SCHOOL, HOW SOME RE-ENTRY STUDENTS SEE IT

by

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ABSTRACT

Factors which relate to continued attendance and to dropout at school were investigated in this study. The Critical Incident Technique was used to interview 22 female and male subjects, aged 12 to 16, in a Re-Entry program. It was found that subjects responded on three levels; the structure of the school system, their relationship with other students and school personnel and the meaning of school in their lives. The process of categorization resulted in seven categories; SCHOOL STRUCTURE, SCHOOL AUTHORITY, SCHOOLWORK, TEACHERS, STUDENTS, PERSONAL ACTIVITIES or INFLUENCE of PEERS, and FAMILY INFLUENCES. Each of these categories included critical incidents that, in the subject's opinion, facilitated their continued attendance at school and hindered their staying in school.
# Table of Contents

List of Tables ........................................ iv
Acknowledgements ..................................... v

## Chapter I
Introduction ........................................ 1
  Background to the problem ....................... 1
  The Problem ...................................... 7
  The Question .................................... 8
  Delimitations of the Study ...................... 8
  Importance of the Study ......................... 8
  Definition of Terms .............................. 9

## Chapter II
Review of Literature ............................... 11
  Overview ....................................... 11
  Characteristics of the Dropout ................. 12
  Patterns of Dropping Out ....................... 15
  Predictors of Dropout .......................... 17
  The Dropout's School Experience .............. 17
  After Dropout .................................. 19
  School Attendance .............................. 20
  Summary ....................................... 23

## Chapter III
Methodology ........................................ 25
  The Critical Incident Technique ............... 25
  Pilot Study .................................... 30
  Interview Structure ............................ 31
  Population ..................................... 33
  Organization of the Data ....................... 35
### Chapter IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Results</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability of Categories</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Factors</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table I</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table II</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table III</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table IV</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table V</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Results</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Results</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter V

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of Results</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Significance</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Significance and Recommendations</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for Implementation of Findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Additional Research</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Bibliography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Letter to Burnaby School Board</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Letter from Burnaby School Board</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Letter from School Principal</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Student Consent Form</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Parent Consent Form</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Average Daily Attendance</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G: Dropout Rate</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H: Facilitating Factors</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I: Hindering Factors</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table I: Factors Contributing to Continued Attendance ......................... 43
Table II: Factors Contributing to Dropping Out .................................. 43
Table III: Frequency of Factors Relating to Continued Attendance ............ 44
Table IV: Frequency of Factors Relating to Dropping Out ...................... 45
Table V: Frequency of Factors Relating to Continuous Attendance Compared to Frequency of Factors Relating to Dropping Out ..................... 46
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Problem

Attendance at school, in British Columbia, Canada, is compulsory for children aged 7 to 15. The School Act (1982) states in Part 6, Division 1 - Compulsory Attendance: Section 113 Subsection 1;

Subject to exemptions under subsection (2), every child over the age of 7 years and under the age of 15 years shall attend some public school during the regular school hours every school day, and every parent or guardian who fails or neglects to cause such a child under his care to attend some public school during the regular school hours every school day commits an offense and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding $10, and each day's continuance of this failure or neglect shall constitute a separate offense.

Exemptions are granted if a child is being educated by other satisfactory means, is sick, has reached a standing equal or better than the local school or is not within 4.8 kilometers of a school.

Since there is no apparent movement to change the attendance requirements, one can conclude that the majority of British Columbians agree that a child has a right to an
education and that right must be protected by compulsory attendance laws. However, not all children aged 7 to 15 attend school on a regular basis and a few children in this age range drop out altogether.

The extent of the lack of attendance and dropout is not known.

Average daily attendance reports (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 1981) for the 1980-81 school year, in British Columbia, show an overall average of 93.4%. For schools containing Junior Secondary students, the rate of attendance was slightly lower at 92.3% (see Appendix F). The National Center for Health in the United States estimates that a normal school absentee rate due to illness would average 4 to 5% (Neill, 1979). One can assume that the Canadian illness rate would be very similar. Therefore, approximately 2.7% of all Junior Secondary students miss school on any one day for reasons other than illness.

However, while figures do not indicate a high degree of truancy, concern continues to be expressed. In 1974, when the average daily attendance for students in the 7 to 15 age range was reported to be 91% (104 Annual Report, Ministry of Education, 1975), the then Minister of
Education in British Columbia, The Honourable Eileen Dailly, tabled the following in the B.C. Legislature (Ministry of Education, 1974);

... whatever the reasons, there is a serious problem of non-attendance of students between the ages of 7 and 15.

Similarly, in the United States, a survey of 1,414 administrators (Neill, 1979) indicated that the majority of administrators thought attendance was a problem. They listed "casual" class cutting, tardiness and whole day truancy among their concerns.

In a report by the Phi Delta Kappa Education Foundation (Bamber, 1979), serious charges are made regarding student absenteeism;

Unauthorized absences are increasing while data gathered by the National Center for Education statistics show a continuing decline in the percentage of student absences nationally. The current annual rate of student absenteeism is 8% nationally but daily rates of 30% are not uncommon in urban secondary schools.

... another contributing factor to stable absentee figures may be that they are inaccurate because state funding is based on average daily attendance.

The report admits that it would be impossible for schools to hide large numbers of truants but points out that there are small numbers who check in for daily attendance and
then do not attend classes.

In California, (Neill, 1979), physical counts of students in classrooms showed actual attendance was substantially below that reported by school districts for purposes of allocation of state funds. The counts were taken by staff members of the office of the state auditor general in a random sample of 1,780 classrooms in 48 schools in the fall of 1978. The average daily attendance over all grades was 83.8%; it fell as low as 75.9%. The average daily attendance that had been reported for aid purposes was 96%.

A study by the Ontario Ministry of Education (1979) found that while a rate of 10% was quite common, absenteeism in some schools was approaching 20%.

It is equally as difficult to establish the extent of the dropout problem as it is to find actual attendance rates.

The percentage of 14 to 17 year olds enrolled in High School increased from 11% in 1900 to 94% in 1978 (Grant and Eiden, 1980). However, recent evidence indicates that this trend may be reversing. Enrolment data for the state of
Ohio shows that the number of dropouts has increased 15% from the 1975-76 school year to the 1978-79 school year (Kaeser, 1980). In California, the attrition rate between the 9th and 12th grades increased from 12% in 1967 to 22% in 1976 (Camp, 1980). Furthermore;

Although most states and school districts do not keep exact records on dropouts, evidence indicates that the percentage of dropouts is increasing. Washington for example, recorded an average 68% increase in the number of dropouts from 1962 to 1976. The state figures show, moreover, that the actual dropout rates are higher than indicated because summer dropouts are not included in official tallies (Neill, 1979).

In British Columbia, the dropout rate is calculated as a percentage of the June Enrolment (Educational Data Services, 1979). Summer dropouts are not counted and there is no systematic follow-up of student transfers to ensure that students who withdraw from a school, register in another. For these reasons and the reporting feature that dropout figures are given by type of school, eg. Elementary, Elementary Junior, Elementary Senior, etc., it is impossible to find out from these records how many children under 15 have dropped out of school. One can conclude, since the method of calculating the dropout rate has remained the same, that the rate of dropout has remained fairly constant after a slight increase in the early 1970's (see Appendix G).
In addition to the inadequacy of the present method of recording student dropout, there is some cause for concern about the accuracy of the records. Anyone who has worked in a school knows of instances of keeping "Johnny" on the roll until his fifteenth birthday when he can legally withdraw from school, or keeping "Jenny" on the enrolment until the end of September when student enrolment is reported to the Ministry of Education in Victoria, B.C., even though it is common knowledge that "Jenny" and her parents have returned to live in Scotland. Also, a school principal in North Saanich was fired, recently, for keeping students who were not attending school on the school register (The Province, January 2, 1984).

For several decades, researchers have attempted to identify the factors related to school dropout. However, in spite of the numerous correlational studies and the resultant lists of factors, research on students who leave school early continues. One of the reasons for this is that few of the factors have been found to be reliable predictors of school dropout (Brantner and Enderlien, 1972). Another reason is that while school boards have responded to the research yielding profiles of dropouts and patterns of dropping out by expanding educational alternatives (Smith, Barr, and Burke, 1976), by increasing
special classes, learning assistance centers, counselling and other support services, the dropout rate has remained fairly constant (see Appendix G).

The Problem

Some children, aged 12 to 15, do not attend school on a regular basis and some quit school altogether. By doing so, they deprive themselves of their right to an education.

We believe that a major responsibility of the school system is to provide a measure of success for every student. The fact that it fails to do this in some instances calls for an examination of the whole structure within which the student is expected to learn (Ministry of Education, 1974).

This research examines from the point of view of the students themselves, how the structure failed for them. It elicits detailed recollections of events that occurred while the subjects were in attendance in regular school. It uses the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) to analyze the information collected and identify the factors that people who have dropped out of the regular school system see as critical to continuous attendance at school and critical to dropping out of school.
The Question

What are the factors that Re-Entry students see as helpful in maintaining them in school and factors that they see as contributing to their dropping out or suspension from school?

Delimitations of the Study

This study is limited to 22 Re-Entry students, aged 12 to 16, in Burnaby, British Columbia.

No claims are being made as to the extent to which the subjects are typical of Junior Secondary school students who drop out of school.

Similarly, one can only speculate as to the likelihood of stayins having school experiences that are similar to those of the research subjects.

Importance of the Study

The subjects in this study are students in a Re-Entry program. They attend a Rehabilitation program specifically set up for students who were unable to cope with the regular school system or for students with whom the regular
school system was unable to cope. Whether dropouts or pushouts, the subjects have all experienced considerable difficulty within the regular school system and by virtue of that are experts on why some students feel like dropping out.

The review of the literature reveals that the research rarely focuses on the actual school experience of the dropout. Some studies with dropouts have tried to elicit the reasons for dropping out (Pawlovich, 1983) or the needs of dropout students (Larter and Gershman, 1979) directly from the dropout. What these studies have lacked is a systematic, reliable and valid method of analysis of the data collected. The Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) provides such a method.

The results of this research provide data for comparison with the literature regarding factors relating to school dropout. They also provide information about the supportive aspects of the school environment.

Definition of Terms

dropout - "a pupil who leaves school, for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and without transferring to another school (Schreiber, Kaplan, and Strom, 1965)."
**early school leaver** - see "dropout".

**pushout** - a student who is formally or informally excluded from school.

**Re-Entry program** - a program designed for children who have had more than one month absence from school for reasons other than death or illness.

**regular basis** - on all days for which there is not a valid excuse for absence. Valid excuses would include illness, and bereavement of close relative or friend for a period not exceeding one month. Valid excuses would not include employment, lack of motivation, or parent consent, except as above.

**regular school** - all programs within the public school system including special classes within schools but excluding Re-Entry programs.

**stayins** - students who are not dropouts.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

Although somewhat dated, a commentary and annotated bibliography (Miller, Saleem, and Bryce, 1964) attempts to pull together the enormous literature of school dropouts. What it does for the researcher is catalogue the major areas of concern. These are; definition of dropout population, methods of data collection, research design, community variations, types of dropouts, the process of dropping out and interpretation of research results.

Another comprehensive and critical review of dropout research with concrete suggestions for design and conduct of future research, by the National Education Association in Washington (Schreiber, Kaplan, and Strom, 1965) states;

The most helpful way to view dropout studies is in terms of their purpose.

They identify six questions that have dominated the research to date; how many pupils drop out of school, who are the dropouts and what are they like, which pupils will
drop out, what happens to dropouts and what ways and means can be developed to reduce dropout rates.

Schreiber et al go on to say that the recognition that each dropout is an individual influenced by forces in his own particular environment is more meaningful than the profile of the dropout. The latter suggests that each dropout is the same as the next.

Finally, the book suggests guidelines for research. Examples are; a common definition for dropout, a standardized information form on students for statistical purposes, a model guidance form for individual pupils, and standardized methods of calculating dropout rates and holding power.

Characteristics of the Dropout

Cervantes (1965) has made one of the major contributions to the profile of the dropout. While the usefulness of this concept comes more and more into question, his findings stand as a challenge to further research. Using an interview method, questionnaires and the Thematic Apperception Test, with a population of 300 dropouts and stayins, he identified 20 characteristics
commonly found among youth who are actual or potential dropouts.

The 20 characteristics were divided into four groups; school related, family related, peer related and personality. The 8 school related characteristics are; two years behind in reading or arithmetic at the 7th grade, failure of one or more years, irregular attendance and frequent tardiness, below potential performance, no participation in extracurricular activities, frequent change of schools, behavior problems, and feeling of not belonging. The 6 family related characteristics are; more children than parents can readily control, parents inconsistent in affection and discipline, unhappy family situation, father weak or absent, parents have eighth grade level education and few family friends. Those characteristics related to peers, 3 in number, are; friends not approved of by parents, friends not school oriented and friends much older or much younger. Finally, the 3 characteristics related to personality are; resentful of all authority, deferred gratification pattern is weak and the person has a weak self image.

Childers (1965) found the significant differences between 9th grade dropouts and stayins to be; total number
of times an individual has been retained in a grade in elementary school, socio-economic position, total number of activities the student participated in while at school, the pupil's occupational aspiration level and measurement on a school interest inventory.

In his research findings, Levens (1970) concluded that dropout is significantly associated with one parent family, sibling competition, physical differences from peers, antagonism to teachers, emotional disturbance, car ownership and males, "illegitimate" parenthood amongst females, lack of purpose, truancy, tardiness, boredom and physical fatigue. In summary, he states that the dropout sees his vocational future in a pessimistic fashion and does not see school and education as a means to a vocational end.

As a result of his findings, Levens (1970) submits two propositions. The first is that dropping out, student dissatisfaction and low commitment to education values are in large part responses to three, not necessarily mutually exclusive factors; educational failure, perceived irrelevancy of formal education and lack of involvement in the process of education. Secondly, the nature of the authority system and the teaching-learning structure in
most schools positively contributes to educational failure, perceived irrelevancy of formal education and student dissatisfaction and lack of involvement in the educational process. The report elaborates that there are identifiable conditions and educational practices that contribute to this failure; the labelling process, teacher expectation, testing, grouping and grading, and economic segregation.

Patterns of Dropping Out

A study which focuses on patterns of dropping out (Young and Reich, 1974) used an interview approach with dropouts and people similar to dropouts, people who were dissatisfied with school, preferred to work, or had bad grades but remained, nevertheless. In this research, a dropout was defined by the student's desire to complete a certain grade level.

The findings include the classic picture of the dropout as a chronic low achiever. Twenty-three percent fit into the classic description; poor attitude, poor attendance, failing subjects, among the oldest at their grade level, more males than females and less likely to be new Canadians. Five other patterns were identified; 53% were work oriented, 6% were homemakers, 7% were family
supporters, 3% were intellectual elite and 2% were cultural isolates. In addition to these five patterns, 3% were institutionalized and 2% did not fit any other category.

The differentiating factors between the stayins and the dropouts were; support of parents and plans for the future. Thirty-nine percent of dropouts had parents who actively opposed their leaving school while 90% of stayins who considered dropping out had parents who strongly discouraged their leaving school early. The stayins had clearer plans for the future than did the dropouts.

A study by Elliott and Voss (1974) concluded that few students left school because of financial pressure or illness and that dropout among intellectually capable youth is not always voluntary. While troublesome behavior undoubtedly triggered the administrative response, a sizeable portion of the capable dropouts were forced to leave school. Their data does not support the contention that dropout is precipitated by problems in the home. Rather, the major instigating forces in dropout are to be found in academic failure and alienation from school.
Predictors of Dropout

According to the results of Elliott and Voss (1974), the strongest predictors of dropout are academic failure, school normlessness, social isolation, exposure to dropout in the home and commitment to peers.

Another study (Brantner and Enderlien, 1972) considered 20 independent variables and statistical analysis identified one, absenteeism, as a unique significant predictor of the tendency for vocational and non-vocational Grade 9 students to drop out of school.

The information analyzed by Middleton (1978) did not provide the basis for determining whether a particular student would drop out or graduate. However, the potential dropout, when compared to the graduate, would score lower on I.Q. tests, would be perceived by the first grade teacher as lacking in social skills and reading readiness skills, would become a poorer reader as he passed through school, would score better on non-verbal and math sections of tests than verbal and language sections and would exhibit a pattern of irregular attendance.

The Dropout's School Experience

In 1983, a paper entitled "What Early School Leavers
"Say About Their School Experience" was presented to the Canadian Guidance and counselling Association by Professor W. Pawlovich. It summarizes research that used a structured interview method with early school leavers, their parents, teachers and age-mate stayins.

Findings related to leaving school early follow. The majority of parents were employed in skilled and unskilled labour and had less than Grade 11 education. The early leavers had four or more siblings, some of whom left school early. They had failed a grade and had attended four or more schools. Fifty-seven percent reported getting along fine with teachers; 7.1% said they got along poorly with teachers. They reported problems with schoolwork and 88.6% had skipped classes. Approximately 83% reported satisfactory relationships with peers. Nearly one-quarter, 21.6%, left school for economic reasons.

Pawlovich states that there was considerable agreement among early school leavers, their parents, and teachers about why they had left school early. Dissatisfaction with school was the primary complaint.

The only detectable difference between stayins and early leavers is the stayins appeared more intent on
continuing their education and their parents were less tolerant of their wanting to leave than the parents of the early leavers. They also appeared to receive more support and assistance than early leavers from friends, parents and counsellors.

In a study conducted at an alternate school for dropouts and potential dropouts, 54% of the students responded to an open ended questionnaire which simply asked them to list their needs (Larter and Gershman, 1979). They listed: basic academic skills at own level and pace, friendly and understanding teachers, ability to find a good job, wide variety of courses with flexibility of course scheduling, democratic and relaxing atmosphere, credits and diploma for further education, learning to learn skills, social skills, school structure, small classes and life skills. The usefulness of this information is lessened by the low percentage of responses to the questionnaire, the general nature of the responses and the lack of systematic analysis of the data.

**After Dropout**

Dropouts experience higher unemployment rates and receive lower earnings than other workers (King, 1978).
In 1971 and 1972, 260 youths who visited overnight youth hostels in Eastern Canada were interviewed (Loken, 1973). One half of those interviewed were found to be school dropouts. Drug use was linked to time lost from school and to dropping out of school. It would be unwise to suggest that this is more than a simple relationship. Drug use is at most a symptom of underlying problems and at least a possible component of the life style of truants and dropouts.

School Attendance

Research in the area of school attendance, the precursor to school dropout, is also of significance here.

A project with 12 high risk students (McRae, 1974) in Vancouver, is credited with reducing the average rate of absenteeism of 7th grade boys to 4.6 days a year.

Another program (Catherall, 1978) designed to improve school attendance introduced a monthly attendance report by mail to parents. The following results were achieved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Daily Attendance</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tr>
<td>90.26%</td>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>Prior to treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91.15%</td>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>Treatment instituted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94.00%</td>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>Treatment continued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94.00%</td>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>Treatment continued.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In a study by Nielsen and Gerber (1979), where truancy was defined as absence from school unexcused by the student's parents, two modal types of truants were delineated; the authority defying and the peer phobic. The prevalence among Junior High students for the school year 1974-75 was 6.7% truant at least one day, 2.7% truant 2 or more weeks, and 1.1% truant for 5 or more weeks. These figures are said to be comparable to current estimates of U.S. national truancy.

Length of period, subject level difficulty, and teacher expectation were found to be related to class absence (Toney, 1978). The longer the period, the more difficult the class, or the higher the teacher's expectations, the more class absences resulted.

John S. Wright (Neill, 1979) found that attendance rates decreased as the size of the school increased.

Results of a study and others reviewed in the literature (Adler, 1980) support the hypothesis that students attending competency based or alternative schools had better attendance than the traditional comprehensive high school. The alternative schools had small school environments, individualized instruction, and a high degree of student involvement in the operation of the school.
Finally, in the area of school attendance, it is interesting to note that in 1975 (Larter and Eason, 1978) the Board of Education for the City of Toronto adopted a unique solution to the attendance and dropout problems. They introduced a policy based on Ministry of Education regulations and guidelines for Early School Leaving, which permits;

...certain 14 and 15 year olds to be excused from regular attendance at school under special circumstances and provided that the pupils follow a program prescribed by a committee to be set up by each board.

Because 32% of the 645 students who were registered in this program between 1976 and 1978 were born in Portugal, the implications of the research are limited. The real item of interest is the school board policy itself. Is allowing 14 year olds the opportunity to leave school early, to seek employment or become involved in other out of school programs, really in the best interest of the 14 year old or is it an abrogation of the responsibility entrusted in the school board?

Elliott and Voss (1974) raise this issue of compulsory attendance in relation to delinquency prone adolescents. They have data to show that delinquency is causally
involved in dropout and dropout in turn leads to decreasing involvement in delinquency. This finding supports their position that the school is the critical generating milieu for the delinquency. One might come to the conclusion that perhaps delinquency prone adolescents should not be required to attend school. However, if one looks at this from the point of view of school dissatisfaction leading to delinquency, surely the appropriate response would be to look at ways to increase success in school rather than remove the symptomatic group.

Summary

The following summary gives information on the extent to which research has answered the six questions that have dominated the literature on dropouts.

1. How many pupils drop out of school?

This is not definitively answered in either Canadian or American statistics. The usual method of calculating the dropout rate does not take into account summer dropouts or students who withdraw from one school, on the basis that they are transferring to another, but do not enrol elsewhere.
2. Who are the dropouts and what are they like?

Aside from minor variations, the research agrees that there are general characteristics related to dropout. These are academic failure, absenteeism, frequent tardiness, below grade level in reading or math, retention in one or more grades, below potential performance, lack of participation in extra-curricular activities, frequent change of schools, behavior problems, feeling of not belonging, lower socio-economic level, more likely to be male than female, dissatisfaction with school and lack of future plans.

3. Which pupils will drop out?

Students who are absent from school on a frequent basis will drop out. Slightly less reliable predictors are academic failure, social isolation, school normlessness, exposure to dropout in the home and commitment to peers.

4. What are the reasons for dropping out?

The results in this area are rather unsatisfactory. The reason given for the dropout is often predetermined by the question being asked or the person or institution asking the question. The reasons that are agreed on, dissatisfaction with school, academic failure, and school alienation, are too general to have practical significance. Other research findings are contradictory. One study finds more than 20% of students leaving for financial reasons, another says very few leave school today for that reason.

5. What happens to dropouts?

The dropout is generally lower paid and more frequently unemployed than the graduate.

6. What ways and means can be developed to reduce dropout rates?

Early identification of potential dropouts and intervention programs are suggested. Expansion of educational alternatives is another. The difficulty is that the programs claiming success are often not readily transferrable to another setting. They are highly intensive, and therefore more expensive, local solutions based on the unique features of the potential dropout population. The programs that have been instituted have not succeeded in lowering the overall dropout rate.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Critical Incident Technique

The Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954), used in this study, is an outgrowth of studies in the Aviation Psychology program of the United States Army Air Forces in World War II. One of the first studies carried out in this program was the analysis of specific reasons for trainee failure in learning to fly. One thousand pilot candidates who were eliminated from flight training schools reported the reasons for their failure by recall of specific incidents critical to learning to fly.

The Critical Incident Technique is both an interview method and a procedure for the analysis of the data collected. It consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles (Flanagan, 1954). The technique outlines procedures for collecting observed incidents having special
significance and meeting systematically defined criteria. Following the collection of the data, there is a set of procedures for analyzing and synthesizing the incidents.

Flanagan (1954) defines an incident as any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects.

The data analysis stage follows the collection of critical incidents. The purpose of this stage is to summarize and describe the data in an efficient manner so that it can be effectively used for practical purposes.

The first step in the data analysis is classification of the critical incidents. The process is an inductive one, and includes selecting a general frame of reference based on the use that is to be made of the data, sorting a small number of the incidents into piles relative to the frame of reference, and labelling the piles with descriptive titles. After these tentative categories have been established,
more incidents are classified into them and the categories are redefined or new categories are created if so required. At this time one weighs the advantages of the specificity achieved in specific incidents against the simplicity of a small number of categories. The process of categorization is continued until all incidents have been classified. The categories are then labelled with clear, comprehensive titles. The titles should reflect logical organization, convey meaning in themselves and all be of the same level of importance.

The second step is to make frequency counts of the incidents in each category and to interpret the findings relative to the identified problem, or as Flanagan (1954) describes it, to make inferences regarding practical procedures for improving performance based on observed incidents.

Applications for this technique include; measures of typical performance (Nagay, 1949), measures of proficiency (Gordon, 1950), training (Collings, 1954), selection and classification with regard to job requirements (Hahn, 1954), motivation and leadership assessment (Preston, 1953), a clarification of the concept of maturity (Eilbert, 1953), and studies in counselling and psychotherapy (Speth,
1952). Allen (1950) used the technique in an attitudes study on what caused students to like a fellow student either more or less than before. Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) used the technique as a basis for their two factor theory of worker motivation. More recently, David C. McLelland (1973) set up a consulting firm, which uses an approach similar to the Critical Incident Technique, to assess competence. Flanagan (1978) developed categories for the concept, quality of life, and F. Old (1983) used the technique in her study on self disclosure.

Andersson and Nilsson (1964) have tested the reliability and validity of the Critical Incident Technique. They studied the technique when it was applied in analyzing the job of store manager in a Swedish Grocery company. About 1,800 incidents were collected, mainly by interviews but also by questionnaires.

The procedure for collecting the data is a reliable one. The structure of the material was not influenced by the methods of collecting or by the interviewers. Andersson and Nilsson (1964) used the "Kruskal-Wallace one way analysis of variance by ranks" and found that there were no great differences in the number of incidents collected by different interviewers.
In regard to the saturation and comprehensiveness, Andersson and Nilsson (1964) state that the material collected seems to represent very well the behavior units that the method may be expected to provide. After a relatively small number of incidents had been classified, very few new behavior categories needed to be added.

Validity of the technique was demonstrated by comparing the training literature used with the store managers to the training aspects reported by the subjects. The incidents reported by the subjects covered all aspects of the job as described in the training manuals. Also, in judging whether or not the reported aspects of the job were of greatest importance in the job of store manager, the average reliability coefficient calculated was .83 when 86 subcategories were rated on a six-point scale by independent judges.

The classification system was found to have high stability. When students tried to re-categorize the incidents, they showed a strong tendency to place the incident in the same category before deciding on a different category.

In conclusion, Andersson and Nilsson (1964) state;
According to the results of the studies here on the reliability and validity aspects of the critical incident technique, it would appear justifiable to conclude that information collected by this method is both reliable and valid.

Pilot Study

The pilot study had two main objectives. The first of these was to determine whether or not subjects were able, some after nearly two years out of regular school, to recall events that were crucial to their staying in or leaving school. The second was to test the interview structure that had been developed, based on Flanagan's (1954) description of the Critical Incident Technique.

Two boys, from the Re-Entry program from which the population for this study was obtained, who had returned to the regular school system, were interviewed.

The subjects were asked to think back to a time in regular school when they felt like quitting or dropping out, and later to recall events that were supportive of their continued attendance at school.

The subjects had little difficulty recalling and relating significant events and details from their earlier school experiences. However, it was discovered later, when
listening to the taped interviews that some of the recollections did not qualify as critical incidents because the significance of the incident was not self-evident. The subject had not volunteered what it was about a particular incident that made him feel like dropping out or staying in school and the student investigator had failed to use further questioning to obtain the information. One could not deduce, from the events themselves, how the subject felt, or what meaning the person attached to the incident.

The pilot study demonstrated the willingness and ability of subjects to recall and relate past school experiences. It revealed the importance of follow-up probes in eliciting a series of critical incidents.

**Interview Structure**

The outline below approximates the way in which the student investigator conducted the interviews.

**Procedures.** Before we begin, I will explain to you the procedures I am required to follow.

I am taping the interview so that I can listen to the interview again and write down the main ideas from it. No one else will listen to the tape and I will erase it after I write my report.

I want to assure you that you will not be personally identified in the research report.
You are not required to participate in this research. Whether or not you participate will not affect your standing at this school. If you decide, at any time, that you do not wish to be interviewed, please tell me and I will stop the interview.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me before we begin?

**Introduction.** I am doing a study to find out what it is about school that makes some people feel like quitting or dropping out of regular school and what it is that makes people feel like staying in.

I believe you are especially able to tell me about this because you aren't in a regular school anymore.

I'd like to know what made you feel like quitting school and what happened that kept you in school or made you want to keep going.

**Negative Incidents.** We'll start with the things that happened that made you feel like quitting.

Think back to a specific time when you felt like quitting or dropping out of school. What did you do or what happened to you? It may be something that happened at home, at school, on the playground, at a friend's place, or anywhere else outside school. Take some time to remember a particular incident. When you have the event clearly in mind, tell me about it. . .

**Follow-up Questions.**

What led up to this incident?  
What happened as a result of it?  
What were you feeling at the time?  
What did this incident mean to you?  
Why did this incident make you feel like dropping out?

Think of another time . . . etc.

**Positive Incidents.** Now I'd like you to think of some of the experiences you had in regular school that were very satisfying to you and made you feel like staying in school. Again, it may have happened in school, at home, on your way to school or anywhere at all. Think of a particular time and take a minute to really picture what is happening . . .

Follow-up questions parallel those used for the negative incidents.
Population

When using the Critical Incident Technique, it is not necessary to specify a sample exactly as one would for normative testing for two reasons. Firstly, it takes only one incident to form a category. That more incidents of a certain nature might be provided by a certain type of subject is relatively unimportant since the number of incidents is not a criterion for categorization. Secondly, Folley (1953) found that categories and subcategories decrease rapidly toward the end. The first three or four hundred incidents allow a reasonably complete categorical framework. Incidents collected beyond this number tend to be placed within existing categories rather than requiring new categories.

Volunteers were obtained from a Re-Entry program for Junior Secondary students. The students had all been referred to the program after they had experienced considerable difficulty within the school system or after a prolonged period of school refusal.

The research question and the purpose of the project were presented to each classroom within the Re-Entry
program. Students were asked to volunteer at that time or to approach the student investigator or their teacher at a later date if they wished to participate. Students were also approached individually, either by their teacher or the student investigator, and asked to volunteer.

Volunteers were given consent forms (see Appendix D). The consent form was read and explained in order to make clear that participation was voluntary, participation or non-participation would not affect their standing in the school, interviews would be taped, the subjects would not be personally associated with the data, and parent's or guardian's permission was required (see Appendix E).

Subject response to participation in the research was very enthusiastic. Introduction of the proposal was met with comments like "right on . . .", and "oh, boy, do you have a year to listen . . ." and "could I tell you a lot....". The interviews averaged one hour and fifteen minutes. The subjects were fluent and eager to tell their story. Once the incident was presented and the interviewer confirmed that the subject was responding according to the structure of the interview method, a stream of recollections followed. At the end of the interview, subjects were often surprised by how one recollection had
triggered another and another. Emotions ran high occasionally and subjects expressed appreciation at being given the opportunity to talk, although many of them were confused about how their story could be of any value to the interviewer.

Of the 30 students in the Re-Entry program, 22, 11 girls and 11 boys, were interviewed. Two students declined participation and the other six were not interviewed due to time constraints, absenteeism, or incarceration in a Youth Detention Center. All interviews were conducted by the student investigator.

**Organization of the Data**

Critical incidents from the taped interviews were summarized on 3X5 index cards with 1 incident per card. An incident was judged to be critical if the subject could recall details of the experience and remember what it was about that incident that caused her to feel like staying in or dropping out of school.

The incidents were put into groups based on reasons given for wanting to stay in or drop out of school. When all incidents were classified, each group was given a title that included all incidents in that category.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Statement of Results

A total of 506 critical incidents yielded 506 factors. Of these, 350 factors related to dropping out of school; 156 factors related to staying in school. Twenty-two subjects were interviewed; the average number of factors for each subject was 23. There were no significant differences between the data collected from the males and that from the female subjects. Both boys and girls related incidents in all categories.

Subject responses were on three levels; the structure of the school system, their relationships with other students and school personnel and the meaning of school in their lives.

The incidents relating to staying in (positive) and to dropping out (negative) were treated separately. Incidents were put into piles based on the reason given for wanting to stay in or drop out of school. In effect, the events
were grouped, not on the basis of what actually happened but according to the meaning the subject attached to the event.

The initial categories decided on were the school, teachers, students, and the family. As more incidents were put into piles it became necessary to further subdivide these areas in order to make the categories more specific and the information more useful. This process of analysis of the reasons for staying in school resulted, finally, in the following categories:

1. School Structure
2. School Authority
3. Schoolwork
4. Teachers
5. Students
6. Personal Activities or Influence of Peers
7. Family Influences

After classifying the negative incidents, it became apparent that both groups of incidents fit into the same categories, one having a positive valence, staying in, and the other a negative valence, dropping out. Each of the categories included critical incidents that, in the subject's opinion, facilitated their continued attendance at school and hindered their staying in school. Neither group of incidents, positive or negative, required an extra category.
Below is a description of each category with examples of factors facilitating and hindering school attendance.

Category 1. School Structure

Definition - the structure of the school including the size of the school, the design of the physical plant, organization of the classes, school ideology and the resultant rules and routines.

Facilitating - Examples include having all subjects with the same class, and having the school structure explained to an individual by the principal.

Hindering - Feeling scared to go to a new school, having to face several different classes, getting a timetable card all mixed up and not knowing where to go for the next class, not being allowed to smoke, not having structured activities at lunchtime, and being discouraged from talking to a teacher after school hours about a particular political ideology.

Category 2. School Authority

Definition - This category comprises the various aspects of the student's relationship to school authority. It includes recognition in the form of school awards and the school discipline meted out for behavior transgressions. The relationship here is between the individual and the principal, vice-principal or teachers as a group. Category 3 refers to the student's relationship with individual teachers.

Facilitating - Getting a patrol certificate for helping kids cross the street, being given a second chance when caught smoking, having special privileges or fun activities organized in school time.

Hindering - Feeling watched by the teachers and administrators, being angered by the lines and detentions handed out for misbehavior, having privileges taken away, being put down by the administrator ("you have no hope of making it here"), and skipping out of school to avoid the
consequences of being late to school or having been truant from school.

Category 3. Schoolwork

Definition - This category relates to the subject's perception of and attitude toward schoolwork, independent of personal relationships. It includes liking a particular subject or class, doing well on an assignment, inability to do the work, insufficient help with the work, teacher expectations, lack of progress or anticipated failure.

Facilitating - Enjoying cooking, being in a French Immersion class, studying the evolution of people, learning to read and write, having Physical Education outside, making a table in Woodwork, getting a perfect mark on a map, and pairing up with another student to work on a Science unit on skeletons.

Hindering - Having to take gym, feeling dumb in class, having to correct mistakes in work, being in a class where the work was too hard, having to take Science or Sewing or French, and wanting help but the teacher being too busy with other students to help.

Category 4. Teachers

Definition - The relationship between the student and the teacher, including liking or disliking a teacher and the teacher's expressed praise or discipline regarding the subject's behavior.

Facilitating - Teacher patiently showing the subject how to do Math, teacher being like a dad or grandfather, teacher treating the subject in a decent manner even though the subject was failing the class, being listened to, being "in love" with the teacher, and "lipping off" the teacher to get revenge.

Hindering - Feeling singled out or picked on by a teacher, being yelled at, being punished for breaking something when it was an accident, having a teacher who used a whistle on the class as one would with animals, being questioned by a teacher and being scared of a teacher.
Category 5.  Students

Definition - Category 5 refers specifically to the relationship with other students. It includes play or friendship or lack thereof, and the difficulties such as feeling different from others or not belonging.

Facilitating - Playing tackle football, playing with a boy who was in a wheelchair, chasing the boys, writing notes in class, making new friends, kids buying the subject a new yo-yo when his got broken, having a boyfriend and kids sticking up for the subject during a fight.

Hindering - Not agreeing with kids, feeling embarrassed in front of kids who had witnessed a dressing down by a teacher or parent, being scared to go to the gym because it would be an opportunity for kids to get at or beat up the subject, being teased for being overweight, being the new kid in school, and getting into fights with kids.

Category 6.  Personal Activities or Influence of Peers

Definition - In general, this category refers to the perceived meaning of school, either in relation to an individual's interests or those of the peer group. It includes personal interests, satisfactions, or goals, and activities within or without the school and the meaning derived from those activities.

Facilitating - Being recognized as a leader, field trips, coming second in a school track and field meet, having a noon-hour concert and being in a school play.

Hindering - Becoming a part of a tough gang that hung around the store and skipped school, and preferring camping to sitting in a classroom.

Category 7.  Family Influences

Definition - This includes the attitude of family members to school, the value placed on education, the help given with schoolwork and the extent to which school life was compatible with family life.

Facilitating - Mom helped finish sewing a blouse and parents said school was important.
Hindering - Arguments with mom kept subject from concentrating on schoolwork, mom wouldn't talk to subject about problems subject was having at school, parents questioning about problems at school and being placed in a foster home.

Reliability of Categories

The classification system developed was tested for reliability by 4 independent judges; two of the judges were people not directly involved in the education system and two were school teachers with training in Counselling Psychology.

The judges were trained in the category system to be used. They were asked to categorize a randomly selected set of incidents. The percentage of hits or accurate placements provided the measure of reliability. For the categories to be considered reliable, a minimum of 80% agreement, between the judge and the student investigator, was set. Each of the 506 incidents was tested by one of the judges. The following results were obtained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judge</th>
<th>Number and Type of Incident</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>78 positive, 70 negative</td>
<td>89.74%, 80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>78 positive, 70 negative</td>
<td>83.33%, 82.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>105 negative</td>
<td>83.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>105 negative</td>
<td>86.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency of Factors

This information is provided in Tables I, II, III, IV and V. A more detailed description of the factors, their frequencies, subcategories and superordinate categories is provided in Appendix H and Appendix I.
### Table I

**Factors Contributing to Continuing Attendance at School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table II

**Factors Contributing to Dropping Out of School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table III

Frequency of Factors Relating to Continued Attendance at School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IV

Frequency of Factors Relating to Dropping out of School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total of Factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. School Structure
2. School Authority
3. Schoolwork
4. Teachers
5. Students
6. Personal Activities or Influence of Peers
7. Family Influences
Table V

Frequency of Factors Relating to Continuous Attendance at School Compared to Frequency of Factors Relating to Dropping out of School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Continuous Attendance</th>
<th>Dropping Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School Authority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Schoolwork</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Personal Activities or Influence of Peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Family Influences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of Total Factors
Discussion of Results

The following discussion of the results is based on the category system developed and on the incidents themselves.

Of the 506 incidents, 350 related to dropping out of school, and 156, nearly half as many, related to staying in school. Because the subjects had experienced so much difficulty and failure in regular school, it would have been reasonable to assume that they would have had less to report on the positive side. However, the subjects could think of many reasons to stay in school, even though the positive incidents were not nearly as detailed as the negative ones. For example; a negative Category 5 incident would include details leading up to a fight with another student, a description of the fight, the aftermath and the consequences, while a positive Category 5 incident would be the simple statement of going to school to see friends with only a little detail of what happened.

An outstanding feature of this research is the high proportion of incidents involving relationships with other students. Twenty-two percent of the incidents contributing to students staying in school and 24% of the incidents leading to their dropping out of school relate to how well
an individual got along with the other students. This does not include the category of peer group influence (Category 6) that the literature regarding dropouts often alludes to. It simply refers to other students in the school and clearly shows that for kids, the single most important thing about school is other kids.

In fact, the peer group influence regarding dropout is as much a facilitating factor for staying in school, as it is a negative influence to drop out. Seventeen responses indicated that a subject wanted to stay in school because of the attention or recognition from students as a group. There were 15 incidents of students wanting to quit because their friends wanted to or had already dropped out of school.

The second largest category of factors is the schoolwork itself. It accounts for 19% of the factors contributing to continued attendance at school and 23% of those contributing to dropping out of school. These results are in agreement with the literature which points to academic failure (Young and Reich, 1974) as one of the prime reasons for students wanting to leave school. However, because this research is done from the point of view of the consumer, the emphasis is different. Where
Young and Reich stress poor attitude, poor attendance and being among the oldest at their grade level, this study stresses inability to do the work, insufficient help with the work, lack of progress and anticipated failure.

Twenty-six percent of factors relating to school dropout were related to the student's acceptance of discipline; 11% of this involved the discipline from an individual teacher, and 15% originated with the school administrators. This finding supports the work of Neilsen and Gerber (1979) on the authority defying truant. It also relates to Dailly's (1974) plea for change in the public school system.

"The student is often on the receiving end of a series of decisions that are made for him by people in the system who have no direct knowledge of his actual circumstances. Decisions with respect to curriculum, programme, and general policies of the school are decided in isolation of individual needs of students. Parents, in general are not involved with these decisions...."

"The student has no means of resolving any conflict with the system; he must conform, leave voluntarily or be suspended."

In view of the latter statement, it is interesting to note that 17 incidents or 11% of the total relating to continued attendance at school focused on the school administration. Seven of the 17 involved recognition in the form of school awards, 5 cited help from school personnel other than
teachers, and 5 described satisfaction gained from conflict with the school administrators. It is not encouraging that as many subjects continued to attend regular school because of their power struggle with the administration, as because of help received from administrators.

Twenty-one percent of the incidents contributing to staying in school featured a relationship with a teacher. Of a total of 33 incidents, 28 showed a positive relationship and 5 were motivated by the subject wanting to get the better of a teacher.

This research did not attempt to differentiate between the dropouts and the pushouts, but it was noted during the interview that many students did not want to leave school. When asked what it was about regular school that made them feel like dropping out, several replied that they didn't want to drop out so the question was rephrased to "what happened that led to your leaving?" One student expressed a strong desire to remain in regular school even though he admitted that he had only been attending one of his eight classes on a regular basis. He said that the kids didn't like him and picked on him. He quickly became a victim in Junior Secondary School and because he was unable to cope he was referred to the Re-Entry program.
An unexpected result of this research is the lack of influence of the family regarding staying in or dropping out of school. Other research often looks to socio-economic level (Childers, 1965), education of parent (Pawlovich, 1983), or attitude of parent to student's dropping out (Young and Reich, 1974) as an important factor. While family influences, regarding staying in or dropping out of school may be very strong, these subjects did not see it that way. Only 7% of the factors relating to dropping out of school concerned the family. Of these 26 incidents, 19 were in regard to home interfering with continued attendance at school and 7 were details of problems at school causing the individual difficulty at home.

Having worked as a counsellor in the regular school system, the student investigator was disappointed to find that only 3 of 506 incidents reported by the subjects involved school counsellors. Two of these related to the subject's perceived reason for dropping out and 1 for maintaining an individual in school. The negative incidents were:

a) a counsellor was seen to be meddling in the student's personal life.
b) the student was confused about the counsellor's role and when asked to speak to the counsellor privately, he feared for his personal and sexual safety.

The positive incident was;

a) a counsellor gave a student, who described herself as having a quick temper, an "emergency visa" - written permission to show the teacher she could leave the class when she felt she was about to explode in anger.

That Junior Secondary schools are too large is not born out in a direct way in the research results. Only 7 of the subjects' responses directly stated that the school was too large. However, many of the factors relate to school size; difficulty getting along with other students, insufficient help with the work and lack of individualization due to the number of students taught by a teacher. Also, in extra-curricular activities where a student might find some success outside the classroom, the competition is very keen due to the large number of students.

Summary of Results

The two factors contributing most to dropout are difficulty relating to other students, and problems with schoolwork. Problems in these two areas lead to discipline from a teacher or an administrator. The subject's response to these conflict situations is avoidance, non-attendance
or confrontation. The result of the truancy or confrontation is dropping out or suspension from school. Changes in the structure of the school are required to reduce the number of problems students have with other students. This will in turn reduce the number of conflict situations with teachers and administrators.

Family influence and that of peers who are dropouts are not seen to be strongly related to school dropout.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Interpretation of Results

Junior Secondary school aged students stop attending school on a regular basis because of the difficulties encountered in relating to other students and successfully completing the assigned schoolwork.

They may well be students from a lower socio-economic level, come from a one parent family, have an unhappy family situation, experience sibling competition, or have parents who do not value education. They may have physical differences from peers, be antagonistic toward teachers, have emotional disturbances or not participate in extra-curricular activities. More of them may have cars than their stayin counterparts; more of them may be parents. However, according to the subjects in this study, they do not drop out of school because of the above factors; they drop out because they have problems with the schoolwork and problems relating to other students.

The issue of generalizability of the data, from the
Subjects in this study to students in regular school, was raised in Chapter I. Do we have a group here that is so far from the norm that to suggest that others might experience school in similar ways would be a grave error? The results of the research suggest not. It is highly likely that students who remain in regular school have problems relating to other students and have some difficulty with the schoolwork. Therefore, the difference in the experience of the student in the Re-entry program and the one in regular school is more likely a difference of degree rather than kind. It would seem that the stayings require less individual attention from teachers and are better able to get along with a large number and variety of students. Their positive experiences outnumber their negative ones and they stay in school. Also, because they are happier within the system, than the dropout, they rarely confront the authority structure and are not suspended or withdrawn from school.

In view of this, the solution to the potential dropout of students adopted by the City of Toronto School Board (Larter and Eason, 1978), of allowing 14 year olds to leave school early, would seem to be an abrogation of the responsibility of educating all young people rather than a creative approach to meeting the needs of the target group.
Part of the rationale for the Larter and Eason (1978) study was to measure whether or not the Leaving School Early program solved the problems that students were having and indeed in the short term it may. However, what is the cost of the lack of education over a lifetime to those individuals? And if in fact there are many more like them, albeit not quite so badly off, in regular school, the Leaving School Early program removes the symptom, but does not solve the problem.

Educational alternatives and support services have increased in British Columbia. The Ministry of Education has made an effort to provide an education for all children. Yet, children continue to drop out at the same rate. This fact gives credence to the argument that the answer to the dropout problem lies, not in creating new programs for students who obviously do not fit the present system, but in making changes in the present system. On a financial basis alone, school boards cannot continue to introduce programs which require resources beyond the normal allocation of a classroom unit. On a theoretical basis, the students who drop out of school are not the problem, but the symptom of problems within the school structure.
Theoretical Significance

Subjects responded on the level of the structure of the school system, their relationships with other students and school personnel, and the meaning of school in their lives. A positive experience in relation to the structure of the school, a relationship with another person, or meaning derived from an incident in either of these categories was a contributing factor to staying in school. A negative experience on one of these three levels was a reason for dropping out.

Toffler (1980) presents this idea in *The Third Wave*;

To create a fulfilling emotional life and a sane psychosphere for the emerging civilization of tomorrow, we must recognize three basic requirements of any individual: the needs for community, structure, and meaning.

He defines community as that necessary sense of belonging, the satisfying bonds between individuals which also requires loyalty ties between individuals and their organizations. The students who drop out of school have neither enough satisfactory relationships with their peers nor supportive relationships with their organizers - the teachers, counsellors, administrators and other school personnel. They drop out because school does not satisfy their need for a sense of community.
Structure, Toffler elaborates, provides the relatively fixed points of reference we need. That is why, for many people, a job is crucial psychologically over and above the paycheck. For young people, the school potentially provides that structure. The dropout either rejects or is rejected by the school structure.

Finally, meaning, the feeling that our lives "count" comes from healthy relationships with the surrounding society. What Toffler describes was expressed in the beam on a young woman's face as she related the following experience;

I was a leader; I was always getting some fad going. One day my friend and I took our roller skates to school. The next day others brought their skates. That was great fun.

For an 11 year old, that is meaning, being able to see oneself as a part of a larger whole and understand one's contribution and how it fits into the larger scheme of things in society. When a student drops out, not only does it mean that school no longer has meaning for that individual but that unless that person fulfills her need for community and structure outside the school system, that individual's life no longer has meaning.
Practical Significance and Recommendations for the Implementation of Findings

The size of the school accounts, to a large extent, for the difficulties students have in relating to other students. One of the subjects commented;

In Elementary school, it was okay. When I got to High School . . . well, there are so many kids, there is always someone you don't get along with.

and another said;

There are too many kids in school. The teachers can't cope with this so what they do is have their favorites and their kids they pick on.

Recommendation #1. Reduce the size of Junior Secondary Schools.

Students reported feeling out of place with their peer group. Instances of this were Grade 7's whose friends were in High School, and Grade 8's who felt pressured by the Junior Secondary School to find a clique or social gang to belong to. One girl said;

I was really scared I wouldn't make friends in Junior High. When I got there I saw a gang hanging around the store and I decided I wanted to be one of them. I ended up skipping out with them and when they dropped out I was too scared to be in school without their protection.

A solution to both the school size and age segregation problems would be to keep small schools, that are presently being closed due to declining enrolment and reduced funding
for education, open to a larger age range of students. As well as providing older role models for pubescent 12 to 16 year olds, a Kindergarten to Grade 12 or a Kindergarten to Grade 8 and Grade 9 to Grade 12 division would provide more opportunity for students to find a group to identify with and a sense of community over a longer period of time. The costs of heating, maintaining and administering these buildings might well be offset by reduced vandalism and the long term social benefits of the decrease in the dropout rate.

Recommendation #2. Open schools to a wider age range of students.

The present structure of the Junior Secondary school is too dramatic a change from the Elementary school. The Secondary school puts an individual in classroom contact with 9 teachers compared to 2 or 3 in Elementary school, and 270 or more students, compared to 30 in Elementary.

In the interviews there were many references to getting lost in Junior Secondary School, not liking to change classes, feeling uncomfortable with so many strangers, and harassment by other students while changing classes or during lunchtime.

In a school with 800 students, where a 4 minute period
of time is allocated for moving from one classroom to another, the result is a 4 minute period of time when 800 young adolescents are basically unsupervised. Teachers at this time are engaged in conversations with students leaving or coming into class; some lucky teachers may even manage a washroom break before the next 30+ students pile in. In the meantime, the crowding in the halls is moving some students to minor acts of violence like knocking someone's books flying or shoving a kid into a locker.

One student at the Re-Entry program had a brief time in a Middle School, where nearly all subjects were taken with the same group of students. Where truancy and failure had been evident in a previous Junior Secondary School, she maintained regular attendance and achieved greater academic success. A family move resulted in her enrolment in another Junior Secondary School, continued truancy, and the eventual referral to the Re-Entry program.

**Recommendation #3.** Bring the structure of the Elementary and Secondary school closer together.

Present funding for education is on a pupil-teacher ratio of approximately 17 to 1. This does not mean that there are 17 students in each classroom. In a Junior Secondary School, there are 30+ students in every classroom.
except for Home Economics and Industrial Education where physical safety is a factor and 24 students is the guideline. Special education classes, administrators, counsellors, learning assistance teachers, assisting teachers and other school personnel who are not assigned to the classroom, bring the ratio to 17 to 1.

Twenty-one percent of the factors contributing to continued attendance at school involved a relationship with a teacher. Very few incidents reported related to help from other school personnel. Students want time, attention, and caring from the person they are in direct contact with in the classroom. Absenteeism and acting-out behavior begin when the student does not receive that attention.

A common strategy to prevent dropout is to identify students with failing grades and provide counselling, special class placement, or other support. In a study where 3 educational strategies were used in an attempt to prevent students from dropping out (Titone, 1979), chi square analysis of comparative data indicated that even though both groups had reduced their number of failing grades, there was no significant difference between the control and the experimental group. There were 3 treatment stages; the first phase was counselling, the second was
special class placement and the third was specially staffed classes combining counselling and help in subject area deficiencies. If the individual did not improve his grades after phase 1, he moved into phase 2 and finally phase 3 if his grades had still not improved. This study and other research suggests that a better solution would be to provide more individual help or more individualized programming to students to prevent the failure than to provide service after the failure.

Recommendation #4. Reduce class size.

It is clear from the number of incidents relating to difficulty with schoolwork that there is a need for more individualization of instruction and more individual help at the Secondary School level. The Elementary School teacher has approximately 30 students for all academic subjects. The Secondary School teacher has about 240 students. What this means for the student is a dramatic decrease in the individualization of instruction and help with the schoolwork. If class size were reduced the classroom teacher would be able to help more students.

Recommendation #5. Provide the student with schoolwork that is at her ability level.
Attendance problems grow very quickly. Subjects reported skipping classes because they were unable to do the work or because they were having difficulties with other students and then staying home from school to avoid the consequences of having skipped out. They saw the consequences — detentions, lectures from the administrators or teachers, assignment to picking up garbage on the school grounds as unpleasant punishment that only added to their original problem.

A study of the effects of two intervention strategies on the attendance, achievement and attitudes of chronic absentees in a selected High School showed no significant differences in improvement by the 2 treatment groups over the control group. The treatments were; two home visits during the semester or 3 or 4 counselling sessions in a semester (Bush, 1980). Presumably more counselling would have been required to make a significant change in the student's behavior. However, the problem is the counselling treats the symptom, absenteeism, in an effort to improve achievement. One of the reasons students stop attending is because they have difficulty with the schoolwork and require more individual attention than is
given to them. Counselling them to attend and improve their attitude, without providing the required help with the schoolwork, is doomed to failure.

**Recommendation #6.** Adopt a problem solving approach rather than a punitive one in dealing with attendance problems.

Some of the subjects questioned the validity of having to take a particular subject or study a particular topic. They thought that some of the schoolwork was irrelevant to their lives.

Toffler (1980) suggests that in education we need to pay more attention to matters that are routinely ignored. These include the structure of everyday life, the way time is allocated, personal uses of money, and the places to go for help in a society exploding with complexity.

**Recommendation #7.** Introduce changes in the curriculum.

A few subjects reported continuing to attend school because of the satisfaction gained from participation in extra-curricular activities. Literature regarding dropouts often refers to dropout being related to lack of participation in extra-curricular activities. However, participation is often not simply a matter of wanting to
participate. Gaining a place on a school team is usually the result of a highly selective process. Many sports programs focus on coaching a chosen few to stardom to the exclusion of the majority.

Recommendation #8. Implement an extra-curricular program that includes more students.

Recommendations for Additional Research

1. Devise a method of counting the real dropout rate in British Columbia.

2. Research the actual attendance of students aged 12 to 14.

3. Use the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) to interview students in regular school to identify the supportive and unsupportive factors in the school environment.
Bibliography


Hahn, C.P. Measurement of individual differences with respect to critical job requirements. USAF School of Aviation Medicine, 1954, Project No. 21-21-014, No. 2.


Young, V. and Reich, C. Patterns of Dropping Out. Toronto, Ontario: Research Department, The Board of Education for the City of Toronto, 1974.
APPENDICES
Proposed Research Topic

Title: School - How Some Re-Entry Students See It

Problem: There is an increasing number of students, aged 12 to 15, that consciously or unconsciously, adopt a pattern of behavior that results in suspension from school or referral to a special program designed to maintain him/her in school.

Attendance at school is compulsory in British Columbia for children aged 7 to 15. The School Act of British Columbia states in Part 6, Division 1 - Compulsory Attendance. Section 113, Subsection 1. "Subject to exemptions under subsection (2), every child over the age of 7 years and under the age of 15 years shall attend some public school during the regular school hours every school day, and every parent or guardian who fails or neglects to cause such a child under his care to attend some public school during the regular school hours every school day commits an offense and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding $10, and each day's continuance of this failure or neglect shall constitute a separate offence." Exemptions are granted if the child is being educated by other, satisfactory means, is sick, has reached a standing equal or better than the local school or is not within 4.8 kilometers of a school.

In spite of compulsory attendance, more and more adolescents are not attending school on a regular basis. For several decades, researchers have attempted to identify the factors related to truancy and school dropout. More recently, the focus of research has been to implement programs, within the schools, for potential dropouts in an attempt to prevent or delay the school refusal.

A few researchers have chosen to ask the students themselves. Whether the student takes a positive stance and refuses to go to school and says so, or a more evasive stance and simply stops attending, the result is the same - a non-attender, a dropout. Because children are not allowed to quietly drift out of the school system, I make the assumption that they feel strongly about school and do not take the decision to quit, lightly. Therefore, in order to better understand this problem, I have decided to ask the students.
Thesis: One can identify factors within the school system that students see as helpful in maintaining them in school and factors that they see as hindering them or contributing to their suspension from or dropping out of school.

Method: Using the Critical Incident Method (Flanagan 1954), I will attempt to identify the factors that the students consider positive and supportive of their continued attendance at school and those that they consider negative and responsible for their withdrawal from school. I will ask each student two questions.

1. Remember a time in "regular" school when something really awful happened to you. It may have gotten you suspended from school or have made you feel like walking out the door and never going back. When you have the event clearly in mind, tell me about it. ... What is it? ... What happened before it? ... What happened as a result of .........?

2. Now, pretend that you are back in a previous school and something really nice is happening that you are a part of. When you are ready, tell me what is going on. Who else is there? What are your feelings?

Population: Approximately 25 students in a Re-Entry program for Junior Secondary students. These students have all been referred to the program after they have experienced considerable difficulty within the school system or after a prolonged period of school refusal.

Leona Margaret Serediuk
Graduate Student - M.A. Counselling Psychology
U.B.C.
TO: Ms. Leona Serediuk, Windsor Re-Entry Program.

FROM: G.C. Miller, Assistant Superintendent - Instruction.

SUBJECT: YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR M.A. (COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY) PROGRAM.

I am responding on Elmer Froese's behalf to your request for consent to do research for your M.A. thesis, using student volunteers from the Windsor Re-Entry Program. I hope that the lateness of this response does not create any problems for you.

Please accept this correspondence as authorization to proceed with your research, as outlined in your research proposal. I appreciate your assurance that the "anonymity, welfare, and integrity of the student subjects will be considered above all else." You should be aware that Dr. Blake Ford chairs the school district's Research Committee, a standing committee which serves to screen most applications for research, particularly those submitted by persons from outside of the district. You need not seek the committee's approval for this project but you may wish to consider tapping Blake's expertise as a resource person. You should also be aware of the existence of the "Dropout Prevention Committee," a sub-committee of the Positive School Climate Committee, which has studied the question of the early identification of potential school dropouts at an early age. I believe that the work of this committee and some of its findings may have considerable relevance to your study. The persons who probably have the best knowledge of the work of this committee are Judy Doyle, Vice Principal of Cariboo Hill or Don Kelley, Special Education Coordinator, based at Cariboo Hill.

In perusing your research proposal, I couldn't help but notice that you made reference to an "increasing number" of dropouts in the first paragraph and to "more and more adolescents who were not attending school" in the first sentence of the third paragraph. I'll take the risk of offering unsolicited feedback by posing the following questions:

- "Increasing numbers" relative to what?

- "More and more" than what?

I pose these questions because I am familiar enough with research to
know that the tighter the proposal is in terms of definition, the less likely the researcher is to run into later problems with the Research Committee.

Best of luck with your research. I look forward to your findings.

gcm/nhs

c.c. B.J. Cutcliffe, Principal,

    K.D. McAteer,
    Assisting Principal.

    B. Ford, Supervisor,
    Staff Development and Program In-Services.
APPENDIX C
APPENDICES D AND E
### Average Daily Attendance by Type of School for 1980-81 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Actual Daily Attendance</th>
<th>Possible Daily Attendance</th>
<th>Actual as % of Possible Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Secondary</td>
<td>22,905.8</td>
<td>24,800.4</td>
<td>92.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>93,557.3</td>
<td>101,911.4</td>
<td>91.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Secondary</td>
<td>50,919.1</td>
<td>55,474.7</td>
<td>91.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary-senior Secondary</td>
<td>6,995.0</td>
<td>7,617.1</td>
<td>91.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary-junior Secondary</td>
<td>15,051.1</td>
<td>16,069.3</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>274,923.8</td>
<td>291,366.1</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>464,352.2</td>
<td>497,238.9</td>
<td>93.4</td>
</tr>
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## B.C. Secondary School Dropouts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Secondary (VIII-XII) Dropouts</th>
<th>% of VIII-XII June Net Enrolment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>8,774</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>9,039</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>9,215</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>11,135</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>13,262</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>14,039</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>17,460</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>17,591</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>18,002</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>16,375</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>17,827</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>17,918</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>17,714</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>17,519</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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Facilitating Factors and Their Categorization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitating Factors</th>
<th>Factor Frequency</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Superordinate Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>All subjects in one class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Awards</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School subject</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Schoolwork</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular class</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Schoolwork</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding teacher</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict with teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likeable teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talented teacher</td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;In love&quot; with teacher</td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play or Sport</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of peers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special events</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction or goal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with schoolwork</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
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</table>

Total Facilitating Factors - 156
## APPENDIX I

### Hindering Factors and Their Categorization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindering Factors</th>
<th>Factor Frequency</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Super-ordinate Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changing classes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School too big</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting in class</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School ideology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad reputation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other conflicts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting with students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateness to school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Struggles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfair punishment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inability to do work</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Schoolwork</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient help</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Schoolwork</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher expectations</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Schoolwork</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipated failure</td>
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<td>Schoolwork</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject or class</td>
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<td>Schoolwork</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of progress</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Schoolwork</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Picked on or put down</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't like teacher</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical fights</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power struggles</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fights (verbal, physical)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling different</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being afraid</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having friends</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being embarrassed to face</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends quit or quitting</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside interests</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home problems</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School caused problems</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Hindering Factors - 350