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ABSTRACT

Module Three of the Alberta project "Stay In--You Win" is presented in this document. This module provides for an integrated strategy involving community, parents, students, and teachers. A collaborative team planning approach is used to maximize the "buy-in" of all teachers. The stated objectives of the module are to introduce a planning-for-change process for educational improvement; to provide an interactive workbook for planning school-based dropout prevention initiatives; and to encourage ongoing program development in dropout prevention. These topics are covered: (1) factors for student success and failure; (2) strategic planning; (3) developing required policies and procedures; (4) operational planning and budgeting; (5) implementing; (6) monitoring, evaluating, auditing, and adjusting; (7) communicating; and (8) identifying potential dropouts. A section on planning an individual school's initiatives describes seven steps for establishing priorities: assess the facts on dropping out in the particular school; assess the school's major objectives; examine how to integrate dropout prevention initiatives; examine how to involve staff; examine what initiatives need to be developed; examine how to monitor, evaluate and adjust initiatives; and determine how results are to be communicated. (ABL)

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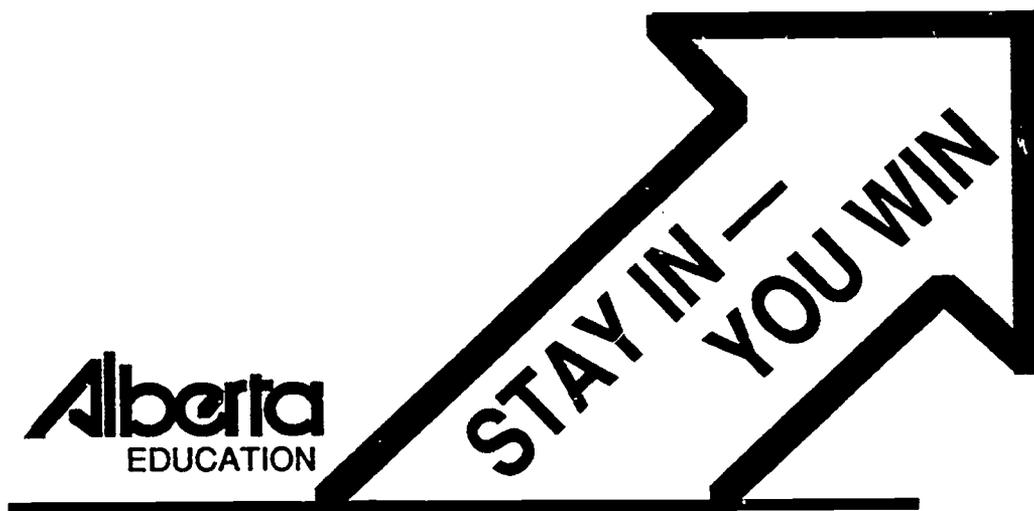
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# STAY IN — YOU WIN

## MODULE THREE

# PLANNING YOUR STAY IN - YOU WIN INITIATIVES



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ALBERTA EDUCATION  
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and was

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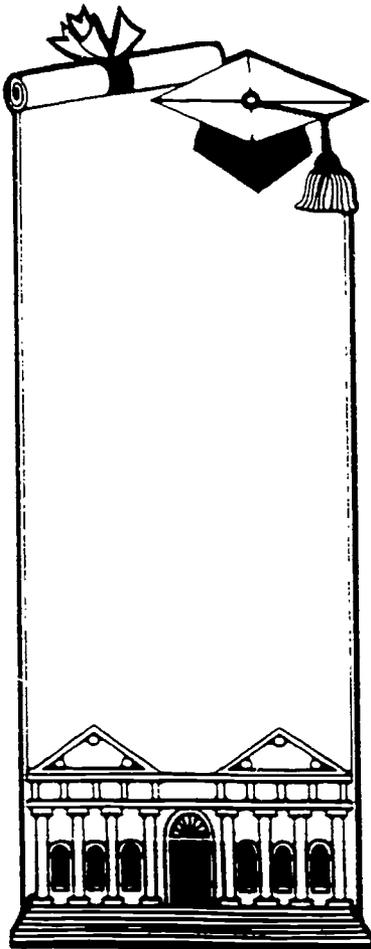


# 1. INTRODUCTION

Planning is not a terminal “once only” activity; rather, it is a dynamic ongoing process which is designed to improve program implementation. Educational planning is one of the more challenging management tasks because it calls for higher level problem-solving skills, a sensitivity to human needs and imagination.

Planning for educational change and improvement is perhaps the key leadership role in education today. The increasing pace of technological, social and economic change makes planning even more critical. Increasingly, managers are encouraged to anticipate and be proactive in their program administration. It is now recognized that implementing change is much easier and more effective if those affected are actively involved in the planning process. This is why the planning model introduced here is a participatory model and develops a team approach to tackling the dropout problem. Involvement of all stakeholders is essential if they are to work in partnership to encourage students at risk to stay in school.

By working with school staff, parents, the community, and students, the particular circumstances that affect your school and community can be identified and new initiatives developed to complement your existing program. An Alberta high school in a northern community with few businesses and a high native student population will clearly have different needs from an urban high school. This “needs assessment” phase is at the heart of the planning process. The diagram below illustrates that careful consideration of needs leads to the formulation of specific “Objectives” to meet your priorities. “Program Design & Delivery” is the phase where targeted initiatives are designed and then delivered to the selected audiences. “Evaluation” is as much used to diagnose where improvements can be made as to measure the final



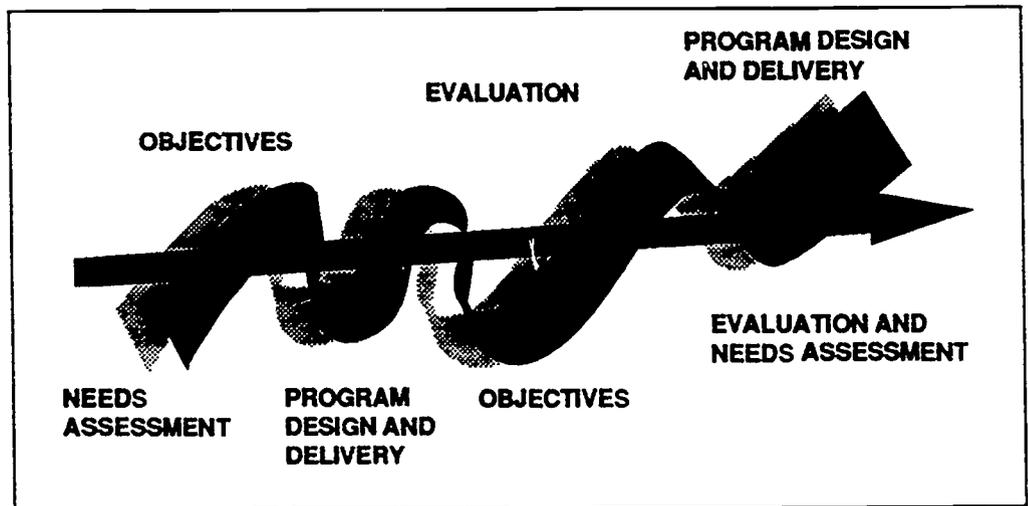


results of any given initiative. The spiral continues with a resetting to objectives based on the evaluation phase and modifications to the program design and delivery. This planning model ensures a responsive and dynamic approach to improving the quality of education.

### DYNAMIC PROGRAM PLANNING MODEL



overhead 3.1



## 2. MODULE OBJECTIVES

Module Three is “where the rubber hits the road,” and where you and your staff can plan for those dropout prevention initiatives that are most relevant to your students and most appropriate for your school.

Module Three provides for an integrated strategy involving community, parents, students and teachers. A collaborative team planning approach is used to maximize the “buy-in” of all teachers. The development of STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives is based on school leadership because of the professional expertise of educators, and the primacy of the school as the social institution most involved with young people.

## Objectives

- To introduce a planning-for-change process for educational improvement.
- To provide an interactive workbook for planning school-based dropout prevention initiatives.
- To encourage ongoing program development for dropout prevention.

## 3. PLANNING FOR CHANGE

### A. Factors for Student Success and Failure

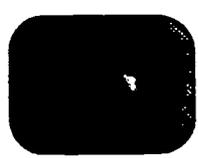


The information presented in Modules One and Two has outlined the case for a high priority for dropout prevention programs. It is difficult to think of a more important educational issue in high schools today than the issue of dropouts. Essentially the issue of dropouts has many faces and combines a large number of different symptoms. Clearly, much of your current school program and its ongoing improvement speak directly to the issue of dropouts. A basic assumption behind this module is the fact that there is a lot right with our high schools today and there is evidence of very solid achievements. As principal your selection of staff is based as much on personal qualities as it is on their academic knowledge. Seldom today are administrative policies uncaring, arbitrary and capricious. Alberta's curriculum is more responsive to social and economic circumstances than it was twenty years ago and programs of study now recognize the diversity of talents, interests and abilities of students. In short, what is needed is not a shotgun approach and dramatic revolution; rather a selective ballistic missile approach where "smart weapons" are used to target carefully selected objectives and make a difference.

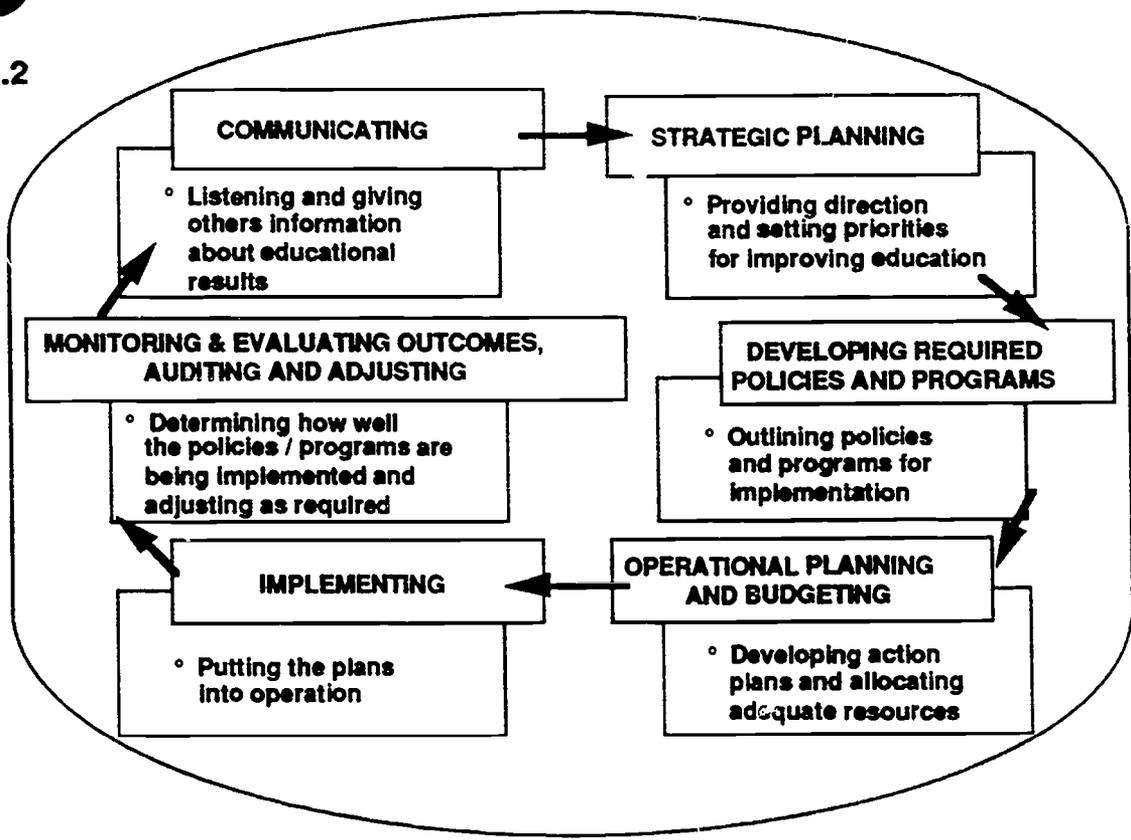


To help this targeted approach to design of specific programs in dropout prevention, the list of factors behind student success and student failure is presented on the next two pages. They are reprinted from the "Star Plan," the Portland Public Schools blueprint for success for students at risk, 1989.

The planning model used in this module is the generalized model used by Alberta Education to emphasize that the management of education is a continuous process. The remainder of this chapter will provide specific suggestions for planning dropout prevention initiatives based on the phases outlined in the following management of education model.

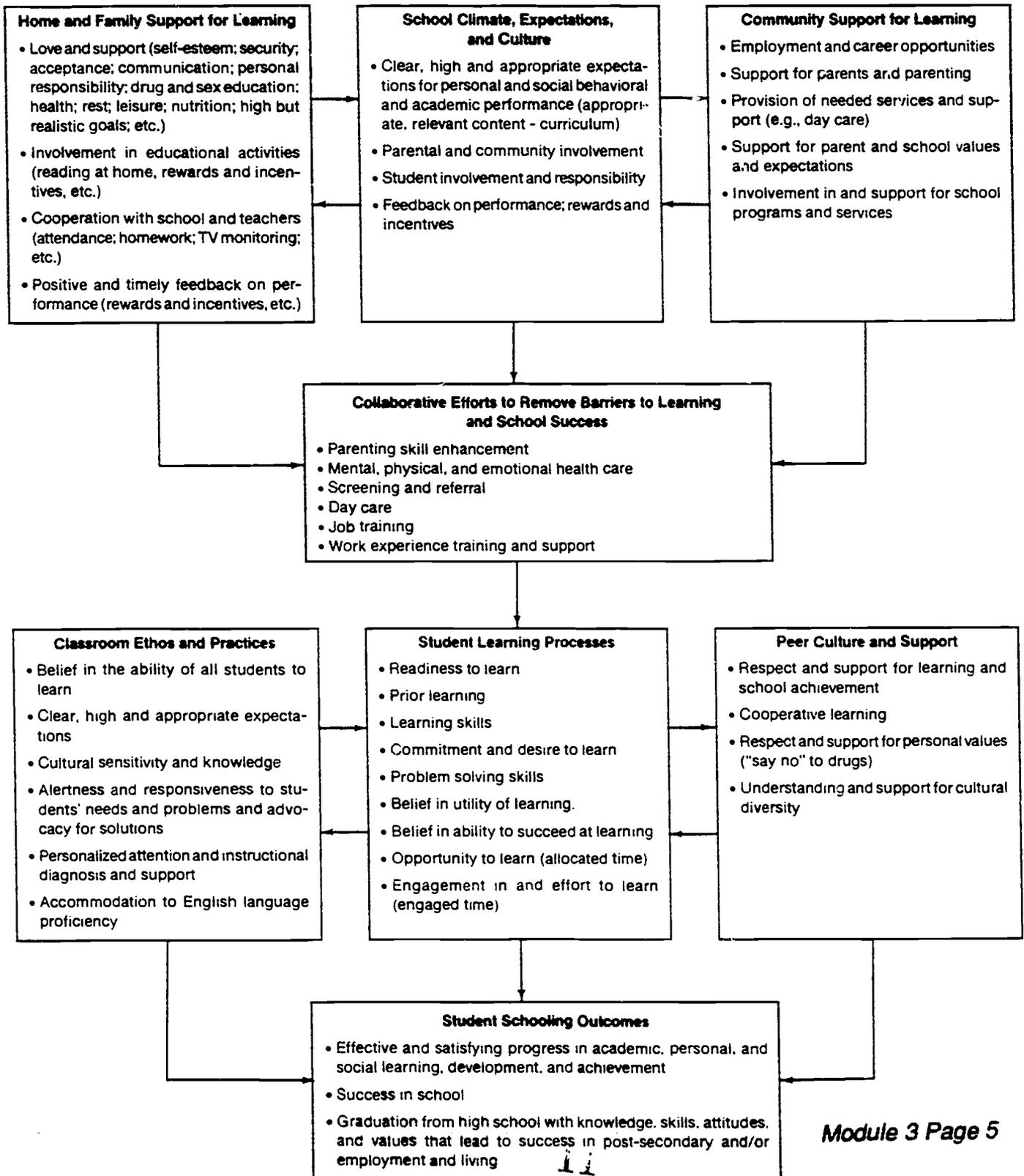


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## MODEL OF FACTORS OF SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS AT RISK





# MODEL OF FACTORS OF FAILURE FOR STUDENTS AT RISK

## Immediate Causes of Failure

Impoverished prenatal environments  
Unsupportive home environments  
Unmet family health and economic needs  
Negative peer culture and influences  
Unresponsive school and classroom environments

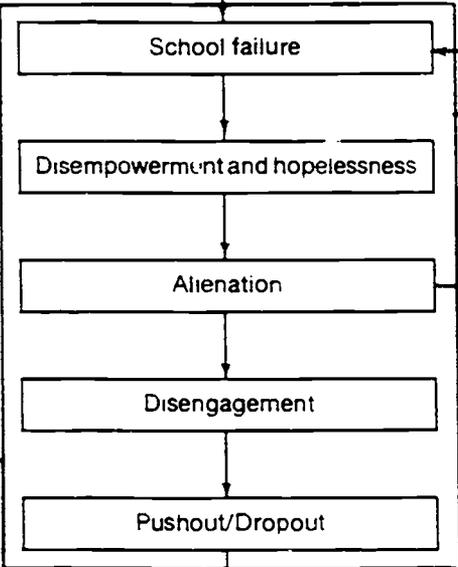
## Short-Term Effects

Low or unrealistically high goals and aspirations  
Poor self-esteem  
Lack of future orientation  
Poor study habits and learning capabilities  
Deteriorated motivation

## Systematic Causes

Increased "competition" and higher standards as a result of top-down school reforms  
Negative labeling  
Low expectations

## Intermediate Effects



## Proximate Societal Causes

Lack of employment and career opportunities  
Gang membership  
Substance abuse and teen pregnancy

## Indicators

Poor or deteriorating grades and test scores  
Poor or deteriorating attendance  
Poor and deteriorating behavior

## Correlates

Low family education  
Low income  
Membership in typically underrepresented ethnic and cultural groups

## Long-Term Effects

Economic dependence on family or welfare  
Crippling physical, emotional and mental health problems  
Criminal involvement

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## B. Strategic Planning

At the school level, strategic planning involves the principal in evaluating the school program and its resources. The trend to school-based budgeting makes the setting of priorities an easier task. Simply put, the principal, administrators and staff have an opportunity of changing the emphasis on factors which affect school climate and the entire academic and extra-curricular program. Planning for each new academic year takes place already and the addition of an emphasis on dropout prevention can become an integral part of this regular activity. As a specific example let's assume that the school identifies the need to improve student motivation. If strategic planning discussions lead to this priority, then the principal can exercise leadership in developing specific policies and programs for the coming school year.

The October 1987 issue of the Journal Educational Leadership carried an article on "Synthesis of Research on Strategies for Motivating Students to Learn," in which Jere Brophy provided a summary of teacher-learning strategies to show the variety of constructive approaches that can be followed to improve student motivation.

### Highlights of Research on Strategies for Motivating Students to Learn

Research on student motivation to learn indicates promising principles suitable for application in classrooms, summarized here for quick reference.





### **Essential Preconditions**

1. Supportive environment
2. Appropriate level of challenge/difficulty
3. Meaningful learning objectives
4. Moderation/optimal use

### **Motivating by Maintaining Success Expectations**

5. Program for success
6. Teach goal setting, performance appraisal, and self-reinforcement
7. Help students to recognize linkages between effort and outcome
8. Provide remedial socialization

### **Motivating by Supplying Extrinsic Incentives**

9. Offer rewards for good (or improved) performance
10. Structure appropriate competition
11. Call attention to the instrumental value of academic activities

### **Motivating by Capitalizing on Students' Intrinsic Motivation**

12. Adapt tasks to students' interests
13. Include novelty/variety elements
14. Allow opportunities to make choices or autonomous decisions
15. Provide opportunities for students to respond actively
16. Provide immediate feedback to student responses
17. Allow students to create finished products
18. Include fantasy or simulation elements
19. Incorporate game-like features
20. Include higher-level objectives and divergent questions
21. Provide opportunities to interact with peers

### Stimulating Student Motivation to Learn

22. Model interest in learning and motivation to learn
23. Communicate desirable expectations and attributions about students' motivation to learn
24. Minimize students' performance anxiety during learning activities
25. Project intensity
26. Project enthusiasm
27. Induce task interest or appreciation
28. Induce curiosity or suspense
29. Induce dissonance or cognitive conflict
30. Make abstract content more personal, concrete, or familiar
31. Induce students to generate their own motivation to learn
32. State learning objectives and provide advance organizers
33. Model task-related thinking and problem solving.

The factors behind student success and failure provide the distilled essence of those concerns that might govern your strategic planning activities. The highlights on strategies for motivating students to learn are an example of moving from the general to the specific. Although the Management of Education Cycle is divided into six phases, in reality the planning process must be holistic and give full consideration to all aspects. Otherwise a "grand strategy" can emerge that is incapable of implementation because of lack of budget. It is advisable to involve staff, selected students and parents in the planning process so that they can react to your priorities. Generally, a school can mount about three or four individual initiatives before resources become so stretched that the additional initiatives end up not making a difference. In the field of social planning the concept of assembling a "critical mass" of resources has been borrowed from physics. The concept of "critical mass" implies that there must be a sufficient combination of resources to begin a chain reaction or make a difference. The next section takes the priorities developed in your strategic plan and leads to a review of policies and programs.





### C. Developing Required Policies and Programs

Bonnie Doon High School in Edmonton, among others, has reviewed its student attendance problems and its related school policies on student attendance. The result has been to offer an incentive program for those students with a perfect or near-perfect attendance record. This is an example of a school reviewing its policies to meet changing circumstances and student attitudes. Another example might be the review of policies for teenage mothers, arrangements for day care, and counselling for families if this is an unresolved problem in your school. A high school with a high number of native students might develop improved policies and programs for cultural awareness, involvement of Elders, or home-school liaison. The kinds of policies and programs you develop will depend on which kinds of problems are acute in your community and your school.

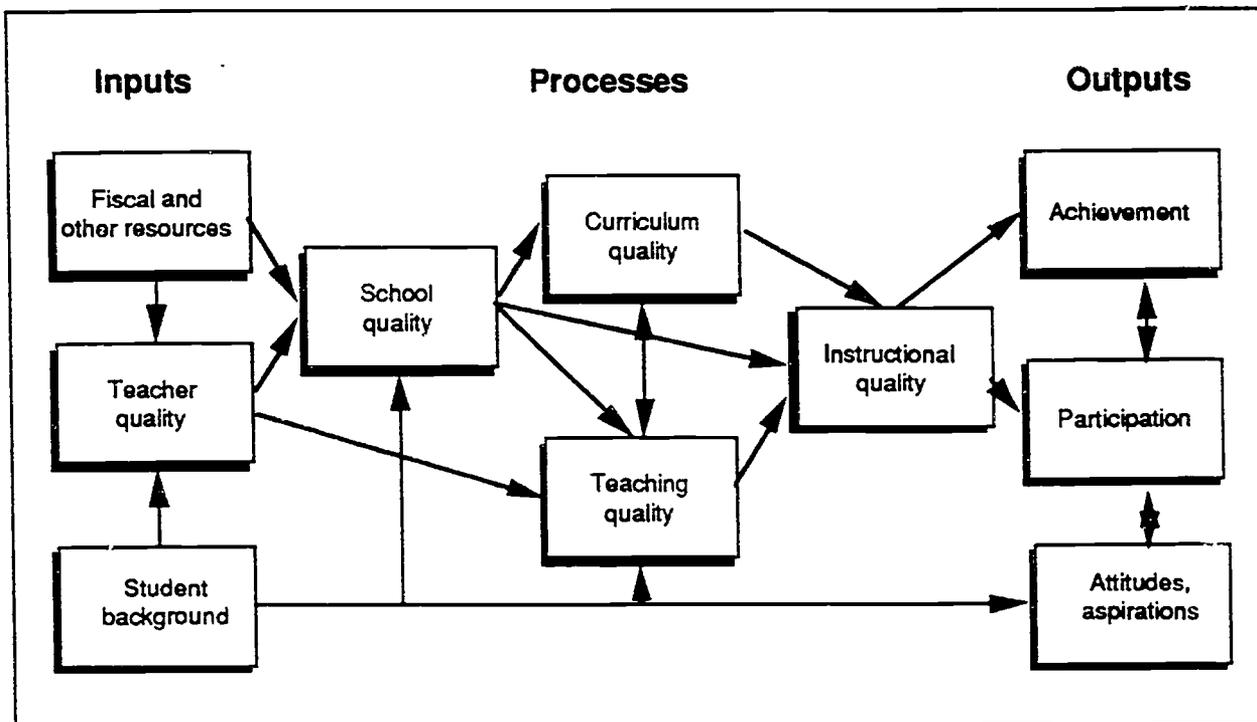
Program development is perhaps the most critical stage of the management cycle and illustrates that all phases of the cycle have to be considered throughout the process. The diagram opposite of "Linkages Among Elements of the Education System" (from Indicators for Monitoring Mathematics & Science Education, Rand Corporation, 1989) may be helpful in analyzing the various connections among inputs, processes and outputs, particularly for the academic aspects of dropout prevention programming:

As a concrete example of program development your school may identify a major priority for specialized tutoring services for students at risk of failing courses. Decisions as to whether teaching time will be assigned within the regular timetable or whether to use student peer-group tutors, or whether to use computer-assisted learning programs will have to be made. Perhaps there are implications for your counselling staff, or for hiring extra staff to offer remedial programming.





## ELEMENTS OF AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM



### D. Operational Planning and Budgeting

This phase is closely linked to program development and to implementation. In these phases the clear setting of goals and objectives can assist in focusing resources and staff on providing a "critical mass" that will make a difference. Considerations of space, time and funding have to be addressed in order that your initiative is viable and effective. In times of fiscal restraint it is always difficult to allocate resources. However, without adequate resources and careful planning, program initiatives are unlikely to be effective. This is why the literature on effective dropout prevention programs reminds us that it is preferable to identify potential dropouts and concentrate resources on those students. As always, there are trade-offs that only the principal can make. At this stage it may be helpful to talk to the central administration about grants available from school board, provincial and/or federal sources. Alternatively, community resources may be





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available for programming in school-to-work transitions, mentoring or counselling support from community agencies as described in Modules Two and Four. Fundamentally, budgeting is a means of allocating resources to meet priorities, and re-allocation is sometimes required to meet changing priorities.

Operational planning involves the assignment of specific personnel and timelines in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the strategic planning and program development phases. It is now that the programs described in Module Four can be helpful in generating specific plans. At this stage it is wise to involve the people concerned and establish mutual project targets for each initiative. The evidence on fostering change in an educational environment is clear — participatory planning leads to improved decision making and more effective implementation.

The following “Low-cost Dropout Prevention Ideas” are taken from Youth in Crisis, Eduserve, B.C. School Trustees Association, 1988. The ideas are offered as a means of expanding what might be achieved in developing a well-rounded set of initiatives to deal with the complexities of dropout prevention.

#### **Low-cost Dropout Prevention Ideas**

- Establish a dropout prevention center on your campus.
- Encourage individual staff members to take a personal interest in one or two pupils both in school and outside school through an advisement or adopt-a-student program.
- Have individual staff members adopt-a-student for the entire time





the student attends school in that particular building; then, the staff member helps to ease the transition to the next school the student attends by taking him to visit the school, meet with some teachers, and help him identify the next person to adopt him.

- Encourage administrators and dropout prevention staff to say positive things about individual (dropout-prone) pupils to help school staff understand or see the students in a more positive/acceptable light.
- Utilize pupils as tutors to dropout-prone students in peer tutoring programs/activities.
- Promote dropout-prone pupils to volunteer and help community social service providing agencies.
- Have teachers/counsellors help dropout-prone pupils with study-skills programs.
- Use special events to generate interest in the school and education, e.g., parent-child dinners, gym nights, art nights, and alumni reunions.
- Invite pupils in the dropout prevention program and pupils who have left school to talk about their jobs, what they do, the type of people they work with, working conditions, potential promotions, salary/wages, and employer attitudes toward employees.
- Have dropout-prone pupils assume responsibility for reading newspapers and posting job openings on the bulletin board in the program room.

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- Have dropout-prone pupils with typing skills type newsletters, news releases, and thank-you letters for speakers.
- Have dropout program pupils paint pictures, draw cartoons, make posters, and refinish used furniture for the drop-in center, counselling center, program room and/or teachers' meeting rooms.
- Develop a system where volunteers call parents of students who are absent.
- Utilize volunteers from the community to help in classrooms and throughout the school.
- Encourage retired persons to help/volunteer to work with or spend time with potential dropouts.
- Solicit college students to volunteer to work with, tutor, and develop resources/materials for remedial and/or gifted dropout-prone students.
- Disseminate a dropout prevention program/activity newsletter for school staff, parents, and community.
- Prepare news releases for school, local radio and/or TV stations, and newspapers.
- Ask local businesses and industries to pay for radio or television spots.
- Ask business/industrial/public relations people to help develop a dropout prevention campaign, and an improved school image campaign.



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- Ask businesses and industries to make small donations, e.g., “\$25.00 will buy us a couch for the Drop-In Center.”
- Invite workers to talk to students about their jobs, the need for a high school diploma, and the value of an education.
- Encourage employers to talk to their employees, many of whom are parents, about the importance of a high school diploma and how to help their children in school.
- Promote community development of work sites for dropout-prone youth.
- Ask business and industry groups/companies to let you talk to their employees, many of whom are parents, about helping their children stay in school, and how to talk with or ask questions of the teachers.
- Have local businesses and industries write letters that can be shown to potential dropouts that tell why they want to hire people with diplomas.
- Ask a local printer to donate printing services for posters, fliers, and newsletters.
- Encourage school staff, school board members, advisory committee members, and business and industry to express their support for dropout prevention efforts in writing so that it can be shared with others.
- Establish a home visit program to improve home-school relations.



- Involve both mothers and fathers in conferences to discuss student progress and problems.
- Have parents participate on advisory committees, task forces, or assessment/evaluation teams.
- Request school staff to call parents when the potential dropout has done something good, not only when there is a problem.
- Make ongoing or current parenting skills classes accessible/inviting to parents of dropout-prone students.
- Use newspapers, magazines, and paperbacks for current, less expensive classroom materials. Staff might bring in day-old papers; local newspaper offices might donate extra papers.
- Have dropout prevention staff work with other school staff members to develop materials and audiovisual resources that present programs and activities to the school, students, and community; e.g., the art teacher might design posters; the English or journalism teacher could write news releases/newsletters; a staff member with a photography interest could take/develop pictures of students in dropout prevention program activities.
- Have dropout prevention staff meet with school board members to keep them informed and gain their support.
- Have school board members participate in program planning.
- Have staff make presentations to local groups about the dropout problem, what people in the community can do to help the schools, and what the school is doing to meet the needs of its students.



- Have the dropout prevention team spend time in teachers' lounges (or appropriate location) to increase communication with other staff members.
- Ask school staff members to report/comment on the attendance, attitude, and performance of students participating in the dropout prevention activities.
- Identify leaders of various staff groups and work with them to win their support for dropout prevention efforts.
- Offer in-service, educational, or awareness activities to school staff to explain dropout prevention program/activity objectives and functions.
- Involve school staff in the planning and implementation of dropout prevention efforts.
- Generate an attitude of caring for students and a general atmosphere of "I am/we are interested in you as a student and individual" in the school district.
- Encourage dropout prevention staff to meet with members of school staff on an individual basis in addition to group presentations or discussions.
- Involve school staff in evaluation/feedback activities.
- Use local public library community information and referral service for information concerning government and private services available to help your local dropout prevention effort.

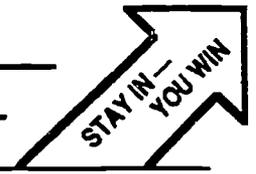
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- Request information, suggestions, etc., from individuals working with dropout-prone students in other schools in the area.
- Conduct meetings and/or co-operative efforts with religious groups.
- Utilize/develop parent/family support groups within the religious network.
- Encourage dropout-prone youth to utilize services available through local job service offices.
- Initiate co-operative efforts with post-secondary schools, colleges, and universities — advanced placement, enrolment in courses — to provide services to dropout-prone youth.
- Make services available to dropout-prone youth through vocational, technical, and adult education.
- Encourage constructive feedback from the community — and school.

Finally, staff should be invited to brainstorm ideas that are particularly appropriate for your school.

In summary then, operational planning and budgeting will blend the aspirations of school resources with available resources. This process is fundamentally linked to the strategic planning and program development phase and calls for an answer to the critical question: How important is dropout prevention?



## E. Implementing

Implementation is the art of managing initiatives to ensure that the outcomes expected are achieved in a practical setting. Theory and practice blend together at this stage as the operational plans are put into action. Effective communication with those involved is critical at this stage and there has to be a readiness to deal with difficulties being experienced. Effective in-service and professional development of staff involved is imperative. Regular school newsletters can be used to communicate the nature and requirements of each initiative. The trick is to have everyone in your school think "STAY IN— YOU WIN."

## F. Monitoring, Evaluation, Auditing and Adjusting

Module One suggested that there be a dropout prevention co-ordinator in each school and a director of dropout prevention. As the co-ordinator becomes increasingly involved in day-by-day implementation, it is important that the results being achieved are monitored on a regular basis. Fine-tuning of project implementation may be necessary in the light of experience and feedback from students and staff. Criteria for this phase may be listed as:

- Are the stated objectives for each initiative being achieved?
- Can the effects of the initiatives be enhanced? If so, how?
- Is the initiative cost effective?
- Is there a need for additional resources?
- Are the achievements of each initiative being recognized?
- How might strategic planning and program development be improved?

The primary focus of this phase is on formative evaluation to learn how implementation may be improved. Summative evaluation is a longer-range consideration and should not intrude into the learning experience of the new initiative. Change in schools takes time and a supportive environment for those involved in change and improvement pays dividends.





## G. Communicating



Evaluation should involve members of the target audience for each initiative in open and frank discussion of respective responsibilities; e.g., students, parents, staff, administrators, community, as appropriate.

Communicating is an ongoing process throughout all phases of the management cycle. Effective communication involves a high degree of interpersonal skill in persuading colleagues, listening to their problems and also communicating results achieved to parents and the community. Public awareness of the dropout problem and its consequences is growing and it is vital to the growth of public education that taxpayers have confidence in the school system. The agenda is far broader than "public relations" and extends to in-service staff training and education of parents. School trustees also need to be regularly involved in two-way communication of the results achieved. In their publication, Community Mobilization for Dropout Prevention (1987), the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education has this to say about mobilizing the public:

Without broad-based public support and involvement, mobilization stops short of being a real community-wide effort and loses the energy required for its success. We must make the public understand that the dropout crisis is everyone's problem, show the real effect it has, and develop the outrage that promotes involvement.

We must help the public articulate its outrage and provide a way to harness and direct that energy by introducing its members to the many activities of the coalitions or by encouraging them to create their own mechanism for involvement.

Mobilizing the public requires a massive public relations campaign using as many approaches as possible to get attention, to achieve public ownership of the problem, and to move into action.

## Write the Headline: Get the Attention

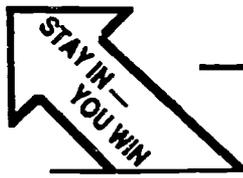
How can we best convey our message so that the public will buy into the issue and get involved in working on the solution? We must begin by knowing our audience. What is its understanding of the problem? What is the capacity for involvement? Why would it want to be involved? How will it benefit?

Messages about the crisis need to be aimed at individual needs. But these needs are varied. For some the appeal is to reduce the personal threat they feel from those who have so little to lose. For others, it is the mission of a better and more equitable society. While for still others, it is the attraction of being involved, of being part of something bigger than themselves, of experiencing the excitement of social change, of the happy camaraderie that is shared by those who are in something together.

### We listened, and we heard...

#### 1. Altruistic Motivation

- **Join in** — change something for the common good of the community.
- **Waste not, want not** — our society's human capital is going to waste.
- **Invest now** — intervene and improve the situation — investing now costs less than paying the social costs over the lifetime of the dropout.
- **Help** — something can be done.
- **Involve yourself** — it's socially unacceptable not to be involved in dropout prevention.
- **Express feelings** — act with compassion.
- **Appreciate the importance** — education is important to just about everything we are trying to build in the country and our community.



## 2. Self Protection Needs

- Appeal to people's fears that their quality of life is threatened.
- Focus on how the quality of life of the aging population is jeopardized when the next generation does not have the skills to support it.

## 3. Personal Enjoyment Needs

- Join the effort — there is something in it for you — people.
- Make new friends — develop a camaraderie with new people with similar interests.
- Feel a sense of community rather than boredom or isolation.

### Transmit a Clear Signal: Get a Frequency Match

The vision of what's possible must be clearly presented to the public. The message must be as simple and succinct as possible so that everyone can understand it easily. It must be stated with the passion and experience of real life through hard-hitting anecdotes, testimonials, and stories that touch the hearts of people.

We must carefully choose the messengers of our vision and cause. The stronger the belief and commitment of the messenger to the dropout prevention issue, the further the message will be carried. Whether the message is delivered at the national, or local level the best messenger might be a teacher, a dropout from the community, a parent, a well-known citizen, a corporate executive, a sports figure, a famous writer, a politician, a religious leader, a television or movie star, an organization leader, or a potential dropout.





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### **We listened, and we heard...**

- **Frame the message in simple terms.**
- **Tailor the message for the different constituencies.**
- **Change the message if the listener is not listening.**
- **Set an agenda people can act on.**
- **Communicate a sense of urgency.**
- **Release different levels of detail at varying time intervals.**
- **Capture the essence of case studies, statistics, actual events which support dropout prevention efforts.**
- **Capture the essence in 30 or 60 second media bits.**
- **Find as many voices as possible.**

### **Select the Right Channels: Choose the Medium**

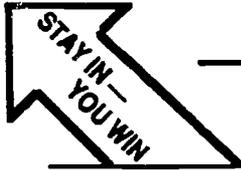
In addition to getting the attention of the audience, tailoring the message, identifying the messengers, and creating a clear signal, the dropout prevention effort needs to consider which communications medium is most appropriate for delivering the message. Most public issue campaigns tend to approach this decision by thinking about three mediums — print, electronic, and face-to-face or a combination of all three.

#### **1. Print Media**

- Media releases
- Letters to editors
- Editorials
- Newsletters
- Op Ed pieces
- News articles
- Feature articles
- Flyers

#### **2. Promotional Materials**

- Advertisements
- Billboards
- Bumper stickers
- Buttons
- Balloons
- Posters
- Tee shirts
- Certificates



### 3. Electronic Communications

- Phone conversations
- Radio and TV public service announcements
- Radio and TV talk shows
- Radio and TV documentaries
- Electronic bulletin boards
- Protest songs
- Tele- and video-conferences
- Soap operas

### 4. Face-to-Face Communication

- Speeches
- Canvassing
- Debates
- Forums, seminars
- Public hearings
- Demonstrations
- Meetings
- Neighborhood gatherings

## 4. IDENTIFYING YOUR POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

Module Two has a section on identifying potential dropouts in Chapter 5. In summary, the dropout is likely to be:



- **Non-academic.**
- **A short-range and not a long-range goal setter.**
- **A frustrated learner.**
- **Less inclined to value education than graduates.**
- **Reward-driven.**
- **Work-driven.**
- **Alienated.**
- **A general-level student.**
- **A concrete rather than an abstract thinker.**
- **Low in self-esteem and self-confidence.**
- **Loyal.**

The major factors causing students to leave school are:

- **The dropout is frustrated academically.**



- **The dropout perceives the curriculum as irrelevant.**
- **The lure of the adult work world.**

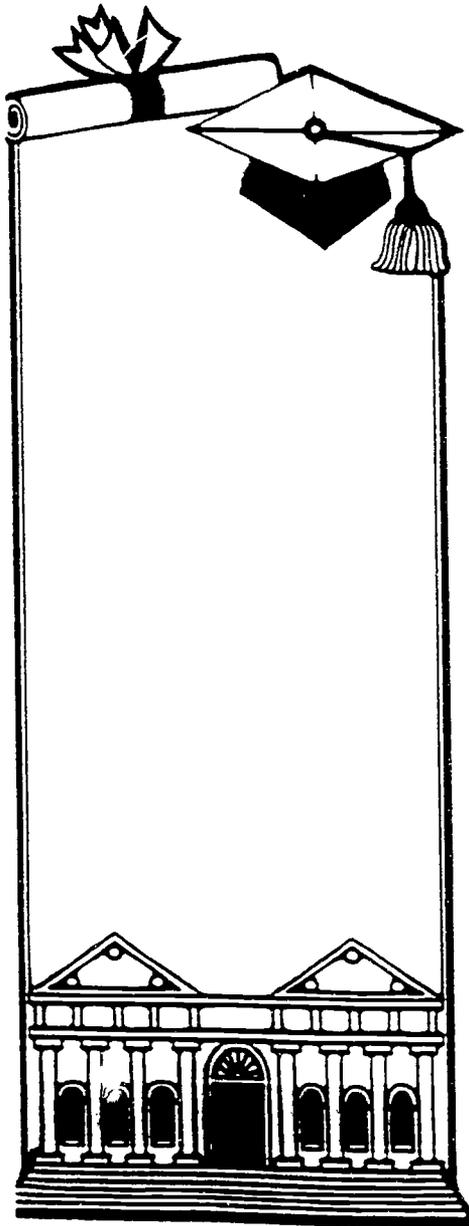
Secondary factors are:

- Family background.
- Value of education in the family.
- Family problems.
- Pregnancy.
- Personal trauma.
- A rebellious nature.
- Lack of self esteem.
- Size of classes/lack of individual attention.
- Bright and bored.
- Double standards/labelling.

One or more of these factors may be present and it is very difficult to predict with accuracy who might become a dropout. The following school-based techniques may be helpful in developing an “early warning system.”

- **Cumulative Record Cards**

A student entering Grade 10 has accumulated significant experience of school and the educational system has had a decade of recording that student’s academic and personal progress. Things like being delayed a grade, low marks, poor self-concept are prime indicators of a potential dropout. If the “cum cards” are available they should be analyzed and flagged so that these students can be monitored. It is critical that we diagnose learning difficulties early on and prescribe effective remedial programs.



- **High School Report Cards**

Administrators may wish to give special attention to discussing with home-room teachers which of their students may be potential dropouts and indicating this to parents on the regular report cards. Many schools have established follow-up procedures for parents of students at risk.

- **“Buddy” System**

The assignment of students in pairs or small groups to form a self-help network has worked in several systems. A refinement of this idea is the student assistance club, sometimes operated in conjunction with the students' council. The intent here is to provide structure for peer-group assistance similar to that described in Modules Two and Four. This mechanism can provide a semi-formal but effective sounding board for the discussions that are all too often absent when a student drops out.

- **Teacher Assessment**

If teachers are briefed to detect students in academic or personal difficulty and refer these students for counselling or special tutoring, early intervention can lead to success and staying in school. The home-room concept or the House system help to guarantee that no student is left without assistance if it is needed. Improved tracking of high school students at risk is the key to stop them “falling between the cracks.”

- **“So you want to win the Lottery?”**

The short quiz in the student handout, Module Five, is based on the research into dropout prevention and provides a simple “early warning” indicator. Students might be invited to discuss a low score with a

counsellor or a favorite teacher on a confidential basis. The parent handout, Module Six, is similarly designed to encourage the student to think about the future in longer-range terms than sometimes is the case. Follow up with the student and parent booklets included in this package is important for those at risk.

- **Encouraging the Drop-Back**

A system which asks students to notify the school if they have dropped out may be of assistance in tracking some cases of dropout. Efforts to persuade these students, either directly or through their parents or friends, can prove successful. Chapter 6 of Module Two contains information on dropping back.

- **School-Generated Ideas**

Administrators and staff should be encouraged to suggest ideas that will work in the specific context of your school. Module Four is designed to facilitate this activity.

Certainly each school should establish a means of calculating its own dropout rate to understand the extent of the problem. The definition recommended in Alberta Education's strategy paper, included in Module One, is:

**Those public, separate and private school students who are 14 to 18 years of age as of September 1st of a school year and enrolled on September 30th, who did not complete a diploma or other program and are not in school the following September 30th.**

By gathering dropout statistics on a regular and consistent basis each school will also glean valuable data on the effectiveness of its STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives as part of its evaluation strategy.





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A detailed 53 item questionnaire is contained in Identifying Probably School Leavers in Ontario High Schools, by Quirouette, Saint-Denis and Huot, Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1990. Although not yet validated it may be a useful reference for use with students who are identified as potential dropouts in the initial screening. One of its main findings is that the feeling of isolation in students is a very significant factor. In the context of the other information presented in this package on the importance of effective human contacts, improving the quality of human interactions in the school community emerges as a priority need.

In conclusion, some educators warn of the danger of identifying a potential dropout and labelling the student as destined for failure. This issue is a sensitive one, and each school will develop its own policies on confidentiality and measures to ensure that no stigma attaches to the student. If potential dropouts are treated with respect and understanding in a positive and supportive school climate, they have much to gain from receiving the individual assistance they need.

Particular care must be taken in any attempts to gather socio-economic information on matters pertaining to family background and discussing these matters with the student. However, discussion with parents of potential dropouts is an important aspect of creating a supportive environment for the student at risk.

Regular staff discussions about potential dropouts is a means of communicating to all teachers the importance of this issue and monitoring progress being made in dropout prevention. Finally, the research evidence is clear — identification of potential dropouts and early interventions which overcome the particular difficulties is an essential part of any stay-in-school initiative.

## 5. PLANNING YOUR SCHOOL'S INITIATIVES

The information in the six STAY IN—YOU WIN modules has been designed to provide background facts and a planning process for your school's initiatives in dropout prevention. The following seven steps are intended to help in establishing new priorities to complement those you may already have in place. They are:

- 
1. What are the facts on dropping out in my school?
  2. What are my school's major objectives for this year?
  3. How can I integrate dropout prevention initiatives?
  4. How can I involve staff?
  5. What initiatives need to be developed?
  6. How do we monitor, evaluate and adjust initiatives?
  7. How do we communicate results?

### STEP ONE: What are the facts on dropping out in my school?

1. Dropout rates vary greatly across Alberta according to the circumstances of each school. However, accurate quantitative and qualitative data on the dropout situation in your school is a first step in planning. Pending the development of special data-gathering programs at the school level you can obtain a reasonable estimate by comparing the number of enrolments at the beginning of a Grade 10 year and comparing that with the number of graduates three years later. Allowance should be made for those who move, die or are taking more than three years to complete their diploma. Interview dropouts to ascertain their reasons.

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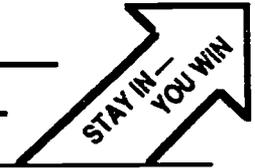
Total # of dropouts in 1990-91 = . . . .	Enrollment . . . .
Total # of dropouts in 1989-90 = . . . .	Enrollment . . . .
Total # of dropouts in 1988-89 = . . . .	Enrollment . . . .
Our school's dropout rate = _____%	

From these figures you can calculate the approximate dropout rate over a three-year period, which is the basis for the statement made that the dropout rate in Canada is "about one-third."

2. Our students' reasons for dropping out:

	#	%	TOTAL
<b>School Related:</b>			
• Suspended	.....	...	} . . . . %
• Lack of interest	.....	...	
• Problems with teachers	.....	...	
• Poor grades	.....	...	
<b>Work Related:</b>			
• Got a full-time job	.....	...	} . . . . %
• Too many part-time hours	.....	...	
<b>Family/Personal:</b>			
• Financial problems	.....	...	} . . . . %
• Pregnancy	.....	...	
• Emotional difficulty	...	...	
Other (specify)	.....	...	. . . . %





This simplified checklist or other information-gathering systems you have in place can assist in diagnosing the particular causes of dropout in your school. It is important to establish some form of data collection system either by having dropouts "sign out" and give their reason(s), or by follow-up phone call, or by asking their "buddy."

This information can be used to assess the severity of the dropout problem and the underlying reasons that apply in your school. Planning of your initiatives can then be based on addressing the specific problems in your community.

Regular ongoing review of programs, resources, staffing and extra-curricular activities will have led you to identify the major planning objectives for the coming year. For the moment, new dropout prevention initiatives should not be included.

## **STEP TWO: What are my school's major objectives for this year?**

### **Major School Objectives for this Year**

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

### **Secondary Objectives**

6. ....
7. ....
8. ....



### STEP THREE: How can I integrate dropout prevention initiatives?

This step involves strategic planning as described in Chapter 4, and integrating new dropout prevention initiatives with existing efforts and your current objectives for improvement. There is likely to be some overlap because dropout prevention touches all areas of the school program.

This step involves integrating dropout prevention by modifying some existing objectives and adding new ones on a priority basis.

#### Ranked Order of School Objectives including Dropout Prevention

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....
7. ....
8. ....

The following is taken from the Conference Board of Canada's Profiles of Partnership, 1991, which differentiates between the prevention, intervention and transition phases of an overall dropout prevention program as follows.

- **Prevention:**

These are activities like early identification, even as early as the elementary grades, which seek to inform students of the consequences of dropping out. identify those at risk, undertake remediation, and encourage satisfactory academic achievement.



- **Intervention:**

Those initiatives which speak directly to a student who, for a variety of reasons, may be at risk. These include study skills or extra homework for those in need, personal and family support, motivation and the ideas proposed in Module Two.

- **Transition:**

The literature identifies a gap between “school” and “work” where some students may be encouraged through co-operative education, vocational education and career counselling to make a smoother transition and see enhanced relevance in school.

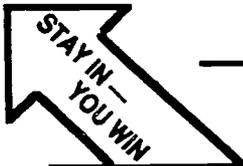


# Retention Strategies

	Prevention	Intervention	Transition
<b>Academic Achievement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program goals for retention—at provincial, school board, agency and school levels</li> <li>2. Improvement of basic skills</li> <li>3. Peer counselling</li> <li>4. Mentoring</li> <li>5. Professional training and development for teachers</li> <li>6. Early identification of at-risk students</li> <li>7. Pre-school early intervention</li> <li>8. Elementary school remediation programs</li> <li>9. Elementary school guidance programs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Professional education programs—including computers</li> <li>2. Alternative programs for natives; ethnic, racial and cultural minorities; the disadvantaged; pregnant; handicapped</li> <li>3. Storefront schools</li> <li>4. Monitoring and reporting student progress</li> <li>5. Mentoring</li> <li>6. Volunteer tutors</li> <li>7. Professional training and development for teachers</li> <li>8. Teachers into industry</li> <li>9. Job shadowing programs</li> <li>10. Co-operative education programs</li> <li>11. Screen and train mentors</li> <li>12. Screen and train volunteer tutors</li> <li>13. Innovative subject-specific teaching programs</li> <li>14. Special/enriched teaching facilities</li> <li>15. Academic and skills counselling</li> <li>16. Remedial instruction programs</li> <li>17. Monitoring absenteeism</li> <li>18. Career awareness programs</li> <li>19. ESL courses</li> <li>20. Curriculum change and development</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Basic skills programs</li> <li>2. Life skills programs</li> </ol>
<b>School Environment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. School-based management</li> <li>2. Extra-curricular activities</li> <li>3. Gender-specific interventions</li> <li>4. Home-school liaison programs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Peer counselling</li> <li>2. Peer tutoring</li> <li>3. Teacher in-service programs</li> <li>4. Selecting and hiring culturally appropriate personnel</li> <li>5. Developing self-esteem</li> <li>6. School-based management</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Automatic, personal contact with students dropping out</li> <li>2. Outreach to local employers regarding part time employees</li> </ol>

	<b>Prevention</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Transition</b>
<b>Personal and Social/Family and Community</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drug, alcohol and pregnancy prevention programs</li> <li>2. Counselling services for students</li> <li>3. Head Start programs</li> <li>4. Parent-teacher workshops</li> <li>5. Support for effective parenting</li> <li>6. Awareness raising about education through media and information sessions for parents</li> <li>7. School lunch programs</li> <li>8. Effective parenting programs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Joint in-service sessions—teachers and others</li> <li>2. Child care and support services for young parents</li> <li>3. In-kind support for families</li> <li>4. Group counselling</li> <li>5. Life management programs</li> <li>6. School district and school dropout prevention committees</li> <li>7. Truancy prevention programs</li> <li>8. Home visits to truant students and families</li> <li>9. Counselling of at-risk students' parents</li> <li>10. School-business dropout prevention committees</li> <li>11. Presentations by dropouts to at-risk students</li> <li>12. Health and social services</li> <li>13. Community outreach programs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involve parents and community groups in work-oriented strategies</li> </ol>
<b>Career Preparation and Job Training</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vocational education programs</li> <li>2. Co-operative education programs</li> <li>3. Job shadowing</li> <li>4. Career centres</li> <li>5. Apprenticeship programs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career exploration strategies</li> <li>2. Career counselling</li> <li>3. Alternative Schools—vocational/technical and fine arts</li> <li>4. Mentoring</li> <li>5. Vocational skills competitions</li> <li>6. Technical skills competitions</li> <li>7. Outreach to local employers regarding hiring practices</li> <li>8. Co-operative education programs</li> <li>9. Career awareness programs</li> <li>10. Industry lecturers in schools</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Co-operative education</li> <li>2. Vocational education</li> <li>3. Job shadowing</li> <li>4. Apprenticeship programs</li> <li>5. WOW programs</li> <li>6. Business co-operative education schools</li> <li>7. Alternative programs for students working part-time</li> <li>8. Career information centres</li> <li>9. Computerized career information systems</li> <li>10. Student assessments—individualized</li> <li>11. Interactive videos on career options</li> <li>12. Collection and distribution of local career/employment data</li> <li>13. Combined paid on-the-job training and academic preparation</li> <li>14. Career orientation programs</li> <li>15. Vocational counselling</li> </ol>

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After reviewing the "Retention Strategies" (shown on last two pages) it may be helpful to study appropriate programs described in Module Four and earlier in this Module, to generate ideas for your STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives. This chart may help identify your priorities.

**DROPOUT PREVENTION**

RANKING OF SPECIFIC CAUSES OF DROPOUT	ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS
1.	1. 2. 3. 4.
2.	1. 2. 3. 4.
3.	1. 2. 3. 4.
4.	1. 2. 3. 4.

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RANKING OF SPECIFIC CAUSES OF DROPOUT	ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS
5.	1. 2. 3. 4.
6.	1. 2. 3. 4.
6.	1. 2. 3. 4.
7.	1. 2. 3. 4.
8.	1. 2. 3. 4.

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## STEP FOUR: How can I involve staff?



At this stage a brainstorming session with staff can be an opportunity to begin inservice training in dropout prevention. Excerpts from the STAY IN—YOU WIN package and/or the overhead projectuals can be helpful in educating staff about the key facts on dropout prevention.

This first session might include the following broad areas for discussion:

1. **Significance of the Dropout Problem in Canada**
  - Future job opportunities
  - Economic costs to society
  - Quality of life
2. **Overview of Factors Behind Student Dropout**
  - Review information from handouts provided to staff in advance of meeting (include your review of school objectives)
  - Discussion on which factors are most relevant to your school
3. **Our School's Number of Dropouts and Causes**
  - Analysis of school-specific data
  - Discussion of community-specific causes
  - "Zoptions" video
4. **Solutions**
  - Presentation of data assembled from Steps #1-3
  - Discussion of alternatives
5. **Administration**
  - Who will be responsible for developing ideas?
  - When will the initiatives commence?
  - Generally, what allocation and reallocation of resources will be required?

Preparation for this meeting might include the distribution of materials in advance in order to raise awareness, detailed briefing of key players such as other administrators, counselors and CALM 20 teachers, and identifying interested staff. If the Principal is serving as STAY IN—YOU WIN Project Director, now is the time to appoint a Co-ordinator to carry the work forward.

Based on feedback from this staff meeting it may be advisable to allow 4-5 weeks for more detailed planning to take place, staff awareness to be enhanced through discussions, and consultation with student representatives.

Step Four might also include consultation with trustees and head office administrators and with members of the parent school council.

## **STEP FIVE: What initiatives need to be developed?**

Once feedback has been obtained from staff, students and others it is time to decide on specific initiatives for your school. Based on your earlier setting of priorities and analysis of your school's available resources you can develop specific initiatives that address the problems experienced by your students.

Some initiatives can be undertaken at little or no cost and if you are seeking additional funds from government, head office or your community, now is the time to develop the proposals for funding.

This STAY IN—YOU WIN package contains background information organized according to particular audiences. This is the time to review the other five modules and consolidate the information. Some initiatives that we recommend are outlined here as examples:





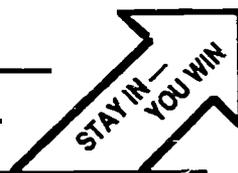
1. **“So You Want to Win the Lottery?” (Module Five)  
(Example)**

**N.B. COMPLETE A SIMILAR CHART FOR EACH INITIATIVE**

OBJECTIVES	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1. To persuade high school students to stay in school and obtain a diploma.</p> <p>2. To provide essential facts on the benefits of staying in school.</p> <p>(“So You Want to Win the Lottery?” is an initial screening device to begin identifying potential dropouts and raise awareness about the consequences of dropping out.)</p>	<p>Home room teachers will distribute copies to each student and explain the reasons for concentrating on dropout prevention. Either through a “buddy” system or teacher discussion, those students in need of assistance will be referred to counselors for the booklet “Straight Talk About Staying in School,” and follow-up with both student and parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office staff for duplication.</li> <li>• Home room teachers for explanation &amp; distribution</li> <li>• Counselors for discussion.</li> <li>• Coordinators for parent follow-up.</li> </ul>

2. **“How To Help Your Teenager Stay in School” (Module Six)  
(Example)**

OBJECTIVES	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1. To inform parents about the consequences of their teenager dropping out.</p> <p>2. To motivate parental interest and involvement in education, and help parents understand how to create a supportive environment.</p> <p>(“How To Help Your Teenager Stay in School” is an awareness raising strategy to promote discussion between parents and students.)</p>	<p>Administration will integrate the parent handout in an issue of the newsletter sent to all parents. This will coincide with the distribution of “So You Want To Win the Lottery?” to students. Contact names at the school will be given and referral procedures established. Follow-up will be through providing “Stay In School: A Parent's Guide” to parents with at-risk students, discussion with counsellors and staff, and an “information night.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinator to prepare text for newsletter.</li> <li>• Office staff to duplicate.</li> <li>• Co-ordinator and counselling staff to arrange contacts and information night.</li> <li>• Administrators to follow up with students at risk and plan remedial programs.</li> </ul>



REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES	NEW RESOURCES REQUIRED	EVALUATION

REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES	NEW RESOURCES REQUIRED	EVALUATION



## **School-related**

STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives should be balanced so that the three areas of difficulty are addressed. Module Two (pp. 62-63) contains a profile of characteristics of potential dropouts in three sections. Initiatives can be planned under these three headings and related to your school's priorities:

- **Absenteeism/Truancy/Frequent tardiness**
- **Poor grades**
- **Discrepancy between ability and performance**
- **Reading level not equal to grade level**
- **Difficulty learning math skills**
- **Verbal deficiency**
- **Inability to tolerate structured activities**
- **Lack of basic skills**
- **Lack of definitive educational goals**
- **Feeling of alienation from school**
- **Belief that the school doesn't care**
- **Failure to see the relevance of education**
- **Limited extra-curricular involvement**
- **Two or more years older than peers**
- **Frequent change of school**
- **Retention in one or more grades**
- **Disruptive classroom behavior**

## **Family**

- **Residence in a single parent home**
- **Belonging to a low income family**
- **Poor home-school communication**
- **Siblings or parents who are dropouts**
- **Low educational level of parents**
- **Excessively stressful home environment**
- **Limited parent monitoring of student activity**

## Personal



- Lower parental expectations
- Dysfunctional family
- Fewer study aids present in the home
- Inability to identify with peer group
- Friends all outside of school
- Poor social adjustment
- Difficulty relating to authority figures
- Disruptive behavior and rebellious attitudes
- Frequent health problems
- Some form of emotional trauma
- Poor self concept
- More than 15 hours per week spent on a job
- Raising one or more children
- Lure of more immediate gratification (outside jobs, wages, experiences)
- Substance abuser, delinquent or suicidal
- Above average or below average intelligence
- Early assumption of adult roles

The next few pages contain planning charts so that your STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives can be developed in more detail.

### **STEP SIX: How do we monitor, evaluate and adjust initiatives?**

Frequent informal discussions with those involved, students, parents and staff, will allow you to determine if there are problems with implementation. Procedures can be revised in the light of experience to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of your initiatives. Chapter 3 of this module outlines the role of these activities.



**STEP SEVEN:  
How do we  
communicate  
results?**

A significant part of dropout prevention is raising public awareness and enhancing the level of understanding in students, parents and staff. The ideas in Chapter 3 of this module may be of help in designing your communication plan. Effective communication with parents and the community is a long-term investment in improving confidence in public education.

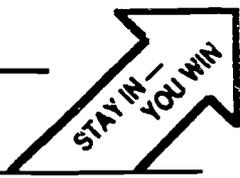
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**GOOD LUCK WITH  
YOUR "STAY IN — YOU WIN"  
PROGRAM**

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**Alberta Education**



**NOTES**





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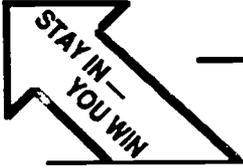
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OBJECTIVES	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBILITY

STAY IN —  
YOU WIN

REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES	NEW RESOURCES REQUIRED	EVALUATION



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

OBJECTIVES	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBILITY

STAY IN —  
YOU WIN

REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES	NEW RESOURCES REQUIRED	EVALUATION