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ABSTRACT

A 1-year research project was undertaken to discover how the arts could help keep at-risk high school students in school. The project was conducted in three phases. In phase 1, recent literature was reviewed to define criteria for the at-risk student and to identify implications for the arts in dropout prevention programs. Phase 2 consisted of interviews with Florida high school administrators, arts teachers, and at-risk students to identify aspects of arts courses that seemed to be most effective in motivating those students to remain in school. In phase 3, field observation of at-risk students was conducted through on-site observation at seven selected high schools. Administrators and arts teachers also were interviewed informally regarding their impressions of: (1) the effects of arts activities on retention of at-risk students and (2) specific cases of at-risk students who succeeded directly as a function of their interest and progress in one or more of the arts areas. The project findings grouped into two areas: (1) effects of the arts on student motivation; and (2) strategies and motivational techniques used by the arts teachers. There was strong evidence that arts programs currently offered in Florida's high schools helped students who border on dropping out of school; therefore, it was recommended that the project be repeated with a broader geographical distribution. A 39-item list of references is included along with two appendices: (1) summary of responses to student questionnaires and (2) a table on the percentages of on-task behavior of at-risk students observed in arts classes and academic classes. (KM)

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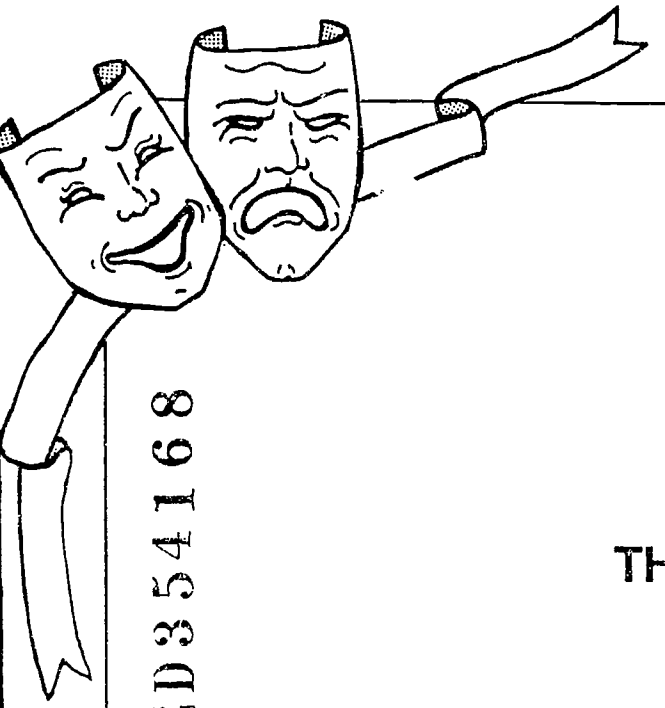

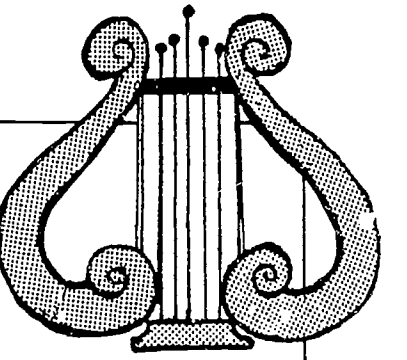

ED354168

# THE ROLE OF

# THE FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

# IN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION

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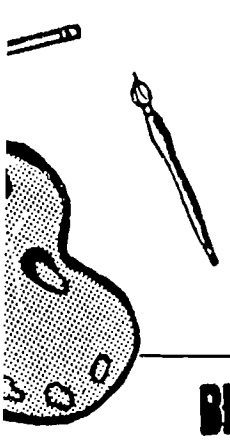

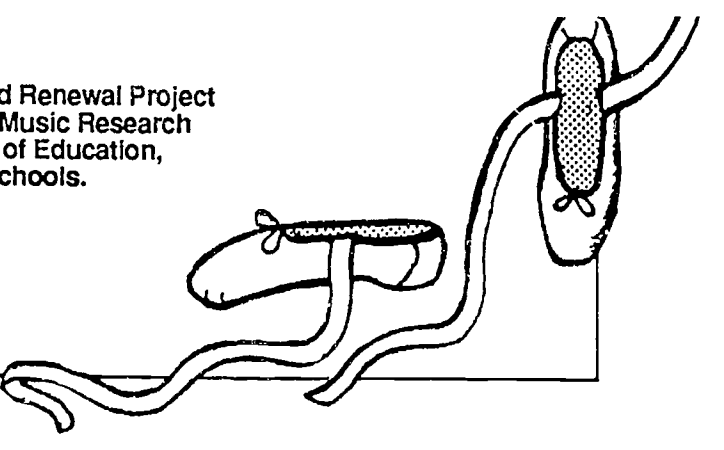

A Curriculum Development and Renewal Project
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for the Florida Department of Education,
Division of Public Schools.

July, 1990

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Miami Northwestern - Dade County

New World School of the Arts - Dade County

South Miami High - Dade County

Douglas Anderson School of the Arts - Duval County

Ribault - Duval County

Sandalwood - Duval County

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Betty Castor
Commissioner of Education

July 20, 1990

Dear Educator:

It is a pleasure to extend my appreciation for your contributions to At-Risk Students.

As you are aware, a top priority is the improvement of graduation rates in Florida. Toward this end, Curriculum Development and Renewal funds have been used to support a number of initiatives regarding the fine arts.

This research project documents the many positive contributions which fine arts programs can make in each student's education. The creativity provided by these programs pervades the overall attitude toward school and enhances a positive self image.

I'm sure this document will assist you as you design programs for At-Risk Students and I look forward to hearing about your success.

Sincerely,

Betty Castor
Commissioner

BC/na



Tallahassee, Florida 32399
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# SUMMARY OF THE ROLE OF

# THE FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

# IN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION

# SUMMARY OF THE ROLE OF THE FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS IN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION

## OVERVIEW

### Rationale

Students at risk and the arts. For some time now, arts teachers in the high schools have been well aware of the intensity of student interest and involvement when these young people are participating in the creative processes of playing in the band or orchestra, acting in a play, singing in a chorus or other musical production, creating a painting or sculpture, or participating in modern dance or ballet. This enthusiasm for expressing oneself through the various artforms seems to be a motivating force for student attendance in these classes and for their development of skills essential to satisfactory artistic expression.

Over the years arts teachers have observed that enthusiasm for creative expression is not limited to the bright and/or academically motivated students. Instead, it seems to have universal appeal. Students with learning disabilities and motivational problems also demonstrate a need for creative expression. Teachers have found that enthusiasm for the arts can be observed in all student types.

One particular type of student is of considerable interest to teachers, school administrators, parents, and the State of Florida: the so-called potential "dropout" or "at-risk" student. Florida has great concern for its school dropout rate; but, of course, all states share this problem. Recent studies of these students have resulted in the development of reliable "dropout" profiles for students who run the risk of leaving school before graduation. These profiles include risk factors such as poor grades, dislike of school, family problems, lack of respect for education and authority, etc. The profiles can be used to identify at-risk students.

Participation in the arts. Because participation in music, visual arts, drama, and dance seems to generate enthusiasm while satisfying a need for creative expression, arts teachers claim that many at-risk students not only participate in positive ways in their classroom activities, but also develop average to well above average achievement in artistic

skills and expression. Furthermore, their attendance records in the arts classes are good, especially when compared to some of the other classes. If these claims appear to be justified, then it would seem that arts classes can be effective ways to reduce--and perhaps even terminate--the at-risk student's desire to leave school. It may even be possible to transfer some of the learning environment and teaching concepts used in arts classes to other courses, with the intention of generating greater student enthusiasm and participation--and thus perhaps reducing the dropout problems in the State of Florida.

But before such actions can be taken, it is necessary to (1) objectively research the arts teachers' claims that at-risk students both attend and perform well in their classes; and if these claims are verified, then (2) it must be determined which aspects of the arts classes generate these desirable student behaviors. The present Arts and High School Dropout Prevention project was designed to investigate the first topic.

## The Project

This project was undertaken by the Center for Music Research at Florida State University as a Curriculum Development Grant for the Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools. The grant period was for the 1989-90 school year, and the project progressed in three stages: review of the relevant literature on the dropout and at-risk problems; interviews with administrators, teachers, and students; and on-site observations of students.

Phase 1: Recent research on the at-risk student. Related literature was reviewed in order to: (a) define criteria for the at-risk student and (b) identify implications for the arts in dropout prevention programs. The most prominent topic appearing in the literature concerns the identification of the potential dropout or student at risk. Factors pertaining to the home environment, intelligence quotients (I.Q.), history of school failures, low self esteem, and lack of involvement in school activities are consistently reported as predictors of students who will drop out of school. Several studies have examined specific programs and strategies for dropout prevention. Effective programs generally provide students with opportunities for vocational, academic, and creative success.

Studies relating directly to arts and dropout prevention were not found. There are, however, many studies which seem to suggest the importance of arts participation to programs designed to keep the at-risk student in school. These studies indicate that the arts are not merely "frills," but are essential for fulfilling the at-risk student's needs for expression and intellectual development.

Phase 2: Interviews with Florida high school administrators, arts teachers, and at-risk students. The second phase of this project consisted of interviews with secondary school administrators ($N = 28$), arts teachers ($N = 85$), and at-risk students at high schools

throughout the state of Florida. Both administrators and teachers acknowledged the apparent impact that participation in the arts has had upon many students' decisions to remain in school. Seventy percent of the administrators reported cases in which participation in arts courses has influenced a student to stay in school. An even higher percentage (89.5%) of the arts teachers stated that they were aware of specific cases in which participation in arts courses has influenced at-risk students to remain in school. These teachers were asked to identify aspects of arts courses that seem to be most effective in motivating the at-risk student to remain in school. The most frequently mentioned aspect was the social interaction and camaraderie that comes from being identified as part of an arts group or performing ensemble. Teachers also mentioned the importance of performance, the feeling of success and satisfaction derived from arts experiences, the self-esteem and self-confidence that spring from participation in the arts, the importance of creative and expressive activities, and keen student interest in the subject matter of arts courses.

The at-risk students surveyed in this study included those presently enrolled in arts courses ($N = 35$) and a few former at-risk students ($N = 5$) who persisted to graduation. These students supported the conclusions of the administrator and teacher surveys regarding the importance of arts courses to their decision to remain in school. Specific comments and suggestions made by these students provided additional insight into ways in which arts courses can be most effective for motivating at-risk students to persist (Appendix A).

Phase 3: Field observations of at-risk students. The third phase of this project consisted of on-site observations of at-risk students at seven selected Florida high schools. Administrators and arts teachers also were informally interviewed regarding their impressions of (a) the effects of arts activities on retention of at-risk students and (b) specific cases of at-risk students who succeeded directly as a function of their interest and progress in one or more of the arts areas.

The at-risk students were observed in their arts classes and non-arts classes. Observations of the at-risk students revealed more consistent on-task behavior during arts classes (83.9%) than during the non-arts courses (73.3%). These students were more easily distracted in the non-arts courses; and although some of them were not disruptive, it was clear that much of the time they were not attentive to the teacher or the materials (books, papers). In the arts classes, however, these same individuals clearly were immersed in their class activities of dancing, drawing, painting, singing, playing an instrument, etc. Furthermore, when the teachers gave demonstrations, lectures, or instructions, the at-risk students were alert. It became clear to the observers that students realized their teacher was providing them with information that could affect the quality of their art performance.

Discussions with administrators and arts teachers verified the observations made in the classroom; and some of them cited examples of students who not only remained in school because of their interests in the arts, but who also (a) improved academically in other classes

(non-arts), (b) remained in school and graduated, (c) were awarded college scholarships upon graduation, and (d) became so skilled in their artistic endeavors that their artworks were being sold commercially and to private sources. The observers also talked to some of these at-risk students about their interests and work in the arts areas. It was evident that their enthusiasm was high and that their determination to succeed as a musician, dancer, actor, or artist had become a motivating force in their lives.

# RESULTS

The general results of this project are described under the Phase 1, 2, and 3 headings in the full report (following this section). Detailed here are those factors that were consistently mentioned by the administrators and the arts teachers (telephone and personal interviews) and which also were verified by the on-site observations, personal discussions with at-risk students, and/or comments made by the students in response to the anonymous survey. These factors can be grouped into two areas: effects of the arts on student motivation and strategies and motivational techniques used by the arts teachers.

Effects of the arts on student motivation

A number of factors were mentioned, but they can be organized into the following areas:

Keen interest in the arts. It would be difficult to know if actual involvement in the arts by these students generates the high interest we observed, or if students enter their arts courses because of an initial curiosity and interest in playing an instrument, dancing, acting, etc. We suspect that this "keen interest" is a combination of these two factors. We also believe that interest increases along with a growth in the student's self-confidence and artistic skills. These, in turn, occur because students recognize a challenge and overcome it.

A band student wrote, "Challenging, ambitious, and exciting can best describe my involvement in band. I would say I've become highly involved in the past year and will become more involved in the future." The intensity of this interest, or involvement, was clearly expressed by a drama student who said, "My involvement in drama is my life, it's all that I have. Of course, I have other parts of life, but everything life means to me is drama. I'm deeply involved."

Criticism. Musicians, artists, dancers, and actors are judged by the quality of their artistic performances. While sometimes this can be stressful for the student, it also has the potential for building the student's confidence--and for motivating the student to become an even better artist. The criticism that comes from five sources (peers, teachers, parents and other adults, society in general, and from within oneself) has to be accepted in some way by

students--and put to good use. Constructive use of criticism builds confidence, which eventually promotes a personal value system. When students value themselves they begin to realize what their lives can become. It is at this point that they think about the future and realize that they need to succeed in school in order to meet their goals. The at-risk students we observed who successfully coped with competition were eager art students; and in some cases this eagerness extended to school in general (we talked to an at-risk student who had developed a considerable talent in sculpture over the past year; his confidence was high because his work was valued by his peers, teacher, and the commercial world).

At-risk students made a number of comments related to criticism and its challenges: "Today's society would not accept individuals who drop out of school. Getting a job without a high school degree is like signing your death warrant." "I had parts in plays, so I couldn't drop out and disappoint everyone, especially the teacher. Plus, theatre will help me in later life, so I decided to get as much as possible."

Social interactions and the "family" concept. With some exceptions, high school arts involve team activities, and therefore the overall quality of a project (such as a band concert) is dependent upon each student. Teachers and students are forced to deal with each other's shortcomings and strengths in constructive ways, if the performance is to succeed. Positive outcomes of these experiences in team efforts are more than simply learning to accept different personalities and skills. They include the "family" concept--a close-knit team that is striving toward a mutual goal (a quality performance or a quality art project, etc.). An example of this was particularly obvious in a Miami high school: In celebration of Earth Day, students in the visual arts program were creating life-size paper mache animals and forests as a multi-class team project. When one class left, another entered, each student taking the paint brush, etc. from the previous student and continuing work on the paper animal or tree! In this family, the students developed special respect for each other--and for their arts teachers, who had become the "mother" or "father" of the family.

Many comments were made by the at-risk students about social interactions and the family concept: "Takes away some shyness and...more outgoing." "A sense of family, leadership, that you belong...and you matter..." "You meet new people with different perspectives toward music or playing." "Taught me a whole lot of respect for other people." "I learned not just about music but life, and how it really is in the big city." "He [music teacher] is like a good friend. He is always there when you need him. He will help you with about any problem you have." "[My drama teacher] and I are closer than I am to my own mother. She is like or better than a best friend to me. She believes in what I can do as an actress."

Artistic and creative satisfaction. The expression of individuality is a basic human need that can be satisfied by the creation of an artistic product. Although the arts teachers and at-risk students did not describe their drive for creativity in eloquent terms, enough was

mentioned to assure us that such a drive exists--and that these students found satisfaction and personal "release" in painting, acting, playing an instrument, and singing (this latter fact was clearly obvious in the faces of high school chorus students--while they were singing for our observation team).

Students had different ways of talking about their creative expressions: "Drama is the best thing that happened to me. I never thought I could do any acting or singing or even dance. Drama has inspired me deeply." "Helped my creativity...and speech." "[I like] the thought of getting up and being somebody important and not being afraid of being somebody else! I like having a chance to be someone else." "My answers are starting to sound set-up, but they're very real. Because of drama--I know and knew what I wanted to be, I had to stick with what I love. I live for drama." "Photography has enlightened and fulfilled my life."

Discipline. One of the major problems facing young students is the organizing of one's life. Without it, students accomplish little, wandering from one thought to the next--not being able to "buckle down" to any single task for more than a few minutes. The administrators and teachers were quick to tell us that lack of personal discipline is characteristic of at-risk students. Our observations of these students in their classes (and between their classes!) certainly confirmed this problem. But we also noticed that in all the arts courses, at-risk students were purposely attending to the task at hand; that is, they were systematically working on their artwork (drawing, sculpture, dancing, rehearsing a play) for the entire class period. The nature of creating art certainly requires all the dimensions of a disciplined person: concentration, repetition, patience, and organization. The students seemed to be exhibiting these characteristics.

The at-risk students were aware of the discipline required in the arts: "It [dance] gave me self discipline, responsibility, self confidence and also how to budget my time." "Great--she [dance teacher] is very strict but at the same time she loves us. She is strict not because she is a mean person but because she wants us to be the best we can be." "...that anything is possible, it may just take ...work and ...commitment."

Strategies and motivational techniques used by the arts teachers

Arts teachers, like other teachers, use a variety of techniques to motivate student interest and participation, and also to promote general learning and skill achievement. But because the arts are both "activity" oriented (very much like sports, since in order to produce a desired outcome, mental intensity must be coupled with physical coordination) and interpretive (using the materials of arts, such as the printed music, dance steps, a script, etc., to create an artistic production), some special strategies and techniques seem to play important roles in the classroom. Of course, the following strategies and techniques are not the only ones used by the arts teachers, but they were frequently mentioned by the teachers. They also were apparent in the on-site observations and interviews.

Hands-on involvement. The highest level of on-task behavior consistently occurred when the at-risk students were actively involved in a creative activity. According to our discussions with the administrators and arts teachers, students realize that the only way to achieve the goal of becoming skilled in an arts area (acting, playing in the orchestra, painting, etc.) is constant "hands-on" experiences with the materials of their art. Our talks with the students verified this fact: They talked about the need to work as hard as they could in painting, dancing, playing an instrument, etc. in order to succeed as individuals--and to succeed as a member of the team (the play, chorus, orchestra, etc.). It was our observation that the arts teachers were spending most of the class time in guiding their students as they practiced their craft. The music rehearsals, for example, continued throughout the class period, with lectures from the teacher amounting only to brief (but pointed) instructions for playing the music. This pattern carried through the other arts as well. Clearly these arts teachers (and their students) understand the value of keeping their students involved.

Individualized instruction coupled with positive reinforcement. Many arts teachers emphasized the importance of one-to-one interactions between the at-risk students and the arts teacher. Because at-risk students usually suffer from a lack of confidence, the teachers have found it helpful to frequently attend to that student, offering positive reinforcement for appropriate student accomplishments--and also to offer personalized assistance in helping the students develop artistic skills.

Pride in creative accomplishment. Low self esteem is a characteristic of the at-risk student. For many of these students, the arts provide a unique opportunity for self expression, pride in accomplishment, and thus increased self esteem. Indeed, many at-risk students stated that an arts class was the only reason they decided to stay in school. The arts teachers and administrators cited examples of former at-risk students who became motivated by the possibility of a college scholarship and/or a job in the world of arts. These same students realized that in order to meet this kind of goal, they had to do well in all their classes. Specific suggestions from teachers regarding ways to foster pride in creative accomplishment included the importance of public performances, showings of art works, dance recitals, etc. The strategy here is to display student talents whenever possible--showing off the good work these students can do.

Genuine and personal interest in the students. Although perhaps not a teaching strategy, the close relationship between students and their arts teachers was observed on many occasions. These observations were reinforced in two ways: (a) comments from the at-risk students about the teacher as "best friend," as "someone who really cares about me," and as "someone who makes me work hard, but I know that he/she is doing it in my best interest;" and (b) our discussions with the teachers. In the latter case, all the arts teachers knew the histories of their students, both academic and personal. Some of them described the lives of at-risk students in considerable detail, explaining the students' behavioral

histories and their (the teachers') attempts to intervene when appropriate to do so. The arts teachers pointed out the importance of "knowing your students;" and it seemed to the committee that this philosophy can be a powerful influence in these student's lives.

Maintaining high standards and expectations. Many arts teachers pointed out the importance of having high standards and expectations for all students--not just the talented ones, or the ones who get good grades. At-risk students know when they are getting (or not getting) preferential treatment from the teacher, and either effect tends to demoralize the student. Pride in accomplishment results from the at-risk student knowing that he or she is competing with everyone in the class and that any success the student achieves in developing artistic skills is "real."

Providing a quality arts environment. It has been stated elsewhere in this project report that a number of the at-risk students enrolled in the arts stated that their primary reason for staying in school was the particular arts classes themselves. Many comments from students regarding their love and dedication to the arts lend support to this conclusion. At the same time, a number of students criticized their arts courses (not the teachers) for a lack of funding. Supplies, equipment, and additional staff were mentioned as being underfunded, and some students even expressed an interest in adding more arts courses in their particular school. It seems to the committee that an expanded arts program may very well attract a larger number of at-risk students, who in turn may find the experiences of creating and interpreting the various artforms rewarding and satisfying.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

This project has provided some strong evidence that arts programs currently offered in Florida high schools provide a supportive, and in many instances, nourishing environment for students who border on dropping out of school. In many cases, at-risk students remained in school solely because of their interest in, and commitment to the band, chorus, orchestra, dance class, drama group, painting, sculpture, or other art project. Furthermore, some of these students remained in school, graduated, and successfully entered the business world--or received college scholarships.

This project was limited in scope, since only a small sample of the successful arts programs in Florida was studied. It would be a worthwhile effort to repeat the present project with schools which have a broad geographical distribution in Florida, and which range in size from the small suburban schools to the large urban schools. It should also be noted that because this project reports improved student attitudes and behavior in arts classes as compared to their non-arts classes, this does not imply that non-arts classes and teachers fail to contribute to the welfare of at-risk students. On the contrary, we talked to non-arts

teachers who are well aware of the problem and were making special efforts to help these students.

In spite of its limited sample, the implications of this project for the at-risk student and the school dropout problem in Florida can be significant to all high school education; and therefore it is recommended that efforts be made to adapt some or all of the strategies and motivational factors described earlier to non-arts classes. On the strength of this project and its findings, it is also recommended that the arts programs and teachers in Florida schools be strongly supported and promoted in their efforts to provide both the general student and the at-risk student with a creative, self-fulfilling, and satisfying learning environment.

# THE ROLE OF

# THE FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

# IN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION

THE ROLE OF

THE FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

IN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION

# PURPOSE AND GOALS

Educators throughout the nation are concerned with the problem of student dropouts. In contrast with rather discouraging national statistics on student dropout rates, many arts teachers report cases of students who stayed in school because of their involvement in school arts programs. There are a number of possible explanations for the positive influences that arts participation can exert upon the student at risk. Student talent, a positive relationship with the arts teacher, positive peer relationships associated with arts activities, and creative expression have all been suggested as possible influences on dropout prevention.

The present Arts and High School Dropout Prevention project was designed to investigate the claim by arts teachers and others that the involvement of potential dropout students enrolled in arts classes reduces or eliminates their desire to leave school and also to investigate several high school arts programs in Florida that have had success with encouraging potential dropouts to stay in school. This project involved three phases: (1) review of the relevant literature on the dropout and at-risk problems, (2) interviews with administrators, teachers, and students, and (3) on-site observations of students.

# Phase 1: REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON STUDENTS AT RISK

Status of the research

The most prominent topic appearing in the literature pertains to the identification of the potential dropout or student at risk. A number of studies provide a profile of the student at risk (Baker & Jensen, 1973; Crawford, 1987; Cullen & Moed, 1988; *Dropout Prevention: A Manual for Developing Comprehensive Plans*, 1986; Garibaldi & Bartley, 1987; Gudeman,

1987; Hershaff, 1978; Johnson, 1985; Jurgens, 1985; Loken, 1973; Martin, 1981; McArthur, 1986; Moritz, 1977; Pezzullo, 1984; Rumberger, 1983; Sadowski, 1987; Sappington, 1981; United States General Accounting Office, 1987; United States General Accounting Office, 1986; Wilcynski, 1987). Factors pertaining to the home environment, educational level of parents and siblings, parents' attitudes about school, I. Q., a history of school failures, low self-esteem, and lack of involvement in school activities are consistently cited as the common predictors for students dropping out of school.

The importance of early identification of potential dropouts appears to be a cause for concern in more recent literature (Gudeman, 1987; Middleton, 1980; Wilcynski, 1987). These studies point out the need for identification of the student at risk during the preschool and early elementary stages of the student's educational career.

Some researchers have used a statistical approach in their investigation of the problem. *A Statistical Study of Wastage at School* (1972) described three major approaches to longitudinal evaluation of educational wastage: (a) the true cohort method in which the student's school career is measured through an individualized data system where each student has his/her own reference number and can be followed throughout his/her career, (b) the apparent cohort method in which the enrollment in grade 1 in a particular year is compared with enrollment in successive grades during successive years (assuming that the decrease from each grade to the next year corresponds to wastage), and (c) the reconstructed cohort method in which the school "history" for each grade from one year to the following year is reconstructed according to the enrollment by grade and the pupils repeating each grade in each year.

Dentler and Warshauer (1968) conducted a comparative analysis of differences in levels of high school dropouts as functions of social and economic differences across the largest cities in the United States. These researchers concluded that:

> . . . variations in high school dropout rates, as well as variations in levels of adult illiteracy, across 131 of the largest central cities in the United States are to a very significant extent functions of differences among the cities in levels of poverty, occupational mix, economic opportunity, and social mobility. (p. 54)

A number of programs and strategies have been designed for dropout prevention (Anderson, 1975; Blackler, 1970; Byerly, 1967; *Developing Work-Study Programs for Potential Dropouts: A Manual*, 1965; *Dropout Prevention: A Manual for Developing Comprehensive Plans*, 1986; *Dropout Prevention: First Report of Program Effectiveness for the 1987-88 School Year*, 1989; Garibaldi & Bartley, 1987; Pridgeon, 1982; Reed, 1987; Smartschan, 1979; Titone, 1979; United States General Accounting Office, 1987; Wilson, 1985; Wohl, 1973). There is much agreement among these researchers. Effective programs

generally provide a learning environment with opportunities for vocational, academic, and creative success.

Research related to the arts and dropout prevention

The role of the arts in dropout prevention has not been investigated. There are, however, some studies with direct implications. Johnson (1985) found that music provided an effective way to reduce discipline problems in an inner-city junior high school. Leidig (1983) examined a successful inner-city high school music program. Three primary factors were found to affect that program's success: (a) teacher commitment, (b) suitability of curriculum, and (c) discipline. Marshall (1978) investigated the relationship between dimensions of the urban black middle-school student's self-image and music curricula. Recommendations from this study included: (a) an increase in interdisciplinary work in music, (b) an increased focus on ethnic music with proper perspective in the music curriculum, (c) not relying on the use of music composed or simply performed by specific ethnic or racial groups as the panacea for the problems facing music educators, and (d) involving the total community in curriculum planning for effective and culturally relevant music programs.

A number of successful programs have included arts activities in the curriculum. The Benjamin Franklin Street Academy included music and videotaping elective courses in the curriculum (Wohl, 1973). The Guadalupe "Dropout School" started out as a summer arts and crafts program in the predominantly Mexican-American lower west side of St. Paul, Minnesota and evolved into a special "dropouts" school within the public school system (McCarthy, 1980). Studies of the New Orleans Urban League Street Academy's curricula (Garibaldi & Bartley, 1987) "indicate that arts and crafts, when properly mixed with academic work, enhance academic achievement and provide a more enriching experience for the students. Years of work and research at the street academy confirm that these activities are not merely luxuries for this population, but rather are fundamental to their need for expression and growth" (p. 233).

The arts and the learning styles of at-risk students

Recent research in learning styles has indicated that the arts may provide an instructional format that is better suited to the learning style of the at-risk student than traditional academic curriculum. Hanson (1990), for example, stated that "the academically at-risk student is generally a more extroverted, sensing, feeling, and action-oriented type. Since there is little or no traditional curriculum that fits the at-risk . . . [student's learning style] there is no formal educational opportunity to demonstrate one's native intelligence." Hanson goes on to suggest that music education can provide those at-risk students with an appropriate medium for intellectual growth.

The conclusions of many studies seem to suggest the importance of arts participation for programs which are designed to keep the at-risk student in school, but no studies relating directly to arts and dropout prevention were found. This Arts and High School Dropout Prevention project represents a unique attempt to investigate the relationship between participation in school arts courses and keeping the student at risk in school.

# Phase 2: INTERVIEWS WITH ADMINISTRATORS, ARTS TEACHERS, AND AT-RISK STUDENTS

The second phase of this project consisted of a series of interviews with high school administrators, arts teachers, and at-risk students at Florida high schools (interview forms are available from the Center for Music Research) that were identified as having successful arts programs. These schools were selected on the basis of (1) recommendation by teachers, administrators and state department officials and/or (2) successful performance at arts events and festivals. Programs designated as "arts schools" (that is, arts as the focus of the curriculum), such as magnet schools and special arts academies, also were included in this study.

Administrator Surveys

Twenty-eight high school administrators were interviewed by telephone. These administrators reported an average of 30% of their total school population to be at risk, with a higher percentage of at-risk males (57%) as opposed to females (43%). Most at-risk students were reported to be in the 9th and 10th grades.

Administrators stated that an average of 59.7% of those students considered to be at risk will persist to graduation. Most of the remaining 41% that drop out will do so while in the 10th grade.

Administrators were asked to state which courses are the most effective in motivating the at-risk student to stay in school. Of the 19 responses to this question, nine mentioned the importance of vocational courses, five mentioned arts courses and another five mentioned "any course with an effective teacher."

Eighteen of these administrators described the arts courses offered in their schools as consisting of both individual and group activities, seven said their arts courses were primarily geared toward individual activities, and three stated that their school's arts courses were primarily geared toward group activities.

Positive influences of the arts on at-risk students. Seventy percent or 20 of these 28 administrators said that they were aware of specific cases in which participation in arts courses has influenced a student to stay in school.

Administrators were asked to describe specific aspects of the arts courses at their schools that seem to be the most effective in motivating the student at risk to remain in school. The aspect that was mentioned most frequently was the opportunity for active participation and "hands on" involvement provided by arts courses (15 administrators).

When asked to identify effective teaching strategies for motivating the student at risk to remain in school, administrators pointed out the importance of establishing a relationship with the individual student (11 responses). Providing opportunities for active participation in class activities was also mentioned frequently (8 responses).

Funding and the at-risk student. Increased funding for arts programs, materials and equipment was most frequently cited as the way that current arts programs could be made more effective for retention of the student at risk (7 administrators).

Special programs for the student at risk. Twenty-seven of the 28 administrators interviewed said that their school had some kind of special program for the student at risk. Of those 27 schools, however, only 12 used the arts in those dropout prevention programs.

Teacher Surveys

Eighty-five high school arts teachers were interviewed by telephone: 31 music teachers, 20 drama teachers, 20 visual arts teachers, and 14 dance teachers. These arts teachers reported an average of 25 at-risk students currently enrolled across all their classes. The teachers stated that an average of 62.6% of the at-risk students enrolled in their arts courses persist to graduation, a percentage very close to the one cited by the administrators (59%). Arts teachers reported that students who drop out of school tend to do so while in the 10th or 11th grade.

Most visual arts teachers (15 of 20) described their classes as primarily geared toward individual activities. Drama, dance and music teachers tended to describe their classes as consisting of both individual and group activities.

Positive influences of the arts on at-risk students. Of the 76 arts teachers responding to this item, 89.5% (68) said that they were aware of specific cases in which participation in arts courses has influenced students to stay in school (compared to 70% of the administrators).

These teachers were asked to identify the specific aspects of their arts courses that seem to be most effective in motivating the student at risk to remain in school. Responses to this question were varied, but certain distinct trends were observed. The most frequently mentioned aspect was the importance of performance (23 responses). Teachers also mentioned the social interaction and camaraderie that comes from being identified as part of an arts group or performing ensemble (22 responses), the feeling of success and satisfaction derived from arts experiences (17 responses), the self-esteem and self-confidence that spring from participation in the arts (17 responses), the importance of creative and expressive activities (17 responses), and keen student interest in the subject matter of arts courses (7 responses).

Teaching strategies. A number of different teaching strategies were identified as being effective in motivating the student at risk to remain in school. The most frequently-mentioned teaching strategy was to set high standards and expect the very best from all students (16 responses). The importance of individual attention and individualized instruction was the second most frequently mentioned strategy (13). Several teachers (11) mentioned the importance of positive reinforcement. Genuine interest in the student also was listed frequently (10). Other stragegies mentioned were hands-on involvement with the arts materials and pride in creative accomplishment.

Support for the at-risk student in the arts programs. The most frequent response regarding ways in which the arts programs could be made more effective for retention of the student at risk was the need for smaller classes (14 responses). The second most frequent response to this question was the need for more funding for the arts in schools (11 responses). More flexible scheduling for longer class periods, and time for more individual teacher-student interaction also were mentioned by a number of teachers (7 responses). The need for individual instruction was also an important concern (7 responses).

Arts teachers were asked to rank the value--to an arts program--of several aspects of the school environment that can help motivate the at-risk student to stay in school. A rating scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important) was used. These teachers rated "staff" as the most important with an average rating of 4.82. "Funding" was second with an average of 4.45. "Equipment", "course offerings", and "scheduling" were a relatively close third, fourth, and fifth with average ratings of 4.28, 4.26, and 4.24. The lowest rating was for the importance of the physical plant, which received an average rating of 3.86.

Over 68% of these teachers claimed that guidance counselors encourage student participation in the arts. The remaining 32% reported that guidance counselors do not encourage students to participate in the arts. A higher percentage of teachers (76.5%) felt that guidance counselors encourage minority students to participate in the arts.

When asked to list ways in which arts programs could be made more attractive to minority students, many teachers (25 responses) pointed out the need for culturally relevant materials--materials such as plays, musical compositions, etc. of artistic merit that are of special interest to minority students. Another frequent response was the need for financial support for lower income arts students. Transportation for after school rehearsals, money for arts equipment (such as musical instruments, visual arts supplies, etc.), and expenses for trips were mentioned. Another suggestion made by several teachers (8 responses) was that minority students should be actively recruited.

Student Surveys

Another part of Phase 2 involved surveying high school arts students who were identified by the teachers (the ones who were surveyed earlier) as being at risk. This survey was designed to ascertain ways in which arts participation may have influenced the student to stay in school.

The teachers were asked to administer the student survey to two types of at-risk student populations: students currently enrolled and those who had stayed in school and graduated. They were sent copies of the survey, blank envelopes, posted return envelopes, and cover letters. Teachers told their students that responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Students returned their completed survey forms to the teachers, who in turn sent them to the Center for Music Research.

Forty students returned surveys, representing 12 schools. The average age of these students was 17.7 years; 17.3 for the 35 presently enrolled students and 20.4 for the five graduated students. The majority of the students (19) were 12th graders. The remainder of the group was composed of nine 11th graders, four 10th graders, one 9th grader, three college students, two employed college students, and one high school student of unknown grade level. The ethnic backgrounds represented included one American Indian/Alaskan Native; seven Black, non-Hispanic; 10 Hispanic; 17 White, non-Hispanic; and two White, Hispanic respondents.

Positive influence of the arts on the at-risk student. Over half the students admitted seriously contemplating dropping out of school at some time, but nearly all of them said that their participation in the arts influenced their decision to stay in school. Most of the students were "involved" in their arts classes and liked everything about the classes. They tended to participate in school arts activities outside of classes. All thought that their participation had been valuable. Most said the teacher had made the class special.

Most of the respondents had taken either Band (14), Art (14) or Drama (13). Some were enrolled in Jazz Ensemble (6) and Stagecraft (5), and 21 other arts classes were listed by respondents.

Thirteen students described their involvement in the arts courses as very involved ("it is my life"). Eight students found the learning aspect of the courses most appealing; four liked the courses because they were "fun;" and three liked marching band the best. The majority of respondents (32) liked everything about the arts courses. Regarding dislikes, two students listed drama. One mentioned not liking "book work," and another "got nervous" when required to sing solos. Two students disliked certain art media and one thought the teacher did not teach the course well.

Support for the at-risk student in the arts programs. Twenty-two students thought that the arts courses could be improved in terms of resources: Five indicated that more funding is needed, four wanted longer class periods, two saw a need for better facilities, two wanted smaller classes, three stated a need for more equipment, and two wanted more variety in literature and media.

Except for one student who had not yet finished a course, all respondents thought that the arts courses they had taken were valuable. Seven students felt that their participation had increased their self confidence and made them feel successful, and eight thought that learning the materials and improving technique were the most valuable aspects. Four students felt that the courses had helped them to overcome shyness, four said they increased job opportunities, five learned how to deal with and have respect for others, and four claimed that the arts courses improved self discipline. Three students valued the college and scholarship opportunities connected to their participation.

Positive relationships between at-risk students and arts teachers. Nine students described their arts teacher as a friend and four felt a family-type relationship with their teacher. Five said they got along great with their teachers, and three said they were "close" to their teacher. Thirty-six students thought the teacher made the class special for them; six thought "fun" made the class special and six believed that learning made the class special. Seven also said the class was special because the teacher believed in or respected the student. Three students enjoyed the opportunity to perform.

Only 11 students thought the teacher could have been more effective. The most suggested improvement (3) was to control the teachers' tempers. Three thought that more time, smaller classes, or new equipment would enable the teacher to do a better job.

Evidence of at-risk student involvement in arts outside of school. Twenty-five respondents participated in school arts activities outside of the regular classroom. These activities consisted mostly of contests (7) and evening and weekend performances (6). About half (16) of the respondents participated in arts activities not sponsored by the school. Seven participated in church-sponsored activities, and five performed in community bands or

theatre groups. Eighteen said that an adult was involved in the community activities (8 responses), usually a teacher (10 responses).

Positive influence of the arts on remaining in school. Twenty-one students reported that they had seriously considered dropping out. Reasons listed by these students were consistent with those cited in the literature including: boredom (4), being older than classmates (3), being behind in credits (2), poor grades (4), not caring about school (3), home and personal problems (6), and "school trouble" (2). Six students stayed in school because they liked their arts classes and five stayed because of the importance of the diploma to their future. Three students chose to remain because they wanted to work in an arts field and two felt needed in their arts activities.

Thirty students thought that their participation in an arts course affected their decision to stay in school, mainly because of a love of the arts or their arts class (6), or to increase job opportunities (7).

All responding students would advise others to stay in school. Seven respondents advised students who are considering dropping out to join a class or activity in an interesting area, and seven recommended thinking about the future.

Student responses tended to support the comments of arts teachers in regard to the influence of the arts upon their decision to remain in school. Many students pointed out the importance of arts courses to their lives (both academic and personal). An eloquent statement of the relationship between arts participation and keeping the at-risk student in school came from an at-risk student who said, "Things just got so rough at home that work and school got in my way. I just wanted to quit everything so no one would expect anything of me. . . . My love for the arts is the only thing that keeps me here [in school] and my grades up."

See Appendices A1 and A2 for additional student quotations.

# Phase 3: FIELD OBSERVATIONS OF ARTS TEACHERS AND AT-RISK STUDENTS

The final phase of data collection for this project consisted of on-site observations of arts teachers and at-risk students in seven selected Florida high schools. Administrators and arts teachers at these schools were asked to identify at-risk students who were presently enrolled in arts classes and to provide the researchers with the class schedules of each student. An observation team from the Center for Music Research visited the schools, observing the students in both their arts and non-arts courses. On- and off-task behaviors

were tabulated (in 10 second observation and recording intervals) for the students, using standard teacher/student observation forms (Madsen & Madsen, 1970).

A total of 11 at-risk students were observed in both their arts and non-arts classes. On-task behaviors were analyzed as percentage of time on-task in each setting. Compared to the non-arts classes, a larger percentage of on-task behavior by the 11 students was observed for the arts courses (arts courses = 83.9%, non-arts courses = 73.3%). Some individuals exhibited many differences in behavior between their arts classes and their non-arts classes, and some showed few differences (see Appendix B for percentages of individual on-task and off-task behaviors).

Discussions with both the teachers and administrators at these schools regarding the histories of the at-risk students in their classes (and in school generally) gave considerable credence to the high student involvement and interest noted in the on-site visits. Without exception, the arts teachers and the administrators agreed that for the majority of their at-risk students, involvement in the arts had played, and is playing a big role in delaying (and perhaps eliminating) the student's decision to leave school. The observation team noted that many times the at-risk student excelled in an art area, and in all these instances the students gained considerable self-confidence, which sometimes seemed to "spill over" into other classes and the school in general.

# CONCLUSIONS

It is interesting to note the acknowledgement by both administrators and arts teachers that participation in the arts has had an impact upon many students' decisions to remain in school. As mentioned above, their comments were supported by information obtained from student surveys and from on-site observations. However, most of the schools selected for this study (schools reported to have outstanding arts programs) do not make use of the arts as part of their special dropout prevention programs. On the basis of the surveys and observations conducted for the present study, it would appear that the arts can be a powerful vehicle for motivating the student at risk to remain in school; thus it is recommended that high school administrators and their faculty seek ways to incorporate the arts into dropout prevention programs. Of course, additional research may be needed to ascertain the most effective ways to use the arts in dropout prevention programs.

Given the power of the arts to interest and motivate the at-risk student (and other students), it is also recommended that future research investigates the reasons why the arts provide students with these kinds of incentives. Some of these reasons were discussed in the first part (Summary) of this report. We believe that the arts present tangible challenges to the student--challenges that can be met and overcome on an individual basis by developing and refining skills (learning to play an instrument, for example), while at the same time satisfying

a natural need to creatively express oneself. These skills and creative products are immediately observable, because art is expressed through its products (dancing, playing instruments, singing, painting, acting in a play, etc.). Of course, these artistic products are not only judged by the teacher, but also by one's peers; and this process of critical analysis (especially by one's peers) can have a profound effect on the artist's motivation and self-confidence. Our observations of at-risk students (and our discussions with the teachers) indicate that criticism of the students' art products was very important to their motivation and attitude: Inspiration to improve their skills and/or reasons to "be proud" and develop confidence grew out of critical comments from teachers and friends.

The above ideas need to be carefully evaluated through additional research. It may be possible that some of them can be helpful in developing retention programs in the non-arts classes as well. This is not to say that non-arts classes do not contribute to dropout retention. We believe that those non-arts teachers who have been successful in motivating students to remain in school should be interviewed (and their classes should be observed). Perhaps their teaching strategies use some of the ideas described above; and perhaps they have developed unique strategies--ones that are not found in the arts courses.

The present study represents an investigation into the relationship between arts participation and retention of the high school student at risk. The results should not be generalized to all high schools in Florida; however, they can be interpreted as data which can direct the design of future research in this important area.

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## APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

1. Student responses to questionnaires.

Note: Two different survey forms were administered: Form A, for students currently enrolled in a Florida high school school; and Form B for students formerly enrolled in a Florida high school. The following responses represent a combination of both forms.

**Grade Level (Form A) or Present Occupation (Form B):**

| NO RESPONSE | 9TH | 10TH | 11TH | 12TH | COLLEGE STUDENT | EMPLOYED | OTHER |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 19 | 5 | 2 | 1* |

* = high school student using form B

**Student's involvement in high school arts courses:**

| YES (involved in arts) | NO (not involved in arts) | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 40 | 0 | 0 |

**Arts courses taken:**

BAND - 14
DRAMA - 13
ART 2D - 7
DRAWING/PAINTING - 7
JAZZ ENSEMBLE - 6
CHORUS - 5
PORTFOLIO - 5
STAGECRAFT - 5
ART HISTORY - 3
KEYBOARD - 3
OTHER ART - 3
PHOTOGRAPHY - 3
VOCAL ENSEMBLE - 3
CHORUS - 2
GRAPHIC DESIGN - 2
MUSIC THEORY - 2
ART 3D - 1
BALLET - 1
CERAMICS/POTTERY - 1
DANCE - 1
FABRICS/FIBERS - 1
GUITAR - 1
MUSICAL THEATRE - 1
OTHER MUSIC - 1
SCULPTURE - 1
VOCAL TECHNIQUE - 1

**Student's description of his/her involvement in those high school arts courses:**

VERY INVOLVED - 11
LEARNING - 4
LISTED ACTIVITIES - 4
ENJOYMENT - 3
CHALLENGING - 2
SENSE OF FAMILY, BELONGING - 2
HOBBY - 1
INTERESTING AND FUN - 1
LISTED ACHIEVEMENTS - 1
ONLY DO GRADED ACTIVITIES - 1

ENJOY PERFORMING - 2
IT IS MY LIFE - 2
LISTED RESULTS BESIDES LEARNING MATERIALS - 2
PRIVILEGE TO BE IN - 1
SLOW - 1
STRIVING FOR THE BEST - 1
WANT AS CAREER - 1

**Aspects of those arts courses that were most appealing to the student:**

LEARNING - 8
FUN - 4
SENSE OF FAMILY, I AM IMPORTANT - 4
MARCHING BAND - 3
ALL ASPECTS - 2
HOW TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS - 2
LOVE OF THE ARTS - 2
PERFORMING - 2
TO BE SOMEONE DIFFERENT - 2
ACADEMIC ASPECT - 1
ART CLASS - 1
CHALLENGE TO BE THE BEST - 1
COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES - 1
CREATIVITY - 1
FEELING OF SUCCESS, SELF-CONFIDENCE - 1
HELPING THE TEACHER - 1
IMPROVE SPEECH - 1
MEET NEW PEOPLE - 1
PROFESSIONALISM - 1
THE COURSE IS THE ONLY ONE - 1
VOCAL ENSEMBLE - 1
WHAT I SHOULD BE DOING - 1
WHAT I WANT TO DO - 1

**Were there aspects of those arts courses that were least appealing to the students?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 8 | 32 | 0 |

**What are those aspects?**

NO RESPONSE - 31
DRAMA - 2
BOOK WORK - 1
DANCING - 1
LACK OF TEACHING - 1
ONLY WANTS TO DRAW - 1
PHOTOGRAPHY - 1
SOLOS - 1

**Were there ways in which those arts courses could have been made even better?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 22 | 18 | 0 |

**What are those ways?**

NO RESPONSE - 18
FUNDING - 5
LONGER CLASSES - 4
BETTER/MORE EQUIPMENT AND
DON'T KNOW - 1
COURSE OFFERINGS - 1
INDIVIDUAL LESSONS - 1
ONLY ALLOW INTERESTED STUDENTS IN

MATERIALS - 3
BETTER FACILITIES - 2
SMALLER CLASSES - 2
STRESS IMPORTANCE OF ARTS TO ALL STUDENTS - 2
USE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MUSIC AND ARTS, MORE VARIETY - 2
CLASS - 1
RECRUIT MORE STUDENTS - 1
REQUIRE DRAMA - 1
START YOUNGER - 1
USE POPULAR MATERIALS - 1

**Did the arts course or courses prove valuable to the student after the course was completed?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 39 | 0 | 1 |

**Aspects of the course or courses that proved valuable:**

LEARNING COURSE MATERIALS, TECHNIQUES - 8
BUILDS SELF-CONFIDENCE, FEELING OF SUCCESS - 7
HOW TO DEAL WITH OTHERS, RESPECT FOR OTHERS - 5
JOB OPPORTUNITIES - 4
OVERCOMES SHYNESS - 4
SELF DISCIPLINE - 4
COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES/SCHOLARSHIPS - 3
APPRECIATION - 2
BETTER SPEECH - 2
CREATIVITY - 2
LEADERSHIP - 2
BETTER READING - 1
EXPERIENCE - 1
FUN - 1
LIKE TO HAVE WORK SHOWN - 1
MUSICAL BACKGROUND - 1
REAL WORLD SKILLS - 1
RELAXATION - 1
RESPONSIBILITY - 1
SENSE OF BELONGING - 1
TAKES TALENT AND TIME - 1

**Student's description of his/her relationship with the arts teacher:**

FRIEND - 7
GET ALONG GREAT - 6
HELPFUL - 5
CAN TALK TO, LISTENS - 4
FAMILY MEMBER - 4
CLOSE - 3
DEMANDING - 3
BELIEVES IN ME - 2
BEST FRIEND - 2
LEARNED FROM TEACHER - 2
LOVE - 2
MUTUAL RESPECT - 2
PROFESSIONAL - 2
REASON I STAYED IN SCHOOL - 2
THERE WHEN NEEDED - 2
AVERAGE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP - 1
CAN RELATE TO - 1
CARES - 1
DEDICATED - 1
DISTANT - 1
GOOD RELATIONSHIP - 1
HONEST - 1
NO ONE GETS ALONG WITH TEACHER - 1
OK - 1
OPEN - 1
TEACHES RESPECT AND DISCIPLINE - 1
UNDERSTANDING - 1
WANTS YOU TO BE HAPPY - 1
WE NEVER TALK - 1

**Are there ways the teacher made the arts class special?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 36 | 4 | 0 |

**In what ways?**

FUN - 6
I LEARNED, IMPROVED - 6
BELIEVED IN ME, GAVE ME A CHANCE - 4
CHANCES TO PERFORM - 3
ONE-ON-ONE - 3
RESPECTED ME - 3
DEMANDING - 2
ACTIVE - 1
CHALLENGING - 1
DEDICATION - 1
DISCIPLINED - 1
ENCOURAGING - 1
FAMILY - 1
FIELD TRIPS - 1
GAVE ADVICE, SET GOALS, GAVE REWARDS - 1
GAVE US RESPONSIBILITIES - 1
GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER - 1
HELPED CREATE SUCCESS - 1
INSPIRED ME - 1
LIKES US - 1
NO RESPONSE - 1
SELF DISCIPLINE - 1
SENSE OF HUMOR - 1
SHOWED US HOW TO BE SPECIAL - 1
TEACHER WAS RELAXED - 1
UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES - 1
VARIETY - 1
WITHOUT HER NO COURSE - 1
YELLED - 1

**Could the arts teacher have been even more effective?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 11 | 29 | 0 |

Student's suggestions for ways the arts teacher could have been more effective:

NO RESPONSE - 24
CONTAIN TEMPER - 3
BE FIRMER - 1
DON'T KNOW - 1
HAVE MORE TIME FOR INDIVIDUAL HELP - 1
NEW EQUIPMENT - 1
SMALLER CLASS SIZE - 1
TEACH SOMETHING - 1
WHEN IT GETS DOWN TO WORK IN OUR CLASS - 1

**Did the student participate in school activities in the arts outside of regular classes?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 25 | 15 | 0 |

**School arts activities students participated in outside of regular classes:**

NO RESPONSE - 14
CONTESTS - 7
EVENING AND WEEKEND PERFORMANCES - 6
OUT OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCES - 4
PERFORMANCES AT FOOTBALL GAMES - 4
CONVENTIONS - 2
NATIONAL ART HONOR SOCIETY - 2
PARADES - 2
THESPIANS - 2
ART LEAGUE - 1
EVERYTHING - 1
JAZZ BANDS - 1
LIP SYNC - 1
PAINTED MURAL IN SCHOOL - 1
PERFORMING GROUPS - 1
SHOWS IN AND OUT OF CITY - 1
SOLOS - 1
YOUNG ASTRONAUTS OF AMERICA - 1

**Did the student participate in community activities in the arts outside of school?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 20 | 19 | 1 |

**Community arts activities students participated in outside of school:**

NO RESPONSE - 19
CHURCH CHOIR - 3
CHURCH THEATRE - 3
COMMUNITY THEATRE - 3
COMMUNITY BAND - 2
OTHER - 2
ALUMNI BAND - 1
CREATIVE MUSIC COALITION - 1
DANCE SCHOOL - 1
EXTRAVAGANZA - 1
OTHER CHURCH - 1
PAINTED A MURAL IN HAIR SALON - 1
SIGMA BETA CULT - 1
SPECIAL OLYMPICS - 1
YOUTH FAIR - 1

**Was there an adult involved in those community activities who influenced the student in a positive way?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 18 | 8 | 14 |

**In what way was that adult influential?**

NO RESPONSE - 25
TEACHER - 10
CHOREOGRAPHED - 1
DIRECTED PLAY - 1
NECESSITY OF TOTAL EXPRESSION - 1
PREACHER'S WIFE - 1
PRESIDENT OF CLUB - 1
SET UP EQUIPMENT - 1
SPARKED CURIOSITY - 1
YOUTH CHOIR LEADER - 1

**Did the student ever seriously consider dropping out of school?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 22 | 18 | 0 |

**Why did the student consider dropping out of school?**

NO RESPONSE - 18
BORING - 4
HOME PROBLEMS - 4
AGE - 3
FAILING/POOR GRADES - 3
SCHOOL NOT IMPORTANT/DIDN'T CARE - 3
FEELING OF HELPLESSNESS DUE TO LACK OF CREDITS - 2
PERSONAL PROBLEMS - 2
SCHOOL TROUBLE - 2
ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITIES - 1
MOVED OUT OF HOME - 1
TO MOVE OUT - 1

**Why did the student decide to remain in school?**

NO RESPONSE - 18
LIKED ARTS CLASS - 5
SAW IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE - 5
WANT TO WORK IN ARTS FIELD - 3
FEELING OF BELONGING/NEEDED - 2
BOYFRIEND HELPS ME - 1
FOUND A PLACE WHERE TEACHERS CARE - 1
LOVE OF MUSIC - 1
TEACHER HELPED SELF-ESTEEM - 1
TEACHER SENT TO COUNSELOR - 1
TO PROVE TO SELF THAT ONE CAN FINISH - 1
WANT TO BE THE BEST I CAN - 1

**Did participation in an arts course affect the student's decision to remain in school?**

| YES | NO | NO RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| 30 | 4 | 2 |

**How did this arts course influence the student?**

NO RESPONSE - 11
JOB OPPORTUNITIES - 7
LOVE OF ARTS/ARTS CLASS - 6
PERFORMING - 3
FAMILY ATMOSPHERE - 2
FEELING OF SUCCESS - 2
FUN - 2
HELP WITH FUTURE - 2
TEACHER MADE ME FEEL SPECIAL/TALENTED - 2
DIFFERENT FROM ACADEMIC CLASSES - 1
MADE SCHOOL INTERESTING - 1
NEED FOR COLLEGE EDUCATION TO PARTICIPATE IN ARTS - 1
NEEDED - 1
RELAXING - 1
SCHOLARSHIPS - 1
TEACHER CARED AND HELPED - 1
WANTED TO GRADUATE - 1

**Students' advice to a student who is considering dropping out of school:**

DON'T - 16
TAKE COURSE/JOIN ACTIVITY IN AREA OF INTEREST - 7
THINK ABOUT FUTURE - 7
EARNINGS POTENTIAL - 3
EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT - 3
YOU WILL BE NOBODY WITHOUT DIPLOMA - 3
BUILDS SELF ESTEEM/ ACCOMPLISHMENT - 2
SCHOOL IS BETTER THAN THE STREETS - 2
IT'S YOUR DECISION - 1
NO RESPONSE - 1
SCHOOL IS FUN - 1
STAY IN SCHOOL - 1
TALK TO SOMEONE - 1
THERE IS A LOT TO LEARN - 1
WOULD LISTEN - 1

**Ethnic background of respondents:**

WHITE, NON-HISPANIC - 17
HISPANIC - 10
BLACK, NON-HISPANIC - 7
NO RESPONSE - 3
OTHER - 2
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE - 1

**Additional student comments:**

"I swear, everything I've stated is true. Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream, so do I... it can happen! Never give up!!!!"

"Drama has it all over sports (Drama has changed by life.)"

"I'm thankful for my friends and family and my teacher for pushing me [illegible] to find myself and try hard and be the best me I could ever be."

"Photography has enlightened and fulfilled my life."

"Yes I enjoy art, I think it's fun and educational, thank you."

"Band here in high school is about as good as it can be, with a few minor flaws, but nothing is perfect."

"I attended many schools when growing up, and had many music teachers. My high school director was the best. He is an excellent teacher and knows his business."

"I wish to say that the dance department at my high school is very advanced and not only girls are involved in it but boys as well, and we are proud of it."

"The Performing Arts ARE a vital aspect in TODAY'S Society and Those involved (teachers) should get a lot more respect, They do a lot more than teach Drama."



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"My high school [magnet arts school] - is the best thing going today."

"I think that my high school is a great opportunity for students to express themselves and that is a big factor in all artist's lives. It's helped me tremendously."

"I enjoy my art course and feel that its very important to offer that course to students in the future."

"I just wish this to be a lot better even though I have a great time now. . .."

"I wish I knew what this form is about and to who I'm going to send it to meaning who will read it."

"My teacher has been very influential on my future with music."

2. **Selected quotations about music, drama, art, and dance from student questionnaires**.

**MUSIC**

"Challenging, ambitious, and exciting can best describe my involvement in band. I would say I've become highly involved in the past year and will become more involved in the future."

"[Music gives me] the challenge of being the best that I can be and then being better than that."

"It [music] has taught me that anything is possible, it may just take a greater amount of work and a greater commitment."

"He [band teacher] made it challenging, a place to learn, not only music, but how to make something out of yourself, to be somebody."

"Band in general is like my second home because I am always there for practice. It is like one big family."

"In band, I learned not just about music but life, and how it really is in the big city."

"He [music teacher] is like a good friend. He is always there when you need him. He will help you with just about any problem you have."

"That was one of the main reasons I stayed [in school], because of band."

"My grades were failing and I found I couldn't graduate on time with the rest of my class [but] I knew that if I didn't stay and continue studying music I would have no chance in college music."

"My time in jazz band increased my love for the art of jazz music and my desire to excel in jazz, and I knew I couldn't do it without college and a diploma."

"Band improved my overall playing skills and gave me a chance to relax during the day."

"Marching band was the thing I enjoyed most [about school]."

"All of the different learning experiences--there's so much to learn while being in a music course."

"Today society would not accept individuals who drop out of school. Getting a job without a high school degree is like signing your death warrant."

"He [band teacher] helped me a lot with my playing skills and helped me to mature into a responsible young adult."

**DRAMA**

"My involvement in drama is my life, it's all that I have. Of course I have other parts of life, but everything life means to me is drama. I'm deeply involved."

"[I like] The thought of getting up and being somebody important and not being afraid of being somebody else! I like having a chance to be someone else."

"My drama teacher and I are closer than I am to my own mother. She is like or better than a best friend to me. She believes in me and what I can do as an actress."

"Drama is the best thing that happened to me. I never thought I could do any acting or singing or even dance. Drama has inspired me deeply."

"Drama should be a required course. It's a wonderful thing to be in."

"It [drama] made me believe in myself and made me look at my real potential."

"It [drama] has been of personal value--has allowed me to open up and be myself. I love drama. I've accomplished things that I never knew I could."

"Drama helped me a lot! It basically was the only thing keeping me going to school."

"Drama helped me to see that I can do things I never thought I could do. It relieved a lot of stress and got my mind off things. I want to become an actress one day and I need to stay in school for that. I am going to try for a scholarship....Don't dropout because school has so much to offer."

"Drama has it all over sports. Drama has changed my life."



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"The drama course has helped me to talk things out with people, and now I'm not as shy as I used to be."

"She [drama teacher] made the class one to look forward to. I really enjoy the projects that we do."

"My answers are starting to sound set-up, but they're very real. Because of drama--I know and knew what I wanted to be, I had to stick with what I love. I live for drama."

"I had parts in plays so I couldn't drop out and disappoint everyone, especially the teacher. Plus, theatre will help me in later life, so I decided to get as much as possible."

"Being on stage in front of a lot of people takes away some shyness and makes you more outgoing."

"Things just got so rough at home that work and school got in my way. I just wanted to quit everything so no one would expect anything of me....My love for the arts is the only thing that keeps me here [in school] and my grades up."

**ART**

"Photo II showed me the opportunities that you can have."

"Photography has enlightened and fulfilled my life."

"We [student and art teacher] have a good relationship--she respects me and I respect her."

"It [art] kept me interested in school."

"Drawing I, II gave me insight on how to draw."

"Don't [dropout] you won't survive."

"Portfolio teaches you to try new things and expand your range of abilities. Painting is fun and teaches you color blending."

"They [art classes] raise your level of abilities."

"It's [art] what I want for a career."

**DANCE**

"Dance is valuable to me because I'm musically inclined."

"They [arts courses] gave me the chance to do what I like to do most--entertain and perform."

"Dance [kept me in school] because I want to become a dance teacher with my own studio."

"I would tell them not to [dropout] because school has much more to offer than the streets."

"I like it [dance] because I get to perform in shows in school and out. And my teacher is a great dance teacher and probably the Best in Dade county I think."

"Dance--it's fun and exciting even though last year I didn't try as hard as I should have. This year it has really made a big difference."

"Great--she [dance teacher] is very strict but at the same time she loves us. She is strict not because she is a mean person but because she wants us to be the best we can be."

"[I stay in school] because I like to dance."

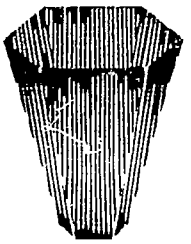
"It [dance] gave me self discipline, responsibility, self confidence and also how to budget my time."

"My [dance] teacher made me proud to represent my school where ever I would go to perform."

APPENDIX B

**Percentages of On-Task Behavior of At-Risk Students Observed in Arts Classes and Academic Classes**

| | Arts Class | | | Academic Class | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subject | Intervals | On-task | %On-task | Intervals | On-task | %On-task |
| A | 18 | 16 | 88.89 | 18 | 5 | 27.78 |
| B | 18 | 12 | 66.67 | 18 | 16 | 88.89 |
| C | 18 | 13 | 72.22 | 18 | 17 | 94.44 |
| D | 18 | 11 | 61.11 | 18 | 18 | 100.00 |
| E | 18 | 12 | 66.67 | 18 | 11 | 61.11 |
| F | 6 | 5 | 83.33 | 18 | 11 | 61.11 |
| G | 6 | 6 | 100.00 | 18 | 11 | 61.11 |
| H | 24 | 24 | 100.00 | 24 | 13 | 54.17 |
| I | 24 | 21 | 87.50 | 24 | 18 | 75.00 |
| J | 18 | 18 | 100.00 | 18 | 18 | 100.00 |
| K | 18 | 18 | 100.00 | 18 | 16 | 88.89 |
| TOTAL | 186 | 156 | 83.87 | 210 | 154 | 73.33 |



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