This instructor's guide is part of a series of program materials for a school-based intervention process to help at-risk students stay in school. This instructor book, a related student book, and a videotape called "A Time of Choices" comprise the classroom component of this set of materials focusing on awareness and commitment. It addresses the concept of reaching potential, having relevant school experiences, and ensuring success through problem solving and decision making. This classroom component is intended for the middle and junior high school level. Section A: "Potential" leads students to examine and develop the attitudes, habits, and behaviors that will enable them to reach their potential for success. Section B: "Experiences" helps students to recognize the importance of basic, vocational, and employability skills and leads them to develop an educational plan for acquiring the combination of the skills that are required for work in career areas that interest them. Section C: "Success" helps students develop decision-making skills that will enable them to deal positively with conditions or situations that cause stress in their lives. Each section contains an introduction followed by subsections describing purpose, benefit, theme, components, content, use, the role of school personnel, a walk through of salient components, and preparation needed. Each section concludes with distribution to each student of one copy of "The Student's Choice" student guide. An answer guide to worksheets in the student book is included. (YLB)
The Student's Choice
Instructor's Guide
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THE STUDENT’S CHOICE
INSTRUCTOR’S GUIDE

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FOREWORD

Dropping out of school is not the result of an isolated incident. Rather, it is the result of an accumulation of factors that weigh so heavily on the student that no other alternative seems possible. Individual dropout patterns—which often manifest themselves at the beginning of the high school years—are well developed before the student reaches the 9th or 10th grade. Dropout prevention strategies, therefore, must begin at the middle and junior high school levels during the period when young adolescents are beginning to make decisions that will greatly affect their ability and desire to remain in school.

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education had developed a comprehensive set of materials to provide students, teachers, administrators, and counselors with materials focusing on dropout prevention issues and vocational-technical education's role in addressing those issues. THE STUDENT'S CHOICE, a classroom component of this set of materials, focuses on awareness and commitment. It addresses the concept of reaching potential, having relevant school experiences, and ensuring success through problem solving and decision making. THE STUDENT'S CHOICE material includes a three-part student book, this instructor book, and a videotape entitled "A Time of Choices" designed to accompany Section 3 of the student book.

Special recognition is due to the following National Center staff who played major individual roles in the development of this document: Richard J. Miguel, Associate Director of Applied Research and Development; Robert D. Bhaerman, Project Director, for leadership and direction of the project; Bettina A. Lankard, author of the documents; and Jeanne Thomas, for word processing the documents. Appreciation is extended to the National Center editorial and media services personnel for editorial review and production of the document and to Jan Harris, Counseling Services, Columbus, Ohio, for reviewing the document.

Ray D. Ryan
Executive Director
The National Center for Research in Vocational Education
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE STUDENT'S CHOICE curriculum materials present strategies for helping students develop self-awareness, educational awareness, and problem-solving and decision-making skills that will keep them connected with school.

The information presented in THE STUDENT'S CHOICE is based on research findings about the patterns and characteristics of dropouts. It examines three concepts—reaching one's potential, creating relevant in-school educational experiences, and ensuring success.

SECTION A: POTENTIAL leads students to examine and develop the attitudes, habits, and behaviors that will enable them to reach their potential for success.

SECTION B: EXPERIENCES helps students to recognize the importance of basic, vocational, and employability skills and leads them to develop an educational plan for acquiring the combination of the skills that are required for work in career areas that interest them.

SECTION C: SUCCESS helps students to develop decision-making skills that will enable them to deal positively with conditions or situations that cause stress in their lives.

THE STUDENT'S CHOICE materials are designed for use with THE SCHOOL'S CHOICE: GUIDELINES FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION AT THE MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL resource for teachers, counselors, and administrators. Both THE STUDENT'S CHOICE and THE SCHOOL'S CHOICE are designed to promote school bonding, improve basic and vocational skills, and ensure advocacy by making available to students information about counseling help, alternative schooling and course options, support groups and organizations, and other in-school and out-of-school activities that will help students on their paths to success.
SECTION A: POTENTIAL
INTRODUCTION

A number of school dropouts were interviewed recently on a nationally televised talk show. Most of these young people had been out of school for several years. All but one said they had made a mistake. Once they had faced the realities of life, they realized they needed a high school diploma. They recognized previous attitudes and behaviors that had been detrimental to their progress in school and that had led them to dropping out. Only one girl did not feel she had made a mistake. She said she "just wanted to get married and have kids." She had no idea who she might marry because she did not have a boyfriend. This program illustrated the fact that most young people who drop out of school are unaware of the real consequences of their actions... or of the factors that caused them to drop out. Research shows that the characteristics of dropouts relate to psychological, behavioral, academic, and family factors that affect the well being of these youth and their propensity to drop out. Following are some facts about dropouts as they relate to these factors. Because the facts are based primarily on urban statistics, not all dropouts will fit every fact. Other conditions such as geographic location, cultural patterns, and so forth must be considered to determine which facts are relevant to given groups of students.

Important Facts about Potential Dropouts

Psychological Factors

- Feel rejected by the school
- Have negative attitudes toward school
- Do not identify with school life
- Feel that courses are not relevant to their individual needs
- Lack incentive for achievement in traditional school activities
- Are socially isolated or socially and emotionally disturbed
- Are loners who are not accepted by their peers
- Have poor self-concept and lack a clear sense of identity
- Have experienced some form of trauma including abuse or loss
- Cannot relate to authority figures
- Are attracted to outside jobs, wages, and experiences
Behavioral Factors

- Have a high rate of absenteeism and truancy
- Exhibit discipline problems in school
- Do not participate in extra curricular activities
- Associate with friends who are outside of school, usually older dropouts
- Have frequent health problems
- Are inclined toward physical rather than mental activities
- Are impulsive decision makers
- Work more hours per week on a job than do completers
- Are over represented among
  - chemical users and abusers,
  - delinquents,
  - adolescent parents, and
  - persons who attempt suicide or self-mutilation

Academic Factors

- Are low achievers
- Are 1-2 years behind grade level
- Are unable to tolerate structured activities
- Lack definite and realistic educational goals
- Are enrolled in a general course of study rather than vocational education or college preparatory programs
- Have lower occupational aspirations than their peers
- Have difficulty in abstract reasoning, generalizing, and forming relationships to the satisfaction of the teacher
- Do not read at grade level
- Experience difficulty in mathematics
- Have low perceptual performance
Family Factors

- Come from single parent homes
- Come from low-income homes
- Experience little solidarity with their families
- Have more older siblings than do their peers
- Come from a family whose members have a pattern of dropping out of school
- Are more mobile than other students' families
- Come from non-English speaking families
- Lack cultural and economic experiences which relate to success in traditional programs

This component, SECTION A: POTENTIAL, is designed to make students aware of the characteristics that affect their ability to become successful in school, namely their attitudes, aspirations, achievements, activities, and autonomy, and to help them recognize how particular psychological, behavioral, academic and family factors can affect their growth in these areas.

POTENTIAL is also designed to promote school bonding and to give teachers and counselors an opportunity to serve students on a personal level so as to support and encourage these students to remain in school and reach their potential for success.

PURPOSE

The purpose of SECTION A: POTENTIAL is to help middle school students develop the attitudes, habits, and behaviors that will enable them to reach their potential for success in school and beyond.

BENEFIT

Students will gain a new awareness of the factors that affect their potential for success. They will develop a realistic plan for improving their potential, and they will carry out their plans with the support, encouragement, counsel of their teachers and counselors, and other people and programs deemed appropriate for them.
THEME
Awareness; bonding

COMPONENTS
Instructor guide
Student guide

CONTENT
Students complete a questionnaire and analyze their answers to determine the extent to which their attitudes, aspirations, achievements, activities, and senses of autonomy are helping them to reach their potential for success and the factors—family, psychological, and behavioral—that could limit their success. Through reading, discussion, and role-playing activities, students analyze their own situations, characteristics, and behaviors and determine the steps they will take and the people and programs that will help them to realize their potential for success in middle school, high school, and beyond.

USE
This program is one of dropout prevention. It is intended for all middle school students, not just those a school has singled out because of major and obvious behavior problems, such as alcohol and drug abuse, absenteeism and truancy, or academic failure, including failure to advance in grade level. Other students may have equally important hidden factors that are moving them toward dropout—factors like family stress, abuse, neighborhood influences, poor self-image, and so forth.

For this reason, we believe that all students can benefit by learning more about themselves, by being linked to programs and people who can help them, and through dedicated and caring interactions with teachers, counselors, and other school personnel.

With this program philosophy and its intended goals, the problems of where to infuse the program must be solved by each participating school, based on that school's structure, needs, and personnel.

Some options and the rationale for those options follow:

Homeroom

All students assemble for this period at sometime during the day. The homeroom teacher could be the mentor or bonding
individual who would help students through the SECTION A: POTENTIAL program and then link them with appropriate counselors, teachers, and programs for further support.

Social Studies, English, or Similar Core Courses

One of these classes might be chosen to initiate the program, since all students must attend these basic courses and the teachers would have the advantage of working together to determine the point at which this program could be infused into their required curriculum content.

A Required Career Education or Vocational Education Class for all Students

The focus of these classes lends itself to the self-exploration/awareness nature of SECTION A: POTENTIAL program, given that increased understanding of self is crucial to students' success on the job, as well as in school. The teachers of such classes would likely be in tune with the strategies employed to develop the choice awareness, decision-making, and problem-solving skills of their students. These teachers would also be more likely to have contacts with community people who could serve as mentors to students in need.

Counseling

If the program is initiated as part of counseling, it would best be conducted during counseling time that is allotted regularly to all students. This may be the least likely place to initiate the program, but may better serve as the place where students are linked to activities, programs, and people who can help them with their specific problems.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Teacher's Role

Teachers using these materials should be particularly sensitive to the factors that lead students to drop out of school and have an interest and skill in gaining the confidence and knowledge of their students' personalities, habits, and personal lives as they reflect these factors.

The chapter on "bonding" in the school personnel's resource—The School's Choice: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School—provides background research and information relevant to the teacher's role in dropout prevention. That resource, along with proper inservice training for this program,
should provide a basis for teachers' understanding of this program and their role in implementing it. However, the underlying trait of any teacher's working with the affective development of today's students must be the sincere caring for and interest in the individual. Miracles happen because people care; this is the essential ingredient of teaching that touches the lives of students who are in need.

Counselor's Role

Counselors include those designated by title to serve in this role and teachers, principals, mentors, or other persons who perform a counseling function.

The counselor's role is to help students bond or connect with the school and community resources and programs that can help them.

There are many special programs already underway in a variety of schools across the country—programs on teenage pregnancy, parenting, alcohol and drug abuse, learning disabilities, and remediation and instruction in basic skills.

There are other school programs and activities that promote social bonding through extracurricular activities, such as the French club, football teams, social committees, and so forth. The role of the counselor is to help students understand the benefit such programs offer them.

Communities also have special programs offered on the above topics and activities. These program possibilities vary from school to school and from city to city. The School's Choice: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School describes a variety of programs already offered with funding from the U.S. government, state and local governments, social organizations, private industry, and so forth. Many more could be initiated to serve the unique needs of students in your community.

For example, what if 40 percent of your students have child care responsibilities at home or which they must either be absent from school or because of which they have no time for study or extracurricular activities. Such a condition may require school/counselor/teacher/parent action before the students' problems can be solved. One such action may be to contact a nearby community service group, such as the Junior League, to see if their members could provide babysitting and tutoring in a nearby building. This way the students' siblings could be cared for while the students themselves attend a special study hall staffed with volunteers who can help them with their studies. Last, and most significant, is the school's capability of exposing students to vocational courses and activities and the methods by which these courses are taught. This experience would give students inside knowledge about the skills and
requirements of workers in generalized fields, such as home economics, metal working, and so forth. Exposing students to the ways basic skills are used in such vocational courses and the ways vocational or technological problems are solved through the application of basic skills will offer them different learning options and possibilities and demonstrate the relationship between school and work. Such a plan would also serve to build the self-confidence and self-esteem of students who learn better by moving and doing than by sitting and thinking.

A WALK THROUGH

There are five parts to the questionnaire. Each part addresses the following characteristics:

- Part 1: Attitudes
- Part 2: Aspirations
- Part 3: Achievements
- Part 4: Activities
- Part 5: Autonomy

As students proceed through the five parts of the questionnaire, they follow this process:

1. Complete one part of the questionnaire by checking whether they agree with, disagree with, or are unsure about each statement they read.

2. Analyze their responses to the statements on the questionnaire by totaling the number of agrees, disagrees, and don’t knows they checked and considering the reasons that they responded as they did.

3. Discuss the implications of their responses on their abilities to reach their potentials for success in school and beyond.

4. Plan the steps they will take to develop more fully the characteristics that will lead them to success.

After students complete each of the five parts of the questionnaire and analyze, discuss, and plan the way their attitudes, aspirations, achievements, activities, and autonomy will lead them to success, they proceed to the final part of POTENTIAL, called "Another Look."

In this final part, students reassess their responses to the statements on the questionnaire by analyzing them in a different way—according to the factors that affect the characteristics they first examined. These factors are:

- Psychological
- Behavioral
- Academic
- Family
Through tabulation of the agree, disagree, and don't know checks, students are able to identify the factors that have the most positive (and negative) effect on their abilities to develop the characteristics required for success. This exercise leads students to the final step in the process.

5. Bond with school personnel, who, through personal attention and counseling, can help them deal with the problems they encounter.

PREPARATION

None

DISTRIBUTION

Distribute to each student one copy of The Student's Choice student guide.
SECTION B: EXPERIENCES
INTRODUCTION

The traditional approach to education is not always appealing to young people who are having problems in school—problems that can be psychological, behavioral, and family related as well as academic. These at-risk youth, as well as many other young people, need to see the relevance of what they are learning in school and to learn in school the skills that are relevant to the work environment. Middle school is a time when young people are beginning to make curriculum choices that will affect the paths they will follow through high school. Therefore, it is a time when students should be aware of the kinds of skills that are required for various types of jobs. For example, middle school students should recognize how basic skills like reading, writing, and math are used in various types of jobs and be able to observe that the level of skill required varies with the level of job—and is reflected in job pay, job security, and opportunities for advancement. In addition, students need to recognize how vocational and employability skills are critical requirements for many jobs and how having such skills can increase the number of jobs that will be available to them. By having this insight at the middle or junior high school, students will be able to make more informed decisions about the combination of courses they will pursue in their high school years. In addition, they may be more inclined to remain in school because they recognize the importance of what they are learning.

PURPOSE

The purpose of SECTION B: EXPERIENCES is to help students recognize the importance of acquiring a combination of basic and vocational skills while they are in school and to help them develop an educational plan that will enable them to do this.

BENEFIT

Students will gain knowledge about the basic, vocational, and employability skills that are required in various jobs and will understand why learning these skills in school can enhance their employment future.

THEME

Analysis; basic, vocational, and employability skills

COMPONENTS

Instructor guide
Student guide
Students read reports of interviews with four young people who are working in the following areas: secretarial, electronics, auto mechanics, and custodial. After students read each of the interviews, they answer questions to identify (1) the educational background of the worker, (2) the tasks the worker performs, and (3) the skills required for the job. Through small group discussion, students identify the skills each of the workers learned and failed to learn in school and analyze ways in which the workers' skills limit or enhance their career potential.

This program is one of dropout prevention. It is intended for all middle school students, not just those a school has singled out because of major and obvious behavior problems, like alcohol and drug abuse, absenteeism and truancy, or academic failure, including failure to advance in grade level. Other students may have equally important hidden factors that are moving them toward dropout factors like family stress, abuse, neighborhood influences, poor self-image, and so forth.

For this reason, we believe that all students can benefit by learning more about themselves, by being linked to programs and people who can help them, and through dedicated and caring interactions with teachers, counselors, and other school personnel.

With this program philosophy and its intended goals, the problems of where to infuse the program must be solved by each participating school, based on that school's structure, needs, and personnel.

Some options and the rationale for those options follow:

- **Homeroom**
  All students assemble for this period at sometime during the day. The homeroom teacher could be the mentor or bonding individual who would help students through the SECTION B: EXPERIENCES program and then refer them to appropriate counselors, teachers, and programs for further support.

- **Social Studies, English, or Similar Core Courses**
  One of these classes might be chosen to initiate the program, since all students must attend these basic courses and the teachers would have the advantage of working together to determine the point at which this program could be infused into their required curriculum content.
A Required Career Education or Vocational Education Class for all Students

The focus of these classes lends itself to the self-exploration/awareness nature of SECTION B: EXPERIENCES program, given that the skills to be developed by students are crucial to their success on the job as well as in school. The teachers of such classes would likely be in tune with the strategies employed to develop the choice awareness, decision-making, and problem solving skills of their students. These teachers would also be more likely to have contacts with community people who could serve as mentors to students in need.

Counseling
If the program is initiated as part of counseling, it would best be conducted during counseling time that is allotted regularly to all students. This may be the least likely place to initiate the program, but may better serve as the place where students are linked to activities, programs, and people who can help them with their specific problems.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Teacher’s Role
Teachers of these types of material should be particularly sensitive to the factors that lead students to drop out of school and have an interest and skill in gaining the confidence and knowledge of their students’ personalities, habits, and personal lives as they reflect these factors.

The second component of the school personnel’s resource, The School’s Choice: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School, provides background research and information relevant to the teacher’s role in providing in-school experiences that will help to prevent students from dropping out of school. However, the underlying trait of any teacher working with today’s students must be the sincere caring and interest in the individual. Miracles happen because people care: the mechanics of teaching alone will do little to touch the lives of students who are in need.

Counselor’s Role
The counselor’s role is to help students bond or connect with the school and community resources and programs that can help them.
There are many special programs already underway in a variety of schools across the country—programs on teenage pregnancy, parenting, alcohol and drug abuse, learning disabilities, and remediation and instruction in basic skills.

There are other school programs and activities that promote social bonding through peer tutoring and cooperative learning programs as well as extracurricular activities, such as French club, football teams, etc.

Communities also have special programs offered on the above topics and activities. These program possibilities vary from school to school and from city to city. The School Choice: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School describes a variety of programs already offered through funding from the U.S. Government, state and local governments, social organizations, private industry, and so forth. Many more could be initiated to serve the unique needs of students in your community.

One such action may be to contact a nearby community's service group to see if their members could provide babysitting and tutoring in a nearby building where the students could bring their siblings to be cared for while the students themselves attend a special study hall staffed with volunteers who can help them with their studies.

Last, but most significant, is the school's capability of offering students exposure to vocational courses and activities and the methods by which these courses are taught. This experience would give students inside knowledge about the skills and requirements of workers in generalized fields, like home economics, metal working, etc.

Exposing students to the ways basic skills are used in such vocational courses and the ways vocational or technological problems are solved through the application of basic skills will offer students different learning options and possibilities and will demonstrate the correlation between school and work. Such a plan would also serve to build the self-confidence and self-esteem of students who learn better by moving and doing than by sitting and thinking.

A WALK THROUGH

The student guide contains interviews with workers in four specific jobs: secretarial, electronics, auto mechanics, and office clerk.

After students read each interview, they answer questions about the worker's education, job tasks, and job-required skills. Then, in small groups, students discuss the importance of basic and vocational skills to the worker and his or her career potential. They also
examine the ways in which combining basic and vocational courses in their high school schedules can contribute to their own career opportunities.

Finally, students talk with their counselors about the programs and courses available to them and plan the schedule of classes they will take in the next two years to move toward their individual goals.

PREPARATION

None

DISTRIBUTION

Distribute to each student one copy of *The Student's Choice* student guide.
INTRODUCTION

The term “success” has varied meanings that depend upon the interpretations of the people using the term. Success can mean having lots of money, getting good grades in school, having lots of friends, having a good paying job, and so on. The interpretations of success are as plentiful as the numbers of interpreters. This component of THE STUDENT'S CHOICE allows the full array of interpretation but presents the primary definition of success as “being the best that is in your control to be.”

It is commonly known that many students who drop out of school feel that they have no control over their lives; rather, they believe that “fate” dictates what will happen to them. They fail to distinguish between the circumstances they can’t control and those they can and to recognize that they have choices in life—choices they make every day, knowingly or unknowingly—that determine the success they will have in their lives. A step that is often missed in the development of the adolescent (and that continues to be missing for many throughout their adulthood) is the awareness of the decision-making process. Young people need to be able to view more completely the situations they encounter, their responses to those situations, and the ramifications of their actions. They need to be able to fill in the gap between the “situation: what is happening” and their actions or the “decision: what they do.” They need to be able to process their thinking through the steps of decision making by—

- acknowledging the situation—honestly and overtly identifying what is happening;
- learning facts about the situation and about themselves—their feelings, attitudes, behaviors, and so forth—their roles in the situation;
- recognizing that they have choices—that there are options they can choose among and that the control of choice is in their hands;
- understanding that there are ramifications to the choices they make and looking ahead to what will happen if they make each of the possible choices;
- making responsible decisions about their responses to situation having considered a variety of choices and the possible ramifications of each choice.

Skill in decision making is crucial to students as they encounter their adolescent years.

This component of THE STUDENT'S CHOICE uses a videotaped soap opera that depicts 10th grade youth in various decision-
making situations and involves students in using the decision-making process to predict which decisions would best lead each youth down a positive path toward success.

The youth depicted in the soap opera, "A Time of Choices," have a history of factors that could eventually lead them to drop out of school if they fail to recognize that they have choices about how they can respond to and deal with the situations they face. For example, Al, the main character in the first storyline of "A Time of Choices," has problems that are primarily academic in nature. Therefore, the analysis of Al's choices focuses primarily on ways to effect better academic achievement. However, Al, like each of the other three main characters, has other factors (behavioral, psychological, and family) that, as part of his history, affect his potential for success. These factors also receive attention in the discussion questions. The following outline shows the factors that are present in the lives of each of the four main characters.

**AL**

**Psychological**
- Has a negative attitude toward school
- Does not identify with school life

**Behavioral**
- Lacks incentive for achievement in traditional school activities
- Is attracted to outside jobs, wages, and experiences
- Exhibits discipline problems in school

**Academic**
- Is a low achiever
- Is 1 or 2 years behind grade level
- Lacks definite educational goals
- Has lower occupational aspirations than his peers
- Has difficulty in reasoning and forming relationships
- Does not read at grade level

**Family**
- Experienced little solidarity with his family

**WARREN**

**Psychological**
- Feels that courses are not relevant to work
- Is attracted to outside wages, and experiences
Behavioral
- Works more hours per week on a job than do completers

Academic
- Is enrolled in a general course of study rather than a vocational course
- Lacks occupational goals

Family
- Is in a family that is more mobile than others
- Has an Hispanic mother who speaks in broken English

RALPH

Psychological
- Does not identify with school life

Behavioral
- Has a high rate of absenteeism and truancy
- Does not participate in extracurricular activities
- Associates with friends who are outside of school, usually older dropouts
- Is inclined toward physical rather than mental activities

Academic
- Is unable to tolerate structured activities
- Lacks definite educational goals
- Has lower occupational aspirations than his peers
- Has difficulty in abstract reasoning, generalizing, and forming relationships

Family
- Comes from a low-income family
- Experience little solidarity with his family
- Has more older siblings than peers
- Is exposed to a dropout at home
- Has parents who have not completed high school
DIANE

Psychological

- Does not identify with school life
- Lacks a clear sense of identity/poor self-concept
- Has lost the attention/interest of her father
- Has negative attitude towards school

Behavioral

- Does not participate in extracurricular activities
- Associates with friends who are outside of school, usually older dropouts
- Is impulsive decision maker

Academic

- Lacks definite educational goals

Family

- Comes from a single parent home

The supporting adults in "A Time of Choices" also display behaviors that are typical of people in their roles and environments. For example, the teachers—Miss Koski and Mr. Williams—demonstrate two different ways of conducting class. Students' perceptions of the direction and encouragement each style provides is also a subject of examination.

SECTION C: SUCCESS is designed to ensure school advocacy by making available to students information about counseling, alternative schooling and course options, support groups and organizations such as Al-A-Teen, and other in-school and out-of-school activities that will help students on their paths to success. Thus, SECTION C: SUCCESS acquaints students with advocacy options the school and/or community have in place.

PURPOSE

The purpose of SECTION C: SUCCESS and the videotape "A Time of Choices" is to help students develop decision-making skills that will enable them to deal positively with conditions or situations that cause stress in their lives and that could cause them to alienate themselves from school.
BENEFIT

Students will gain skill at following the steps in the decision-making process, specifically those noted here:

1. Identifying the SITUATION: What is happening?
2. Discovering FACTS: What do they need to know?
3. Identifying CHOICES: What can they do?
4. Considering RAMIFICATIONS: What will happen if they follow a given choice?
5. Making DECISIONS: What will they do?

THEME

Decision making; advocacy

COMPONENTS

Instructor guide
Student guide
“A Time of Choices” videotape

CONTENT

Students watch 13 episodes of the soap opera, “A Time of Choices,” that depicts 10th-grade youth in various decision-making situations. After each episode, students complete a worksheet that leads them to use the five steps of the decision-making process to determine which decisions would best lead the soap opera characters on a positive path to success. “A Time of Choices” profiles youth who have the psychological, behavioral, academic, and family factors that put them at risk. It highlights times when choices are presented to the soap opera characters and heightens students’ awareness that all attitudes, behaviors, and actions are the result of choices—choices they may not be aware they are making. The videotape soap opera encourages students to consider choices of academic/vocational courses, in-school and out-of-school activities, and special programs that offer support to them so they are not prone to drop out of school.

USE

This program is one of dropout prevention. It is intended for all middle school students, not just those a school has singled out because of major and obvious behavioral problems, like alcohol and drug abuse, absenteeism and truancy, or academic failure, including failure to advance in grade level. Other students may have equally
important hidden factors that are moving them toward dropping out—factors such as family stress, abuse, neighborhood influences, poor self-image, and so forth.

For this reason, we believe that all students can benefit by learning more about themselves, by being linked to programs and people who can help them, and through dedicated and caring interactions with teachers, counselors, and other school personnel.

With this program philosophy and its intended goals, the problems of where to infuse the program must be solved by each participating school, based on that school's structure, needs and personnel. Some options and the rationale for those options follow:

Homeroom

All students assemble for this period at some time during the day. The homeroom teacher could be the mentor or advocate who would help students through SECTION C: SUCCESS PROGRAM and then refer them to appropriate counselors, teachers, and programs for further support.

Social Studies, English, or Similar Core Courses

One of these classes might be chosen to initiate the program, because all students must attend these basic courses and the teachers would have the advantage of working together to determine the point at which this program could be infused into their required curriculum content.

A Required Career Education or Vocational Education Class for all Students

The focus of these classes lends itself to the problem-solving, decision-making nature of SECTION C: SUCCESS program, given that these skills are crucial to students' success on the job, as well as in school. The teachers of such classes would likely be in tune with the strategies employed to develop the choice awareness, decision-making, and problem-solving skills of their students. These teachers would also be more likely to have contacts with community people who could serve as mentors to students in need.

Counseling

If the program is initiated as part of counseling, it would best be conducted during counseling time that is allotted regularly to all students. This may be the least likely place to initiate the program, but may better serve as the place where students are linked to activities, programs, and people who can help them with their specific problems.
THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Teacher's Role

Teachers of this type of material should be particularly sensitive to the factors that lead students to drop out of school. They should have an interest in their students, gain knowledge about their students' personalities, habits, and personal lives as they reflect these factors. The "advocacy" component of the school personnel's resource—THE SCHOOL'S CHOICE: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School—provides background research and information relevant to the teacher's role in dropout prevention. That resource, along with proper inservice training for this program, should provide a basis for teachers' understanding of this program and their role in using it.

However, the underlying trait of any teacher working toward the affective development of today's students must be the sincere caring and interest in them as individuals. Miracles happen because people care: the mechanics of teaching alone will do little to touch the lives of students who are in need.

Counselor's Role

Counselors include those designated by title to serve in this role, but also include teachers, principals, and mentors.

The counselor's role is to be an advocate of the student linking them with the school and community resources and programs that can help them.

There are many special programs already underway in a variety of schools across the country—programs on teenage pregnancy, parenting, alcohol and drug abuse, learning disabilities, and remediation and instruction in basic skills.

Communities also have special programs offered on the above topics and activities. These program possibilities vary from school to school and from city to city. The School's Choice: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School describes a variety of programs already offered through funding from the U.S. government, state and local governments, social organizations, private industry, and so forth. Many more could be initiated to serve the unique needs of students in your community.

For example, a number of your students may come from homes with serious alcohol and/or drug abuse problems. These problems maybe the basis for students' absences from school or their lack of attention to learning and involvement in extracurricular types of activities. Such a condition may require school/counselor/teacher/parent action before the students' problems can be solved. One
such action may be to link such students to Al-A-Teen programs that could provide support, encouragement, and hope to students in such situations. Another alternative may be for the counselor to arrange for such students to go to a "Children of Alcoholics" meeting at lunch time once a week.

Last, but most significant, is the school's capability of offering students exposure to vocational courses and activities and the methods by which these courses are taught. This experience would give students inside knowledge about the skills and requirements of workers in generalized fields, such as home economics, metal working.

Exposing students to how basic skills are used in such vocational courses, and how vocational or technological problems are solved through the application of basic skills will offer students different learning options and will demonstrate the correlation between school and work. Such a plan would also serve to build the self-confidence and self-esteem of students who learn better by moving and doing than by sitting and thinking.

A WALK THROUGH

Start the "A Time of Choices" videotape for students to view. Instructions are given after each episode directing students to get the appropriate worksheet and read and discuss the set of questions on each worksheet with their classmates and teacher. You will need to restart the tape when they have completed their worksheets.

The videotape contains complete instructions; therefore, it can be used independently by a single student as well as collectively by all class members. In this way, students who need more time and/or help in completing the worksheets or understanding the concepts would have such opportunities.

The questions on each worksheet lead students to look at the following:

1. SITUATIONS the characters are in—what is happening
2. FACTS about the situation—what they need to know
3. CHOICES the characters have—what they can do
4. RAMIFICATIONS of their choices—what will happen as a result of each choice
5. DECISIONS they should make to improve their chances for success—what they should do
PREPARATION

Obtain and set up a VHS videocassette recorder and the TV monitor.

DISTRIBUTION

Distribute to each student one copy of The Student’s Choice student guide.
ANSWER GUIDE
CHARACTER: AL

1. How would you describe Al?

   thinks he's cool
   plays pool

2. Which classmates does Al...

   Like:
   Diane
   Lucy
   Ralph
   Annetta (maybe)

   Dislike:
   Warren
   Annetta (maybe)

3. How did Al act toward others?

   pesters Diane
   challenges Otis to play pool

4. What do you know about Al's behavior in school?

   Pays attention X
   Asks questions in class X
   Gets average or good grades X
   Joins school clubs/sports X
   Cuts classes X
   Skips school X

CHARACTER: RALPH

1. How would you describe Ralph?

   tough
   asks for trouble

2. Which classmates does Ralph...

   Like:
   Lucy
   Al

   Dislike:
   Otis

3. How did Ralph act toward others?

   challenges Otis' skill at football as well as pool

4. What do you know about Ralph's behavior in school?

   Pays attention X
   Asks questions in class X
   Gets average or good grades X
   Joins school clubs/sports X
   Cuts classes X
   Skips school X
CHARACTER: DIANE

1. How would you describe Diane?
   attractive

2. Which classmates does Diane...
   Like:
   Lucy
   Warren

   Dislike:
   Al

3. How did Diane act toward others?
   ignores Al and Hilary
   flirts with Warren

4. What do you know about Diane's behavior in school?
   
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<tr>
<td>Skips school</td>
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CHARACTER: WARREN

1. How would you describe Warren?
   popular in school
   good student
   football player

2. Which classmates does Warren...
   Like:
   Diane
   Otis

   Dislike:
   Hilary

3. How did Warren act toward others?
   friendly with Diane and Otis
   ignores Hilary

4. What do you know about Warren's behavior in school?
   
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<td>Skips school</td>
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CHARACTER: ANNETTA

1. How would you describe Annetta?
   
   nice
   friendly
   cheerful

2. Which classmates does Annetta...
   
   Like:
   Hilary
   Warren
   Julie
   Otis
   
   Dislike:
   Al

3. How did Annetta act toward others?
   
   giggled with clique of friends

4. What do you know about Annetta's behavior in school?
   
   Pays attention X
   Asks questions in class X
   Gets average or good grades X
   Joins school clubs/sports X
   Cuts classes X
   Skips school X

CHARACTER: JULIE

1. How would you describe Julie?
   
   organized
   serious

2. Which classmates does Julie...
   
   Like:
   Annette
   Hilary
   Warren
   Otis
   
   Dislike:
   — —

3. How did Julie act toward others?
   
   giggled with clique of friends

4. What do you know about Julie's behavior in school?
   
   Pays attention X
   Asks questions in class X
   Gets average or good grades X
   Joins school clubs/sports X
   Cuts classes X
   Skips school X
CHARACTER: OTIS

1. How would you describe Otis?
   - big
   - has a temper
   - friendly

2. Which classmates does Otis...
   Like:
   - Warren

   Dislike:
   - Al
   - Warren

3. How did Otis act toward others?
   - avoids Al
   - angry toward Otis

4. What do you know about Al's behavior in school?
   - Pays attention  Yes  No  X
   - Asks questions in class  X
   - Gets average or good grades  X
   - Joins school clubs/sports  X
   - Cuts classes  X
   - Skips school  X

CHARACTER: MOSS KOSKI

1. How would you describe Miss Koski?
   - willing to give extra time to help students in need

2. Which student(s) does Miss Koski compliment?
   - compliments the "A" student only

3. How did Miss Koski act toward the class?
   - offers to help anyone in class

4. What does Miss Koski allow to happen while she is teaching?
   - talking by students
   - inattention of students
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What behaviors led each student to be liked or disliked by other students?

2. What behaviors led each student to pass or fail the test?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?
What is Al doing in class during this episode? What did Al do in the first episode?

FACTS: WHAT DOES AL NEED TO KNOW?
What grade did Al get on his test?
Did Al hear Miss Koski tell students to see her if they need help?
How is Diane responding to Al?
How is Otis responding to Al?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN AL DO?
What choices did Al make today about...
- listening in class?
- asking questions?
- getting along with teachers?
- getting along with other students?

Do you think Al is aware that he made choices today? Why? Why not?

How does Miss Koski's failure to command class attention give Al more choices?

What choice is Ralph presenting when he says he is going to make an appointment with Miss Koski and asks Al, “What about you?”

What choices can Al make about his future in-class behavior?

CONSEQUENCES: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF...?
What happened to Al as a result of the choices he made in the first episode?
What might happen to Al as a result of the choices he made today?
What might happen to Al if he makes other choices?

ON: WHAT SHOULD AL DO? What should Al do at this point? Why?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

What is Warren talking about in the kitchen?

FACTS: WHAT DOES WARREN NEED TO KNOW?

What facts is Warren telling Ollie about his dad? about moving? How does Warren feel about moving? Why is Warren working? How many hours per week is Warren working? Will working part-time really make it possible for Warren to stay in town if his parents move again?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN WARREN DO?

How could Warren’s choice to work (and cut out of school early) affect his ability to do well in school? Why does making the choice to work mean that Warren will have to give up something else, like after-school study time and football? What other activities might Warren have to give up to work 25 hours a week? social activities? extracurricular activities? What choices other than working part time could enable Warren to stay in town if his parents move? Could he stay with a friend’s family for example?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . . ?

What might happen to Warren if he chooses to cut classes regularly in order to work? What might happen to Warren as a result of other choices he might make?

DECISION: WHAT WILL WARREN DO?

What should Warren think about? What additional facts should he learn?
WORKSHEET: DIANE
EPISODE NO. 1

SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

How is Diane relating to the other students? How is she acting to the girls in her group?

FACTS: WHAT DOES DIANE NEED TO KNOW?

Who has Diane chosen for friends? What other people are willing to be friends with Diane?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN DIANE DO?

What choices has Diane made in her friendships?

How has Diane made her choices known?

What other choices does Diane have?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . . ?

What might happen if Diane continues to choose as friends girls who are out of school?

What might happen if Diane chooses to make new friends in school?

How might Diane's choices affect her interest in school? her outlook on school and school life?

DECISIONS: WHAT COULD DIANE DO?

What might Diane do if she wanted to make friends at school?

Where might Diane find out the kinds of school clubs and activities she could join?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

What is Ralph's family doing? What is his mom doing? What is his dad doing? What is Ralph doing?

FACTS: WHAT DOES RALPH NEED TO KNOW?

What is the real problem in Ralph's home?

Who has the problem? Who has to live with the person who has the problem?

How does Ralph's absence from school create a new problem... for himself? for his mom? for his dad?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN RALPH DO?

Who could Ralph ask to help him find solutions to his home problems?

Where could Ralph go to learn how to live with a parent who is an alcoholic?

What could Ralph do to get away from home?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF...?

What might happen if Ralph tells his counselor or a favorite teacher about his home problems?

What might happen if Ralph attends Al-A-Teen meetings which are for children of alcoholics?

What might happen if Ralph takes his mom to an Al-Anon meeting for wives of alcoholics?

What might happen if Ralph and his mom tell his dad about help he can get?

What might happen if Ralph (and his mother) talk to a priest or minister in their church?

What might happen if Ralph joins the street gang?

DECISION: WHAT WILL RALPH DO?

What should Ralph do tomorrow?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?
What help is Al receiving? Who is trying to help Al?

FACTS: WHAT DOES AL NEED TO KNOW?
What happened to Al because he misbehaved in class?
What grades is Al getting in his classes?
What choices did Al make in the last episode to make these facts become real?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN AL DO?
What choices does Al have today? How could he become more interested in English? Who could help Al? Who might Al be able to help?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . . ?
What might happen to Al as a result of each of his choices?
How might getting help enable Al to do better in English class?
How might helping someone learn pool help Al to feel more important?

DECISION: WHAT WILL AL DO?
What should Al do at this point? Why?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

What is Warren talking about with Diane?

FACTS: WHAT DOES WARREN NEED TO KNOW?

What are some facts about Warren’s course of study in high school? about his career plans? Where can Warren learn the benefits of taking a general course of study? the benefits of taking a vocational curriculum? the benefits of taking a college-prep curriculum? the possibility of combining a college-prep and vocational curricula?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN WARREN DO?

What choices does Warren have in preparing for a career?

Who could Warren talk with? Where could Warren go for help?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . . ?

What might happen to Warren if he does nothing about making career plans?

What might happen to Warren if he gets career counseling and advice?

DECISIONS: WHAT WILL WARREN DO?

What should Warren do now? Why?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

What is Diane saying she wants? How does Diane think she will get what she wants?
What does Lucy want? How does Lucy think she will get what she wants?
Who is talking about her feelings and needs first, Lucy or Diane?

FACTS: WHAT DOES DIANE NEED TO KNOW?

How realistic is Diane’s goal of “being taken care of”?
How can Diane be sure someone will be able to take care of her?
What will Diane have to do to be able to take care of herself?
Could Lucy be influencing Diane?

CHOICES: WHAT CHOICES DOES DIANE HAVE?

What choices does Diane have about what she does and how she acts with Warren? For example, what plans could Diane make for her evening with Warren? Where could they meet other than her apartment when Diane’s mother is out? If they do meet in the apartment, what could they do so that sex will not become an issue? For example, they could bake cookies for someone who lives alone or for Warren’s younger brothers and sisters. They could play cards. They could work on a puzzle.

What choice does Diane say she has made about sleeping with Warren?

What choices has Diane made about birth control?

What new choices might Diane have to make if she chooses to encourage Warren’s affection?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . . ?

What might happen if Diane makes plans for herself and Warren to do something like bake cookies tonight?

What might happen if Diane encourages Warren’s affection? What might happen if Diane doesn’t know how to say “No” if she and Warren become too affectionate?

DECISIONS: WHAT WILL DIANE DO?

What decisions should Diane make before Warren arrives?

Why is important for Diane to make some plans and decisions before Warren arrives?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

What is Ralph doing today? Why isn't he in school?

FACTS: WHAT DOES RALPH NEED TO KNOW?

What is Ralph saying about his attendance at school?
What facts is Ralph telling about his family? his sister? his father?
What do Ralph's friends do during the day? at night?
What mechanical skills does Ralph have?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN RALPH DO?

Who could Ralph ask for help in dealing with his family problems? his problems with school?
Who could Ralph ask for advice in selecting courses?
What kinds of courses might Ralph consider taking to develop his mechanical skill?
What choices can Ralph make about school attendance?
What choices can Ralph make about the friends he associates with?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . . ?

What might happen if Ralph continues to cut classes or skip school?
What might happen if Ralph finds a teacher or counselor he could talk to about his problems?
What might happen if Ralph enrolls in courses that are interesting to him? What might happen if Ralph joins the street gang?

DECISION: WHAT WILL RALPH DO?

What should Ralph do about his school attendance? about finding some purpose or meaning in schooling? about getting help?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

What is Al thinking about today? How does he see his future?

Why might Al think that, if he hasn't learned to read and write by 18, he will never learn?

FACTS: WHAT DOES AL NEED TO KNOW?

What facts has Al learned about getting a job?

What skills does Al lack?

Will Al be able to get a job if he drops out of school?

What facts did Al consider when making the decision to refuse tutoring?

What facts should he have considered?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN AL DO?

How can Al take control of what will happen to him?

Where can Al go for help? What are Al's choices today?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . . ?

What might happen to Al if he seeks help?

What might happen to Al if he drops out of school?

What might happen if Al decides he can never learn to read or write?

DECISION WHAT WILL AL DO?

What should Al do now? What responsibility does Al have to prepare himself for the future? Why?

How will Al's decision affect other people in his life? his current family? a wife and children, the possibility of marriage in the future? the kinds of friends he has?

Where can Al go for advice and support in improving his basic skills?
WORKSHEET: WARREN
EPISODE NO. 3

SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

What is on Warren's mind today?
What is Warren talking about?
Who is Warren talking to?

FACTS: WHAT DOES WARREN NEED TO KNOW?

What has Warren learned about his dad?
What has Warren learned about his own needs? For example, is buying a car Warren's only need?
Where can Warren go to learn about various occupations?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN WARREN DO?

What choices did Warren make in this scene? (Who did he talk with?)
What choices can Warren make now?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . . ?

What might happen to Warren if he chooses to talk to the counselor?
What might happen to Warren if he accepts his dad's offer to talk to the counselor with him?
How might this make him feel closer to his dad?
What might happen if Warren chooses to do nothing?

DECISION: WHAT WILL WARREN DO?

What should Warren do now? What responsibility does Warren have to prepare himself for the future?
How might Warren's decision affect his ability to get a good paying job?
Where can Warren go for advice and help in career planning?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

What is going on in this scene?
Is Diane aware of what is happening? Is Warren?
Do they both think the same thing is happening?
What is Warren asking Diane?

FACTS: WHAT DOES DIANE NEED TO KNOW?

What facts might Diane want or need to know about her own intentions? about Warren's intentions? about Warren's commitment? about birth control? about the incidence of teenage pregnancies? about ways to give the "no" message?

CHOICES: WHAT CHOICES DOES DIANE HAVE?

How can Diane take control of the situation?
What could Diane do now?
What might Diane say?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . .?

What might happen as a result of each choice?
How might each choice affect Diane's ability to continue in school? get a job? enjoy life?
How might each choice affect Warren's ability to continue his education? get a job? enjoy life?

DECISION: WHAT WILL DIANE DO?

What should Diane do now? What responsibility does Diane have to think of the future? Where could Diane go for help in learning how to avoid or deal with situations like this?
How might Diane's decision affect other people in her life? her mother? her friends?
How might Diane's decision affect Warren's life? What responsibility does Warren have in this situation?
SITUATION: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

What trouble is Ralph having with school?

FACTS: WHAT DOES RALPH NEED TO KNOW?

Why is Ralph thinking about dropping out of school?

How does Ralph feel about sitting in class all day?

What does Ralph know about the co-op program or other alternatives to the 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. school day?

From whom is Ralph getting his facts about jobs and employment?

CHOICES: WHAT CAN RALPH DO?

What choices did Ralph make since the last episode?

Who was Ralph surprised to see at the Al-A-Teen meetings?

What could Ralph do to learn about the co-op program or other alternatives to the 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. school day?

Where could Ralph learn more facts about jobs and hiring practices in the community?

RAMIFICATIONS: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . . ?

What might happen if Ralph drops out of school?

What might happen if Ralph enrolls in a co-operative education program? finds another alternative to the 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. school day?

What might happen if Ralph finds out the kinds of jobs employers are seeking to fill?

What might happen if Ralph finds out the kinds of skills employers want their employees to have?

DECISION: WHAT WILL RALPH DO?

What should Ralph do now?

How can Ralph take control of his own life?

How can he prepare himself for future employment?

How will Ralph's decision affect his ability to support himself through honest work?

How will Ralph's decision affect others in his life . . . like his mother?
DROPOUT PREVENTION SERIES

THE HELPING PROCESS
Targeted at the various individuals who have roles to play in a successful student retention effort, this series of six booklets and videocassette delineates the activities necessary to create a supportive team of adults to help students gain a diploma, job-entry skills, and options for further education. The Professional Set includes a single copy of each of the booklets and the videocassette.

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<td>Helping Process: Introductory Videocassette</td>
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THE STUDENT’S CHOICE
Designed to introduce decision-making and problem-solving techniques and to offer instruction in interpersonal life-management skills. The Professional Set includes the Instructor Guide and The Time of Choices videocassette as well as a complimentary copy of the consumable student workbook The Student’s Choice.

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<td>The Student's Choice (package of 10 copies)</td>
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IT’S YOUR LIFE ... TAKE CHARGE
Designed to heighten student’s awareness of factors leading to dropping out and to help students consider their choices. The Professional Set includes It’s Your Life... Take Charge videocassette with user’s guide and a complimentary copy of It’s Your Life... Take Charge student workbook.

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ADMINISTRATIVE MATERIALS

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<td>The School's Choice: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School</td>
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