faced with the accumulation of risk factors. This is evidenced by the national drop out rate. According to the U.S. Department of Education in 1994 11% of all 16-24 year olds were high school drop outs. The rate for African Americans was 14% and Hispanics were 28%. Rates were determined by the number of 16-24 year olds who had not received high school diplomas. (Dept. of Education, 1994)

It should be noted that this census did not take into account that many of those people who had high school diplomas at the age of 20-24 may have received them after
initially dropping out of school. Some school districts who compare the number of students who enter school a certain year versus those who graduate in their designated year, report drop out rates that are much higher. Many urban schools report their drop out rates as being any where from 40 - 60%. (McMillan & Reed, 1994)

All of the researchers the author read, cited 3 or more of these barriers within their studies or essays. Students raised by a single female parent or grandparent are included in those considered at-risk for failure. These households often have fixed incomes, in many cases poverty level, which contribute to a tumultuous lifestyle. It is common for these children to live nomadic lives while in school causing frequent school transfers. Racism, unemployment and unresponsive schools all help to destroy human potential. (Newberg & Sims, 1996).

Students who are at-risk of failure are believed to face many challenges that the majority of our students don’t encounter. School is not a positive experience for all students. As stated before, this has not been proven in controlled studies, but has been observed by researchers in school district after school district. One such study involved Lincoln high school which is located in an southern inner-city neighborhood close to a 900 unit housing project. The researcher focused on student perceptions of school including teachers effectiveness and peer relationships. Most of the students labeled at-risk cited teachers negative attitudes, lack of material understanding, and irrelevance of curriculum as reasons for continued failure. The process of placing labels on students that follow them was also seen as a contributor to the problems. (Geary, 1989)
This raises the issue of tracking. The place where many of these students could find positive intervention (the school) often becomes another place for the display of prejudice. While some schools use specialized classes to give students additional attention, tracking has often been a sanctioned means of ignoring the problems faced by at-risk students. (Doherty & Finn, 1996)

For at-risk students, normal transitions such as going from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school can be frightening and dangerous. Students who already have academic difficulties find it more difficult to adjust to unfamiliar environments with new expectations. (Newberg & Sims, 1996)

In the midst of the barriers and challenges faced by at-risk students it is important to recognize that many of these students are victimized again by being blamed for their situation. Observation suggests that blaming students instead of identifying causes can result in acute consequences. For example, a boy who is unable to read may develop low self-concept, stop trying to succeed, and eventually indulge in escapist activities such as drug use. (Baruth & Manning)

While behavior problems may be characteristics of at-risk students seeking attention whether positive or negative, many who are under achievers academically and are neglected socially start to act like they are invisible. Through observation, Testerman contends that although some students may be failing or not doing their work, teachers often lose sight of them because they do not cause problems. They do not disrupt class or draw attention to themselves. It is important to remember that not all at-risk students
react loudly or are disruptive. Whether loud or boisterous, if these students are not attended to, they will eventually flunk out or drop out of school. (Testerman, 1996)

Factors Influencing At-Risk Student’s Academic Success

In spite of multiple barriers, about 19 percent of students classified as at-risk did well in school and have positive outlooks for the future. These students were considered resilient. According to McMillan and Reed, the factors that seem to be related to student resiliency can be organized into four categories: individual attributes, positive use of time, family, and school. In spite of a variety of risk factors including, poverty, single parents, physical violence, family drug abuse, etc., the successful students had positive internal characteristics such as optimism, responsibility and hope. In addition, to personal characteristics, these young people had adults in their lives with whom they had trusting relationships. These adults had high expectations and provided them with lots of support. (McMillan & Reed, 1994)

Samuel Betances is one of those students who beat the odds. Samuel grew up in low income neighborhoods in Puerto Rico and New York’s Spanish Harlem. He attributes his success to his ability to accept support and guidance from interested adults. He had a very strong mother who sought the help of others to provide Samuel with what she could not provide. (Rak & Patterson, 1996)

Resilient at-risk students like Samuel, were also often involved in extra curricular activities, such as sports, choirs, clubs and hobbies, that focused their attention away from
negative involvement's such as gangs. In addition, these activities served to boost their self-esteem by allowing them to succeed at something they were good at. While educators have limited, if any, influence on the first three components they have a lot of impact in the area of school. At-risk students are believed to be most successful when they are exposed to instructional strategies and techniques which promote optimism and personal responsibility. Teachers who identify achievement and relate success to effort and ability are most effective. The researchers found that teachers and administrators are most effective when they have high expectations while building students self-esteem. (McMillan & Reed, 1994)

Schools that have expanded extra-curricular activities are successful because they increase students overall involvement in school. Simply making extra activities available is not enough. These students must often have special encouragement to participate because of the negative experiences and attitudes they have about school in general. (McMillan & Reed, 1994)

The attitudes of learners is important to the outcomes of their work. Educators such as Curwin and Barlow feel that attitudes about education have a major effect on students resilience. Attitudes are formed on the basis of success or lack of it. For example, studies of students attitude toward reading have shown that those who have had negative experiences with trying to read have low interest in literature and avoid reading aloud. Approximately 500 high school students were surveyed about reading. Seventy two percent of those students who felt reading was boring and 68% of those who did not
feel reading regularly was important, were either below grade level in literature or had remedial literature courses in the past. (Howard, 1988)

The importance of student attitudes is reinforced in a study done of 300 Native American graduates in Montana, Oregon and Washington. The group of students had an average GPA of 2.78. This was considered exceptional among a group of students where approximately sixty percent of their peers never complete school at all. When asked what advice they would give schools on how to encourage Native American students to graduate, by far the most common answer was to show encouragement. Encouragement was defined as “not putting students down”, “instilling pride in heritage”, and “showing them they are important”. In addition to their comments, the author found it interesting that 100% of these graduates were involved in at least one extra-curricular activity. (Coburn, 1989)

While working with students many educators find that fear of failure results in at-risk students simply being afraid of risk. By the time these students reach high school, they do not risk trying to learn because they have little hope for success. They develop indifferent attitudes toward school to avoid being hurt. They would rather stop trying than risk the pain of further failure. (Curwin, 1994)

Barlow contends that in addition to this fear of failure, many students do not believe that schools are preparing them for future employment or “real life”. Their lack of faith in the significance of school to their lives is a factor in their failure. Geary’s interviews with students at Lincoln High seem to reinforce Barlow’s contention. Students commented that curriculum did not relate directly to them, their values, their beliefs, their
experiences and their heritage. One student commented that he wanted to learn those things that are relevant to his future not what was relevant in a teachers past.

**Enrichment Activities and Other Intervention Methods Designed to Help At-Risk Students**

Educators have long sought out ways to intervene in the destructive course that at-risk students seem to be on. There are a number of programs that have been established to help improve the resiliency of these students. The programs take into consideration the unique challenges facing at-risk students and use varying combinations of the interventions discussed earlier to increase their chances of success.

Most of these researchers use a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivations are internal drives causing a persons action. Extrinsic motivations are things outside of yourself that encourage certain behavior. While there is debate over the use of extrinsic motivations, it is apparent that they are not effective in achieving long term results. In general, it is believed that if you give extrinsic motivations such as rewards for performance, when you remove the rewards the performance will cease. (Kohn, 1996)

However, others believe that for the student that is at-risk there is such a history of failure, and they often feel so disconnected from the school environment, that at some point they must be given external incentives to participate in the school environment. After gaining their interest educators then work on providing opportunities for success, building
self-esteem and changing attitudes about the significance of education within their lives. (McMillan & Reed)

One program that incorporated these basic concepts was implemented with a school district in Philadelphia in 1987. The program attempted to change the context of school and the odds that defeat inner-city students. The program focused on the belief that without transforming relationships and changing students attitudes about their futures the program would not work. (Newberg & Sims, 1996)

The program involved 112 sixth grade students from Belmont Elementary in Philadelphia. The students were offered free college or vocational training upon graduation from high school. The “Say Yes to Education Foundation” (SYTE) funded this program. SYTE developed a support program which sought to strengthen the areas the author previously discussed. The focus was on increasing self-esteem and improving students attitudes about the future and establishing trusting relationships with family and friends.

There were many significant findings from the implementation and study the program. However, there were some that the author found very significant. Researchers observed that students repeatedly resisted accepting help with academic, social or personal problems. They had internalized macho-cool attitudes that make seeking help a sign of weakness. However, the students stated that they eventually accepted help because they perceived that those giving it were caring and trustworthy. There attitudes about the educators they worked with had an effect on their willingness to participate in the program.
Researchers also noted that 21% of the students participating in SYTE dropped out of school in comparison to 50% of students in their peer group with similar backgrounds who did not participate in the program. (Newberg & Sims, 1996).

Developing relationships with students and using that as a catalyst to encouraging their participation in school is a method used by many educators. Richard Curwin is an educational consultant within the field of behavior modification. He has worked with inner-city youth in Indianapolis, Chicago, and other urban areas. He believes that we need to restructure the way we teach at-risk students. The focus should be more on changing their attitudes than on covering material they are not retaining anyway. By taking risks and utilizing the following methods he has personally worked with inner-city youth successfully:

- focus on more than basic skills.
- let students feel challenged
- personalize topics to relate to their lives
- encourage diversity by incorporating students culture and values
- make personal connections with students
- plan for motivation like you plan your lessons

Knapp, Shields and Turnbull in their review of teacher practices from several school districts found that the most successful enrichment activities encompassed many of the same techniques:

- instruction should help students perceive the relationship of the part to the whole
- instruction should help students relate academic tasks to the world where they live
- instruction should relate academic subjects to one another
Another program used to reach at-risk students is called “Cooperative Individualism” (CI). Like many of the other programs discussed, CI shares the belief that students have to first be aware of their own abilities in order to create a positive attitude or outlook. This method focuses heavily on community service as a means to increase student self-esteem. Researchers contend that students participating in the program have developed a more positive attitude overall. While no numbers were provided in relation to grades it was noted that, for many students who previously had discipline problems, misbehavior was no longer an issue. Based on their observations, researchers believe that doing community service projects such as cleaning parks, volunteering at nursing centers, or starting their own groups to address teen issues fostered a sense of pride and purpose within the students who participated in the program. As a result, students no longer felt the need to be disruptive or antagonistic to receive attention. (Allen & Splittgerber, 1996).

Teaching Excellence for Minority Student Achievement in the Sciences (TEMSAS) is a long range program that is designed to address the problem of academic failure by providing an enrichment program centered on math and science for African American and Hispanic adolescents. The core of the TEMSAS programs was to raise self-esteem and personal expectations of low achieving minority students. The primary thrust was to provide students who were at-risk of failure with a meaningful and motivating context for learning. (Adeniko-Morrow, 1995)

Students participated in a summer program where they took classes in math and science. In addition to the classes, students were taken on field trips and were exposed to various minority speakers in the fields of math and science. Upon completion of the
program students were asked to evaluate the program. Many students who initially entered the program to participate in the field trips and free food, stated that they began to look forward to the classes. The classes were viewed by a majority of the students as different from their science classes in school. The summer classes focused heavily on hands on labs where students could apply the theories they were learning. Researchers believe this helped students see math and science as useful tools. (Adeniko-Morrow, 1995)

By giving students creative assignments and providing opportunity for success educators created a new experience of confidence, accomplishment and zeal for learning. Specific numbers were not provided, however, it was stated that the overall academic performance of students participating increased. However, students grade points in the math and science areas were significantly higher. (Adeniko-Morrow, 1995)

Though educators across the country are using a variety of intervention methods to assist at-risk youths, all of the literature the author reviewed, had a single commonality. The educators in some way attempted to change the perceptions and attitudes of students regarding their abilities to achieve and the relevance of curriculum within their own lives. While this seemed to be a recurring theme among the literature, I was not able to find any research that addressed the specific effects of students attitude about curriculum on their performance level.

As an educator, I often use icebreakers and other enrichment activities to supplement the basic curriculum of my students. I have always believed that these methods made students more receptive to the lesson. However, I had never researched
their effectiveness or formally evaluated their effects for myself. I anticipated finding information about improving students attitudes, while doing this study. However, there was not any research which indicated the best methods of improving attitudes about curriculum. This lead me to examine whether enrichment activities are in fact effective means of improving students attitudes toward curriculum, thereby improving their overall performance in school.
CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Subjects

The subjects are a group of 46 high school seniors. All of these students have been identified as having 3 or more barriers (see definition of terms). (see Exhibit A for a sample of the criterion used to select students)

Setting

School The subjects have voluntarily enrolled in a class designed to provide curriculum instruction on career and life skills. For the purpose of this study the class will be called JTG. The high school has approximately 800 students and, though it is in a suburban community is considered urban by national standards because of the large minority population (approximately 75 percent)

Community The school is located in a small suburban community in southwest Ohio. The business community consists largely of small proprietorships with industry being almost void. The population is aging and though the student body population is 75 percent minority, the community minority population is only 45 percent. This is believed to have been a factor in declining support for school levy’s in recent years.

Data Collection

Construction of the Data Collecting Instrument. This study is designed to see what effect the independent variable (enrichment activities) has on student attitudes about the JTG curriculum. The author determined that the most objective method to use with
limited resources would be the semantic differential. The semantic differential was originated by C.E. Osgood. He wanted a method which he could use to objectively measure beliefs or ideas about words and concepts.

To construct the differential, the name of the class, (JTG), was used as the concept to be measured. It is important to remember that this is the acronym commonly used within the high school for this program. The name which the acronym represents was printed fully at the top of the semantic differential. I then chose 20 polar adjectives that are strongly evaluative and that relate well to the concept. For the pre-test those adjectives which were considered as favorable beliefs about the concept were randomly placed to avoid position habits in the response patterns. The same was done for the post-test, however, the order of the adjectives were different to minimize the effect the pretest may have had on the responses. The differential had a series of 7 undefined scale positions between each set of polar adjectives. Within the introduction it was mentioned that in order to carry out this study there are a few assumptions that must be made. First, the author assumed that the test will measure what it is designed to measure. The author also assumes that the responses of students will be honest and that each student will fully participate in the independent variable, enrichment activities. (See Exhibit B & C for sample pre and post tests)

*Administration of the Data Collection Instrument* the pre-test was given to students their first day of school. Students did not identify their test by writing their names on them. This was done to encourage students to respond honestly to the questionnaire. The test was color coded to designate the students grouping without
compromising anonymity. Treatment with the independent variable lasted 3 weeks and then the post test was given during class. The post test were color coded as were the pre-test. Students did not write their names on the second test.

**Design**

The study uses the following design:

**NonRandomized Control Group**

*Pre-test, Post-test Design*

Experimental Group $T_1$ $X$ $T_2$

Control Group $T_1$ $T_2$

Within this design pre-assembled groups that are as similar as availability permitted were selected and given pre-tests. The mean pre test scores were calculated. The experimental group received treatment with the independent variable in addition to standard curriculum and the control group received standard curriculum only. A post-test was given after treatment was completed. There were not any outside observers in either group.

**Treatment**

The independent variable within this study was a series of enrichment activities. The first activity was a trio of icebreakers that opened the course by helping the students and the instructor know each other better. After the icebreaker activities students participated in an enrichment activity to introduce each of the first three curriculum assignments given to students. All of the activities used to introduce course curriculum
were designed to help students connect the curriculum to their lives. These activities were either originated by the author, adapted from "Icebreakers: a handbook" or adapted from the book "The Winners Circle, Yes I Can".

It is important to remember that the effectiveness of these activities have not previously been studied in an organized manner. However, they have been used repeatedly and shown useful by many organizations. For instance, the icebreakers which we will discuss further have been used by Jobs for Americas Graduates (JAG), the national organization of JTG, for more than ten years successfully. Including these activities within this study allows the author to examine the effectiveness of tools that have not been previously studied, but are already being used to work with at-risk students.

The first icebreaker was a hands on activity called "knot". It is designed to make the group get used to working as a team and relying on others. It is a physical activity in which the group is placed in a circle holding the hands of group members across from them. They are then required to remove themselves from the knot without releasing hands.

The second icebreaker is called "amnesia", and it explores how much classmates already know about each other. Students take turns pretending to not know anything about themselves. They must rely totally on the class to tell them about themselves by asking questions. This exercise allows the student and the instructor to get an idea of how others view the student.

The last icebreaker is called reflections, which allows the students to reflect on themselves. In this exercise students are given slips of paper with questions about
controversial issues and students are asked to give their opinions and why they feel the way they do. This develops into a group discussion which allows students to question their ideas and reflect on the ideas of others. It is important to remember that the instructor participated fully in all activities by answering and asking the same questions as the students. This is designed to increase the instructors and students knowledge of and comfort with one another.

The first curriculum assignment was used to determine two things. The first was to determine if students had begun thinking about their futures, and the second was to determine what career choices, if any, students had made. This is done by the use of an entire chapter on career exploration. To help students become more open to the assignments in the career exploration chapter we began this section with the following enrichment activity.

Students were given a scenario about 3 brothers who each set out on a trip to a city far away. The first brother who reached his destination would win a million dollars. One brother jumped on his motorcycle right away and took off toward the city. The second brother loaded his car with food, 5 containers of gasoline, and a map. He then went to the house to take a nap. The third brother laughed at the slowness of the second brother as he got on his horse to leave.

The students were split into groups and asked to come to a consensus about which brother would win. The answer was the second brother because he was prepared. The first brother got lost and ran out of gas for his motorcycle, and the second brothers horse became tired thirsty and hungry and would not go on because the brother had no
provisions for him. The third brother was well prepared for the trip. He was rested, had food and plenty of gasoline.

This activity was done with the belief that if students understand the purpose of their assignments and their significance they are more likely to participate in and be receptive to the information. This assignment allowed students to focus on the importance of being prepared which is the essence of the Career Exploration chapter.

The second curriculum assignment examined students value system and how it relates to career choices. This chapter is called “What’s Important to Me”. The assignments in this chapter ask students to focus on three basic areas. The first thing is to examine what is important to you and why is it important. Is it money, family, power, excitement, etc. important to you? Do you value things because they give you a feeling of belonging, because they make you feel secure, or because they make you feel important, etc.? The next thing is to examine right and wrong. Is something wrong because your friends or parents say its wrong or have you really examined the issue for yourself. The last thing is how do these values relate to the career you choose. If family is extremely important, do you want a job that requires you travel four days out of the week. This chapter generally calls for students to examine their ideas and beliefs and take them into consideration when choosing a career.

To begin this chapter students were given a poem written on a piece of paper. They were then asked to explain what the poem meant and whether they liked it and why. Many disliked poetry and were not receptive to the poem. Students were then asked to listen to a popular rap song and were enthusiastic. The instructor points out that we often
say we like or dislike things without examining our reasons. They were then asked to do a value survey. They later used that survey to see how their value systems fit within their chosen careers.

The third curriculum assignment was about qualifications for specific careers. Three students were selected for role play by serving as candidates for a specific job. Two were comically unqualified and one was perfectly qualified. The role play was used to emphasize the importance of knowing the qualifications for jobs and making sure you are prepared before applying for them.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In order to calculate the results of this study, a value was assigned to each of the scale positions on the semantic differential. A value of 7 was given to the polar adjective considered to show favorable beliefs. A value of 1 was given to the polar adjective considered negative. A score was given to each survey with 20 being the least favorable score and 140 being the most favorable score.

There were 3 classes of students involved in this project. For the purposes of this study we will refer to them as Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3. Group 1 and Group 3 were treated with the independent variable (enrichment activities) in addition to standard curriculum. Group 2 received standard curriculum only. The following table shows the results of the pre and post tests.

TABLE I
MEAN ATTITUDE SCORES OF JTG STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test Mean</th>
<th>Post-Test Mean</th>
<th>Mean Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the introduction to this study there were several limitations mentioned in relation to internal validity. Selection was one of these limitations. The students were selected to participate in the program based on meeting the minimum requirements of the three or more barriers mentioned previously. However, they were assigned to classes based on counselor scheduling. The author had no control over the groups that the students were placed in after selection. The counselor may have students scheduled based on a number of criteria which may or may not be random. The non-randomized nature of the selection process left open the possibility that one group would be more favorable than another toward JTG based on past experience.

However, the chart shows that the mean pre-test attitude scores of the two groups which received treatment with the independent variable and the group which did not receive treatment with the independent variable are very similar. This leads the author to believe that selection, though non-randomized, is not a significant limitation within this study.

The mean post test scores show that the attitudes of all three groups of students increased. This may suggest that the normal curriculum of JTG is effective in gaining students interest without the use of additional enrichment activities. However, it is important to recognize that while all three groups increased their mean attitude scores those two groups receiving treatment had larger increases. Group 1 had an increase of 14 points and Group 3 had an increase of 9 points while Group 2 only had an increase of 3 points.
In order to determine whether the increases between the pre and post tests were significant, I performed a two-tailed t-test of the dependent samples. The significance level used for rejection was .05. The results are as follows:

**TABLE II**

**Significance Levels of Increases in Mean Attitude Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df=</th>
<th>t=</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there was an increase in the mean attitude scores of all 3 groups, there was a greater increase among those students who had participated in the enrichment activities. When testing the two null hypothesis the results are as follows:

1) There will be no significant difference between the mean pre and post test attitude scores toward curriculum of students who have engaged in enrichment activities.

This hypothesis was rejected at the .02 significance level when Group 1 and Group 3 are calculated together. That is a pretty strong rejection with only a 2% chance that the difference was caused because of something other than the treatment. When the groups
are calculated separately Group 1 also rejects the null hypothesis at the .05 significance level. This gives strong indication that the independent variable contributed to the increase in attitude scores. However, Group 3 does not reject the null hypothesis. It was only significant at a .20 significance level. There was a 20% chance that something other than the authors treatment caused the increase in mean attitude scores for this group. While the results seem inclusive based on the acceptance of the null hypothesis by Group 3, the author is still lead to believe that the enrichment activities have some effect on students attitudes because of the strong rejection of Group 1 and the two groups combined.

In relation to the second hypothesis the results were as follows:

2) There will be no significant difference between the mean pre and post test attitude scores toward curriculum of students who have not engaged in enrichment activities.

This hypothesis was not rejected. Group 2 had a level of significance of .80. This was a very strong acceptance of the null hypothesis.

The author believes the significance of the enrichment activities is inconclusive based on the fact that Group 3 did not reject the null hypothesis at the .05 significance level. However, the fact that there was a significant difference between the pre and post tests of Group 1 alone and Groups 1 & 3 combined and there was not a significant difference between the pre and post test scores of Group 2, lead the author to conclude
that the independent variable (enrichment activities) had some positive effect on the attitudes of students toward the overall curriculum of JTG.

Having stated this, it is important to remember that there are some additional limitations to be considered. All of the students participating in this group attend the same high school. While they may not be in the same group within this program it is possible that they have other classes together. If that is the case it is also possible that they discuss their JTG class. It is then possible that this results in diffusion and students attitudes could be affected by interaction with students from other groups.

Another limitation involves external validity. While all students must meet certain requirements to be in the program, they are only selected from a voluntary population. This means that they may be more highly motivated than the general population that the author is assessing them with. This may limit our ability to generalize these results to the entire population of at-risk students in the area.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Students have always complained about school work, but until recently most have believed that school had some purpose. It appears that this belief is no longer strong. The erosion of student attitudes about the efficacy of our schools is a huge factor in the poor grades, unacceptable behavior, and low test scores plaguing our school systems. This is also a factor that has not been well addressed. Living in communities that do not stress the value of education these students are making destructive choices for their lives placing themselves at-risk of failure.

While doing this study, I became convinced that we as educators must expand our use of community resources in order to capture the interest of our at-risk student population. If students no longer see the relevance of education then shouldn’t we focus more resources toward incorporating activities that promote the application of our lessons to the world our students are living in? What is the use of making lessons more challenging or more in-depth if we convinced our students that what we are teaching is important?

The author’s review of literature about at-risk students indicated that educators are using a variety of intervention methods to stop the cycle of failure. In spite of the diversity of approaches there does seem to be some commonalties among those programs experiencing some measure of success. All of the programs I read about stressed the importance of high self-esteem when working to help at-risk students succeed. Educator after educator stressed the need for students to believe in their own abilities before they
were able to perform. In addition to high self esteem, those students who were resilient, in spite of their circumstances, had a measure of hope. They believed that hard work and persistence would lead them out of their situations, therefore, they continued to try. This was often due to an encouraging adult or role model within their lives.

While educators are implementing several ideas to address the needs of at-risk students, the majority of these programs have not been evaluated in depth to analyze if and why they are successful. Were these programs successful in intervening in the failure of students? If they were successful which aspects of the program caused individual results? These were questions left unanswered by the researchers. Most researchers described the situations placing students at-risk in detail. They also spent a great deal of time describing their observations of students. However, few were able to give definitive answers to the challenge facing the educational system. How do we save our at-risk students?

The authors attempt to test the effectiveness of enrichment activities in improving at-risk students attitudes about curriculum was inconclusive as well. While the results suggested that the activities had some positive effect on students attitudes, the significance of the results were weak. A larger more controlled study of the same methods may result in more conclusive results.

The author believes that additional resources should be used to identify programs across the country which seem to be successful. Once these programs are identified, we must invest the time and energy to analyze what makes these programs work. When we are able to isolate effective intervention methods we can share those results with educators
across the country. They can then adapt them to successfully address the needs of our at-risk population. Until that happens, we will continue this hit or miss form of education, exhausting valuable resources on ineffective programs.
PART II PERSONAL INFORMATION

20. Which of the following best describes your current living situation?
   □ a. Live with both parents
   □ b. Live with mother
   □ c. Live with father
   □ d. Live with relative
   □ e. Live with friends
   □ f. Live by myself
   □ g. Live with husband or wife
   □ h. Live with foster parents or in a group home

21. Number of persons in family or household including yourself: □

22. Mother’s education:
   □ a. Less than a high school diploma
   □ b. High school diploma or equivalent (but no college)
   □ c. Some college or postsecondary education
   □ d. Completed college
   □ e. Unsure (only if student cannot obtain information)

23. Father’s education:
   □ a. Less than a high school diploma
   □ b. High school diploma or equivalent (but no college)
   □ c. Some college or postsecondary education
   □ d. Completed college
   □ e. Unsure (only if student cannot obtain information)

24. If you live with your mother, is she currently employed?
   □ a. Yes
   □ b. No
   □ c. Does not live with mother

25. If you live with your father, is he currently employed?
   □ a. Yes
   □ b. No
   □ c. Does not live with father

26. Are you eligible for free or subsidized lunches?
   □ a. Yes
   □ b. No
   □ c. Information not available

27. Does your family or anyone in it receive the following income from the government? (Check all that apply)
   □ a. Welfare (AFDC)
   □ b. Public assistance
   □ c. Supplemental security income
   □ d. Other cash income from government not including retirement benefits

29. Are you a child of a military veteran? (check all that apply)
   □ Mother □ Father □ No

PART III ADDITIONAL BARRIERS TO ACHIEVE GOALS

(For the Specialist to complete)

28. What are the barriers that have the potential to prevent the student from graduating from high school or being successful in the labor market after graduation? (Check all barriers that can be documented)
   □ a. Having had limited or no work experience in high school
   □ b. Lack of vocational skills that are in demand in the local labor market
   □ c. Weak academic performance (a grade point average of C or below or basic academic skills in the bottom quartile of the class)
   □ d. A past record of absenteeism problems
   □ e. Has been suspended, expelled or put on probation during high school
   □ f. A member of an economically disadvantaged family
   □ g. A single parent with a dependent child in the home
   □ h. A member of a race/ethnic minority group with a low family income
   □ i. Convicted of a criminal offense other than a traffic violation
   □ j. Alcohol and/or substance abuse
   □ k. Has a disability. Describe: __________________________
   □ l. Has dropped out of school previously
   □ m. Has repeated a grade in high school
   □ n. Is pregnant
   □ o. Other. Explain: __________________________

p. Has not passed the 9th grade proficiency test in:
   □ Writing □ Citizenship
   □ Reading □ Math

Statement: The information provided in this Student Profile is true and accurate and can be documented.

Date/Comments: __________________________

School: __________________________

Student: __________________________

Sister: __________________________

Case: 899477
## JOBS FOR TROTWOOD'S GRADUATES

| IMPORTANT | UNIMPORTANT | GOOD | BAD | PAINFUL | PLEASURABLE | BORING | INTERESTING | STRUCTURED | UNSTRUCTURED | FUN | WORK | COMPLEX | SIMPLE | FORMAL | INFORMAL | NEEDED | WANTED | USEFUL | WORTHLESS | SIGNIFICANT | INSIGNIFICANT | RELAXED | TENSE | CALM | EXCITING | COMPLEX | SIMPLE | IMPORTANT | UNIMPORTANT | UNNECESSARY | NECESSARY | SUCCESSFUL | UNSUCCESSFUL | FLEXIBLE | RIGID | EASY | DIFFICULT | NEGATIVE | POSITIVE |
|-----------|-------------|------|-----|---------|-------------|--------|-------------|------------|-------------|-----|------|--------|--------|--------|----------|-------|--------|--------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------|------|-----|--------|--------|--------|-----------|-------------|-----------|---------|-----------|-------------|---------|------|-----|--------|--------|
JOBS FOR TROTWOOD'S GRADUATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>📁</th>
<th>NEGATIVE</th>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>BORING</td>
<td>INTERESTING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>PAINFUL</td>
<td>PLEASURABLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td>BAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>STRUCTURED</td>
<td>UNSTRUCTURED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>FUN</td>
<td>WORK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>SIMPLE</td>
<td>COMPLEX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>FORMAL</td>
<td>INFORMAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>NEEDED</td>
<td>WANTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>USEFUL</td>
<td>WORTHLESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>SIGNIFICANT</td>
<td>INSIGNIFICANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>RELAXED</td>
<td>TENSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>CALM</td>
<td>EXCITING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>COMPLEX</td>
<td>SIMPLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>IMPORTANT</td>
<td>UNIMPORTANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>UNNECESSARY</td>
<td>NECESSARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>UNSUCCESSFUL</td>
<td>SUCCESSFUL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>FLEXIBLE</td>
<td>RIGID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>EASY</td>
<td>DIFFICULT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➡️</td>
<td>IMPORTANT</td>
<td>UNIMPORTANT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCE LIST


