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Educator Perceptions of the Importance of Using Strategies for At-risk Students in Indiana Elementary Schools

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EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF USING STRATEGIES FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS IN INDIANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine if there are significant differences in perceptions regarding the importance of strategies/programs for at-risk students according to employment position, geographic location, and percentage of free- and reduced-lunch population within the school. This study also examined alternative education strategies/programming currently being implemented in Indiana elementary schools. This study had a concentrated focus on a specific population of at-risk students. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on employment position? Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on demographic location? Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on a school's free- and reduced-lunch percentage? The outcome of this study found a significant difference in how educators perceived the importance of using specific strategies/programs in working with at-risk students in the 0-25% free- and reduced lunch-percentage participants and the 26-50% free- and reduced-lunch participants. The 0-25% participants found using specific strategies for at-risk students to be more important than those in the 26%-50% range. It also found the participants in the 51-75% range also perceived strategies for at-risk students significantly more important than those in the 26-50% category. There were no significant differences in how educators perceived the importance of using strategies for at-risk students based on employment position or school location. However, this study did reveal

an overwhelming need for elementary alternative programming. Only 16% of the respondents reported having an active alternative program to support their elementary at-risk students, but 100% of the participants conveyed a need for this type of programming. This study reports an 84% gap in the need versus current alternative school offerings.

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may this be an encouragement to follow your dreams; anything is possible if you choose to focus on your goals and never, never, never give up.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Elementary at-risk students may have emotional, social, and academic issues that obstruct the educational experiences of themselves as well as others. These students encounter the same problems, impediments, and needs as at-risk secondary students; however, their issues are typically disregarded or not addressed at all. At-risk students, even at the elementary level, may require additional resources and support beyond those of the general education classroom (Newgent, Lee, & Daniel, 2005).

Educators are faced with many challenges, especially when it comes to demonstrating effective practices that advance at-risk student academic attainment. The basis for academic achievement begins in elementary school, yet little is being addressed at this level to target the students who need the greatest assistance. Secondary at-risk student needs have been thoroughly studied for effective practices to increase student attendance and decrease discipline issues (Nibbelink, 2011), yet at-risk elementary student issues have been neglected for proven alternative methods of educating these students. Elementary at-risk students need more than traditional educational practices to ensure success from kindergarten through high school graduation.

Statement of the Problem

As the number of at-risk students continues to rise, so do their needs. In a recent study conducted by Lagana-Riordan et al. (2011), several at-risk students were interviewed to ascertain why they felt they were not successful in a traditional school. The students revealed that a lack of relationships with staff members, lack of maturity and responsibility of other students, lack of perceptions of social issues, and lack of positive peer relationships explained why they were unsuccessful in the traditional school. However, at-risk students in alternative schools felt as though they achieved at a higher level because of positive staff relationships, more mature and responsible classmates, forgiving environments related to social issues, positive peer relationships, and inclusive, supportive environments (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011).

Concentrating on the necessities of at-risk students who are unable to function appropriately due to severe behavioral, emotional, social, or academic issues is undoubtedly an obligation for schools to avert potential lifelong ramifications. Belfield and Levin (2007) shared that American society will ultimately pay the price for not addressing these concerns early in children's academic career, since the possibility exists for these students to develop into unsuccessful citizens in the labor market. Lack of appropriate education tends to lead to potential increased costs in government assistance. It can also stimulate an increase in crime rates, which may develop an increase in taxpayer costs and support the complications of ignoring the needs of these students when they are young (Belfield & Levin, 2007).

Since this is a problem for not only educators but for society in general, developing programming for at-risk students should be at the forefront of educators and lawmakers alike. However, there is limited research regarding elementary education programming for at-risk students. According to Foley and Pang (2006), appropriate programming needs to be developed

for servicing middle school and elementary students in alternative educational settings to meet the needs of at-risk students.

Lack of programming may be related to unproductive learning environments that are typically found in traditional schools for at risk students; by developing a nurturing environment for at-risk students educators can lead these students toward academic success. Nibbelink (2011) found that at-risk students in traditional schools are most likely to have a decrease in their grade point averages compared to the same students in an alternative setting. At-risk students involved in alternative education schools with nurturing environments tend to have fewer failing grades than at-risk students in traditional schools. These data are explained by smaller class sizes, one-on-one student support, and student/teacher relationships. Students in alternative programs are found to have more academic support than traditional schools (Nibbelink, 2011); the type of school environment can make a substantial impact on these students.

Providing a safe and nurturing environment in an alternative setting can lead to improved student attendance. Nibbelink (2011) found that at-risk students in the traditional schools had worse attendance than at-risk students in an alternative setting. Additionally, at-risk students in traditional schools were 21 times more likely to drop out of school than those non-at-risk students in the same school. The alternative students were only nine times more likely to drop out than the average non-at-risk student in a traditional setting. The implications of this study suggest the alternative schools provide more conducive atmospheres for at-risk students to flourish and learn.

Some alternatives for at-risk students do exist; a study by Hosley (2003) concluded that 93% of alternative programs served students in Grades 7-12; however, only 4% of those

surveyed provided services to students in the elementary grades. The study concluded that at-risk students are perhaps identifiable as early as Grade 3 (Hosley, 2003).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine if there are significant differences in perception regarding the importance of strategies and programs for at-risk students according to employment position, geographic location, and percentage of free- and reduced-lunch population within the school**.** This study also examined intervention strategies and programming currently being implemented in Indiana elementary schools.

Research Questions

This study had a concentrated focus on a specific population of at-risk students:

1. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on employment position?
2. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on demographic location?
3. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on a school's free- and reduced-lunch percentage?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were developed through the research questions:

$H_0$1. There is no significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on employment position.

$H_0$2. There is no significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on demographic location.

$H_0$3. There is no significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on a school's free- and reduced-lunch percentage.

Definition of Terms

Alternative education is an alternative to traditional school or program that serves students by leading them to focus on successful educational outcomes, not focusing on prior problems or issues (Aron, 2003).

Alternative education programs are school programs that offer struggling students an opportunity to achieve in a new setting by utilizing flexible schedules, small class sizes, and relevant curricula (Brand & Martin, 2006). Programs are usually located within the walls of traditional schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

Alternative education school is a public secondary or elementary school that addresses the needs of students who struggle to be sustained in a traditional school, while providing a nontraditional education; operates as an appendage to traditional school; and does not align with the categories of special education, vocational, or traditional school education (USDOE, 2010).

At-risk students' characteristics are identified as dropping out, failing subjects, and/or having behavior challenges, family distresses, social concerns, and emotional issues (Nibbelink, 2011). McDonald (2002) defined at-risk students as those with low academic and social skills that create disconnect from the traditional school setting.

Elementary school consists of any configuration that includes Grades K-6 in this study.

Employment position refers to a first-grade teacher, a fifth-grade teacher, and a principal in this study.

Free- and reduced-lunch population refers to the percentage of students receiving

government assistance for school lunches.

Intermediate teacher instructs students in Grades 3-6 in this study.

Location refers to an urban, suburban, or rural geographic school location in this study.

Primary teacher instructs students in Grade 2 in this study.

Principal is the position held by the leader of an elementary, middle, or high school.

Rural school is one that is located outside cities or towns in less populated regions such as agriculturl areas.

Socioeconomic levels are acquired by a students' socioeconomic status (SES), determined by his or her free- and reduced-lunch status within a school. SES and free and reduced lunch status are used synonymously in public education.

Suburban school is a school on the outer areas of a city that usually has a separate residential community in a less densely populated area than that of the central city but typically within a short driving distance from the inner city activities.

Student achievement is a student's success based on standardized testing or state achievement assessments.

Urban school is a school located in a higher populated area such as a city or town.

Significance of the Study

This quantitative study contributes to the field of education by examining elementary teachers' and principals' perceptions of the importance of strategies and programs for at-risk students according to geographic location of the school, percentage of free- and reduced-lunch population, and employment position within the school. Lack of research and programming concentrated on at-risk elementary students in terms of effective strategies and practices that provide successful outcomes for students with multiple challenges make this study significant

and relevant for current policy makers and educational leaders. This study sought to provide alternatives for elementary school leaders to address the concerns of an increasingly challenging group of at-risk students who desperately need options to the unsuccessful attempts of servicing these children using traditional methods.

Limitations

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine if there were significant differences in perceptions in the importance of strategies and programs for at risk students. However, the methods used to gather perceptions of elementary teachers and principals in suburban, rural, and urban schools could not control for honesty and introspection of individual responses. It also could not control for schools that border between two geographic locations and how the responders categorized their schools. The complexities of teacher quality, students' lives, and interrelationships among those within the school and community cultures may have effects on the respondents' perceptions, which were not addressed in this study. Personal influences were minimized by developing questions that were objective and as unbiased as possible. Additionally, with the workload of Indiana principals and teachers, some may not have taken the time to complete this survey, affecting the results of the data. Unintentional responses by individual respondents on the survey or inaccurately following instructions of the survey may also render the responses useless to this research.

Delimitations

The data collected and analyzed were only from Indiana elementary teachers and principals and did not consider other states with at-risk students. The study was focused on Indiana principals, one primary teacher, and one intermediate teacher at each public school; however, Chapter 2 of this study presents a literature review of recommended strategies from a

global perspective for students at risk of failure. I had no face-to-face contact with the participants in the schools used in this study.

Summary

This examination is partitioned into five chapters. Chapter 1 delivered an overview of the problem and purpose of the study. A synopsis of literature involves at-risk student concerns as well as effective practices and programs for disadvantaged students are found in Chapter 2. Due to the limited research on at-risk elementary students, some of the literature review throughout the study is on secondary at-risk students and is used to develop a generalization of at-risk students; however, the focus of this study is on elementary at-risk students. Chapter 3 emphasizes the methodology behind the study, which includes the research purpose, questions, null hypotheses, data collection and sources, and analysis methods. The findings of this research are explained in detail in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides an extraction of the study findings, implications, conclusions, and further recommendations for research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature consists of at-risk students' overall challenges, differences between at-risk and non-at-risk students, and federal and state accountability. The differences between urban, suburban, and rural at-risk students are also reviewed. Additionally, throughout the research there were seven recurring themes cultivated as best practice strategies or programming for working with at-risk children. Support service/counseling, community resource partners, behavior strategies, curriculum and instructional strategies, parental involvement, professional development, and alternative education ascended to the top as significant intervention strategies and preventative program measures to generate efficacious outcomes for these challenging students. This is not an all-encompassing list of strategies or programs found in the literature; however, they dominated much of the research on servicing at-risk students.

At-Risk Students' Overall Challenges

Numerous definitions exist for at-risk students dating back several decades. Batsche (1985) recorded several conventional characteristics of at-risk students. Chronic absences, poor grades, low assessment scores, low self-esteem, habitual behavior issues, lack of social skills, low income background, and a feeling of being ostracized by their peers are all typical characteristics of at-risk students. The families also share characteristics. They have several siblings, absent

father figures, unemployed fathers, fathers who did not graduate from high school, absent mothers during adolescence, and a lack of printed materials in the home (Batsche, 1985). McDonald (2002) stated based on numerous studies that it is most likely at-risk students are commonly authenticated by inadequate social skills and academic performance that tend to disconnect students from their peers.

Not only have there been numerous studies recognizing the characteristics of at-risk students, but research presented by Brand and Martin (2006) stated the federal government has acknowledged the lack of long-term support for our neediest youth. A White House memorandum establishing a task force stated,

> The Federal Government has spent billions of dollars over the last 30 years in a variety of programs to address these issues. A 1998 analysis by the General Accounting Office has pointed out that there were 117 Federal programs administered by 15 departments aimed at disadvantaged youth. Some of these programs have been very successful. However, overall, the Federal Government's efforts and programs to assist disadvantaged young people have been fragmented and not as successful as hoped. (Brand & Martin, 2006, p. 3)

As a result of the task force, four goals have been established for federal investment. These goals are better management, better accountability, better connections, and priority for at-risk youth (Brand & Martin, 2006). Funding sources are continually being coordinated across multiple agencies in collaboration with the White House Task Force (Brand & Martin, 2006).

The need for supporting at-risk students in the United States is continually growing. During the 2010-11 school year, 20% of the public school students attended high-poverty schools compared to only 12% of the students attending high-poverty schools in the 1999-2000

school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). School-aged children are eligible for free meals at the 130% poverty level and schools are considered high poverty schools once they recognize 75% of their population as qualifying for free- and reduced-lunch programs. This may have been influenced by a variety of factors, including more systematic identification of students eligible, as well as an elevated level of actual child poverty rates. In 1999, the U.S. poverty levels for children under the age of 18 were at 17%, but in 2010 they rose to 22%.

Increased truancy is also another factor linked to at-risk students. Since the early 1970s, studies have identified at-risk behaviors related to school absenteeism encompassing rates of precarious sexual behavior, court participation, and substance abuse (Kandel, Treiman, Faust, & Single, 1976). A reflective investigation observing early school precedents of students who exited high school early showed that, beginning in Grade 1, dropouts had greater absences than graduates did (Barrington & Hendricks, 1989). By Grade 5, these students were absent twice as often as graduates, and by ninth grade, they were three times as often to miss school, implying an escalating repetition of truancy. Reviewing the number of absences per school year, teacher input in regards to behavior, and assessment scores, dropouts could be distinguished from graduates with virtually 70% correctness by the end of third grade. Hooker and Weatherman (1990) discovered that dropouts in a Midwest rural school system scored in the lower 30th percentile on standardized tests for students in third through sixth grades paralleled to typical scores in the 60th percentile of their peers who stayed in school. Examination of aggregated accounts of Chicago public school students revealed that absences and academic successes for three sequential years (by the end of fourth grade) distinguished nearly 90% of their high school dropouts (Hess, Lyons, Corsino, & Wells, 1989). Henry (2007) also examined characteristics of students with increased truancy rates in high school students. He found that the rate of truancy

increased with grade/age and that students with high rates of truancy were more likely to come from households where parents' education levels were of high school graduates or less or where there were excessive quantities of unsupervised time after school, inferior grades, and low educational ambitions. However, the research was inconclusive as to whether risk behaviors lead to truancy or truancy leads to the undesired behaviors, or possibly both are unrelated to the other. Nonetheless, with high volumes of absenteeism, the at-risk student becomes at even greater risk of academic failure.

Difference Between At-Risk Versus Non-At-Risk

There has been much documented research addressing the concerns that young students from economically disadvantaged homes often begin their school careers with significantly lower academic skills than those of their more affluent peers and are at risk of school failure (Stipek & Ryan, 1997). However, little research has been conducted to find the link between motivation and academic achievement for at-risk students (Howse, Lange, Farran, & Boyles, 2003). Howse et al. (2003) presented a study to better understand self-motivation and self-regulated on-task behaviors for early school achievement differences among young at-risk versus non-at-risk students. The study consisted of 85 students who were five- to eight-year olds in the at-risk group and 52 six- to eight-year olds in the non-at-risk group. The results of the study showed students and teachers reported comparable motivation levels from the at-risk and non-at-risk students; however, the at-risk students presented poorer abilities to regulate their task attention than the not-at-risk group. The at-risk students' attainment results were predictors of their level of attention-regulation capabilities.

The Howse et al. (2003) study is consistent with expectations that although most young disadvantaged students exhibit high levels of motivation on a variety of dimensions related to

academic achievement, they have inferior propensities than more advantaged students to control their attention in goal-centered achievement. Documentation of the relationship between students' attention skills and attainment has notable implications for remediation. Because progress in students' attention regulation may yield perpetual advances in reading processes, teachers must systematize their classrooms in ways that embolden the use of self-regulatory strategies and model for students how to engage in task actions in intentional, preparatory, and strategic ways.

Not only do many at-risk students struggle with attention issues, they also toil with being accepted by their peers as equals. An additional study conducted in Norwegian schools examined the relationship between students' SES and their perceived social inclusion (SI; Idsoe, Midthassel, & Veland, 2009). The results confirmed a tendency for students with low SES to also have low SI. SES seemed to be more critical to students' perceptions of their SI in the sample of students with disadvantaged social upbringings. The findings suggest that adverse consequences of SES might severely affect a student's SI; SI tends to be amplified by social disadvantage. The data also reveal that SES had the greatest association with the variables regarding peers, bullying, and relationships with peers. Relationships with peers were the most substantial in determining success for students from disadvantaged home environments.

Idsoe et al.'s (2009) report also found that students from disadvantaged homes reported fewer successful relationships with their teachers. The gap of cultures, merged with the underprivileged students' other hindrances, might indicate more difficult students who, in turn, distinguish themselves to be less attractive to teachers. The findings in this study concluded that SI is not a certainty for all; although students are physically amalgamated, there appear to be categories of students who distinguish themselves to be less accepted by both teachers and peers.

Many at-risk students not only feel their relationships with teachers and peers are less than advantageous but also have other factors that prevent them from entering school prepared for future academic challenges. Gershoff, Aber, Raver, and Lennon (2007) found convincing evidence that escalations in family income, predominantly among underprivileged families, have a conclusive impact on students. The quantity of funds parents spend on students, such as for books or toys, and the time spent with them in cooperative activities (e.g., reading books aloud) are regarded as investments that have the capacity to enrich a child's cognitive language and skills.

Unfortunately for underprivileged students, it does make a difference how well equipped their parents are financially and educationally to maximize their educational experiences. Hartas (2011) found that family SES matters in terms of children's literacy, linguistic, and social development. Parents from varied circumstances were discovered to participate continually in home learning; however, impoverished children and mothers lacking any educational experiences advanced inadequately in literacy and language skill development contrasted to their cohorts in educationally and financially affluent families. The effectiveness of home learning is most likely affected by parental capacities to capitalize in fiscal and knowledgeable resources and to expand on human investments through educational experiences. Limited access to educational resources makes it challenging for at-risk students to excel at the same rate as their peers.

Exclusionary discipline or other disciplinary actions are yet other impediments that many at-risk students encounter (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010). Numerous urban, very-high poverty schools utilize these practices that exclude the neediest of students from their educational services. Urban schools consistently demonstrated a higher mean of disciplinary

actions per 100 students than any other school typology in the study conducted by Noltemeyer and Mcloughlin (2010), contrasted by rural districts with small student populations and low poverty that consistently demonstrated the fewest mean of disciplinary actions per 100 students. Urban school students were less likely to encounter factors less prevalent than in rural or suburban areas such as substance abuse, limited resources, and crime, which may be an indication of the results of this finding. Removal of at-risk students from the educational setting, for any reason, prevents them from accessing the positive influences that might cultivate them into more productive citizens (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010).

Accountability

Accountability and legislation on educational issues have been ongoing since the beginning of education itself. However, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) has drawn national attention to at-risk students throughout the United States. The NCLB identified a focus on closing the achievement gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds (Blank, 2011). The principle goal of NCLB directive or program objectives and accountability requirements of the federal law was to decrease the degree of discrepancy in accomplishment of students from different demographic backgrounds within schools as well as discrepancies in the academic execution of districts, states, and schools (Blank, 2011).

The NCLB mandates required testing all students, including English language learners and special education students, as well as reporting the level of performance of focused at-risk student groups, such as minority and economically underprivileged students (Blank, 2011). The justification for the intensified accountability concentration on schools was to bring awareness to educators that students' academic needs are not being met, as defined by the given standards, and

to urge districts, states, and schools to focus on education instructional strategies to raise the at-risk students' educational achievement (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009).

In an attempt to hold schools accountable for addressing the needs of at-risk students, the NCLB required each state to determine if the annual target had met adequate yearly progress (AYP) as defined by the specified proficiency level. For schools to be proficient, the proficiency level for each school year must be met for each demographic category within individual schools. Consequences for not attaining AYP for two or more years were implemented by states; schools implemented improvement and achievement steps to address needs of struggling students (Blank, 2011). Since there were explicit consequences for individual schools and districts, an inordinate amount of emphasis was placed on annual reporting of AYP for individual states and reporting the collective outcomes for all states (USDOE, 2010).

The big question is, "Are these accountability measures working for at-risk students?" The Council of Chief State School Officers report analyzed student progress achievement trends (Blank, 2011). During the time when grade-level assessment was fully implemented in math and reading, most states saw significant gains in academic performance of socioeconomic disadvantaged children. There are mixed results in reference to achievement score improvement for socioeconomic disadvantaged students' achievement at a greater rate than the average student. One-third of the states made significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap in eighth grade math, and one-fifth of the states made significant progress in closing the gap for these same students. Unfortunately, the achievement gap continues to exist in all states for financially challenged students and a majority of the states did not exhibit significant improvement for at-risk student populations.

Indiana is just one state attempting to assist at-risk students and to hold schools accountable. Prior to NCLB, Indiana adopted Public Law 221 (P.L. 221) in 1999 to provide accountability for all schools (IDOE, 2011). Indiana's State Board of Education updated their previous accountability system, P.L. 221, in 2010-11, which labeled schools as Exemplary Commendable, Academic Progress, Academic Watch, and Academic Probation, to a less complicated system of letter grades consisting of A through F. Letter grades for high schools are calculated based on academic performance, graduation rate, college and career readiness, and student improvement. A through F grades for elementary and middle schools are established from math and language arts scores generated by the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+), a statewide high-stakes exam. Grades are based on academic performance, growth, participation, and improvement (Indiana Department of Education [IDOE], 2011).

Advocates for assessment-based accountability believe that educators need to be held accountable for student achievement, and it should be measured through standardized test scores (Stecher, Hamilton, & Gonzalez, 2003). Theoretically, accountability based on test scores encourages educators to share in the responsibility for the academic needs of the students, especially at-risk students. Advocates of assessment-based accountability refer to successful private business practice models as a way to judge schools towards improvement when they are ranked based on student performance (Heilig, Young, & Williams, 2012).

Although many share thoughts that schools should be held accountable based on test scores, Heilig et al. (2012) conducted a study at low performing high schools in Texas to analyze the perceptions and productivity of educators as they envelop the mandates of current educational accountability. Interviews of 89 teachers, staff, and administrators disclosed diverse

management methods related to low assessment and accountability scores. The research found, contrary to what advocates for assessment accountability believe, that instead of fostering a community effort of improving student performance and high-level teaching, assessment-based accountability demoralized these goals, therefore potentially harming the at-risk students it was intending to benefit. The pressures of accountability had three unintentional and negative consequences: assessment-based accountability applies pressures on educators and cultivates an environment of distress in most schools, it has caused a search for and use of loopholes around the accountability measures, and it has led many educators to view students as liabilities. The risks associated with career loss and public embarrassment of employees in underperforming schools has led schools in Texas to consider at-risk students as liabilities, which is the opposite intention of those requiring the accountability mandates (Heilig et al., 2012).

High-stakes testing and accountability measures to ensure a quality education for at-risk students are currently used across the United States to assess progress; however, research completed by Vasequez Heilig and Nichols (2013) found there are other alternatives. They found that standards and high-stakes might not be working to deliver quality assessments of learning or intellectual ability, as measured by college and career readiness standards or workforce preparation for career success and higher education. This study suggested methods that are more ecological: a development of various measures that entail wider objective and subjective tests to improve the prediction of long-standing student achievement (Vasequez Heilig & Nichols, 2013).

After much pondering and research on high-stakes testing and accountability, Heilig (2013) shared the theory of community-based accountability. This theory of community-based accountability offers each community to be accountable to themselves and the nation.

Communities can democratically set the achievement criteria and goals, such as business or other more valuable outcomes. Community-based accountability could involve a process where school staff, superintendents, parents, students, school boards along with community stakeholders set short and long-term goals based on their urgencies. Goals could be for some communities to increase higher education enrollment rates, target at-risk student issues, or increase SAT/ACT scores.

San Antonio's Café College resource centers are examples of community-based accountability. The mayor of San Antonio funded these centers based on community input and goals as developed collectively by its members; he culminated the city's resources into academic goal outcomes that effectively benefit students in reaching those goals (Heilig, 2013). Additionally, several Texas schools are seeking waivers from assessment and accountability standards for students. They have chosen to move towards a community-based assessment and accountability system that could be implemented within their communies by 2016 (Heilig, 2013). By using community-based accountability, the community can intentionally target the specific needs of the at-risk learners.

Community-based accountability could also appeal to conservative politicians who advocate local control. State and federal government would participate by regulating baseline goals that communities set in a democratic progression to cultivate the outcomes and objectives. The goal setting would most likely influence the progression of school selection and influence policymakers to lobby federal and state governments for appropriate resources to achieve its accountability goals as opposed to focusing on high-stakes testing. This in turn would hold federal, state, and local politicians accountable for meeting the needs of the community. Accountability would become more than the responsibility of the just the school leaders; it would

be the collective responsibility of politicians, school officials, and community stakeholders (Heilig, 2013), therefore benefiting the at-risk students.

Differences Between Urban, Rural, and Suburban At-Risk Students

Urban schools full of at-risk students have been achieving far below expected measurements for quite some time. Lutkus, Weiner, Daane, and Jin (2003) affirmed the urban schools, in comparison with rural and suburban schools in the nation, are achieving significantly below other schools on basic skills assessments in science, reading, writing, and math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test.

Reviewing trends from the past decade shows that poverty levels may have something to do with the lack of achievement in urban schools. In the 2010-11 school year, more than one-third (37%) of the United States' students were enrolled in city schools, which qualified as high-poverty schools. There were only 10% of the students in rural schools, 14% in suburban schools, and 15% of student in towns enrolled in schools that qualified as high-poverty status (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Urban area schools are traditionally known for serving America's disadvantaged and at-risk children; however, an increasing number of those underprivileged students and their families have chosen to relocate away from inner-city living to a more rural or suburban setting (Murphy, 2007). Poverty rates are now on the rise for children in suburban areas and are increasing faster than poverty in inner city areas. Since more people are living in the suburbs than anywhere else in the United States, the number of disadvantage and at-risk youth in the suburbs continues to climb (O'Hare, 2009).

Miller, Votruba-Drzal, and Setodji (2012) studied the form and magnitude of income in relationship to early achievement and how it differs across the urban-rural communities. The

study revealed that income had significantly smaller links to academic achievement in rural, suburban, and small urban areas in comparison to large urban areas. The association between income and reading skills was also smaller in small urban areas compared to large urban areas. The research revealed that for at-risk students and their families at the lowest end of poverty, the relationship between their income levels and early academic skills is at least three times greater in large cities when compared to rural areas. The data also supported differences between disadvantaged students and higher income families in the use of potentially enriching resources, such as museums, preschools, zoos, and libraries, were smallest in rural areas.

An additional study conducted by Sandy and Duncan (2010) found that the achievement gap between suburban and urban students may be explained by disparities in race and family background. They reported that 75% of the achievement gap for at-risk students can be rationalized by the high volume of low-income and minority students in urban schools. Differences in income between urban and suburban families explained 25% of the assessment results difference. Contrary to the perception of urban schools, very little of the achievement gap is attributed to variations in school quality measures such as private school, school size, or class size. Sandy and Duncan (2010) found that of these factors, class size appeared to be the most encouraging for improving urban schools. Many suggest private schools or vouchers for alternatives to low-performing schools in urban settings; however, their study failed to uncover private school attendance correlates to higher attainment for at-risk urban students.

Lleras (2008) conducted a study to review inequalities for at-risk students, particularly White versus. Black students, in course placement, academic achievement, and student engagement. The results revealed Black and White students in predominantely Black, mainly urban schools, are considerably disadvantaged in all areas of the learning process contrasted to

students in rural and suburban areas. The data suggested that increased opportunities to higher level courses and a more rigorous workload could have a substantial impact on African American math achievement and directly and indirectly improve student behavior and engagement, specifically for those schools that are mainly Black urban schools. Because many Black students attend high minority schools where lower-level courses dominate the curriculum, they are less likely to benefit from higher level courses necessary for higher academic achievement.

Environmental strains in urban areas may also contribute to larger gaps in early achievement for at-risk students. Both urban and rural areas are afflicted with environmental strains; those found in inner-city areas are inclined to be more palpable, such as noise, pollution, smog, and random violence. The environmental strains are harder to recognize (e.g., pesticides) in rural areas as opposed to urban settings. The connection between environmental strains and achievement may be compounded in urban areas by the extreme characteristics of the strains (Miller et al., 2012), whereas rural children have access to green spaces, which are known to act as buffers from the negative impact of environmental strains (Evans & Wells, 2003).

School personnel also tend to be a greater need in servicing at-risk students in urban settings. In a study conducted by Metropolitan Life Insurance and Harris Interactive (2013), principals communicated that there are differences in maintaining adequate supplies of highly effective teachers in urban, suburban, and rural settings. The survey disclosed that 60% of urban principals reported that it is challenging to keep sufficient teachers employed, and only 44% of rural and 43% of suburban principals find this a taxing concern. Teachers in urban settings (56%) are not only hard to retain, but several are more likely to have additional responsibilities beyond their school day than those of rural (51%) and suburban (47%) teachers. The challenges

of teaching in a predominately at-risk urban setting are not just a burden on families, but school staff as well.

Support Services/Counseling

Most schools have issues with at least a few students who struggle with social, emotional, and behavior issues beyond the accepted norms. These students can frequently develop aggressiveness, unacceptable verbal outbreaks, and even physical attacks on other students or staff members. These students may be disruptive to their own education and to the education of other students. At-risk students require additional resources, such as counseling or support services to develop core skills, and encouragement to facilitate academic interest. Overloaded counselors, repeated failure, SES, stereotypes, home issues, and peer relations are a variety of barriers that impede the growth of academic and social success for at-risk students (Newgent et al., 2005).

Counseling services are essential for the family of at-risk students to avert disruption of classrooms, aggressive tendencies, criminal offenses, use of drugs or alcohol, and endangering themselves and others. A study conducted by Crozier, Rokutani, Russett, Godwin, and Banks (2010) compared schools over numerous years using the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program to assist with counseling at-risk students and their parents. The program focused on family functionality and reducing risk factors such as academic failure, violence, and drug and alcohol abuse, as well as family stress. The program focused on enhancing family interactions through the home environment and parental confidence building. It targeted the academic failure of the child through parental involvement and student behavior. Additionally, preventative measures were used to counsel the child and their family with drug and alcohol abuse. Stress reduction for the family was promoted through interactive relationships, reciprocal support and

program satisfaction. Trained staff contribute to the solution by providing students opportunities to focus on changing behaviors. Crozier et al. (2010) found that the FAST program results were mixed, yet overall both parents and teachers reported some improvements in the students' behaviors using the program goals to support at-risk students and their families.

Schools with a high volume of at-risk students are faced with challenges of providing services that meet the ever-challenging needs of the parent and the students. Insufficient resources to provide the students with the counseling services needed continue to be a barrier faced by most public school systems. Educators have made attempts in addressing school-based conflicts, underachievement, minimal parental involvement, and teacher burnout; a holistic ecosystemic solution is warranted (West-Olatunji, Frazier, & Kelley, 2011). West-Olatunji et al. (2011) recommend wraparound counseling as an effective intervention in viewing students in context rather than as individuals who are unconnected to families, peers, communities, and social influences. Wraparound counseling is an amalgamation of customized wraparound arrangement and the fundamental principles of the counseling profession. Customized wraparound preparation, rooted in special education practices, targets students with behavioral and emotional conflicts to permit students to stay in the least restrictive environment (Stevenson & Surber, 2003).

Customized wraparound preparation involves an interdisciplinary team that addresses emotional and behavioral student needs and individualizes interventions, whereas the wraparound counseling services provide a holistic approach, student centeredness, parents as partners, strength-based interventions, and student empowerment (West-Olatunji et al. 2011). The wraparound counseling services capitalize on strength-based collective elements of

customized wraparound preparation by expanding these elements to address system-wide needs of at-risk students (West-Olatunji et al., 2011).

At-risk students necessitate multiple level interventions that require stakeholders and counselors to team up, such as school personnel, parents, mental health agencies, and community agencies, to strengthen the school structure. By fostering a wraparound counseling program, schools can generate stronger, more accommodating, familiarized systems that are durable and less vulnerable to unpredicted crises simply because of the proactive measures implemented by the wraparound preparation team. School leaders are better equipped to manage any predicaments that surface because the strengths are exploited and all points of the organization are in sync (West-Olatunji et al., 2011).

Mentors are yet another successful support service that assists in the development of at-risk students. Caldarella, Adams, Valentine, and Young (2009) observed how adult volunteers mentored at-risk students with emotional and behavioral disorders. The result of their study determined that students felt they had increased social skills and decreased behavior issues after working with a school-based mentor. Teachers and parents/guardians noted an improvement in academic performance and social aptitude, and a decrease in social anxiety. At-risk students in the study received an average of 14 visits over a five-month period. Although this short-term program is not consistent with the length most research-based mentoring programs suggest, it did, however, produce positive results. Most students (71%) said they would change nothing about the program; they felt their mentor really cared about them and their achievements. Although recruitment of the volunteers was the most challenging part of the program, it certainly paid off for the students. Personal referrals with local community organizations and partnerships proved to be the most effective method of recruitment (Caldarella et al., 2009).

Community Resource Partners

Additional effective practices recommended for those who work with at-risk students are an educator's awareness of community resources that support the students and their families (Foley & Pang, 2006). Nationally, 42% of school-age children come from low-income families. Schools are continually challenged to meet the necessities of children with multifarious barriers that hinder their educational processes. Schools cannot embark on this task alone; if these children are to succeed in school they need the support of community resources to partner with them (Castrechini & London, 2012).

Castrechini and London (2012) directed a study in the Redwood City School District in Redwood City, California, in Grades K-8 that offered more than 250 programs, events, and community services during the 2010-11 school year. Quantitative analysis was used on this low-income school district to show how families and students used community resources and how those services work synergistically to positively affect student achievement. The data revealed the following information for schools:

- Participation over time in extended learning and family engagement opportunities are associated with achievement gains.
- Students' motivation to learn is associated with participation in community school programs.
- Extended learning time through middle school is linked to significant increases in students' ratings of their school.
- English language learners who participated in the community programs disclose gains in language arts development at the elementary level (Castrechini & London, 2012).

Utilizing community resources to meet the needs of at-risk students and families is critical to

sustaining environments that support learning for all children.

Epstein and Sheldon (2006) found in their research to improve systems for schools with at-risk students, families and community partnerships, seven principles emerged. The seven principles for effective leadership in supporting families are

- Parental involvement should be referred to as school, family, and community partnerships.
- School, family and community partnerships are a multidimensional model.
- An organized system of school, family, and community partnerships is a vital factor of school and classroom composition.
- Systems of school, family and community partnerships entail multiple levels leadership.
- Systems of school, family and community partnerships ought to concentrate on heightening student improvement and learning.
- All systems of school, family and community partnerships are regarding equality for all learners.
- Processes for examinations on school, family and community partnerships require continual improvement for success. (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006)

Chang and Lawyer (2012) found their research to reveal teachers buying food for their students, doing home visits to promote parental involvement, and finding community resources that offer services for the families of their at-risk students in order to remove the obstacles that impede their education. Teachers of at-risk students are not only concerned about addressing student needs but must also examine how to remove barriers that hinder their progress. Community resources or wraparound services may provide these families with supplemental

services that empower student learning. The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation (2010) in partnership with the Saint Paul public schools contributes to student success by reducing or eliminating obstacles that impede learning by providing onsite services. The services provided include oral health, basic needs, mental health, after-school tutoring, parenting classes, and job skills services necessary to enhance the growth of at-risk students and their families. Students are more likely to focus on learning if their basic needs are met prior to coming to school each day.

Chang and Lawyer (2012) conducted phone interviews with principals, site coordinators, and teachers in 14 schools across the United States that amalgamate wraparound services while emphasizing an effective academic concentration to assist substantial percentages of at-risk students. There were four main developments that transpired from their discussions:

- Providing students with health-related care at the school saved valuable instructional time.
- Providing students and families with basic needs decreased transience in the schools; a decrease in mobility benefits teachers by providing stability and consistency in their classroom.
- Offering family events or programs can inspire parents to connect more with teachers and embolden them to support their children with schoolwork and reinforce the effort of the teachers.
- Recruiting community partners and service benefactors, such as in school health care providers, can lessen burnout propensities and stress levels, so teachers can concentrate on academic student needs. (Chang & Lawyer, 2012)

Providing at-risk students and their families with the resources they desperately need alleviates student anxiety so focus can be channeled to academic achievement rather than on essentials for survival.

Behavior

With an increasing number of at-risk students enrolled in schools today, many administrators have turned to other sources to reduce the number of discipline referrals as an alternative to expulsion (Bohanon et al., 2006). Positive behavior supports (PBS) framework can be an essential tool when combating behavioral concerns to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions. Walker, Cheney, Stage, Blum, and Horner (2005) conducted a study to examine the performance of 72 at-risk students in three elementary schools with PBS programming in place. Students were identified through testing processes and monitored twice monthly for behavior trends. By examining discipline referrals using school-wide screening procedures, schools are accurately able to identify at-risk students' behaviors and implement positive proactive approaches to combat them. In spite of systematic identification efforts, transiency is an area that brings new challenges for at-risk students and the schools they attend. However, by clearly identifying behavior issues on a continual cycle, schools become more proactive in their approach and can use existing resources more efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of their at-risk students.

Although the general public would perceive the early grades to be not as challenging when it comes to inappropriate or rebellious behaviors, Walker et al. (2005) found that students from specific elementary schools with two or more office referrals actually came from the primary grades. The schools in the study addressed the needs early in the students' school careers by using the PBS model for more than three years and monitoring student behavior

consistently and systematically. These educators believe this may have assisted the stabilization of emotional, social, and academic needs in the intermediate grades. Identifying students at-risk of inappropriate behaviors early by tracking behavior, and providing specific levels of interventions, may help in reducing the number of students referred for intense interventions further in their school career (Walker et al., 2005). Elementary schools' utilization of PBS data collection, analysis, and preventive strategies for disruptive behaviors at the beginning of a student's school career may lead to a more conducive learning environment for all learners.

Decreasing inappropriate behaviors is a continual challenge for staff members who serve at-risk students with severe social and emotional issues. Restori, Gresham, Chang, Lee, and Laija-Rodriquez (2007) conducted functional assessments to identify disruptive behaviors in eight at-risk students. These students were selected based on their typical behaviors such as attention seeking or task avoidance. The students were randomly assigned to a management strategy that was mainly consequence or antecedent based. The study compared the management strategies and concluded the students who were shown antecedent-based management strategies such as self-monitoring and task modification were more effective at decreasing disruptive behaviors and increasing academic commitments. Using such a strategy with students who frequently use inappropriate behaviors may help them to become self-aware of their destructive actions and redirect them on a path to correcting undesirable behaviors.

Another successful behavior intervention strategy is noted in school teams throughout the United States that assemble regularly to develop behavior support plans for at-risk students with chronic behavior problems. These plans involve reduction of disorderly behavior, strategies for improved social and academic performance, and diminution of classroom interruptions to their peers (Benazzi, Good, & Horner, 2006). Benazzi et al. (2006) conducted a study to assess how

the composition of behavior support teams affected the design of behavior support plans. They observed 58 school staff personnel on 12 behavior support teams from average elementary schools with six behavior specialists participating in the study. After ranking teams with and without behavior specialists, the teams with specialists were preferred for their behavior plans over the teams without specialists. The implications of this study were to emphasize the magnitude and necessity for behavior support teams who understand the students and apply this knowledge to provide plans that are feasible and able to be implemented with fidelity. Utilizing a team of people knowledgeable about the individual student will ensure functional behavior plans guide the collection of behavior support plan strategies that are most likely to change student behavior. No individual has all the necessary information to construct an effective plan for a struggling student. Team members need to be knowledgeable of the setting, of behavioral theory, and of the student (Benazzi et al., 2006).

Relationship building is also a crucial behavior intervention strategy used to increase positive behavioral, social, and engagement outcomes for at-risk students (Christenson, Decker, & Dona, 2006). It is essential to the learning process that educators work to provide positive environments for all students by building relationships with their students, especially those at risk of failure or those on the trajectory of less-than-desirable outcomes. An investigative study by Christenson et al. (2006) was conducted on behaviorally at-risk Black students on watch for special education referral. Teachers categorized the students based on evidence of behavior concerns within the classroom. This study included 25 teachers and 44 students from three urban and two suburban elementary schools in a Midwestern state. Teachers who reported an increase in student-teacher positive relationships also reported an increase in positive behavioral, social, and engagement results for students. The implications of this study clearly signify the attributes

of student-teacher relationships can either reinforce or dissuade resiliency for students at risk (Christenson et al., 2006).

Christenson et al. (2006) also conducted a study that clearly indicates at-risk students want positive relationships with their teachers and how they feel about their relationships with educators is essential for predicting a number of student outcomes. Therefore, it is vital to clearly understand how students feel, particularly at young ages and in time for intervention and prevention attempts. School psychologists can be indispensable mediators in the school and can contribute to interventions in relationships between students and teachers when they are less than idyllic. By working with students and teachers to develop the characteristics of the relationship, school psychologists might be able to amend student outcomes.

Curriculum and Instruction

Understanding the best methods for instructing at-risk students begins prior to becoming an educator. Instructional strategies for at-risk students encompass a wide range of options; thus, teacher preparation for utilizing appropriate instructional strategies to better meet the needs of these challenging students begins at the university level. Teacher preparation programs necessitate an exploration of strategies that affect the learning development of at-risk students. Strategies must be used by teachers, modeled by professors, and then applied by preservice teachers (Cuthrell, Stapleton, & Ledford, 2010). Schools can be more effectively equipped to serve at-risk students by working in conjunction with local universities to assist in the preparation of preservice educators in meeting the needs of these students.

Although teachers need adequate preparation, they also need to understand just how important they are to the success of their students. There is a wide variety of research that indicates the teacher as the most influential component of student achievement. A study by

Grant, Popp, and Stronge (2008) at The College of William and Mary found the most critical factor in working with at-risk/high transience students was the teacher. The study consisted of six classroom teachers working with at-risk students and what comprised their success with these students. This qualitative and quantitative study revealed these successful teachers focused on both emotional and academic needs. Their focus was on relationship building and delivery of instruction. Effective teachers spent approximately an equal amount time on planning for their instructional goals as they did on the students' emotional needs. High expectations should be at the forefront of the teacher's instruction, while ensuring students receive exactly what they need for success (Grant et al., 2008).

At-risk students not only necessitate relationships with their teachers, they also require relevant learning that connects to their life experiences. Effective teaching means embedding real-world problems throughout the curriculum and instruction. Wenglinsky (2004) conducted a study on racial achievement gaps of middle school math students using data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Wenglinsky found that instructional practices with the greatest impact on narrowing the achievement gap between low SES students and high SES students were those that involved real-world math problems. Relevant learning is meaningful for students in connecting with and understanding for long-term retention (Wenglinsky, 2004).

One way to make learning relevant to students is to identify the learning styles of the students and utilizing technology as a learning tool. Wenglinsky (2004) shared the achievement gap can be closed depending on what teaching techniques the teachers choose to employ. Multiple intelligences, learning styles strategies, and instructional delivery options need to be exercised for optimum learning for at-risk students. He added an additional reminder that today's students are technology savvy and understand how to utilize it to enhance their

knowledge. This makes it imperative that textbooks and technology tools need to be up-to-date and utilized in a balanced approach to learning (National Alternative Education Association, 2009a).

Curriculum and instruction strategies for at-risk students are critical for maximizing achievement levels. Cuthrell et al. (2010) found that the school environment was one of the most crucial aspects of working with at-risk students. Predominantely, there are several teaching and learning strategies that are related to school improvement:

- Hire and retain staff who are committed to high expectations for all learners (Reeves, 2004).
- Focus on small achievable goals (Marzano, 2003).
- Use assessments for continuous feedback to drive instructional decisions (Reeves, 2003).
- Collaborate to promote writing in all content areas (Reeves, 2003).
- Common assessments created for curriculum outcomes and expectations (Reeves, 2003).
- Continuous school-wide collaboration to discuss student expectations and outcomes (Marzano, 2003).
- Use creative scheduling to provide for the needs of the students and staff (Danielson, 2002).
- Spend resources on collaboration, not on programs, to determine what strategies are most effective for the student clientele (Reeves, 2003).

Additionally, relationship building with students and family (Pugach, 2006), planning lessons that are meaningful and relevant to the students, and promoting high expectations for all learners

(Pellino, 2006), are all essential strategies that postulate an environment for at-risk students that is productive and cultivating.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has been continuously reviewed for strategies to improve at-risk students' academic performance. Educational scholars have used their knowledge to progress policies devised to further parental involvement to enhance educational outcomes for students (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002). In 2004, a case study was directed at an elementary school in the Pacific Northwest to investigate parental involvement among low-income students and their families (Smith, 2006). A variety of events was observed, such as parent nights, before-school programming, after-school programming, and other actions designed to involve the parents. This study found schools searching to increase parental involvement by offering services to families that bring them into the school. Inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or churches to school functions can enhance increased parental involvement. Providing community-based services in the school, based on the families' needs, will also bring parents into the school routinely. Encouragement and acknowledgement of parents' efforts, no matter how small, is essential to ongoing parental involvement (Smith, 2006). L. H. Brown and Beckett (2007) researched the importance of parental involvement as it pertains to reforming at-risk students in alternative settings. They found students require more than provisional remediation to advance social and behavior skills. The key factors for promoting success in at-risk students are involving parents/guardians and teacher commitment for optimum success.

A study of at-risk students conducted on urban sixth grade students in three schools that were ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged, as part of a service-learning program, sought active parental consent for participation in school-based health surveys (Secor-Turner,

Sieving, Widome, Plowman, & Vanden Berk, 2010). The goal of the study was to achieve acceptable rates of parental permission. Multiple procedures were put in place including traditional communication with school staff, direct encouragement of students to return forms through multiple classroom visits, incentives for teachers and schools, as well as student and school incentives. They utilized Fisher's exact tests to compare specific characteristics among the parents who did not comply, those who refused, and those who gave their consent to participate. Secor-Turner et al. (2010) had a 94% response rate by using a multifaceted active parent consent campaign. They found that students with unreachable parents had been absent from school more than those students of parents who were contacted. Repeated contact, follow-up phone calls, and options for parental permission all contributed to the success of the study. A successful parental involvement strategy involves a substantial commitment on the part of the school staff's time and financial resources (Secor-Turner et al., 2010); however, it is well worth the time and money if it generates active parental participation.

Statler and Peterson (2003) found a link between creating a nurturing environment and providing support services for the students' families. At-risk students and their families need the enlistment of community resources for a quality education. School administrators and teachers found that respecting and valuing parent/guardian feedback may lead to promoting a sense of partnership in developing a quality education for at-risk learners. Interventions intended to reinforce parental involvement should originate by building on families' interpretations for the fundamental diversity in which parents relate to their children (Hartas, 2011). By offering interventions at the family level such as family literacy, by supporting mothers to access educational resources and maximize their financial and human capital, at- risk children will be

provided with cognitively motivating information that will heighten literacy-based skills and enrichment activities.

Family literacy programs require a necessity for supporting families to extend their human capital, rather than a narrowed focus of supporting parents to simply transfer numeracy and literacy skills to their children (Hartas, 2011). Most critically, family literacy is becoming necessary in the continually changing face of poverty and the diversified need of families living in impoverished and challenging situations that affect a child's learning outcomes. Family programs that focus more on developing both parents' literacy and parenting skills will have a longer lasting influence on increasing children's proficiencies at school entrance and beyond Hartas, 2011).

Reaching parents and educating them prior to school beginnings is critical for narrowing the achievement gap for disadvantaged young children. Although there are multiple factors that hinder the progress of at-risk children, parental involvement in educating children prior to their enrollment in school may be one of the most crucial pieces to educational progress. Many researchers suggest that test score gaps begin at home. Children's experiences prior to entering kindergarten are essential to their academic success (Wenglinsky, 2004). Lee and Burkham (2002) discussed that family experiences and preschool are the keys to eliminating the achievement gap. The point of the gap is already significant for disadvantaged children before they enter kindergarten.

Professional Development

Professional development and a shared vision are key elements in working with staff who serve at-risk students. Statler and Peterson (2003) studied the critical components existing in an exemplary prevention program focused on at-risk students in Grades K- 6. They questioned

administrators, teachers, and parents/guardians regarding the program's ability to reduce characteristics of at-risk students. The researchers found that a shared mission based on beliefs, meanings, and values of at-risk students led to their success. Assumptions of at-risk students were the focus of change throughout the school. A student-centered approach, relationship building, and knowledge of the learner were addressed as prime objectives in the school. These students struggled with connecting their learning with real life situations; therefore, the use of relevant and meaningful learning was essential to successful outcomes of the at-risk learners.

Once the direction of the staff is established and a vision is shared, teachers need instruction on the importance of building relationships with at-risk students. Since many teachers come from different ethnic backgrounds, they need development in how to reach their students. A qualitative study completed in a Washington high school found that communicating caring relationships is one important factor for reaching at-risk students (Knesting, 2008). The study determined committed and caring teachers were more influential to at-risk students than academic assistance or counseling curriculums intended to assist these children. Teachers who sought to understand the behavior of their students, accepted them as they were, and believed in their ability to succeed, were especially able to reach at-risk students. An exemplary model of this was executed in a teacher's classroom where academic challenges, high expectations, respect and safety were demanded. Teachers who talk to their students in the cafeteria, hallways, or implore their opinions on worthy matters, alter students' attitudes about school (Knesting, 2008).

Professional development may also be influential in articulating knowledgeable options that enhance the use of community resources to boost student achievement. Castrechini and London's (2012) study revealed convincing findings that correlated family engagement and utilization of community resources moved one district to generate a movement for district-wide

professional development trainings for school principals, coordinators, and family engagement procedures. Educators need to be informed of community resources and how to best utilize them to benefit at-risk student populations.

At-risk students usually come from a variety of cultural backgrounds that make them unique, yet at times, difficult for many teachers to understand. Teachers need to be knowledgeable and well trained in the concept of culturally responsive teaching (Taylor, 2010), especially in areas where there is a high concentration of at-risk students. Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007) shared that culturally responsive instruction promotes achievement for all students. In an effective culturally responsive classroom, instruction and learning transpire in a culturally supported, learner-centered environment, where strengths are distinguished, nurtured, and employed to develop academic achievement. Culturally responsive teachers first conduct a self-assessment to determine their background knowledge of other cultures and themselves, develop a variety of culturally responsive teaching methods and materials, create classroom environments that celebrate and respect other cultures, establish interactive learning environments, and utilize culturally responsive assessments (M. R. Brown, 2007).

Engaging at-risk students in their learning can be at times challenging for many educators. Response strategies are instrumental in optimizing student engagement for at-risk students. Teachers benefit from professional development that develops an understanding that increased response rates promote an increase in correct response and a decrease in disruptive behavior (Heward, 2003), therefore benefiting at-risk students by employing culturally responsive strategies. There are several strategies that teachers can develop in order to become effective at culturally responsive instruction. Heward (2003) proposed using choral responding,

guided note cards, and response cards as means to increase response rates. Cartledge and Kourea (2008) found other characteristics of the culturally responsive teachers:

- appropriate pacing: brisk pace that includes three second interval responses between tasks to reduce incidence of off-task and disruptive behavior;
- timely feedback: errors corrected quickly, explicitly, directly, and frequently;
- continuous monitoring-explicit instruction is aligned to student performance using short formative assessments to obtain a comprehensive overview of strengths and weakness of each student; and
- community building: creating a positive environment that is learning focused and community driven. (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008)

Achieving success in creating culturally responsive classrooms is a transformative process in the field of education (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008); teachers need time and development to reach a culturally responsive level that meets the needs of the culturally diverse at-risk children struggling to become productive learners.

Differentiated instruction is an additional area in which teachers require extensive training. Dunn et al. (2009) stated that professional development for educators must achieve clear processes for differentiating instruction centered on learning style so individual students are instructed effectively. To effectively teach, educators must understand how to teach students based on their specific brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and perceptual strengths. This method has been considered successful with students exhibiting a wide spectrum of challenges with their learning (Dunn, 1993).

In addition to teachers, professional development is also needed for school leaders. The Institute for Educational Leadership (2000) provided the following summary in regards to principals:

> Even as communities shine a public spotlight on principals when their schools' test scores are released and prescribe stiff penalties for many when their schools perform below expectations, current principals find very little in their professional preparation or ongoing professional development that equip them for this new role. Nor are they supported in this leadership role by their school districts, which, for decades, have expected principals to do little more than follow orders, oversee school staff and contain conflict. So instead, principals mainly stick with what they know, struggling to juggle the multiplying demands of running a school in a sea of rising expectations, complex student needs, enhanced accountability, expanding diversity, record enrollments and staff shortfalls. In short, the demands placed on principals have changed, but the profession has not changed to meet those demands. (pp. 2-3)

In a study conducted by Keith (2011), specific needs for principal professional development were identified to assist public school systems. Principals serving students with a 75-100% free- and reduced-lunch status suggested a strong desire to want professional development to increase school effectiveness and increase student achievement, especially in areas of English language learners (ELL), and raising achievement for students with disabilities. School corporations should focus on professional development for principals, who assist in the comprehension of economic inequities and how that impacts student achievement. The principals in this study also revealed a need to provide teachers with training programs necessary to ensure success of ELL students and students with disabilities (Keith, 2011).

Alternative Education

Alternative education is yet another intervention used for at-risk students. A study by Hosley (2003) concluded that 93% of alternative programs served students in Grades 7-12; however, only 4% of those surveyed provided services to students in the elementary grades. The study concluded that at-risk students are perhaps identifiable as early as Grade 3 (Hosley, 2003). Much research is available for students who are at-risk at the secondary level; however, elementary students with the same characteristics have not necessarily been offered the same opportunities. Carver and Lewis (2010) stated that of the school districts surveyed throughout the United States, only around 8% of students in Grades 1-5 were being serviced in this capacity, which was an increase over the previous seven years. Research on alternative education offers little insight for elementary at-risk students; therefore, the following secondary alternative research is used to provide a comparison of intervention strategies that could be implemented with at-risk elementary students.

In 2007-08, a nationwide study on alternative schools was conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences (Carver & Lewis, 2010). The study found more than 10,000 district-administered programs for at-risk students.

> Most of the districts reported offering alternative schools and programs for students in grades 9 through 12 (88 to 96%), with offerings for grades 6 through 8 reported by 41 to 63% of districts, and for grades 1 through 5 by 8 to 18 % of districts. (Carver & Lewis, 2010, p. 3)

A total of 646,500 students were enrolled in some type of alternative programming in 2007-08 (Carver & Lewis, 2010).

Alternative schools can be configured in a variety of ways: schools within a school (located on a traditional campus), district-wide or separate programs, regional programs (serving more than one district), and/or located within a vocational or technical school (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999). Considerations for site location of an alternative school should be researched for potential conflicts in regards to transportation and community acceptance (Henrich, 2005).

There are typically three types of alternative schools as noted by Aron (2006). Type I alternative schools offer more individualized instruction, personalized whole-student centered approach, and instruction based on the students' challenging circumstances. Type II alternative schools are those approached with a disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last-chance placements prior to expulsion. This approach is less likely to stimulate student academic growth. Type III alternative schools provide counseling and social services along with academic support, yet allow the students the option to participate. Type I and Type II alternative schools are increasingly apt to offer clinical counseling and other psychological services (Aron, 2003).

Choice in an alternative program seems to be an option for those students who are socially awkward, need flexible schedules, or are seeking other alternatives to the traditional school setting. In a study conducted in the state of Georgia, Pope (2007) found that choice changes the entire atmosphere of the alternative school. Student attendance increases, discipline problems are decreased, and academics become a priority for students (Pope, 2007). Some schools reported not giving grades to help students transition back to their home schools by experiencing success (Pope, 2007).

Cable, Plucker, and Spradlin (2009) stated the IDOE recommends alternative schools offer non-traditional elements such as career planning, character education, counseling, parenting

programs, innovative strategies, life skills, and behavior and anger management. The program should be appropriately paced, project-based, mastery based, and address individual learning styles. Project-based learning should be at the core of the alternative school and they should never be a punished, as proven by research to have no long-term positive effects.

Alternative school best practices include a search for well-trained teachers and retention of a staff that will strategically design, scrutinize, and execute prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the needs of at-risk students. Highly skilled educators with a diverse set of behavior management and social strategies, as well as positive behavior supports, are a necessity in an alternative school setting (L. H. Brown & Beckett, 2007). Program targets are to be constructed upon student behavior and social improvement and are the basis of program accountability, assessment, and development (National Alternative Education Association, 2009a).

Counseling services provide another layer of support for at-risk students in an alternative setting. Perepiczka (2009) stated that school counselors were challenged to meet the social and emotional needs of students serving in alternative education settings and still follow the American School Counselor Association's (2005) national model. This model was used on elementary students with disruptive behaviors placed in an alternative setting. Counselors were one of the few people students had contact with who gave them an appropriate outlet for building character and facilitating their adjustment to an appropriate school learning environment. Group counseling services were used for students to share personal experiences, feel group acceptance, and become aware of others suffering the same issues. Self-awareness was also included in the counseling services. Students were taught self-worth, friendship, stress management, self-care, and cultural identity. At-risk elementary students placed in alternative settings may have

suffered from numerous problems that impacted their ability to function appropriately in society. Focusing on positive characteristics, students can build on their strengths instead of problematic behaviors. As one of the first models for use with elementary alternative students, it has proven to have systematic guidelines to assist counselors with social, emotional, and behavior concerns for at-risk students placed in an alternative setting (Perepiczka, 2009).

The literature also points to a number of components necessary for effective practices for at-risk students in alternative programs. Kerka (2003) characterized caring, knowledgeable adults, a sense of community, assets approach, a respect for youth, multidimensional developmental curriculum, authentic and engaging learning, and long-term follow-up services as essential components in creating an effective learning environment for students who are at-risk of academic and social failure. Kerka (2005) also found that low student/teacher ratio, qualified staff, and contiguous professional development are considered best practices for effective alternative schools. A rigorous relevant curriculum, culturally responsive teaching, social skills practice, and hands-on activities effectively support the at-risk students. Included in this list of best practices is a positive school climate with a staff that fosters mutual respect among students and parents/guardians as well as transitioning students with continuous support; these effective elements are necessary for alternative school students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine if there are significant differences in perception regarding the importance of utilizing strategies and programs for at-risk students according to employment position, geographic location, and percentage of free- and reduced-lunch population**.** This study also examined intervention strategies and programming currently being implemented in Indiana elementary alternative programs.

Research Questions

This study has a concentrated focus on a specific population of at-risk students:

1. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on employment position?
2. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on demographic location?
3. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on a school's free- and reduce lunch percentage?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were developed through the research questions:

$H_0$1. There is no significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on employment position.

$H_0$2. There is no significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on demographic location.

$H_0$3. There is no significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on a school's free- and reduced-lunch percentage.

Description of the Sample

This study consisted of perceptions gathered from teachers and principals from Indiana urban, suburban, and rural elementary schools consisting of Grades K-5 or K-6. One first grade teacher, one fifth grade teacher, and a principal from each elementary school were surveyed for data collection.

Data Sources

For this study, a survey was conducted with elementary teachers and principals of the importance in using the following concepts when working with at-risk students: support service/counseling, community resource partners, behavior strategies, curriculum and instructional strategies, parental involvement, and staff professional development (Appendix A). Under each concept were three specific strategies/programs found in the literature for fostering the growth of academic performance of at-risk students. An Indiana State University Ph. D cohort group reviewed the survey for readability and understanding to ensure validity; adjustments were made based on the cohort's feedback.

A Likert-type scale was used to determine the importance of each concept and specific strategy/program. The scale had a range from 1 through 10 with 1 being not important, 5 being neutral, and 10 being extremely important.

Demographic data were collected on free- and reduced-lunch status using the following categories: 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, and 76-100%. Data were also collected on geographic location consisting of urban, suburban, and rural settings, and primary, intermediate, and administrative positions at each school.

Survey Design

The survey was developed through extensive research of appropriate strategies for utilization when working with at-risk students. Questions 1-5 asked participants to share information about years of service in education, employment level, SES status, Title I status, and geographic location of their school. Questions 6-9 addressed beliefs about support services/counseling, questions 9-11 surveyed beliefs on using community resource partners to assist at-risk students, questions 12-14 asked beliefs about behavior intervention strategies, questions 15-17 reviewed curriculum and instructional strategies, questions 18-20 surveyed parental involvement strategies, questions 21-23 involved professional development needs, and questions 24-26 asked about beliefs of using alternative education as a strategy for at-risk students. Questions 27-31 were specific to building principals. These questions included questions about current alternative programs, how long they have been in existence, and if it was effective (why or why not). Participants were also asked to describe their alternative program if it is applicable.

An Informed Consent for Survey form (Appendix B) was included on the first page of the survey to obtain consent from each educator, prior to his or her participation. An Indiana State

University Ph. D cohort group reviewed the survey for readability and understanding to ensure validity; adjustments were made based on the cohort's feedback. To ensure the reliability among the survey responses, a Cronbach Alpha test was ran. With a Cronbach Alpha test score of .784 the internal consistency of the survey results have been proven as the test score exceeds the .7 recommended level.

Data Collection Procedures

An email was sent to 300 elementary school principals in the state of Indiana, based on the most recent data from the IDOE, asking them to participate in the study. In addition, 1,100 elementary teachers received an email; however, only first grade and fifth grade teachers were asked to participate. The three strategies/programs under each concept were averaged to arrive at a composite score.

Method of Analysis

This study tested the null hypotheses using one-way ANOVAs. The reason for using the one-way ANOVA was to determine whether there is a significant difference in one dependent variable with three or more groups (employment, SES, geographic location). If a significant difference was determined in the ANOVA output, a post-hoc test was utilized to determine whether the significant difference lies among the grouping variables. The follow-up tests were the Tukey's HSD post-hoc test as long as the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met. If this assumption was violated, then a Games-Howell post-hoc test was utilized as equal variances are not needed for this test.

Summary

Addressing the academic challenges of at-risk students has been an ongoing concern for educators. This study was conducted to analyze the difference in the importance of utilizing

three specific strategies/programs categorized under seven overall concepts for at-risk students, based on SES, geographic location, and school employment position. This quantitative data provide insight to educational leaders and policy makers on the importance of utilizing strategies and programming for the most needy students. This study also examined the existing alternative programming being implemented across Indiana elementary schools. The information may be used by educators struggling to develop alternatives to addressing the needs of the most challenging students.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Research Questions

This study had a concentrated focus on a specific population of at-risk students:

1. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on employment position?
2. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on demographic location?
3. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on a school's free- and reduced-lunch percentage?

Descriptive Data—Whole Sample

For this study, a survey was conducted with elementary teachers and principals to determine the importance of using the following concepts when working with at-risk students: support service/counseling, community resource partners, behavior strategies, curriculum and instructional strategies, parental involvement, and staff professional development and alternative education (Appendix A). Out of the 227 respondents, 20 (8.8%) had less than five years experience, 34 (15%) had 6-10 years, 54 (23.8%) had 11-15 years experience, and 119 (52.4%)

had 16 or more years in the field of education.

Employment level for each educator was also collected. Out of the 227 respondents who participated in the study, 65 (28.6%) were primary teachers, 56 (24.7%) were intermediate teachers, and 106 (46.7%) were principals. Surveys were sent to 1,100 teachers in which 121 participated totaling an overall response rate of .11 (11%). An overall response rate of .35 (35%) was calculated based on 300 principals receiving the survey with 106 participating.

Demographic data were collected on free- and reduced-lunch status using the following categories: 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, and 76-100%. Twenty-six (11.5%) participants' schools had 0-25% of their students participating in free- and reduced-lunch programs. There were 54 (23.8%) respondents who ranked their school as having 26-50% free/reduced lunch, 65 (28.6%) respondents who ranked their school as having 51-75% free/reduced lunch, and 82 (36.1%) respondents who ranked their school as having 76-100% free/reduced lunch.

Respondents were also asked to share their Title I status. The survey revealed that 60 (26.3%) participants worked in a targeted assistance building, 117 (51.5%) participants worked in a school-wide Title I building, and 50 (22.8%) had no Title I affiliation.

Data were also collected on geographic location consisting of urban, suburban, and rural settings. Seventy-one (31.3%) schools were identified as rural, 66 (29.1%) schools were identified as suburban, and 90 (39.6%) schools were identified as urban.

Elementary teachers and principals were asked how they would rank the importance of using the following concepts when working with at-risk students: support service/counseling, community resource partners, behavior strategies, curriculum and instructional strategies, parental involvement, staff professional development, and alternative education (Appendix A). There were a total of 21 questions; under each of the seven concepts were three specific

strategies/programs found in the literature for fostering the growth of academic performance of at-risk students. A Likert-type scale was used to determine the importance of each concept and specific strategy/program. The scale ranged from 1 through 10 with 1 being *not important*, 5 being *neutral*, and 10 being *extremely important*.

Respondents were asked to rate specific support services/counseling strategies used in working with at-risk students. Of the 227 respondents, 197 (86.8%) ranked this strategy 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student-centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength-based interventions, student empowerment) was rated 7 or higher by 210 (92.3%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how important mentoring programs are for decreasing inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported 7 or higher by 201 (88.5%) participants.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher in importance by 196 (86.3%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care-related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 191 (84.2%). Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated 7 or higher by 180 (79.3%) of the participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems such as PBS, to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported 7 or higher by 173 (76.2%). Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior was rated 7 or

higher by 181 (79.7%). Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated 7 or higher by 208 (97.4%) participants.

Participant perceptions of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 182 (80.1%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real-world instruction was also rated as an effective strategy for at-risk students by 173 (76.2%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. In addition, providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated by 202 (89%) respondents with a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on providing community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs by 170 (74.9%) respondents were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert-type scale. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their children's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts was believed by 165 (72.7%) respondents to earn a rating of 7 or higher. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated by 189 (83.2%) of the respondents with a score of 7 or higher.

Professional development to ensure a school has a shared vision of beliefs, meanings, and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated by 186 (81.9%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated by 185 (81.4%) participants to have a score of 7 or higher. Also, professional development needs for

use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised by 191 (84.1%) participants with a score of 7 or higher.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated 7 or higher by 186 (79.3%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 121 (53.3%) participants. Type III (provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 138 (60.8%) participants.

The three lowest scores reported were Type II alternative education ($M = 6.45$, $SD = 2.36$), Type III alternative education ($M = 6.89$, $SD = 2.17$) and providing community organization contact for parents ($M = 7.58$, $SD = 2.05$). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to having high expectations for at-risk students ($M = 8.59$, $SD = 1.73$), providing wraparound services ($M = 8.72$, $SD = 1.68$) and building positive relationships to increase positive behavior outcomes ($M = 8.72$, $SD = 1.75$). The overall composite score of all 21 survey questions for strategies believed to be useful in working with at-risk students was 8.01 with a standard deviation of 1.42 as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (Whole Sample)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.48	1.93
Wraparound Services	8.72	1.68
Mentoring Programs	8.39	1.79
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	8.25	1.70
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	8.17	1.70
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	8.04	1.97
Positive Behavior Supports	7.88	2.24
Behavior Support Teams	8.03	2.07
Positive Relationship Building	8.72	1.75
Preservice Teacher Development	8.14	2.01
Relevant Teaching	7.78	2.02
High Expectations for Learners	8.59	1.73
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	7.58	2.05
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	7.66	2.18
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	8.16	1.98
Staff Development on Shared Vision	8.16	2.00
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	8.04	2.08
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	8.23	1.90
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction)	7.79	1.94
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	6.45	2.36
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	6.86	2.17

Descriptive Data by Position (Primary Teacher)

Primary teacher respondents were asked how strongly they believe that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 65 respondents, 53 (81.5%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength-based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 61 (93.8%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how important mentoring programs are for decreasing

inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported by 60 (92.3%) participants a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher in importance by 58 (87.8%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care-related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 55 (84.6%). Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated 7 or higher by 56 (86.1%) of the participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS, to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported 7 or higher by 48 (77.4%). Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated 7 or higher by 49 (75.4%). Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated 7 or higher by 59 (90.7%) participants.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also included in the survey. The survey found that 53 (81.5%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real-world instruction was also rated an effective strategy for at-risk students by 53 (81.5%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. Providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated 7 or higher by 60 (92.3%) respondents

Beliefs on inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or

churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert-type scale by 53 (81.5%) respondents. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their children's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts earned a rating of 7 or higher by 48 (73.8%) respondents. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated 7 or higher by 61 (93.8%) of the respondents.

Professional development to ensure a school has a shared vision of beliefs, meanings and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated 7 or higher by 53 (81.5%) participants. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated 7 or higher by 54 (83.0%) participants. Professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised with a score of 7 or higher by 55 (84.6%) participants.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated a 7 or higher by 53 (81.5%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 38 (58.4%) participants. Type III (provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child,

yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 40 (61.5%) participants.

The three lowest scores reported were Type II alternative education ($M = 6.64$, $SD = 2.49$), Type III alternative education ($M = 7.06$, $SD = 2.22$) and providing positive behavior supports ($M = 7.67$, $SD = 2.25$). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to creating a nurturing environment for at-risk students and their families ($M = 8.76$, $SD = 1.44$), having high expectations ($M = 8.78$, $SD = 1.45$) and providing wraparound services to support the wellbeing of the at-risk student ($M = 8.93$, $SD = 1.35$). The overall composite score of the primary teachers taking the survey was 8.01 with a standard deviation of 1.42 (Table 2).

Table 2

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (Primary Teachers)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.50	1.91
Wraparound Services	8.93	1.35
Mentoring Programs	8.63	1.43
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	8.40	1.64
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	8.20	1.83
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	8.46	1.75
Positive Behavior Supports	7.67	2.25
Behavior Support Teams	7.98	2.13
Positive Relationship Building	8.69	1.79
Preservice Teacher Development	8.24	1.77
Relevant Teaching	7.80	2.07
High Expectations for Learners	8.78	1.45
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	8.06	1.92
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	7.78	2.11
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	8.76	1.44
Staff Development on Shared Vision	8.07	1.93
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	8.10	1.86
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	8.26	1.84
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction	7.76	1.68
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	6.64	2.49
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	7.06	2.22

Descriptive Data by Position (Intermediate Teacher)

Intermediate teacher respondents were asked how strongly they believed that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 56 respondents, 47 (83.9%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student-centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 49 (87.5%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how they important mentoring programs are for decreasing inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported 7 or higher by 46 (82.1%) participants.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher in importance by 44 (78.5%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 43 (76.7%) participants. Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated a score of 7 or higher by 36 (64.2%) of the participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS, to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported 7 or higher by 36 (64.2%) participants. Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated 7 or higher by 39 (69.6%) participants. Positive relationship building to increase

positive behavior outcomes was rated 7 or higher by 47 (83.9%) participants.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 39 (69.6%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real world instruction was also rated an effective strategy for at-risk students by 38 (67.8%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. Providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated 7 or higher by 47 (83.9%) respondents.

Beliefs on inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert scale by 37 (66.0%) respondents. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their children's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts earned a rating of 7 or higher by 36 (64.2%) respondents. Parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated 7 or higher by 39 (69.6%) of the respondents.

Professional development to ensure a school has a shared vision of beliefs, meanings and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated 7 or higher by 39 (69.6%) participants. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated 7 or higher by 40 (71.4%) participants. Professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions,

interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised by 41 (73.2%) participants with a score of 7 or higher.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated 7 or higher by 40 (71.4%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 32 (57.1%) participants. Type III (provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 32 (57.1%) participants.

The three lowest scores reported for intermediate teachers were Type III alternative education ($M = 6.67$, $SD = 2.35$), Type II alternative education ($M = 6.64$, $SD = 2.40$) and providing community organization contact for families ($M = 7.17$, $SD = 2.09$). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to providing wraparound services to support the wellbeing of the at-risk student ($M = 8.28$, $SD = 1.93$), having high expectations ($M = 8.23$, $SD = 2.17$) and positive relationship building ($M = 8.10$, $SD = 2.03$). The overall composite score of the intermediate teachers taking the survey was 7.56 with a standard deviation of 1.75 (Table 3).

Table 3

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (Intermediate Teachers)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.07	2.16
Wraparound Services	8.28	1.93
Mentoring Programs	7.98	2.19
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	7.96	1.88
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	7.66	2.02
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	7.32	2.27
Positive Behavior Supports	7.30	2.55
Behavior Support Teams	7.51	2.15
Positive Relationship Building	8.10	2.03
Preservice Teacher Development	7.62	2.30
Relevant Teaching	7.44	2.27
High Expectations for Learners	8.23	2.17
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	7.17	2.09
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	7.28	2.35
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	7.42	2.22
Staff Development on Shared Vision	7.58	2.34
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	7.39	2.49
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	7.69	2.08
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction	7.76	1.68
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	7.35	2.20
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	6.64	2.40

Descriptive Data by Position (Principal)

Principal respondents were asked how strongly they believe that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 106 respondents, 97 (91.5%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength-based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 100 (94.3%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how they important mentoring programs are for

decreasing inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported by 95 (89.6%) participants a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked by 94 (88.7%) respondents a 7 or higher in importance. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked by 93 (87.7%) a 7 or higher. Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated by 88 (83.0%) of the participants a score of 7 or higher.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported by 89 (83.9%) a 7 or higher. Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated by 93 (87.7%) a 7 or higher. Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated by 102 (96.2%) participants a 7 or higher.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 90 (84.9%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real world instruction was also rated an effective strategy for at-risk students by 82 (77.3%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. In addition, providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated by 95 (89.6%) respondents with a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations or churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs by80 (75.4%) respondents were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert scale. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their child's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts was believed by 81 (76.4%) respondents to earn a rating of 7 or higher. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated by 89 (83.9%) of the respondents to have a score of 7 or higher.

Professional development to ensure a school has a shared vision of beliefs, meanings and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated by 94 (88.6%) participants a score of 7 or higher. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated by 91 (85.8%) participants to have a score of 7 or higher. Also, professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised by 95 (89.6%) participants with a score of 7 or higher.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated 7 or higher by 87 (82.0%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 51 (48.1%) participants. Type III

(provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 66 (66.6%) participants.

The three lowest scores reported for principals were Type II alternative education (M = 6.23, SD = 2.27), Type III alternative education (M = 6.84, SD = 2.06) and providing community organization contact for families (M = 7.50, SD = 2.06). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given positive relationship building (M = 9.07, SD = 1.48), providing wraparound services (M = 8.82, SD = 1.70) and providing support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues (M = 8.69, SD = 1.80). The overall composite score of the principals taking the survey was 8.17 with a standard deviation of 1.32 (Table 4).

Table 4

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (Principals)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.07	2.16
Wraparound Services	8.28	1.93
Mentoring Programs	7.98	2.19
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	7.96	1.88
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	7.66	2.02
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	7.32	2.27
Positive Behavior Supports	7.30	2.55
Behavior Support Teams	7.51	2.15
Positive Relationship Building	8.10	2.03
Preservice Teacher Development	7.62	2.30
Relevant Teaching	7.44	2.27
High Expectations for Learners	8.23	2.17
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	7.17	2.09
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	7.28	2.35
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	7.42	2.22
Staff Development on Shared Vision	7.58	2.34
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	7.39	2.49
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	7.69	2.08
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction)	7.76	1.68
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	7.35	2.20
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	6.64	2.40

Descriptive Data by Location (Rural Educators)

Rural educator respondents were asked how strongly they believe that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 71 respondents, 58 (81.6%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g.,counseling, individualized student-centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 63 (88.7%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how important mentoring programs are for decreasing

inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported by 60 (84.5%) participants a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher by 60 (84.5%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 57 (80.2%). Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated 7 or higher by 57 (80.2%) of the participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS, to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported by 56 (78.8%) a 7 or higher. Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated 7 or higher by 60 (84.5%). Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated 7 or higher by 63 (88.7%) participants.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 58 (81.6%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real-world instruction was also rated an effective strategy for at-risk students by 51 (71.8%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. Providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated 7 or higher by 62 (87.3%) respondents.

Beliefs on inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or

churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs by 47 (66.1%) respondents were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert scale. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their children's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts was believed by 50 (70.4%) respondents to earn a rating of 7 or higher. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated 7 or higher.by 56 (78.8%) of the respondents Professional development to ensure a school has a shared vision of beliefs, meanings, and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated by 56 (78.8%) participants a score of 7 or higher. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated a score of 7 or higher by 54 (76.0%) participants. Professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised by 59 (83.0%) participants with a score of 7 or higher.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated 7 or higher by 57 (80.2%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 40 (56.3%) participants. Type III (provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 50 (70.4%)

participants.

The three lowest scores reported for rural educators were Type II alternative education (M = 6.47, SD = 2.32), providing community organization contact for families (M = 7.19, SD = 2.06) and Type III alternative education (M = 7.30, SD = 2.06). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to providing wraparound services (M = 8.54, SD = 2.05), positive relationship building (M = 8.47, SD = 2.11) and having high expectations (M = 8.35, SD = 1.99). The overall composite score of rural educators taking the survey was 7.92 with a standard deviation of 1.68 (Table 5).

Table 5

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (Rural Educators)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.26	2.32
Wraparound Services	8.54	2.05
Mentoring Programs	8.12	2.09
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	8.12	1.78
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	8.18	1.91
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	7.92	2.11
Positive Behavior Supports	7.97	2.28
Behavior Support Teams	8.18	2.03
Positive Relationship Building	8.47	2.11
Preservice Teacher Development	8.12	2.05
Relevant Teaching	7.71	2.19
High Expectations for Learners	8.35	1.99
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	7.19	2.25
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	7.57	2.51
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	8.04	2.37
Staff Development on Shared Vision	8.00	2.35
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	7.81	2.40
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	8.23	2.05
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction)	7.83	2.04
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	6.47	2.32
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	7.30	2.06

Descriptive Data by Location (Suburban Educators)

Suburban educator respondents were asked how strongly they believe that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 66 respondents 59 (89.3%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 63 (95.4%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how important mentoring programs are for decreasing inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported by 61 (92.4%) participants a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher in importance by 57 (86.3%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 59 (89.3%). Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated 7 or higher by 52 (78.7%) of the participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS, to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported 7 or higher by 47 (71.2%). Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated 7 or higher by 52 (78.7%). Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated 7 or higher by 60 (90.9%) participants.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 52 (78.7%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real world instruction was also rated with a score of 7 or higher as an effective strategy for at-risk students by 51 (77.2%) participants. Providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated 7 or higher by 61 (92.4%) respondents.

Beliefs on inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert scale by 52 (78.7%) respondents. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their children's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts was rated 7 or higher by 52 (78.7%) respondents. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated 7 or higher by 59 (83.3%) of the respondents.

Professional development to ensure a school has a shared vision of beliefs, meanings and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated 7 or higher by 54 (81.8%) participants. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated 7 or higher by 56 (84.8%) participants. Professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were

reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised by 59 (89.3%) participants with a score of 7 or higher.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated 7 or higher by 55 (83.3%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 33 (50.0%) participants. Type III (provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 42 (63.6%) participants.

The three lowest scores reported for suburban educators were Type II alternative education ($M = 6.60$, $SD = 2.12$), Type III alternative education ($M = 7.03$, $SD = 2.17$) and providing community organization contact for families ($M = 7.59$, $SD = 1.88$). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to providing wraparound services ($M = 8.83$, $SD = 1.31$), having high expectations ($M = 8.72$, $SD = 1.38$) and positive relationship building ($M = 8.68$, $SD = 1.58$). The overall composite score of suburban educators taking the survey was 8.10 with a standard deviation of 1.16 (Table 6).

Table 6

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (Suburban Educators)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.62	1.61
Wraparound Services	8.83	1.31
Mentoring Programs	8.57	1.41
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	8.31	1.58
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	8.27	1.63
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	8.04	1.70
Positive Behavior Supports	7.81	1.89
Behavior Support Teams	8.00	1.85
Positive Relationship Building	8.68	1.58
Preservice Teacher Development	8.12	1.77
Relevant Teaching	7.74	1.69
High Expectations for Learners	8.72	1.38
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	7.59	1.88
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	7.86	1.68
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	8.34	1.54
Staff Development on Shared Vision	8.27	1.75
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	8.19	1.83
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	8.53	1.60
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction)	7.93	1.79
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	6.60	2.12
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	7.03	2.17

Descriptive Data by Location (Urban Educators)

Urban educator respondents were asked how strongly they believe that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 66 respondents, 80 (88.8%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 84 (93.3%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how they important mentoring programs are for

decreasing inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were ranked 7 or higher by 80 (88.8%) participants.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher in importance by 79 (87.7%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 75 (83.3%). Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated 7 or higher by 71 (78.8%) participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported by 70 (77.7%) a 7 or higher. Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated by 69 (76.6%) a 7 or higher. Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated 7 or higher by 85 (94.4%) participants.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 72 (80.0%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real world instruction was also rated an effective strategy for at-risk students by 70 (77.7%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. Providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated 7 or higher by 79 (87.7%) respondents.

Beliefs on inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or

churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert scale by 71 (78.8%) respondents. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their children's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts earned a rating of 7 or higher by 63 (70.0%) respondents. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated 7 or higher by 74 (82.2%) of the respondents to have a score of.

Professional development that ensures school leaders, teachers, and parents have a shared vision of beliefs, meanings, and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated 7 or higher by 76 (84.4%) participants. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated 7 or higher by 75 (83.3%) participants. Professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised by 73 (81.1%) participants with a score of 7 or higher.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated 7 or higher by 68 (75.5%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 48 (53.3%) participants. Type III (provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child,

yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 46 (51.1%) participants.

The three lowest scores reported for suburban educators were Type II alternative education ($M = 6.32$, $SD = 2.58$), Type III alternative education ($M = 6.40$, $SD = 2.17$), and multiple attempts to engage parents ($M = 7.59$, $SD = 1.88$). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to positive relationship building ($M = 8.95$, $SD = 1.55$), providing wraparound services ($M = 8.77$, $SD = 1.61$), and having high expectations ($M = 8.70$, $SD = 1.75$). The overall composite score of suburban educators taking the survey was 8.00 with a standard deviation of 1.38 (Table 7).

Table 7

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (Urban Educators)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.56	1.81
Wraparound Services	8.77	1.61
Mentoring Programs	8.46	1.78
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	8.32	1.74
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	8.1	1.96
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	8.13	2.05
Positive Behavior Supports	7.87	2.45
Behavior Support Teams	7.93	2.25
Positive Relationship Building	8.95	1.55
Preservice Teacher Development	8.16	2.15
Relevant Teaching	7.87	2.12
High Expectations for Learners	8.70	1.75
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	7.87	1.98
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	7.60	2.24
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	8.12	1.95
Staff Development on Shared Vision	8.21	1.89
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	8.11	1.99
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	8.02	1.97
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction)	7.65	1.97
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	6.32	2.58
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	6.40	2.20

Descriptive Data by Free- and Reduced-Lunch Percentage (0-25%)

Respondents who work at a school with 0-25% free- and reduced-lunch recipients were asked how strongly they believe that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 26 respondents, 25 (96.1%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 25 (96.1%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how important mentoring programs are for decreasing inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported by 26 (100.0%) participants a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher by 24 (92.3%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 25 (96.1%) respondents. Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated 7 or higher by 22 (84.6%) participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS, to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported by 18 (69.2%) a 7 or higher. Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated 7 or higher by 22 (84.6%). Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated 7 or higher by 25 (96.1%) participants.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 24 (92.3%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real world instruction was also rated an effective strategy for at-risk students by 21 (80.7%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. Providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated 7 or higher by 25 (96.1%) respondents.

Beliefs on providing community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations or churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert scale by 21 (80.7%) respondents. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their child's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts was believed by 23 (88.4%) respondents to earn a rating of 7 or higher. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated 7 or higher by 25 (96.1%) of the respondents.

Professional development to ensure a school has a shared vision of beliefs, meanings, and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated 7 or higher by 23 (88.4%) participants. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating culturally responsive classrooms for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated 7 or higher by 23 (88.4%) participants. Professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were

reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised with a score of 7 or higher by 25 (96.1%) participants.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated a 7 or higher by 23 (88.4%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 15 (57.6%) participants. Type III (provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 19 (73.0%) participants.

The lowest scores reported for educators working in schools with a 0-25% free- and reduced-lunch status were Type II alternative education ($M = 6.15$, $SD = 2.34$), Type III alternative education ($M = 7.30$, $SD = 2.24$), and relevant real world problems ($M = 7.73$, $SD = 1.71$) and providing community organization contact for families ($M = 7.73$, $SD = 2.12$). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to support services/counseling ($M = 9.19$, $SD = 1.26$), positive relationship building ($M = 9.15$, $SD = 1.15$), and wraparound services ($M = 9.00$, $SD = 1.26$). The overall composite score of educators working in schools where 0-25% free- and reduced lunches are served, was 8.38 with a standard deviation of 1.05 (Table 8).

Table 8

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (0-25% Free- and Reduced-Lunch Percentage)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	9.19	1.26
Wraparound Services	9.00	1.26
Mentoring Programs	8.96	1.18
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	8.84	1.46
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	8.76	1.33
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	8.50	1.67
Positive Behavior Supports	7.80	2.28
Behavior Support Teams	8.11	2.00
Positive Relationship Building	9.15	1.15
Preservice Teacher Development	8.69	1.43
Relevant Teaching	7.73	1.71
High Expectations for Learners	8.96	1.14
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	7.73	2.14
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	8.23	1.39
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	8.92	1.16
Staff Development on Shared Vision	8.61	1.49
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	8.46	1.83
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	8.80	1.38
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction	8.11	1.63
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	6.15	2.34
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	7.30	2.24

Descriptive Data by Free- and Reduced-Lunch Percentage (26-50%)

Respondents who work at a school with 26-50% free- and reduced lunch were asked how strongly they believe that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 54 respondents, 43 (79.6%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 49

(90.7%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how they important mentoring programs are for decreasing inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported by 45 (83.3%) participants a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher in importance by 45 (83.3%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 42 (77.7%). Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated 7 or higher by 36 (66.6%) of the participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS, to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported by 41 (75.9%) a 7 or higher. Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated a 7 or higher by 40 (74.0%) participants. Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated a 7 or higher by 47 (87.0%) participants.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 41 (75.9%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real world instruction was also rated an effective strategy for at-risk students by 36 (66.6%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. Providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated7 or higher by 44 (81.4%) respondents.

Beliefs on inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert scale by 35 (64.8%) respondents. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their child's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts was rated 7 or higher by 32 (59.2%) respondents. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated 7 or higher by 40 (74.0%) of the respondents.

Professional development to ensure school leaders have a shared vision of beliefs, meanings, and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated 7 or higher by 40 (74.0%) participants. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated 7 or higher by 40 (74.0%) participants. Professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised by 41 (75.9%) participants with a score of 7 or higher.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated 7 or higher by 38 (70.3%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 25 (46.2%) participants. Type III

(provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 31 (57.4%) participants.

The three lowest scores reported for 26-50% free- and reduced-lunch status were Type II alternative education ($M = 6.03$, $SD = 1.93$), Type III alternative education ($M = 6.50$, $SD = 2.03$), and multiple attempts to engage parents ($M = 6.87$, $SD = 2.50$). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to wraparound services ($M = 8.25$, $SD = 2.11$), support services/counseling ($M = 8.03$, $SD = 2.28$), and mentoring programs ($M = 8.03$, $SD = 2.00$). The overall composite score of educators working in schools with 26-50% free- and reduced-lunch recipients was 7.44 with a standard deviation of 1.54 (Table 9).

Table 9

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (26-50% Free- and Reduced-Lunch Percentage)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.03	2.28
Wraparound Services	8.25	2.11
Mentoring Programs	8.03	2.00
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	7.81	1.64
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	7.68	1.76
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	7.33	2.34
Positive Behavior Supports	7.57	2.09
Behavior Support Teams	7.57	1.99
Positive Relationship Building	8.07	2.09
Preservice Teacher Development	7.75	2.14
Relevant Teaching	7.18	2.21
High Expectations for Learners	7.94	2.08
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	6.92	2.09
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	6.87	2.50
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	7.46	2.32
Staff Development on Shared Vision	7.42	2.11
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	7.18	2.17
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	7.51	1.90
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction	7.22	2.12
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	6.03	1.93
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	6.50	2.03

Descriptive Data by Free- and Reduced-Lunch Percentage (51-75%)

Respondents who work at a school with 51-75% free- and reduced lunch were asked how strongly they believe that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 65 respondents 58 (89.2%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 61

(93.8%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank how important mentoring programs are for decreasing inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported by 60 (92.3%) participants a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher in importance by 58 (89.2%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 54 (83.0%) participants. Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated 7 or higher by 55 (84.6%) participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS, to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported by 49 (75.3%) a 7 or higher. Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated by 53 (81.5%) a 7 or higher. Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated 7 or higher by 60 (92.3%) participants.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 56 (86.1%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real-world instruction as an effective strategy for at-risk students was also rated 7 or higher by 55 (84.6%) participants. Providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated 7 or higher by 62 (92.3%) respondents.

Beliefs on inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs were rated 7 or higher on the Likert scale by 50 (76.9%) respondents. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their child's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts was rated 7 or higher by 52 (80.0%) respondents. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated 7 or higher by 54 (83.0%) of the respondents.

Professional development to ensure school leaders have a shared vision of beliefs, meanings and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated 7 or higher by 58 (89.2%) participants. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated 7 or higher by 55 (84.6%) participants. Professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised at a score of 7 or higher by 57 (87.6%) participants.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) was rated 7 or higher by 57 (87.6%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 33 (50.7%) participants. Type III

(provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 44 (67.6%) participants.

The lowest scores reported for 51-75% free- and reduced-lunch status were Type II alternative education (M = 6.60, SD = 2.56), Type III alternative education (M = 7.33, SD = 2.12), and providing community organization contact for families (M = 7.73, SD = 1.76). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to support services/counseling (M = 8.89, SD = 1.31), high expectations for students (M = 8.80, SD = 1.38), and positive relationship building (M = 8.73, SD = 1.56). The overall composite score of educators working in 51-75% free- and reduced-lunch schools was 8.27 with a standard deviation of 1.17 (Table 10).

Table 10

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (51-75% Free- and Reduced-Lunch Percentage)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.69	1.60
Wraparound Services	8.89	1.31
Mentoring Programs	8.55	1.45
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	8.49	1.52
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	8.41	1.68
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	8.21	1.66
Positive Behavior Supports	8.01	2.24
Behavior Support Teams	8.20	2.05
Positive Relationship Building	8.73	1.56
Preservice Teacher Development	8.55	1.66
Relevant Teaching	8.30	1.67
High Expectations for Learners	8.70	1.38
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	7.73	1.76
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	7.98	1.94
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	8.26	1.97
Staff Development on Shared Vision	8.60	1,82
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	8.46	1.80
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	8.55	1.73
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction	8.36	1.60
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	6.60	2.56
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	7.33	2.12

Descriptive Data by Free- and Reduced-Lunch Percentage (76-100%)

Respondents who work at a school with 76-100% free- and reduced lunches were asked how strongly they believe that support services/counseling to address social, emotional, and behavior issues are effective strategies for working with at-risk students. Of the 82 respondents, 71 (86.5%) ranked this strategy a 7 or higher. Wraparound services to support the well-being of the students (e.g., counseling, individualized student-centered interventions, utilization of parents as partners, strength based interventions, student empowerment) was rated a 7 or higher by 75

(91.4%) of the participants. The respondents were also asked to rank the importance of mentoring programs for decreasing inappropriate behavior. Mentoring programs were reported by 70 (85.3%) participants a 7 or higher.

Beliefs on providing community resources for supporting at-risk students (e.g., after school tutoring) were ranked 7 or higher by 69 (84.1%) respondents. Participants were also asked to rate their beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families. The importance of providing these types of resources was ranked 7 or higher by 70 (85.3%) participants. Beliefs on utilizing community partners to provide additional services such as parenting and job skill classes were also surveyed. These types of supports for the families were rated 7 or higher by 67 (81.7%) participants.

The participants reviewed behavior support systems, such as PBS, to minimize suspensions and expulsions. Their beliefs of importance of using these strategies were reported 7 or higher by 65 (79.2%) participants. Strategies for behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior were rated 7 or higher by 66 (80.4%). Positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes was rated 7 or higher by 76 (92.6%) participants.

Participant beliefs of the need for preservice teacher instructional strategies on how to effectively instruct at-risk students were also surveyed. The survey found that 61 (74.3%) participants rated a need for preservice teacher professional development a 7 or higher. Providing relevant real world instruction was also rated an effective strategy for at-risk students by 61 (74.3%) participants with a score of 7 or higher. Providing instruction based on high expectations for at-risk students was reviewed. Beliefs of high expectations for at-risk students were rated 7 or higher by 43 (52.4%) respondents.

Beliefs on invitding community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, or churches to school functions to increase parental involvement were examined. These beliefs were rated a 7 or higher on the Likert scale by 64 (78.0%) respondents. Multiple attempts to involve parents in their child's education were also examined in this study. The importance of using multiple attempts was believed by 58 (70.7%) respondents to earn a rating of 7 or higher. Additionally, parental involvement by providing a nurturing environment for both the students and families (e.g., literacy instruction or parenting classes) was examined. Nurturing environments were rated 7 or higher by 70 (85.3%) respondents.

Professional development to ensure school leaders have a shared vision of beliefs, meanings and values to adequately serve at-risk students was appraised in the study. This belief was rated by 66 (80.4%) participants a score of 7 or higher. Educator beliefs of providing professional development for creating a culturally responsive classroom for at-risk learners were examined. The beliefs of educators surveyed for this type of professional development were rated 7 or higher by 67 (81.7%) participants. Also, professional development needs for use of differentiated instruction (e.g., learning styles based on brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents, and/or perceptual strengths) for staff working with at-risk students were reviewed. Differentiated instruction was appraised 7 or higher by 68 (82.9%) participants.

The participants reviewed three types of alternative education. Type I alternative education (individualized instruction, personalized whole-centered approach, and instruction based on the students' challenging circumstances) was rated 7 or higher by 62 (75.6%) participants. Type II (disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) was rated 7 or higher by 48 (58.5%) participants. Type III

(provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) was rated 7 or higher by 44 (53.6%) participants.

The three lowest scores reported for 76-100% free- and reduced-lunch status were Type III alternative education (M = 6.59, SD = 2.24), Type II alternative education (M = 6.70, SD = 2.46) and Type I for families (M = 7.6, SD = 2.03). In contrast, the three highest ratings were given to positive relationship building (M = 9.01, SD = 1.72), support services/counseling (M = 8.80, SD = 1.72) and high expectations for students (M = 8.75, SD = 1.80). The overall composite score of educators working in 76-100% free- and reduced-lunch schools was 8.05 with a standard deviation of 1.53 (Table 11).

Table 11

Beliefs Rating for Utilizing Strategies for At-Risk Students (76-100% Free- and Reduced-Lunch Percentage)

Strategy	*M*	*SD*
Support Services/Counseling	8.40	2.04
Wraparound Services	8.80	1.72
Mentoring Programs	8.31	2.00
Community Resources for After School Tutoring	8.18	1.87
Community Partners to Provide Health Care	8.12	2.09
Community Partners to Provide Parenting Classes	8.23	1.92
Positive Behavior Supports	8.02	2.33
Behavior Support Teams	8.17	2.14
Positive Relationship Building	9.01	1.72
Preservice Teacher Development	7.89	2.24
Relevant Teaching	7.79	2.15
High Expectations for Learners	8.75	1.80
Providing Community Organization Contact for Families	7.84	2.15
Multiple Attempts to Engage Parents	7.76	2.23
Nurturing Environment for Students/Parents	8.30	1.85
Staff Development on Shared Vision	8.15	2.09
Staff Development on Culturally Responsive Instruction	8.14	2.17
Staff Development Differentiated Instruction	8.28	2.06
Type I Alternative Education (Individualized Instruction	7.60	2.03
Type II Alternative Education (Disciplinary/Last Chance)	6.70	2.46
Type III Alternative Education (Counseling/Social Services)	6.59	2.24

Findings and Analysis

Null Hypothesis 1

The following null hypothesis was developed through the research questions:

$H_0$1. There is no significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on employment position.

In the first null hypothesis, research-based instructional strategies and programming were tested within Indiana elementary schools to determine whether significant difference occurred

based on employment position. Employment position had three different options: primary teacher, intermediate teacher, and principal.

In order to ensure the validity of the test results, all assumptions of the one-way ANOVA were examined. There were no outliers found within the data set as all data points were within 1.5 standard deviations from the edge of the boxplots. The assumption of normality was met with a non-significant Shapiro-Wilks test, $p > .05$. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated with a significant Levene's test, $p = .030$. To accommodate for this violation, the Games-Howell post-hoc test was utilized instead of the Tukey HSD because the Games-Howell test does not require equal variances.

There were significant differences found within the instructional practices and programming score, $F(2, 224) = 3.813$, $p = .024$. Due to having significant differences among an independent variable with at least three levels, a post-hoc test was required to determine where the significant difference lies. The Games-Howell test is a more conservative test, as it does not require equal variances. Due to being more conservative in order to accommodate for the violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance, there were no significance levels among the different group comparisons that was less than the .05 alpha level. Due to this, the null could not be rejected, as there was no evidence of a significant difference.

Null Hypothesis 2

The following null hypothesis was developed through the research questions:

$H_0$2. There is no significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on demographic location.

In the second null hypothesis, research-based instructional strategies and programming were tested within Indiana elementary schools to determine whether significant difference

occurred based on demographic location. There were three options for demographic location: rural, suburban, and urban.

Once again, a one-way ANOVA was used to ensure validity of the test results. There were no outliers found within the data set as all data points were within 1.5 standard deviations from the edge of the boxplots. The assumption of normality was met with a non-significant Shapiro-Wilks test, $p > .05$. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated with a non-significant Levene's test, $p = .237$.

There were no significant differences found within the instructional practices and programming score based on location type, $F(2, 224) = .249$, $p = .780$. Due to having no significant differences among independent variables no further testing was conducted. Therefore, the null was retained, as there was no evidence of a significant difference on researched-based instructional strategies and programming within Indiana elementary schools based on location.

Null Hypothesis 3

The following null hypothesis was developed through the research questions:

$H_0 3$. There is no significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on a school's free- and reduced-lunch percentage.

In the third null hypothesis, researched-based instructional strategies and programming were tested within Indiana elementary schools to determine whether significant differences occurred based on a school's free- and reduced-lunch percentage. There were four categories for schools' free- and reduced-lunch percentages: 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, and 76-100%.

All assumptions of the one-way ANOVA were examined. There were no outliers found within the data set as all data points were within 1.5 standard deviations from the edge of the boxplots. The assumption of normality was met with a non-significant Shapiro-Wilks test, $p > .05$. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated with a non-significant Levene's test, $p = .458$.

There were significant differences found within the instructional practices and programming score, $F(3, 223) = 4.342$, $p = .005$. Due to having significant differences among an independent variable with at least three levels, a post-hoc test was required to determine where the significant difference lies. The Tukey HSD was used to determine which groups were significantly different than each other. The participants in the 0-25% perceived at-risk strategies significantly higher than 26-50% ($p = .028$) free- and reduced-lunch percentage participants. The participants in the 51-75% also perceived at-risk strategies significantly higher than 26-50% ($p = .008$) free- and reduced-lunch percentage participants.

When testing Hypotheses 1 through 3 for normality, a Shapiro-Wilks test found the significance values were more than .05 for all three hypotheses. The assumption was not violated based on employment position, location, or free- and reduced-lunch status.

Summary

In this chapter, quantitative data were utilized to reveal the answers to three research questions presented in this study. The first research question demonstrated no significant differences in how educators perceive using specific strategies for at-risk students based on employment position. The second research question demonstrated there was also no significant difference found on how educators perceive the importance of utilizing strategies for at-risk students based on location. However, the third research question found there was a significant

difference based on how educators perceive using specific strategies with at-risk students based on schools' free- and reduced-lunch percentage, with both the 0-25% and 51-75% groups having significantly higher responses.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5 is organized into five sections: summary, results, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations. The summary section represents a discussion of the findings, which includes a summary of the descriptive data as well as a summary of the hypotheses testing. It also includes the purpose of the study and who benefits from this study. The results section comprises conclusions in addition to a summary of the research presented in Chapter 4. The discussion section considers the implications of using at-risk strategies as a result of this research. The conclusion section provides awareness as to what strategies may need to be addressed in Indiana elementary schools to support at-risk students. The final section discusses the recommendations for future research that may extend the current study.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine educators' perceptions regarding the importance of strategies and programs for at-risk students according to employment position, geographic location, and percentage of free- and reduced-lunch population within the school**.** A survey was conducted using primary and intermediate teachers as well as elementary principals as respondents. All respondents were educators in the state of Indiana. A 10-point Likert scale was used to determine the importance of each strategy/program. The scale ranged from 1 being *not important* to 10 being *extremely important*. This study attempted to find insight on the

perceptions of educators using specific strategies for at-risk students and how this relates to what researchers have found to be effective.

This study has a concentrated focus on a specific population of at-risk students:

1. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on employment position?
2. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on demographic location?
3. Is there a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies and programming for elementary students based on a school's free- and reduced-lunch percentage?

Research shows there are numerous strategies/programs that have shown to be effective for at-risk students. This study was an attempt to provide school districts and policy makers with insight from those who work directly with at-risk students and understand the intricacies of how best they may be supported.

Results

Through comparing perceptions of Indiana educators on the importance of using specific strategies for at-risk students, the only significant difference was found in free- and reduced-lunch percentages. There was a significance difference between the participants in the 0-25% and the 26-50% free- and reduced-lunch participants. The 0-25% free- and reduced-lunch participants rated the strategies/program importance higher than those of the 26-50% category. The participants in the 51-75% range also perceived strategies for at-risk students significantly higher than those in the 26-50% category.

One strategy/program for at-risk students that was examined in this study was the perception of the importance of using alternative education for elementary students. Three types of alternative education were explored for their importance for using with at-risk elementary students. Type I alternative schools offer more individualized instruction, personalized whole-student centered approach, and instruction based on the students' challenging circumstances. Type II alternative schools are approached with a disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placements prior to expulsion. Type III alternative schools provide counseling and social services along with academic support, yet allow the students the option to participate. Type I and Type II alternative schools are increasingly apt to offer clinical counseling and other psychological services (Aron, 2003).

The respondents were asked how they would rate the importance of utilizing alternative education as a strategy for at-risk students. All respondents rated at least one of the alternative school types a 7 or higher based on employment position, demographic location, and free- and reduced-lunch percentage.

Open-ended questioning was also utilized to develop a further understanding of the use of elementary alternative programs. Of the 227 respondents, only 37 (16%) stated they currently have one of the three types of alternative schools. Of the 37 who stated they have an operating alternative school for elementary students, eight of those respondents reported it had only been in existence for 0-1 years, five respondents reported having one for 2-3 years, nine respondents reported having one for 4-5 years, and 15 reported having an alternative school for more than six years. The participants were also asked if the alternative program was meeting the needs of their at-risk population, with 10 (27%) stating it was not effective and 27 (73%) stating it was effective.

Discussion

The findings produced evidence that there is a significant difference on how strategies for at-risk students are viewed by educators in schools based on their free- and reduced-lunch percentage. The participants in the 0-25% free- and reduced-lunch schools rated the strategies/programs more important than the 26-50% free- and reduced-lunch participants. Perhaps this could implicate that a smaller group of at-risk students are located in the schools of the 0-25% free- and reduced-lunch participants and resources to support these students are minimal in comparison to schools with a higher free- and reduced-lunch percentage. Therefore, the need for resources to support these students, such as Title I funds for programming and professional development, are virtually non-existent in the 0-25% free- and reduced-lunch schools. Fewer at-risk students in lower poverty schools may demand supplementary attention to needs they have no means to fulfill.

The participants in the 51-75% free- and reduced-lunch participation range also perceived strategies for at-risk students significantly higher than those in the 26-50% category. Perhaps having a significant percentage of at-risk students' demands more social, emotional, and financial needs than those of the 26-50% free- and reduced-lunch population schools. Typically with an increase in the number of at-risk students, there is an increase in the complexity of needs. Participants in the 51-75% free- and reduced-lunch participation range may experience the need for additional resources to support the never-ending list of necessities to support at-risk students and their families. With the heightened accountability measures in education today, many educators in the 51-75% category could also feel increased pressure to assist their at-risk students to perform on standardized tests. The added pressure may increase the need for additional strategies and programming to enhance educational outcomes. These schools may have more

funding through government-funded programs such as Title I, but the needs are far greater than those of the 26-50% free- and reduced-lunch schools.

Upon review of the data, it was interesting that all respondents rated at least one of the alternative school types a 7 or higher based on employment position, demographic location, and free- and reduced-lunch percentage. Although all respondents indicated that alternative education is a viable strategy to use with at-risk elementary students, very little research is available to support this need. As stated in Chapter 1 of this study, some alternatives for at-risk students do exist; a study by Hosley (2003) concluded that 93% of alternative programs served students in Grades 7 through 12; however, only 4% of those surveyed provided services to students in the elementary grades. The study concluded that at-risk students are perhaps identifiable as early as third grade (Hosley, 2003).

In the open-ended portion of the survey, those respondents who currently have alternative elementary programs were asked if their program were successful. One respondent stated, "It provides students with extra support and often allows reentry into the general education classroom for some students." Another shared the view, "It allows our students to receive coping strategies, services, and instruction that will be beneficial to them." Several respondents also stated that because class sizes are small, students receive the individual attention and encouragement they need to be successful. One participant offered, "The individualized behavior program and therapeutic nature of the alternative school is just what some of our at-risk students need."

There are several possibilities for the respondents to be in support of alternative education programs. Perhaps their programs are successful because the structure of the program is well thought out and supported by all staff members. It is also likely programs are successful

because they have a highly trained staff that understand their roles in providing for the students' social and emotional needs, as well as providing the instructional support necessary for academic attainment. Successful alternative schools could also have the financial support needed to staff the program with the appropriate qualified individuals and provide professional development that integrates all facades of working with at-risk students.

Not all the respondents were in support of elementary alternative programs. One respondent stated, "Taking the students out of the 'normal' environment is only a short-term fix. As soon as they come back to their regular classroom they have a hard time knowing the boundaries." A few other participants shared that the students often come back to the general education setting and behave in the same manner as they did prior to attending the alternative program. Overall, the *not effective* respondents believe the alternative setting addresses behavior issues when students are in the program, but students ultimately struggle when released back to the general education setting.

Possibly, those respondents who view their alternative programs as not effective do not have the financial resources necessary to provide a well-trained staff to support their at-risk student population. It takes great financial support not only to train the staff, but also to provide counseling services and possibly behavior specialists to address extreme behaviors that some at-risk students may experience. Another potential failure of alternative programs may be caused by large class sizes, under staffing, or lack of necessary resources to support academic programs.

Conclusions

This section concentrates on what needs to be done to support educators in servicing at-risk students. The strategies presented in this study have all been researched for their effectiveness in working with at-risk students. However, the most unsettling finding was the

need for at least some form of elementary alternative education for at-risk students. All respondents (100%) scored the need for at least one form of alternative education a 7 or higher. Only 16% of participants in this survey stated that they have an alternative school for at-risk students, yet nearly 33% of those participants that have an alternative school stated it is ineffective in meeting the needs of their students.

There are two concerns that require the attention of educators:

1. What can to be done to support the needs of ineffective elementary alternative schools?
2. What can be done to support schools in need of providing an elementary alternative program to enhance the social, emotional, and academic needs of the at-risk student population?

"Most of the districts reported offering alternative schools and programs for students in grades 9 through 12 (88 to 96 percent), with offerings for grades 6 through 8 reported by 41 to 63 percent of districts, and for grades 1 through 5 by 8 to 18 percent of districts" (Carver & Lewis, 2010, p. 3). It may be time for school districts to look at additional resources to the elementary schools.

Schools may want to consider different methods of approaching their alternative school needs. Alternative schools can be configured in a variety of ways: School within a school (located on a traditional campus), district wide or separate programs, regional programs (serves more than one district) and programs located within a vocational or technical school (Duke & Griesdorn, 1999).

For schools that are struggling to provide effective elementary alternative programs, Cable et al. (2009) stated the IDOE recommends alternative schools offer non-traditional

elements such as character education, counseling, parenting programs, innovative strategies, life skills, and behavior and anger management. The program should be appropriately paced, project based, and mastery based and address individual learning styles.

The National Alternative Education Association (2009b) recommended a safe, orderly, and caring environment for students and staff in an exemplary alternative program. Positive relationships, rather than a punitive approach for behavior management, build a climate of trust and respect. An exemplary alternative school will have an established protocol for appropriating student disciplinary actions. The staff models acceptable behavior and distributes rewards that motivate positive results. Building a positive community among students and staff emboldens social and behavior success.

Additionally, the Texas Education Agency (2007) supported nine different categories as best practices for alternative students: counseling, community services, discipline, transitional component, curriculum and instruction, parental involvement, teacher professional development, program characteristics and hiring appropriate trained staff. Although these are typical traits of a general education program, they should also be included at the alternative level. Including all these services in an alternative school fosters an educational environment that emphasizes the whole child approach to promote successful results.

In order for an alternative school to be successful, the National Alternative Education Association (2009b) recommended promoting high expectations and transitional services for educating the whole child within the alternative program. Likewise, alternative program integration of a creative and engaging curriculum, relevance for students, and individual student focus are all conducive to academic productivity. The alternative instructional and curriculum programing should use teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of the whole student

while abiding by state and federal expectations. Quality instructional programing indicators include a student support team to establish goals and monitor ongoing student progress as well as providing ongoing reinforcements in areas necessary for improvement. Goal planning for possible negative patterns or behaviors (e.g., suspensions, expulsions, absences, tardiness, etc.) should be included in the monitoring process. Parents/guardians are involved in the process of developing a plan for success.

Parental involvement should be an integral part of a successful alternative program. The National Alternative Education Association (2009a) stated that an exemplary alternative program vigorously includes parents/guardians outside of the standard parent/teacher conference. A non-judgmental, resolution-focused methodology should be used as well as respecting parents/guardians/ in a solution-based partnership throughout the length of stay in an alternative program. Appropriate training and support must be given to parents/guardians to enhance student learning and success. Parents/guardians should be involved in the individualized student learning plan to target specific needs and evaluate the general effectiveness of the program. Engaging parents/guardians as equal partners affords staff to fluently maintain a balance between home and school (National Alternative Education Association, 2009b).

Transition programming is essential to a successful alternative school. Avery-Sterud (2009) studied the reintegration of elementary school students back into public school after being placed in an alternative setting. The research found that students could exhibit enhanced behavior in treatment programs; however, the challenge is to shift those positive behaviors to the least restrictive environment. This study produced several themes as students transitioned back to the public school setting. These themes for success were positive relationships,

communication between schools, teacher planning, student readiness skills, administration support, wraparound services, and behavioral expectations at both schools.

School districts need to focus on alternative programs that work. Nibbelink (2011) found that at-risk students in traditional schools are most likely to have a decrease in their GPA compared to the same students in an alternative setting. At-risk students in alternative education schools tend to have fewer failing grades than at-risk students in traditional schools. These data were explained by smaller class sizes, one-on-one student support, and student/teacher relationships. Students in alternative programs are found to have more academic support than those in traditional schools (Nibbelink, 2011).

Funding is also an obstacle for Indiana elementary schools looking to implement an alternative program. According to the IDOE (2011), funding is only available for secondary alternative schools. Perhaps educational leaders may consider advocating to superintendents, central office administrators, and legislators to provide the necessary funding to better support elementary at-risk students in this capacity.

Recommendations

To enhance the findings of this study, further research is necessary on elementary alternative education and how to best support the needs of at-risk students. The following recommendations for further research are offered to support the results of the study.

1. Further research could be expanded to include other states that may provide these services for at-risk students.
2. Additional studies could be conducted on Indiana schools currently providing elementary alternative programs to research the most effective approaches in supporting at-risk students.

3. Information needs to be provided to legislators and educational leaders about the findings in this study so investigations could be conducted on the need to reach at-risk students when they are young and to not postpone assistance until student reach high school.
4. A comparative study could be conducted to review primary needs versus intermediate elementary needs for alternative education.
5. A quantitative study could be conducted to define the specific needs of alternative schools (behavior, emotional, academic). Is there one need that is predominantely the focus for interventions?
6. A qualitative study could also be conducted from a parental perspective for those in need of an alternative to traditional schools.
7. A qualitative study could be conducted from a parental perspective on those whose children are currently in elementary alternative programs.
8. A qualitative study could be conducted from a student perspective on those who currently participate in alternative elementary programs.
9. Types of alternative education programming structures for elementary students could also be researched for effectiveness.
10. Further research on the most effective way to recruit and retain appropriate staff for alternative education could also be researched.
11. A mixed research study could be conducted on appropriate professional development needs for efficient transitions between general education staff and alternative staff.

Conclusion

The research conducted in this study found a significant difference in how educators

perceived the importance of using specific strategies/programs in working with at-risk students in the 0-25% free- and reduced-lunch percentage participants and the 26-50% free- and reduced-lunch participants. The 0-25% free- and reduced-lunch participants found using specific strategies for at-risk students to be more important than those in the 25%-50% free- and reduced-lunch range. It also found the participants in the 51-75% free- and reduced-lunch range also perceived strategies for at-risk students significantly higher than those in the 26-50% free- and reduced-lunch category. However, the most overwhelming finding of this study was that of the need for elementary alternative programming. With 100% of the respondents stating that there is a need, only 16% of them reported having an active program for their at-risk students, action needs to be taken. This study reported an 84% gap in the need for alternative elementary schools versus what is currently offered. The research has presented a tremendous need for elementary alternative programs. The needs for at-risk students are great and continue to grow each year. If at-risk students are identified for failure rates as early as third grade, then why are educators not meeting this need?

This is not just a problem for educators, but one that all citizens should be concerned with. Addressing this problem early may promote a decrease in welfare recipients and incarcerations (Belfield & Levin, 2007). It is imperative that the needs of at-risk elementary students are met and to provide them with alternatives. Society will benefit from providing at-risk students with the services they need at the elementary level; it could possibly lead to higher graduation rates and more productive citizens, which ultimately could save millions of dollars.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Directions: There is no right or wrong response for the following statements. Please answer how you really feel about the importance of strategies or programs as it relates to working with at-risk students. For each statement select the number for the degree to which you agree or disagree. Thank you for your thoughtful responses.

1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

Demographic Information

1. How many years have you served in education?
   0-5
   6-10
   11-15
   16 or more

2. Level of employment
   Primary – Grade 1
   Intermediate – Grade 5
   Principal

3. School SES status
   0-25%
   26-50%
   51-73%
   76-100%

4. Title I status
   Targeted assistance
   Full Title I
   NA

5. School's geographic location
   Rural
   Suburban
   Urban

Support Service/Counseling

6. I believe support services/counseling used to address social, emotional and behavior issues are effective strategies for at-risk students.
   1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

7. I believe providing wraparound services such as counseling (e.g., individualized interventions that are student centered, utilizing parents as partners, using strength based interventions, promoting student empowerment) are effective strategies for at-risk students.
   1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

8. I believe providing a mentoring program for students to decrease inappropriate behavior is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
   1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

Community Resource Partners

9. I believe utilizing community resources for services such as after school tutoring programs is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
   1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

10. I believe utilizing community partners to provide health care related services for at-risk students and their families is an effective strategy for at-risk students
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

11. I believe that utilizing community partners to provide additional family services such as parenting and job skills classes is an effective strategy for at-risk students
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

Behavior

12. I believe Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) implemented with fidelity to minimize suspensions and expulsions is an effective intervention strategy for at-risk students
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

13. I believe utilizing school behavior support teams to develop behavior plans for students with chronic behavior issues in order to reduce disorderly behavior and improve classroom disruptions is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

14. I believe positive relationship building to increase positive behavior outcomes is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

Curriculum and Instruction

15. I believe preservice teacher development of how to effectively instruct at-risk students is an effective strategy for working with at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

16. I believe relevant real world problems throughout curriculum and instruction is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

17. I believe that having high expectations is an effective strategies for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

Parental Involvement

18. I believe inviting community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations or churches to school functions is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

19. I believe multiple attempts to engage parents (e.g., repeated contact through written and verbal communication, follow-up phone calls, and parent assistance) is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

20. I believe creating a nurturing environment for students and their families and providing them with family programs such as literacy instruction and parenting classes is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

Professional Development

21. I believe professional development to ensure a school has a shared vision of beliefs, meanings and values to adequately serve at-risk students is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

22. I believe staff professional development on creating a culturally responsive classroom (e.g., instruction and learning that will transpire in a culturally, supported, learner-centered environment) is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

23. I believe staff professional development on differentiated instruction (e.g., centered on learning style based on specific brain processing, sociological dispositions, environmental conditions, interests or talents and perceptual strengths) is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

Alternative Education

24. I believe Type I alternative education (offers more individualized instruction, personalized whole-student centered approach, and instruction based on the student's challenging circumstances) is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

25. I believe Type II alternative education approach (offers a disciplinary reform perspective for disruptive students or last chance placement prior to expulsion) is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

26. I believe Type III alternative education (provides counseling and social services along with academic support, does not force the child, yet allows the students the option to participate) is an effective strategy for at-risk students.
    1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 Neutral 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

Principals Only

27. Does your school currently have an elementary alternative education program?
    a. Yes
    b. No

28. How long has it been in existence?
    c. 0-1 year
    d. 2-3 years
    e. 4-5 years
    f. 6 or more years

29. If so, describe your program?

30. Do you feel this has been an effective strategy for your at-risk students?
    g. Yes
    h. No

31. Why or why not?

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FOR SURVEY

Dear Participant:

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Teresa Gremaux who is a doctoral student from the Department of Educational Leadership at Indiana State University. Mrs. Gremaux is conducting this study for her doctoral dissertation. Dr. Terry McDaniel is his faculty sponsor for this project.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You should read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a first or fifth grade teacher or an elementary principal in an Indiana school who work with at least one or more at-risk students.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This is a research study about the beliefs of educators in using specific research based strategies in working with at-risk students.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we will ask you to do the following: We will ask you to complete the following survey that should take you approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

We expect any risks, discomforts, or inconveniences will be minor and we believe that they are not likely to happen. You can choose not to answer any questions that may cause you discomfort. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

It is not likely that you will benefit directly from participation in this study, but the research may provide more general benefits regarding whether there is a significant difference on the perceived importance of at-risk strategies/programming for elementary students based on employment position, demographic location, or a on school's free- and reduced-lunch percentage.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive payment or other compensation for participation in this study. There is also no cost to you for participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY
You will not be asked to submit anything to the researcher that includes your name. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of a password locked computer and used only by the researcher. We will not use your name in any of the information we get from this study or in any of the research reports.

Information that can identify you individually will not be released to anyone outside the study. Mrs. Gremaux will, however, use any information that we get from this study in any way we think is best for publication or education. Any information we use for publication will not identify you individually.

The surveys will be destroyed three years after the end of the study by deletion of all information.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
You can choose whether or not to participate in this study. If you volunteer to participate, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you choose not to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study. Incomplete surveys will not be used in this study.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS
If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free- to contact

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RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS
If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

 I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. If you wish not to participate, you may exit the survey at this time.