CHAPTER 8:

EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS & SUCCESS

Key Benchmarks in this chapter:

Ready for school at 5

3rd grade achievement

High school drop-out

Juvenile delinquency

Tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use

Teen pregnancy

Family poverty

Key Chapter Topics

Risk Factors for Poor Academic Performance

Creating Educational Success

Supportive Educational Experiences
　　　Preschool years
　　　Kindergarten and early elementary years
　　　Middle and high school years
　　　At-risk youth

Positive Peer Relationships and Social Competence
　　　Peers, social competence and school performance
　　　School climate

Family Support of Education
　　　Strategies for family involvement
　　　Family literacy

(over)

Effective School-to-Work Transitions

Comprehensive school-to-work efforts
Drop-out prevention
Integrating academics with school-to-work
Employment exploration

CHAPTER 8:

EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

*S*chool failure is the common marker of high risk status among children, youth, and adults* (Dryfoos, 1990). Thus preventing school failure is essential to preventing substance abuse, juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, long-term unemployment, welfare dependence, and other lifelong problems.

Children's academic success is increased when important resources are present in their lives. For example, children who enjoy good physical health and live in emotionally healthy, economically stable families and in strong communities, tend to be personally well adjusted and to succeed in school (Kellighan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 1993). In addition, early childhood experiences and group environments strongly impact children's academic skills and success. (Much of the research on these early years is summarized in Chapter 3, Strong, Nurturing Families and Chapter 5, Healthy, Thriving Children.)

Additional elements that contribute to academic success are:

- Supportive educational experiences;

- Positive peer relationships and social competence;

- Family support for education;

- Effective school to work transitions.

These key elements are important resources for all children and youth, and are especially important to those at-risk. Research findings highlighting these elements are reviewed in this chapter. Preceding that review, risk factors and general strategies for enhancing academic success are briefly discussed below.

Risk Factors for Poor Academic Performance

Many children experience risk factors that seriously threaten their academic success. These risk factors include poverty, minority group membership, personal and family issues, and school characteristics.

Poverty. The most common risk factor for school failure at all ages is poverty, especially when poverty is prolonged (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, &

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> *Poverty is the most common risk factor for school failure at all*

Klebanov, 1994; Kellaghan et al., 1993; McWhirter et al., 1993). Living in low-income and, especially, violent neighborhoods adds incredible stresses to the lives of students (Duncan et al., 1994). Many coping skills (such as aggressiveness) that children may develop in reaction to such neighborhoods, are not behaviorally appropriate for the school environment, and thus increase the risk of school failure (McWhirter et al., 1993).

Children from low income families are particularly disadvantaged during the preschool period because of limitations in their home and child care environments (Durlak, 1995). Economically disadvantaged children are more likely to repeat early grades, and are three times more likely to drop out of school than are other children (Magdol, 1992).

Minority group membership. Many minority group children and youth excel academically. However, poverty is much more common among minority families, and many minority children face the academic risks associated with poverty. Among minority children who are marginalized by the majority culture and stressed by prolonged poverty, poor school performance is unacceptably high (Duncan et al., 1994; McWhirter et al., 1993).

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Although many low income, minority parents have high expectations for school achievement (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996), most also have realistic concerns about economic survival for their children (Gandara, 1995). Thus low income minority parents may transmit a double message to their children - have high educational and occupational aspirations but be prepared to experience frustrated ambition. This combination of high aspirations but low expectations for success is associated with poorer school performance.

Academic success is particularly elusive when ethnic minority children are not proficient in English. These children spend time learning the language of instruction and have difficulty interacting with their peers and speaking in class. Forty percent of children for whom English is a second language drop out of school, compared with 10% of English-only students (McWhirter et al., 1993). Effective interventions to increase language skills include:

- bilingual instruction;

- early and effective development of English proficiency; and
- intensive training for parents in parenting skills and English conversation (Committee for Economic Development, 1987; Gingras & Careaga, 1989; McWhirter et al., 1993).

Personal and family risk factors. Personal and family risk factors contribute to school difficulties, regardless of income. For example, the risk of poor school achievement is greatly increased among children who experience attention deficit disorders or anti-social behaviors. These issues are usually first visible, and easiest to remediate, in early childhood (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).

Poor school achievement is also more common when parents:

- are too permissive;

- are too rigid or punitive;

- poorly monitor their children's behavior; or

- provide little support for education (Dryfoos, 1990; McWhirtier, et al., 1993).

School risk factors. Although social, personal, and family factors affect school achievement, school experiences themselves often have the *greatest* impact upon academic success or failure. Once children enter elementary school, the best predictor of later school success is early academic performance.

Although not universal, a four-stage sequence typically describes the development of serious academic problems:

- early academic problems;

- being held back one grade;

- being targeted for special education; and

- eventually dropping out of school or graduating with poor academic performance (Durlak, 1995).

Personal and family risk factors contribute to school difficulties, regardless of income.

School experiences themselves often have the greatest impact upon academic success or failure.

Creating Academic Success

Nearly all students could succeed in school if prevention efforts were combined with early intervention and continuous instructional support for at-risk students (Slavin, Karweit, & Wasik, 1994). Over the long run, early and sustained efforts to increase academic success can be cost effective because of reduced costs related to special and remedial education, dropouts, delinquency, and early pregnancies (Slavin et al., 1994, p. 218), as well as the life-long problems associated with school failure.

Primary prevention and early intervention programs have the highest level of effectiveness in increasing academic success (Durlak, 1995; Slavin et al., 1994). In designing these programs, the following ideas are critical:

Nearly all students could succeed in school if prevention efforts were combined with early intervention and with continuous instructional support for at-risk students.

- Quality *early* educational experiences from infancy forward optimize children's success in school, especially children exposed to multiple risk processes (Slavin et al., 1994).

- In kindergarten, work habits and achievement patterns are established, reputations begin, and children's concepts about themselves and school start to form (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996). Kindergarten is a critical year.

- As children and youth progress in school, *many* strategies are highly effective in increasing school success (Dryfoos, 1990; Slavin et al., 1994) including:

  - supportive educational experiences that emphasize success and skill-building;

  - positive social skills and relationships;

  - family support for education; and

  - effective school-to-work transitions.

- The most successful strategies are comprehensive *and* individualized to address multiple risk factors.

These strategies and related outcomes are summarized in the following research reviews.
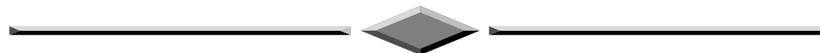
Supportive Educational Experiences:
Measurable Interim Outcomes

Preschool:	**School years:**
Normal developmental levels in infancy and early childhood.	Positive academic self-esteem, self-efficacy, and attitudes.
Early intervention for all children falling outside normal developmental ranges.	Low levels of school aggressiveness and anti-social behavior in school.
Parent basic skills and family literacy.	No or few behavioral referrals.
	Grade completion/retention rates.
Age-appropriate:	Progress in required coursework.
• language and pre-literacy skills, including ESL skills if needed;	ESL skills.
	Grades.
• familiarity with basic information (patterns, relationships, cause/effect, problem-solving);	Achievement tests scores.
	Special or remedial education referrals.
• positive social skills.	Absenteeism, truancy, and/or tardiness rate.
Pre-reading skills; pre-math skills.	
	Drop-out rates and/or re-enrollment.
Readiness for school at age 5.	
	Graduation or GED rates.

Research Linkages

The Preschool Years

Primary prevention and early intervention are the most successful approaches to ensure the academic success of children and youth (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996; Dryfoos, 1990; Durlak, 1995; Slavin et al., 1994). A one-year prekindergarten program cannot be expected, however, to have strong, lasting effects on school achievement (Karweit, 1994a). The most effective early intervention programs begin during the early preschool years and *continue* into elementary school.

Primary prevention and early intervention are the most successful approaches.

Early intervention programs should begin during the early preschool years and continue into elementary school.

Comprehensive prevention and early intervention, including quality early childhood education and family support, are highly effective in increasing later school progress and success (Kellaghan et al., 1993; McWhirter et al., 1993). For young, low income children, center-based programs with a language-based curriculum and high quality day care are effective, particularly in combination with intensive parent programs involve parents in learning the most effective ways to interact with their young children (Slavin et al., 1994).

(See Chapter 3, Strong, Nurturing Families and Chapter 5, Healthy, Thriving Children for more in-depth review of parent-child interactions and the pre-school years.)

The Kindergarten and Elementary School Years

Early achievement. Achievement in the earliest years of school is crucial to long-term academic success. In kindergarten, work habits and achievement patterns are established, reputations begin, and children's concepts about themselves and school start to form (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996). While almost all children enter first grade full of self-confidence, enthusiasm, and expecting to succeed, many learn that they have failed by the end of the school year (Slavin, 1994).

Kindergarten and early elementary school interventions must involve a long-term vision and be implemented over several years to build lasting school

Extensive review of research studies of full-day versus half-day kindergartens, kindergarten retention, extra-year kindergartens, and transitional first grade programs indicate that these programs show modest short-term effects, but these usually "wash out" by the end of first grade (Slavin, 1994). As was true of pre-school experiences, kindergarten and early elementary school interventions must involve a long-term vision and be implemented over several years in order to build lasting school success (Karweit, 1994).

Reading and literacy. The content of early instruction is particularly important. Reading below grade level in the early grades adds to children's risk of dropping out, and remedial programs tend to be less effective after third grade (Slavin et al., 1994). Kindergarten and the early grades must begin to build reading and language as essential basic skills. Some kindergarten and first-grade programs have been certified as effective in developing reading and other academic readiness skills (Joint Dissemination Review Panel cited in Slavin et al., 1994).

- For example, one certified kindergarten program is entitled the *Kindergarten Integrated Thematic Experiences (KITE)*. KITE emphasizes language, socio-emotional, and cognitive physical development and includes the introduction of letters and letter-

sound correspondence and Astra's Magic Math program (Karweit, 1994). The KITE framework provides supportive materials, but also encourages teacher creativity and ownership of the program. The positive effects of KITE on children's math and reading skills are consistently large and have been followed through the third grade.

Grade retention. Being "held back" or retained most frequently occurs in the first grade and is far more likely for low-income children than it is for high-income children (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996). Regardless of socioeconomic status and ethnicity, retention of students in any grade for a second year is *strongly* predictive of reduced school achievement in later years and eventually dropping out of high school (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996; Dryfoos, 1990; Slavin et al., 1994). Further, *no lasting benefits* have been demonstrated for retention in a grade (Dryfoos, 1990; Slavin et al., 1994).

Tracking. Like grade retention, tracking students into groupings with similar ability-levels is a controversial practice. Tracking is *least* harmful when it:

- occurs during *brief* periods;

- is limited to *specific* subjects; and

- allows for *reassignment* or students to different groups in different subjects (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996).

Mixed-age ability grouping (i.e., across classes rather than within class) has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy for increasing reading achievement within an heterogeneous population (Slavin et al., 1994).

Tutoring. Tutoring is among the most *effective* instructional intervention for low-achieving primary grade students. Successful tutoring programs can reduce rates of grade retention and referrals for special education.

Structured tutoring plans and one-on-one adult tutoring are among the most effective methods. For example, when classroom aides participate in structured one-on-one tutoring activities, their presence in classrooms is effective in improving student reading achievement, even over a period of three years (Slavin et al., 1994).

Summer programs. During the early elementary years, most middle-class children continue to develop academic skills during school vacations, but many disadvantaged children do not (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996).

Kindergarten and the early grades must build reading as an essential basic skill.

No lasting benefits follow grade retention and tracking is controversial.

Successful tutoring programs can reduce grade retention and referrals for special

Summer school programs can prevent learning losses which may otherwise occur among low-SES children. Effective interventions to keep skills active in the summer include child and family literacy activities (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996; Epstein, 1996).

Comprehensive programs. Comprehensive early intervention programs are the most effective in improving the school success of at-risk elementary school children (Slavin et al., 1994). These comprehensive programs combine:

- developmentally appropriate education;

- enriching school-aged child care;

- family support and training; *and*

- aggressive response to *individual needs* of children and families to prevent school failure (Slavin et al., 1994).

Success for All ensures that every child completes third grade at or near grade level in reading and other basic

The *Success for All* program is an example of a comprehensive school program. *Success for All* is a research-based collaborative effort between several Baltimore Schools and Johns Hopkins University (Slavin et al., 1994). All aspects of the program are directed toward ensuring that *every* child completes third grade at or near grade level in reading and other basic skills. Integral components of the *Success for All* model are:

- family support and training program;

- teacher training;

- research-based developmentally appropriate reading, writing; and

- language arts programs, and one-on-one tutoring for first graders who are falling behind in reading.

Success for All has been replicated in 12 states.

Middle & High School Years

Transitions from one school to another or from grade to middle school or middle school to high school are points of vulnerability for youth, particularly those already at-risk (Eccles et al., 1993; Graham et al., 1997).

- For many students, such school transitions are frequently accompanied by decreases in academic achievement, extra-curricular activities, and psychological well-being.

- School transitions can be especially difficult for children and youth who are having difficulty academically and who often feel that no one at school cares about them (McWhirtier et al., 1993).

Youth who are engaged in school, who value doing well in school, and who are more involved in academic and extracurricular activities, are more likely to be high achieving than other students (Steinberg, 1996). These characteristics are related to the youths' earlier experiences, current activities, and most importantly, to the school environment. For example, efforts to develop strong, positive, supportive adult relationships *within schools* can buffer the transition to middle school, resulting in better grades and more enjoyment of extracurricular activities (Graham et al., 1997).

Middle and high school environments. Middle and high school quality and practices affect academic success, engagement in school, and eventually, high school completion rates. Failure and drop-out rates are higher for high schools with large classes, high pupil-teacher ratios, and an emphasis on tracking and testing.

Students who drop out report feeling they were shut out of school activities, were powerless in adversarial teacher-student relationships, were bored and uninvolved, didn't receive enough individual attention, and were treated disrespectfully (Dryfoos, 1990).

In contrast, *responsive* school environments are characterized by:

- high expectations for all and minimal use of ability grouping or "tracking";

- strong family and community partnerships, including family resource centers;

- safe, positive, cooperative environments;
- challenging, interdisciplinary curriculums;

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Failure and drop-out rates are higher for high schools with large classes, high pupil-teacher ration, and an emphasis on tracking and testing.

- varied teaching approaches and flexible organizational structures;

- positive individualized assessment procedures; and

- strong, supportive personal relationships between youth and adults *in* the school.

All students benefit from such learning environments (Scales, 1996).

At-risk Youth

At-risk students can be effectively served by alternative programs or schools.

Effective interventions for at-risk adolescents improve school achievement through individual attention, individual and small group counseling, mentoring, tutoring, cooperative learning, and individual accountability (Dryfoos, 1990).

Many at-risk students are most effectively served by alternative schools. Alternative schools may involve separate facilities or "school within a school" models. Due primarily to their small size, flexible schedules and curriculums, and close relationships between students and teachers, alternative schools can improve school achievement and completion for at-risk youth, including youth who have left school because of parenthood, employment, or other reasons (Dryfoos, 1990).

Alternative school programs seek to develop academic skills in a caring atmosphere. Training in life skills is a common feature. Non-traditional educational strategies may be used, and social services, including child care, must be available if needed (McWhirter et al., 1993). Alternative educational programs are most successful when:

- no more than 50-100 students are involved;

- individual staff members choose to be involved;

- policies, procedures, and resources are flexible in order to meet individual students' needs and time frames; and

- a sense of belonging and involvement with the school community is promoted (McWhirter et al., 1993).

Educational Progress and Success

**Positive Peer Relationships and Social Competence:
Measurable Interim Outcomes**

Children's and youth's positive involvement in school activities.	Sustained, positive relationships with peers who value conventional behavior.
Pro-social skills.	Positive peer and social engagement and interaction.
Conflict resolution and mediation skills.	
Effective refusal skills.	Low levels of aggression or anti-social behavior toward peers.

Research Linkages

Throughout the school years, peers strongly influence school achievement. When peers are more academically oriented, more involved in school and have high educational aspirations, children tend to do better in school (Steinberg, 1996). Further, when students are socially competent and have positive peer relationships they are more likely to succeed academically (McWhirter et al., 1993).

Abilities that add to children's early and continued academic success include skills in:

- verbal communication;

- decision-making;

- autonomy and self-reliance;

- impulse control and anger management;

- conflict resolution; and

- refusal skills.

Family environments strongly effect the development of these social competency skills especially early in life (McWhirter et al., 1993; Walker et al., 1995). (See Chapters 3, 5, and 6 for related discussions.)

Positive social skills add to children's academic success

School environments and climate strongly influence children's and youths' social skills, roles, and attitudes.

School climate. School environments and climate strongly influence children's and youths' social skills, roles, and attitudes. Positive skills and behaviors develop when schools support students to:

- take responsibility for their own learning;

- monitor their own progress;

- make effective decisions;

- solve academic *and* interpersonal problems;

- exercise positive conflict resolution skills; and

- have a positive self-concept (McWhirter et al., 1993).

Responsive school environments and policies can develop these skills in students, especially young adolescents (Scales, 1996).

Numerous curriculum resources exist for developing positive peer relationships and effective social skills. These are reviewed in greater depth in Chapter 6. It is critical to remember, however, that:

- skill-building curriculums are most effective when the principles espoused by the curriculum are *integrated* into the daily life of the school operation and guide all relationships, including those between students and teachers.
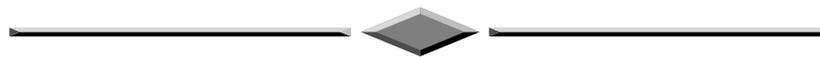
Family Support for Education:
Measurable Interim Outcomes

Adequate educational resources and practices in the home.	High quality family involvement programs in schools.
Parent basic skills (reading, writing, math, speaking/listening).	High quality school-based family literacy programs.
Adult completion of General Equivalency Diploma (GED), high school diploma, or other credentials.	Educational aspirations of adult family members for child.
	Students' educational aspirations.
Positive family literacy practices.	Home work completion.
Parents' positive involvement in school activities.	Student grades and progress.
Parents' positive support of education.	

Parent support of education. Parents are a child's first and most influential teacher. Before and after children begin formal education, family support of children's learning is essential to student success.

Throughout a child's school life, parental expectations for academic achievement or attainment influence the child's educational aspirations. In fact, parents' positive expectations and involvement in their children's education can improve:

- student attitudes;

- homework completion;

- report card grades; and

- children's aspirations and achievement.

Despite the fact that most families want to support their children as students, the degree of *active* parental involvement in the educational process is limited (Evans, Okifuji, & Thomas, 1995).

Parental expectations for academic achievement are important

- On average, single parents, parents who are employed outside the home, parents who live far from the school, and fathers are less involved in schools.

- In economically depressed communities, and among poor families, school contacts with families often concern children's problems and difficulties. Such interactions are typically difficult and limit parents' desires to be active in the school.

- Family participation in schools tends to decline as children move into the upper grades, unless schools and teachers implement appropriate partnerships with parents at each grade level (Epstein, 1996).

Many parents need information about how to participate in schools.

Regardless of education, race, or income, most parents want to be involved in their children's education, but many parents report that they need information about participating in schools, helping their children at home, and understanding school practices and school "reform" (Epstein, 1996).

Overall, when schools implement practices to involve families, most parents respond positively. Family involvement must, however, recognize that time and other obligations limit many parents' involvement in school. Schools can respond to this reality by:

- clear, timely, and regular communication;

- realistic, flexible, convenient, and reasonable opportunities for parents' involvement.

Parental involvement must be sensitive to cultural, social-, and economic differences.

Strategies for family involvement. All approaches to parental involvement must be sensitive to cultural, social, and economic differences. When both parents and schools are from the middle and upper classes, and thus share equal social status, contacts between parents and schools are generally beneficial to children (Comer, 1988; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). In relationships with low-income minority parents, however, schools often transmit the perception that the children are "disadvantaged" by their parents' limited income or lack of formal education. This does not foster better understanding between schools and parents. Efforts to build more positive parent-school-student relationships must acknowledge these issues and focus on developing positive, realistic expectations *and* environments that build success for all students and families.

There are many ways to involve families in schools. The most widely used method *extends the school experience into the home*. For example, in Head Start programs, parents are encouraged to become involved in educationally enriching home activities with their children (Evans, Okifuji, & Thomas, 1995). For older children, homework monitoring programs, homework hotlines, and other strategies can make parents more effective as "tutors" or supporters of learning at home.

A second model of parent involvement is *parental empowerment*. The best example of the parental empowerment model is found in special education in which Federal law requires parents to be involved in *development* of an individualized educational program for each student. Such parental empowerment can increase parents' sense of positive involvement. Parents of special education students typically report more positive feelings about their involvement in their child's education than do parents of children in general education (Evans, Okifuji, & Thomas, 1995).

In the final model of parent involvement, *parents and teachers work together collaboratively*. When decisions must be made or conflict occurs, both parents and teachers are responsible for resolution. For example, using neutral home visitors as mediators, in the *Binghamton School Partnership Project* (BSPP), demonstrated improved parent-teacher communication even in conflictual situations (Evans, Okifuji, & Thomas, 1995).

Depending on the needs of individual parents, school, and communities, the possibilities for improving interactions between families, schools, and communities include:

- assisting families with parenting skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and creating home conditions to support learning at each grade level;

- communicating with families about school programs and student progress, and providing a variety of ways in which parents and teachers can interact;

- creating parent volunteer programs at schools to support students;

- opening school decisions for input from families and establishing parent-teacher committees to review and to ensure family-friendly school policies and practices;

There are many ways to involve families in schools through home activities, empowerment, and

- coordinating the resources of businesses, agencies, colleges, and other groups to strengthen family practices and student learning;

- establishing a system for resolving parent-teacher conflict including mediation if needed.

Particularly successful strategies to increase family involvement in their children's education include parents serving as classroom tutors and engaging in structured home-based instruction that reinforces classroom instruction (Epstein, 1991; Eastman, 1988). Family involvement programs that target the families of older at-risk children and youth demonstrate that regular home visits and assigning specific roles to parents are often successful (Dryfoos, 1993).

Family resource centers in schools can be an effective way to reach parents. Such family resource centers can coordinate the delivery of family-based services, parent volunteers, homework helpers, educational resources and lending libraries, and a range of other informal and formal supports. Although Family Resource Centers can be located in many locations, schools are a natural place to connect with children, youth, and parents. (See Chapters 3 and 9 for further discussions of Family Resource Centers.)

Family resource centers in schools can be especially effective in reading parents.

A national resource for the development of more effective family involvement in schools is the *Partnership-2000 Schools* network. This national network is sponsored by the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning and the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At-Risk. Located at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. The goal is to improve school-family-community connections. Resource books, workshops, and educators are available to assist schools and communities to plan, fund, and implement improved school, family, and community connections and improved curriculums and school reform efforts.

Contact:
Partnership – 2000 Schools
Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning
Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

Family literacy. Both home and school are important to children's acquisition of literacy skills. Families who successfully promote literacy in their homes provide a variety of contexts in which literacy is utilized – literacy is *not* isolated as a separate instructional activity (Auerbach, 1989). From newspapers to recipes to comics to stories – reading is included in everyday life. (See Chapter 5 for more on family literacy activities.)

Family literacy programs improve the literacy and other basic skills of educationally disadvantaged children *and* their parents. Participants in Oregon's Even Start family literacy programs are typical of participants in many family literacy programs. They are low-income and lack literacy skills; for many English is a second language. Many experience depression and lack social supports; most started their families as teen parents (Bailey, 1996). These parents need support to develop parenting and adult life skills as well as literacy skills.

Family literacy programs improve literacy by focusing on the whole family.

To respond to these needs, comprehensive family literacy programs generally include four basic components to serve families with young children:

- parent literacy, adult basic education, and life skills training;

- parent education and parent-child interaction; and

- early childhood education.

In such family literacy programs, parents and young children learn together in group activities that are relevant to everyday life. As children enter school, parents involvement in their child's learning is one way to extend family literacy programs. School-based family literacy programs are often a part of comprehensive Family Resource Centers. (See Chapters 3 and 9 for further discussions of Family Resource Centers.)

For information about adult basic education and family literacy programming in Oregon, contact:

Sharlene Walker
Office of Community College Services
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310
(503) 378-8648 x368

Family-friendly employers can also support family-school linkages. For example, some employers provide paid release time annually for parents to spend in their children's schools. (See Chapter 9 for further discussion of family-friendly workplaces.)
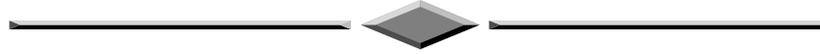
Effective School-to-Work Transitions:
Measurable Interim Outcomes

Positive future plans for education and/or work training.	Accessible career information and counseling.
Lower high school drop-out rate/higher re-enrollment rates.	Use of curricula that develops positive work attitudes starting in the early grades.
Positive work skills, attitudes and/or behaviors.	School-work transition programs that combine businesses, education, labor, community-based organizations, parents, and youth.
Participation in cooperative education, youth apprenticeship, and other school-work programs.	

Research Linkages

Clearly basic academic skills are essential to future employment opportunities. In addition, all youth, especially those who are non-college bound, need support to successfully bridge the gap between school and work force participation. Yet the United States does not systemically assist youths to make a successful transition from school to the world of work (Sherrod, 1997). In fact, little attention is given to assisting youth to make the transition to adulthood – including the transition to work.

Among non-college bound students, high school drop-outs are in particular need of effective school-to-work support. Most high-school drop-outs face employment at the low end of the labor market and frequent periods of unemployment. High school drop-outs from minority families are at particularly high risk of marginal employment or prolonged unemployment.

In the U.S., school-to-work transition efforts typically:

- concentrate on preparation of youth for jobs that are *presumed* to be available in the labor force;

- focus on at-risk, low-income, minority students, and other students who are the least likely to attend college;

- are limited to the provision of vocational education courses in secondary schools (National Research Council, 1993).

The United States does not systematically assist youths to make a successful transition from school to the world of work.

> ***The federal government invests less than one-half as much in the education and training of each non-college youth as it does for each college youth.***

Thus despite the need for more comprehensive school-to-work efforts, almost all efforts are concentrated on non-college bound students and these efforts are declining. The federal government invests less than one-half as much in the education and training of each non-college youth as it does for each college youth (National Research Council, 1993). Over the past 15 years, the number of programs that provide training and employment to non-college bound youth has *declined* (National Research Council, 1993).

School-to-Work Programs

Many youth and employment experts believe that school-to-work programs should be expanded to include four components:

- prevention of dropping out of school;

- assistance to re-enter educational institutions;

- integration or academic and vocational or career education; and

- provision or employment guidance to college bound *and* non-college bound youth.

> ***Effective school-to-work programs include innovative educational approaches.***

An effective school-to-work transition system should being *before* grades 9 rather than in grade 11 as is now typical. Early, comprehensive programs are more likely to attract at risk students and to more effectively serve other students as well (Pauly, Kopp, & Haimson, 1995).

Each of these four components of an effective school-to-work transition system is reviewed briefly below.

Drop-out prevention. The lack of connection between school and work contributes to school behavior and motivational problems, including dropping out (Rosenbaum, 1989). In fact, when asked why they dropped out, school drop-outs cite school-related reasons (such as irrelevance and boredom) and a desire for the adult status offered by work far more often than they cite family and personal problems (Tanner, Krahn, & Hartnagel, 1995).

Educational practices that *encourage dropping-out* include assigning students to non-academic "tracks" in high school and "back-to-basics" or rigid curriculum requirements (Dryfoos, 1990; McWhirtier et al., 1993). In contrast, retaining students in school is *enhanced* by school climates and curriculums that:
- are relevant to work;

- are flexible to meet individual needs;

- foster student-teacher and student-teacher-workplace partnerships; and

- lower administrative and other barriers for those at risk of dropping out and those attempting to return to school.

Policies and programs that encourage high school drop-outs to *return* to school are as important as retention or "stay-in-school" policies and programs. To be effective, education programs must treat high school returnees as adults and meet their needs for child care and flexible timing to accommodate work and other obligations.

Integrating academics with vocational and career education. Many vocational education programs are not effective school-to-work transition programs because they are haphazard, and not meaningfully tied to existing local employment opportunities (National Research Council, 1993).

In contrast, effective school-to-work programs integrate academic and vocational education through:

Effective school-to-work programs integrate academic and vocational education

- curriculums that explicitly join academic concepts and vocational instruction;

- work experiences in which students apply problem-solving skills to actual work tasks and gain entry-level job training;

- career experiences which provide opportunities to observe the daily activities of workers ("job-shadowing"); and

- explicit connection of local job opportunities and work experiences to academic assignments (Pauly, Kopp, & Haimson, 1995).

These experiences are particularly useful to non-college bound students. Compared to more traditional approaches, new curricular approaches more fully integrate academic and vocational education (Resnick & Wirt, 1996).
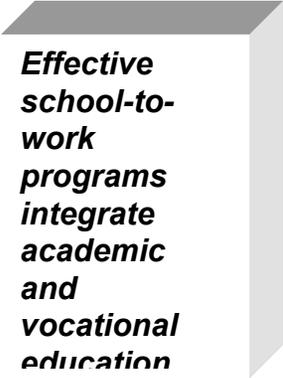
For example, "tech prep" programs involve 2 years of high school and 2 years of post-secondary preparation, focus on applied academics and technologies. Tech prep programs typically lead to an associate degree or certification in a specific career field.

Combining academic and work experiences can also be important components of college-bound education curriculums (Pauly et al., 1995). For college bound students, integrated academic-career experiences can include:

- volunteering or part-time work in the field of interest;

- job-shadowing; and

- solving career-related problems in academic courses (e.g., calculating dosages for medications; designing bridges; managing school businesses, etc.).

Few of these techniques for linking school and work are new – what is needed, however, is a rapid and systematic expansion of their use.

Good guidance systems enable non-college bound, and college bound students to successfully enter the labor market.

Employment exploration and guidance. Good occupational information and guidance systems in the schools can enable non-college bound and college bound students to more successfully enter the labor market.

Unfortunately, high school guidance counselors who serve as gatekeepers for post-secondary experiences tend to be over-worked and focused on college bound students (Pauly, Kopp, & Haimson, 1995).

Teachers and counselors must be given time and incentives to become involved in employment guidance activities, such as:

- providing placement and other job information;

- matching students with employers; and

- providing educational warranties in which schools assure that students can meet dependable standards (Rosenbaum & Jones, 1995).

Effective school to work efforts. The most effective school-to-work efforts involve local employers and the local workplace as sites for occupational training and experience. These efforts:

- let employers decide on skill requirements;
- utilize students at real-life worksite; and

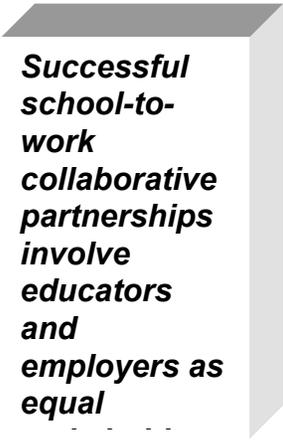- give youth the local connections they need to get jobs.

The biggest challenge to school-to-work programs may be the expansion of employer involvement; currently most participating employers offer intensive training to a maximum of three students or a less complete experience to larger numbers of students (Pauly, Kopp, & Haimson, 1995).

Successful school-to-work collaborative partnerships must involve educators and employers as equal stakeholders in planning implementation, and assessment. Such partnerships require regular contact and jointly developed policies, procedures, and indicators of success (Lacey & Kingsley, 1989). In short, more collaborative relationships between local employers and schools are needed to build bridges for youth entering the labor force.

Successful school-to-work collaborative partnerships involve educators and employers as equal

Summary and examples. Although individual school-to-work programs are quite diverse, successful programs share these characteristics:

- integration of work-based learning and academics;

- at least two years of high school-based instruction are required;

- community members and local employers are actively involved;

- "school-within-a-school" or other strategies offer supportive, small group environments for the students; and

- teachers and counselors are provided with the time and training to make effective employer connections.

One effective school-to-work effort has been instituted by the *Cooperative Extension National 4-H Youth Development Program*. This effort uses a workforce preparation model and curriculum guide to help communities create workforce preparation programs for all age groups (National 4-H Council, 1995). Nationwide, six projects have been implemented. In one project, the American Honda Motor company has established a youth apprenticeship program that provides high school students with diverse

occupational experiences in the auto and motorcycle manufacturing, sales, and services industry.

Contact:

Workforce Preparation Program
National 4-H Council
7100 Connecticut Avenue
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815-4999
(301) 961-2853

Successful school-to-work programs utilize individualized learning plans, "a school within a school" formats, flexible scheduling, alternative assessment, and occupational training.

Another successful school-to-work program is the *performance-based diploma program* at Fort Pierce Central High School in Fort Pierce, Florida. This program is a partnership between the Chamber of Commerce, the local Community College, the private industry council, and the high school. The program utilizes individualized learning plans, a "school-within-a-school" format, flexible scheduling of classes and work, alternative assessment strategies, and options for occupational training. This program reduced the dropout rate from 60% in 1987 to less than 2% by 1994; more than 90% of the program graduates went on to college, the military, or gainful employment (School-to-Work Resource Bulletin, 1996).

A third successful program is sponsored by the *Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Public Schools*. This program serves out-of-school middle- and high-school aged youth through 31 alternative school; all contain a school-to-work element. Each of the 30 alternative schools is characterized by small class sizes, and a specific occupational and/or cultural identity. For example, one school serves Hispanic youth and another serves young mothers. Milwaukee has been successful in involving schools, parents/guardians, businesses, the community, and the youth in these alternative programs (School-to-Work Resource Bulletin, 1996).

For more information about these and other programs and strategies access the web site of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (http://www.stw.ed.gov/factsht/).
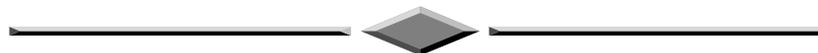
Table 8-1

Oregon's 1997 Benchmark Indicators[a] Related to OCCF Wellness Goal: Educational
   Progress and Success

	1990	1995/96	2000	2010
EDUCATION BENCHMARKS				
• **High school drop out rate (#22)[b]**	**6.6**	**7.4**	**5.7**	**4.6**
• Percentage of 8th graders who achieve established skill levels (#23)[b]				
a. Reading	---	89%	92%	100%
b. Math	---	84%	89%	100%
• **Percentage of 3rd graders who achieve established skill levels (#24)**				
a. Reading	**---**	**93%**	**95%**	**100%**
b. Math	**---**	**86%**	**90%**	**100%**
• Percentage of high school students that have completed a structured work experience, including a practicum, clinical experience, community service learning, or school-based enterprise program (#25)	---	21%	65%	100%
• Percentage of Oregon adults (age 25 and older) who have completed high school or an equivalent program (#27)	85%	91%	94%	100%
PROTECTION BENCHMARKS				
✔ • **Percentage of 8th grade students who used: (53)**				
a. Alcohol in the previous month	**23%**	**30%**	**26%**	**21%**
b. Illicit drugs in the previous month	**14%**	**22%**	**15%**	**12%**
c. Cigarettes in the previous month	**12%**	**22%**	**15%**	**12%**
PUBLIC SAFETY BENCHMARKS				
✔ • **Total juvenile arrests per 1,000 juvenile Oregonians per year (#65)**	**46.5**	**58.6**	**46.5**	**37.2**
• Percentage of students who carry weapons (#66)	---	19%	15%	9%
DEVELOPMENTAL BENCHMARKS (No baseline or targets are yet established)				
• **Percentage of children entering school "ready-to-learn" (Developmental Benchmark #13)**	---	---	---	---
• Percentage of students who attain a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) (Developmental Benchmark #14)	---	---	---	---
• Percentage of students who attain a Certificate of Advanced mastery (CAM) (Developmental Benchmark #15)	---	---	---	---
• Juvenile Crime Index (Developmental Benchmark #20)	---	---	---	---

[a] <u>Oregon Shines II: Updating Oregon's Strategic Plan, 1997</u>; Oregon Progress Board.
[b] Benchmark number in <u>Oregon Shines II</u>
✔ Key Benchmark to be tracked by Progress Board
Bold = Benchmark tracked by OCCF, 1995-97