

DISSERTATION

VOICES OF TALENT SEARCH SIXTH GRADE TRIO STUDENTS:
A CASE STUDY OF THEIR PROGRAM EXPERIENCES

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY LAURIE ANN SCHMIDT ENTITLED VOICES OF TALENT SEARCH SIXTH GRADE TRIO STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF THEIR PROGRAM EXPERIENCES BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

“VOICES OF TALENT SEARCH SIXTH GRADE TRIO STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF THEIR PROGRAM EXPERIENCES”

This study examined the question: How do at-risk sixth grade students in Northwest Iowa experience the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth TRIO program? Talent Search programs are a pre-college intervention program for at-risk students. If educators are to reach these at-risk students, they must begin by listening carefully to their voices. Currently, there appears to be few documents that capture the voices and experiences of at-risk sixth grade students.

This case study captures the voices of twelve students who were enrolled in the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program from January 2002 – March 2002. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to collect and document the experiences of sixth grade, at-risk youth enrolled in the Educational Talent Search program in Northwest Iowa. Through systematic data gathering and analysis procedures, the researcher sought to determine how students experienced the program.

This study is designed to empower at-risk Success for Sixth students by carefully listening to their voices and by hearing their stories of how they experienced the program. Results from this study revealed that there were two core themes: Relationships, and Identities, and five support themes: Friendships, Peer-pressure, Self-esteem, Self-

confidence, and Activities. These themes provide the framework to understand how at-risk middle school students experience an after school program from their perspective.

Perhaps the most important implication for this study is the fact that at-risk middle school students are rarely listened to or empowered in their educational endeavors. These children face numerous hidden obstacles that may permanently scar them if caring educators do not address them. Unless they are given the chance to voice their frustrations, many at-risk students suffer in silence and isolation.

It is important to measure these core and support themes in a quantitative format with instruments that are both valid and reliable measures of these themes for future information. Further, it is essential to ascertain if students from different socioeconomic status and backgrounds report similar themes. More research needs to be done to further listen to the voices of our at-risk youth.

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DEDICATION

To my family!

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background/Overview

For the past forty years, Americans have had the opportunity to attend higher education regardless of socioeconomic status or race. This opportunity came about from sweeping legislation introduced by President Lyndon Baynes Johnson. He introduced the Civil Rights Legislation, the War on Poverty, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the Higher Education Amendments of 1965. This series of laws set a new direction for the Federal Government (Groutt & Hill, 2001). In his first State of the Union Message, Johnson stated that: “Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of their poverty, some because of their color, and all too many because of both”(p. 112). During this same message he went on to say, “Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity”(p. 112). He urged Americans to fight a war on poverty. In speaking of this war, he advocated that the richest nation on earth “can not afford to lose it” (Government Printing Office, 1965, 112-116).

President Johnson experienced first hand the devastating effects of poverty on young students. As a teacher, he opted to work with low-income, at-risk, Hispanic students. Teaching for very little monetary gain, he often experienced the cruel pangs of hunger and poverty. Amidst such meager earnings, Johnson worked hard to ensure that all students had an opportunity to learn. He cared deeply for education. He believed that all students deserved the right to attend higher education, regardless of their income or

socioeconomic status. He felt that education was the avenue to reach underrepresented minorities who lacked the opportunity for higher education that middle class students often took for granted (Caro, 1982; Dallek, 1998).

After becoming the President of the United States in 1963, Johnson began a social reform to wage what he termed “the war on poverty.” He began by passing the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Anderson, 1998). In 1965, funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA), Johnson established both the Headstart and TRIO Programs. Headstart serves at-risk children before they enter kindergarten. It was designed to prepare poor children for school (Urban & Wagoner, 1996). TRIO serves at-risk, first generation students who have completed the fifth grade through adulthood. However, TRIO does not serve students in kindergarten through the fifth grade. These at-risk students must fend for themselves during this critical developmental period. Many of these children fall through the cracks of our educational system during this time (Watts, 1995).

TRIO was originally comprised of Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, and Student Support Services. However, at the present time, TRIO is comprised of eight individual programs all federally funded and coordinated through the U.S. Department of Education. TRIO program legislative requirements are found in the Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2. Educational Talent Search is the only TRIO program designed to be an outreach effort for targeted at-risk middle school students (i.e., grades six through eight).

The Talent Search program has the ability to educationally develop those at-risk middle school students at a critical time in their lives. Lee and Clery (1993) found that

those low income and minority students who participated in Talent Search were four times more likely to graduate from college than their non-Talent Search program counterparts. Other studies have found it difficult to measure the overall effectiveness of the Talent Search program because each project is so varied (Franklin, 1985). For instance, each project has unique populations, program emphasis, and varying data collection. Although it is difficult to categorize and compare all Talent Search programs, the need for these types of services has been well documented by various studies (Flint, 1993; Hostler & Maple, 1993; Lee & Clery, 1993).

In December 1993 the National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations (NCEOA) conducted a survey to find out information about Talent Search project characteristics. They found that 59 percent of Talent Search participants are minority, 41 percent of the participants are male, and over half the participants are 10th grade or below. Seventy-six percent of Talent Search participants continue their education past high school. They found that the average student spends 50 hours a year in program activities at a cost of \$5 per hour. The average Talent Search program has been funded for nine years, and most programs are operated by public four-year and two-year colleges. Most programs provide career counseling and academic counseling. The average staff to student ratio is 1:183 (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

Talent Search programs are designed to be a pre-college intervention program for at-risk students (Lee & Clery, 1993). If educators are to reach these at-risk students, they must begin by listening carefully to their voices. Breggin (2000) implores readers to listen carefully to the at-risk children who have been “falling with deafening sound” while we have “remained unmoved” (p. 40). He mentions the familiar philosophical

metaphor, "...if a tree falls in the forest with no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?" He believes that many of the ills of American society can be traced back to "what we've allowed to happen" to our at-risk children. He sees the lack of attention to at-risk students as "distancing us from our own children and from each other" (p.40).

By examining the developmental characteristics of sixth grade students, patterns and stages emerge that give insight into how at-risk sixth grade students experience school and education. Campbell (1981) stated middle school children in grade six are beginning to coordinate social relations, deal with surging hormones, and find out who they are. During this time, middle school students are often concerned with the concept of fairness. Brownlee (1999) found that sixth grade students often confuse fairness with sameness. Therefore, when at-risk sixth graders do not have the same resources and options as others within their school, they feel they are suffering an injustice. This sense of injustice can cause at-risk middle school students to engage in behaviors that are detrimental to their cognitive and physical development. At-risk boys may engage in violence and fighting. At-risk girls may get pregnant or drop out of school.

Physical development also plays a critical role for sixth grade middle school students. Many girls at this age become obsessed about their weight and body fat. Many boys at this age find it difficult to sit still and concentrate on their schoolwork. Boys who mature early earn the respect of other boys by performing better in sports and social activities (Conger, 1977). Boys who mature late often find themselves feeling anxious and less than adequate (Jones, 1958; Jones & Bayley, 1950; Mussen & Jones, 1957). Girls who mature early often are teased by boys and treated as a sex object (Clausen, 1975).

According to Erik Erikson (1968), sixth grade students must find out who they are. He believed that the quest for identity was the main task of adolescence. Erikson viewed sixth grade students as having many fragmented selves. For instance, a middle school student might be a son or daughter, brother or sister, friend, football player, artist, and so forth. As students enter adolescence, they begin to integrate new roles. These roles could include peer group member or ethnic group member. Middle school students begin to integrate their many new roles into a single unified identity. Erikson said that individuals who do not achieve identity suffer from role confusion. They attempt to be all things to all people and have difficulty in their relationships.

Middle school students who have a healthy relationship with both parents have a greater chance of developing a healthy identity (Conger, 1977). In order for middle school students to achieve a positive self-image and identity, they must have a background of love and trust (Erickson, 1963). At this age, middle school students often turn to their peer group to find their identity (Conger, 1977). Many times at-risk middle school students feel misunderstood at home and thus turn to their peer group to find acceptance. When their peer group is also at-risk, they may lack the ability to successfully meet the students' needs, and thus create more conflict and confusion for the students.

Piaget (1958) also believed that children pass through a series of stages as they mature. He placed middle school students in the formal operations stage. At this stage middle school students were able to think abstractly. They were able to use logic and discuss the possibility of issues. Students in the formal operations stage were able to develop concepts and see beyond the concrete and the specific (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958).

In addition, Piaget believed that children pass through various stages in their moral development. These stages go along with their cognitive development. For instance, at first children view rules as specific examples. Then, they see rules as almost sacred. Piaget referred to this stage as moral realism. Lastly, children see rules as more arbitrary. In this stage, they are learning autonomous morality (Piaget, 1932). Therefore, students may follow or break the rules based on their moral interpretation of what those rules mean. While much research has been conducted on the development and stages of middle school students, little has been captured of their perceptions and self-determination.

Statement of the Research Problem

Currently, there appears to be few documents that capture the voices and experiences of at-risk sixth grade students. Despite the need for educational reform, many early intervention education programs remain the same. One of the biggest obstacles these programs face today is the lack of a clear, coherent sense of meaning of how students experience these programs. A more coherent picture of the people who are involved in or affected by educational programs can be used to clarify how students experience educational outreach programs. Venues and paths that need to be further researched may become clearer through the development of these shared meanings (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

Are there some aspects of early intervention education programs that are unclear due to a lack of input from at-risk students? While students in the Headstart program make many gains, they are often lost in the next five years while they wait to be eligible for TRIO Programs. According to Brown (1978) "...the initial gains in IQ scores

obtained immediately following the termination of an intervention are decreased before the child enters school, if intervention is not continuous” (p. 34). Brown’s research hypothesizes that the “earlier” and “longer” the intervention lasts, the “better” the results. Interestingly enough, Brown also found that, “To the extent that we can influence the family with respect to behaviors related to child rearing we will make a more pronounced effect on all children” (1978, p. 34).

Brown’s research was conducted over twenty years ago. Since that time, little additional research has been done to listen carefully to the voices and experiences of at-risk youth in early intervention programs. More research is required to effectively evaluate the issue. Current research does show that participating in any type of outreach program during school nearly doubled the odds of enrolling in a four-year college among the at-risk (Horn & Chen, 1998).

William Glasser (1992) found that all children have five essential needs that must be met in order for them to thrive. He found these needs to include survival, fun, power, freedom, and feeling of belonging. When these needs are provided, children can perform at their best. Throughout their lives, children are constantly trying to have these needs met. Their behavior is often centered on whether or not these needs are being met. When these needs are not met, children will engage in behaviors designed to meet those needs. Educators and adults may view this behavior as not appropriate or counterproductive.

According to Glasser, these same needs must be met in the school setting. When they are not, students will not have a rewarding school experience. Indeed, students who do not have these needs met get poor grades in school, struggle academically, and often dislike the school experience. Children at-risk are less likely to have their five essential

needs met (Glasser, 1992). That is why the Educational Talent Search program is vital for at-risk sixth grade students. This study will ask these students how they experienced the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program.

This study captured the voices of the students themselves. It was written from an emancipator's perspective. This study provided food for thought for other researchers who wanted to then delve into specific venues and arenas perhaps not previously thought of for further research and evaluation. This research provided an opportunity for our most needy students to be given a voice and an arena to express themselves. This research allowed rural at-risk sixth grade students in Northwest Iowa a chance to be listened to and heard. Qualitative research provided a "choreographed" (Huberman & Miles, 1994) data analysis to give a voice to at-risk students.

At-risk children must feel that they matter in this world. Dr. H. Stephen Glenn (1990) found that at-risk children want control and to influence their own destinies. In addition, they want to be listened to. They long to be understood. When at-risk children sense that adults are not able to listen to them, they turn to their peers. This can be a very dangerous substitute since their peers are often lacking in adult judgment and insight (Glenn, 1990). Most of all, at-risk children want to know that their lives are significant and that they matter in this world (Glenn, 1990). This study will validate for at-risk children that they matter in this world and that their voice is worth listening to.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to collect and document the experiences of sixth grade, at-risk youth enrolled in the Educational Talent Search program in Northwest Iowa. Through interviews and systematic data gathering and analysis procedures, I sought to determine how sixth grade students enrolled in Success for Sixth

experienced the program. This study was designed to add to the current knowledge base of the education of at-risk middle school students. It explored the experiences of at-risk middle school students enrolled in the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program. This study focused on the students' experiences in the context of the middle school Success for Sixth program.

The youth of today will be the adults of tomorrow. Investment in their education has the potential to help them overcome class, social, academic, and cultural barriers (Anderson, 1998). The findings produced through this study can expound upon our understanding of the meaning of the term at-risk. In addition, this information can be used to improve TRIO programs and educational experiences for at-risk middle school students.

Conceptual Framework

The underlying conceptual framework for this study was related to emancipation, or overcoming. I provided a forum for at-risk students to share their experiences. This study sought to research by listening to at-risk children in an after school educational program. At-risk children who are successful in educational programs have several protective factors. Werner (1992) found that such children needed an internal locus of control, interaction with the environment in a physical manner, assigned responsibility, age-appropriate reading skills, and a variety of support. According to this study, the support needs to come both from within the family and from outside the family. Children who were able to experience this were often found to be able to overcome poverty and negative labels. This same study found that even when parents were remote or not accessible, children were still able to thrive when they had the care and concern of

another adult. Children most needed to be able to develop trust, autonomy, and initiative (Werner, 1992).

I was interested in identifying the experiences of at-risk students in the Educational Talent Search program. Although at-risk students may participate in the Educational Talent Search program, their participation alone does not listen to how they experienced the program. To understand how these children experienced being enrolled in the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program, I first needed to listen carefully to the voices of the students through in-depth interviews and data documentation.

Research Question

The research question that this study examined was: How do at-risk sixth grade students in Northwest Iowa experience the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth TRIO program?

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms are defined as follows:

1. At-risk – The Education Commission of the States, (E.C.S.) defines at-risk students as “Young people who face uncertain futures as workers and citizens. Most will become dropouts” (Currence, 1985). Conrath (1987) defines at-risk students as, “discouraged by the formal process of school house learning, and by the time they reach their teenage years, they become defeated learners” (p. 7).
2. Dropout – A dropout is a student who leaves one school and does not transfer to another (Kozol, 1991).

Significance of Study

The Council of Opportunity in Education (COE) was created to “advance equal educational opportunity and promote diversity in America’s colleges and universities” (Introducing TRIO, 1995). The COE conducts frequent research on educational opportunity programs and publishes their results in monthly reports and newsletters. The COE has created an informative newsletter entitled, “EQUALITY.” In the March 1997 issue, Mitchem submits recommendations to redesign TRIO Programs. He advocates for TRIO Programs to survey their students and find out what they need to be successful in education. In addition, Mitchem believes that increased funding can better provide for the academic needs of at-risk students. He believes at-risk students need access to technology, tutors, and cultural enrichment. In summarizing his concerns he states, “Fortunately, we are not proposing massive changes in a program that is broken or has lost its way. Instead, we are making proposals designed to help a good program work better” (Mitchem, 1997).

In light of Mitchem’s concerns, the Educational Talent Search program could be even more effective with increased funding and an increased understanding of how at-risk students experience the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program. While many educational outreach programs typically focus their energies on high school students and adults, the Educational Talent Search program focuses on middle school students. Other outreach programs attempt to reach out to individuals who are at-risk for high school dropout, teen pregnancy, poverty, and unemployment. Often such programs offer temporary help, but lack in their effectiveness to bring about long-term significant changes and growth. The Educational Talent Search program allows for earlier

intervention and long-term changes. This study adds to a deeper understanding of how at-risk students experience the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program.

Researcher's Perspective

My mother never had the opportunity to graduate from high school. She earned her GED when she was 32 years old, after having four children. She then began attending a local community college at night. She quickly earned a 4.0 G.P.A. In the summer of 1969 she began attending the community college full-time during the day to earn an Associate of Arts degree. The community college opened up a whole new world of dreams and hopes for my mother. She began to explore literature and philosophy in hopes of earning a degree in American Literature. While into her second year of college, she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She never had a chance to fulfill her dream of earning a college degree. She died in the fall of 1970 at the age of 34. However, her dream and belief that all students should have the opportunity to learn, regardless of their life situation, has continued to live on. It has now become my dream to ensure that students have the opportunity to pursue and achieve their college dreams, regardless of their income or their life situation.

After teaching in the classroom for over six years, I accepted a position for a federally funded TRIO Program. It was during this time that I began to really ponder just how effective our program was in helping low-income Americans enter college and graduate. I believe that an effective outreach program must include several capstones of learning that enable educators to accurately assess change and the development of students throughout their learning experience. I have watched students in the third grade progress from learning to read to reading to learn. When students are not monitored along

a checks and balance system, they often fall off the nebulous path of learning. By the time TRIO programs reach them, it is often too late.

At-risk students often experience repeated failure from an early age. They are vulnerable to the stress produced within their family, community, school, and themselves due to their lack of coping skills. Caring and qualified educators have the ability to empower at-risk students to acquire the skills and motivation they need to be successful in education. Students may display at-risk tendencies well before kindergarten. By the time these students reach the sixth grade, they may have experienced repeated devastating failure. This failure may have become so ingrained and accepted that the student is basically labeled or well down the path toward failure and dropping out. Students may also be incorrectly labeled, given lowered expectations or placed in inappropriate tracks.

Students develop and mature in stages. They bring with them a diverse background that is shaped by their previous experience and environment. They pass through various developmental states by experiencing conflict and by being challenged to test their perceptions and beliefs. I have seen various assessments, such as the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator used to help understand students' unique characteristics. The elementary student population is heterogeneous. Educators must understand student development in order to make wise policies and decisions that will affect the students. This study is designed to empower at-risk Success for Sixth students by carefully listening to their voices and by hearing their stories of how they experienced the program.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

In this literature review I consider the historical context of the Educational Talent Search program and its relevance in the American educational system. I will also review literature on at-risk students who qualify to enroll in programs like the Educational Talent Search program. First, I will take an historical look at our present educational system. Second, I will discuss the events that expanded the history of the Educational Talent Search program. Third, I will introduce four theoretical propositions that I formed as I reviewed the literature on the history of education and at-risk students. These theoretical propositions describe who at-risk students are, what their educational needs are, what previous types of after school tutoring programs have been effective for them, and what may happen to them if they do not receive the support they need.

I will begin now with an historical overview of our educational system. I will begin with the year 1945 as this marks a turning point for how our country opts to spend federal funds for education. It is at this time that the federal government begins to set the stage for programs such as the Educational Talent Search program to later develop.

Brief Historical Overview of Education

1945 – 1960. On September 2, 1945, Japan signed the articles of surrender aboard the U.S.S. Missouri and WWII was over. This heralded a time of significant change in our educational system. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the

GI-Bill, was made available to the four million returning war veterans. Thousands swelled the student ranks of schools and colleges, as they pursued higher education and improved job skills. Thus, education was provided for everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status.

In 1947 President Truman enlisted the help of a national Commission on Higher Education. The federal role in education was increased as a result of these postwar proposals. Just how involved the federal government should be in education soon became a matter of national concern. Members of Congress were not in agreement as to the role of the federal government in education. Some congressional members viewed the federal government's role in education as all-inclusive. They wanted the federal government to provide the solutions to our country's educational dilemmas.

Other members of Congress stood in opposition to federal involvement in education based upon Amendment X of the Constitution, which made education a state responsibility. Most congressional membership was somewhere between these two extremes. They believed in limited federal assistance to education (Urban & Wagoner, 1996). Thus, Congress began to have a greater role in determining what the federal government's involvement should be in the educational arena.

Perhaps the most significant predecessor to Lyndon B. Johnson's comprehensive series of federal laws regarding student aid was the 1958 passage of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). This legislation gave monies to undergraduate college students and states to improve education. Although the total amount of federal aid appropriated through this bill was relatively small, it set a precedent that later paved the way for the

sweeping legislation of the early 1960s which eventually brought about the Educational Talent Search program (Urban & Wagoner, 1996).

1960 – 1980. The 1960s were a time of social unrest in the United States, as themes of race and poverty took center stage. Minorities became vocal in their demand for social and educational equality. Even leading educators were involved in the debate. For instance, James B. Conant, former president of Harvard University, believed that education's focus should be on improving the inner city schools. He saw a great disparity between the well-staffed schools of the affluent suburbs and those of the inner city poor. He proposed implementing improved vocational programs within the inner city schools that would reduce the existing large dropout rate (Urban & Wagoner, 1996).

Another leading activist for change, Michael Harrington, produced a startling book that examined the dire poverty that was beginning to affect more and more Americans in 1963. The serious warning that his book signaled was certainly heard by President Kennedy. However, before he was able to respond, his life all too quickly ended. After President Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Lyndon Johnson took over the presidency. Johnson also appeared to have heard the startling message of Harrington's book. A "war on poverty" was started, largely in response to Harrington's work (Urban & Wagoner, 1996). All these activities would set the stage to soon introduce the Educational Talent Search program. This program would attempt to equalize educational opportunity.

Johnson appeared to be proficient in working with the Congress, perhaps due to his previous tenure as a congressional leader. He skillfully maneuvered many important pieces of legislation through Congress at this time. For instance, the Civil Rights Act of

1964 was enacted. Although previously proposed in 1963, the bill was stalled under Kennedy, but Johnson was able to get it passed (Urban & Wagoner, 1996). Johnson believed that his path to greatness as a president would be ensured through the elimination of poverty (Andrew, 1998). These legislations had long-term effects on our country and its ability to effectively deal with our most needy students. These legislations brought about the Educational Talent Search program.

In support of providing educational opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, ethnic background or economic circumstance, Congress established a series of programs referred to as the TRIO programs. The Educational Talent Search program is one of three programs that originated in the Higher Education Act of 1965. This program both identifies and assists individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who have the potential to succeed in higher education. The Talent Search program provides career, academic, and financial counseling to its students. It encourages them to graduate from high school and go on to college (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

The U.S. Department of Education (2001) lists services provided by the Educational Talent Search program. These services include academic, financial, career, or personal counseling including advice on entry or re-entry to secondary or postsecondary programs, career exploration and aptitude assessment, tutorial services, information on postsecondary education, exposure to college campuses, information on student financial assistance, assistance in completing college admissions and financial aid applications, assistance in preparing for college entrance exams, mentoring programs, special activities for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, and workshops for the families of participants.

In addition to these services, specific guidelines are given on who can participate in the Educational Talent Search program. Students must be between the ages of 11 and 27 and have completed the fifth grade. Within each Talent Search program, two-thirds of participants must be students who are low-income and potential first-generation college students (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

After 1970 education again evolved to meet the need of the citizens. According to Lombardi (1978), education and community services comprise a group of functions, activities, and programs that, in the late 1960s and 1970s, grew rapidly (Smith, 1994, p. 225). The Educational Talent Search program was an example of services started to meet the needs of and create opportunities for at-risk students.

1980 – 2000. The 1980s brought a shift in the focus on education. Rather than concentrating on equalizing educational opportunity for the poor and minorities, the federal government instead began to explore more popular issues such as tax credits for private school parents and public funding for private schools. Educators involved with the Educational Talent Search program feared that Congress might cut funding to the program. When Ronald Reagan became President in 1980, he had three major policies that he wanted to promote: (1) abolition of the federal Department of Education, (2) tax credits for tuition paid by parents of private school children, and (3) returning prayer to a prominent place in public schools (Urban & Wagoner, 1996). Many large cuts were made to federal funding and support of education. However, the Talent Search program was left intact.

In a report entitled, “A Nation at Risk,” the U.S. Government (1983) stated “we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our education system for the benefit of all.” This

report put particular emphasis on pre-college education. The report made five recommendations to improve our country's education. These recommendations were to be implemented over the next several years. In addition, the report suggested five measures that would improve education in our country. These included:

1. Recommendation A: Content

We recommend that State and local high school requirements be strengthened and that, at a minimum, all students seeking a diploma be required to lay the foundations in the Five New Basics by taking the following curriculum during their 4 years of high school; (a) 4 years of English; (b) 3 years of mathematics; (c) 3 years of science; (d) 3 years of social studies; and (e) one-half year of computer science. For the college-bound, 2 years of foreign language in high school are strongly recommended in addition to those taken earlier.

2. Recommendation B: Standards and Expectations

We recommend that schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards and higher expectations for academic performance and student conduct, and that 4-year colleges and universities raise the requirements for admission. This will help students do their best educationally with challenging materials in an environment that supports learning and authentic accomplishment.

3. Recommendation C: Time

We recommend that significantly more time be devoted to learning the New Basics. This will require more effective use of the existing school day, a longer school day, or a lengthened school year.

4. Recommendation D: Teaching

This recommendation consists of seven parts. Each is intended to improve the preparation of teachers or to make teaching a more rewarding and respected profession. Each of the seven stands on its own should not be considered solely as an implementing recommendation.

- (1) Persons preparing to teach should be required to meet high educational standards, to demonstrate competence in an academic discipline. Colleges and universities offering teacher preparation programs should be judged by how well their graduates meet these criteria.
- (2) Salaries for the teaching profession should be increased and should be professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based. Salary, promotion, tenure, and retention decisions should be tied to an effective evaluation system that includes peer review so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated.
- (3) School boards should adopt an 11-month contract for teachers. This would ensure time for curriculum and professional development, programs for students with special needs, and a more adequate level of teacher compensation.
- (4) School boards, administrators, and teachers should cooperate to develop career ladders for teachers that distinguish among beginning instructor, the experienced teacher, and the master teacher.
- (5) Substantial non-school personnel resources should be employed to help solve the immediate problem of the shortage of mathematics and science teachers.

(6) Incentives, such as grants and loans, should be made available to attract outstanding students to the teaching profession, particularly in those areas of critical shortage.

(7) Master teachers should be involved in designing teacher preparation programs and in supervising teachers during their probationary years.

5. Recommendation E: Leadership and Fiscal Support

We recommend that citizens across the Nation hold educators and elected officials responsible for providing the leadership necessary to achieve these reforms, and that citizens provide the fiscal support and stability required to bring about the reforms we propose (U.S. Government, 1983).

The federal government established these national goals and standards for pre-college education in 1983. With these guidelines came several budget cuts to reduce the federal deficit.

Headstart appears to be another area that did not suffer cuts during this time. When Reagan and Bush were accused of favoring the rich with their federal policies, they were able to promote their support of the Headstart program showing their altruism and concern for the needy. They promoted the Headstart program as a safety net for the poor. Because Headstart programs were locally run, their support did not seem to feed a large educational establishment. Thus, the Headstart program was in agreement with their political educational agenda during the 1980s and 1990s (Urban & Wagoner, 1996).

When William Jefferson Clinton entered the White House in 1993, his educational plan sought to provide fiscal equity and higher educational standards for education. Clinton supported the National Education Association and he appointed a

high-ranking NEA official to be the director of research in the U.S. Department of Education. Clinton added to Bush's education plan with a Goals 2000 program. He wanted to ensure that teachers were prepared to meet the growing challenges of student poverty and a declining economy. Once again, the nation looked to the schools to educate the children of the poor. Our nation saw education as a way to break the cycle of poverty and the barriers that at-risk students must overcome to be successful in education (Urban & Wagoner, 1996).

In November 2001, President Bush announced the establishment of the National Center for Educational Accountability, a collaborative effort to improve learning and evaluate the quality of public education in this country. President Bush has named his educational reform plan, "No Child Left Behind." His plan, according to the U.S. Department of Education, would focus on four pillars. These pillars would:

1. Increase accountability for student performance: States, districts and schools that improve achievement will be rewarded; failure will require intervention. Parents will know how well their child is learning, and that schools are held accountability for their effectiveness with annual state reading and math assessments in grades 3 – 8.
2. Focus on what works: Federal dollars will be spent on effective, research-based programs and practices. Funds will be targeted to improve schools and enhance teacher quality.
3. Reduce bureaucracy and increase flexibility: Additional flexibility will be provided to states and school districts, and flexible funding will be increased at the local level.
4. Empower parents: Parents will have more information about the quality of their child's school. Students in persistently low-performing schools will be given more

options (U.S. Department of Education, Community Update, November/December 2001, Issue No. 93).

President Bush reflected on his new education policy by stating, "Some say it is unfair to hold disadvantaged children to rigorous standards. I say it is discrimination to require anything less." U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, recently wrote a letter to explain what the "No Child Left Behind" will mean to communities. In this letter, Paige looks back to the year 1965. He remembers Congress creating a role for the federal government in education. This role was designed to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds receive quality education and look forward to a brighter future. According to Paige, these objectives were never accomplished. He states, "Many years and good intentions later, we still have not fulfilled that promise."

His letter recommends that educators give back more local control and flexibility to bring about educational reform. Paige suggests that local neighbors know what local schools need better than anyone in Washington. He suggests that decisions affecting school reform should be made through the state and local officials. This accountability will strengthen educational endeavors and increase results, especially for at-risk students.

Summary

An historical overview of the history of education shows that for the past forty years new programs and philosophies have been adapted in response or reaction to historical events. Our leaders have used federal funds to give a boost to the sagging educational climate and communities of the United States of America. Just as new and different programs and policies have evolved to meet the changing needs of our society, so have new and more complex problems arisen just as quickly in spite of them. No

longer do educators merely face needing to train and educate a workforce. We now must also begin to examine the societal ills that are a direct result of poverty, discrimination, stereotyping, hunger and war.

One result of poverty for students is that they become at-risk of attaining the skills and abilities they need to be successful in life. Much research has been done to study at-risk students. I will not attempt to delve into the extensive research on this subject. Rather, I will develop four theoretical propositions which will describe who at-risk students are, what their educational needs are, what previous types of after school tutoring programs have been effective for them, and what may happen to them if they do not receive the support they need. I will begin by looking at adolescent development, which will serve as a frame to understanding at-risk youth.

Adolescent Development

This thread now leads to briefly examining the crucial development that occurs during early adolescents.

Brief Look at Early Adolescence

In this section, adolescence will be examined in terms of physical development, cognitive development, psychological development, emotional, and moral development. These developmental stages are examined to show the differences between typical adolescence as compared to at-risk adolescence.

Joan Lipsitz (1977) examines the critical period of early adolescents and focuses on the impact of physical development. She sees early adolescence as “a critical developmental stage in the life span” (Lipsitz, 1977, p. 124). She ponders the “fit or lack of fit between social institutions, especially schools, and the physical developmental

needs of young adolescents” (p. 124). Bromberg, Commins, and Friedman (1980) see the normal physical changes that occur between the ages of 10 and 15 as “staggering” (p. 135). They further explain early adolescence as a time when the teenager will add the final 25 percent of his/her ultimate adult height, and as much as 50 percent of his/her adult weight. From the child’s body will emerge the sexually adult male and female with appropriate physique and body composition. The child must identify with a new body image and sense of self (Bromberg, Commins, & Friedman, 1980). In addition to their staggering physical development, adolescents are also experiencing rapid cognitive development.

Piaget (1972) described adolescence as a period of time that individuals begin to develop their cognitive abilities to think abstractly and logically. In addition, other research suggests that adolescents are now able to use hypothetical and logical reasoning, and reason abstract concepts (Keating & MacLean, 1987). However, Byrnes (1988) found cognitive development and abilities among adolescents to be inconsistent, especially among at-risk students. According to Byrnes (1988) adolescents may have higher reasoning on one area, but lower in another. Also, cognitive development alone is no guarantee of advanced moral development (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971). In addition to their cognitive development, adolescents also experience psychological development.

Freud (1938) believed that the personality was fully developed by the time a child was age 12. He believed that personality must progress through various stages of development at approximate ages. When students’ personality was unable to progress due to life circumstances, they became dysfunctional and unable to function in society. He also believed that children needed to learn socialization during the middle school years.

Perhaps the most critical psychological aspect of adolescence is the growing independence of the adolescent. "He must begin to separate from his family and consider his position in the world as an independent entity" (Bromberg, Commins, & Friedman, 1980, p. 135). Bromberg, Commins, and Friedman (1980) point out four states that adolescents must successfully progress through for healthy psychological development:

Four major tasks are generally considered necessary for the adolescent to progress from childhood to adulthood: separation from one's family and increasing independence, development of a sense of one's self or identity, establishment of a sexual identity leading to the ability to form significant interpersonal relationships, and creation of educational and vocational plans (Bromberg, Commins, & Friedman, 1980, p. 141).

In addition to psychological development, adolescence is also a time of emotional and moral development.

Kohlberg (1963, 1967, 1968) proposed a theory of emotional and moral development that identifies three general levels of moral reasoning. He believes that as children develop, they go through three distinct levels of moral development. Each level requires the child to use more advanced levels of cognitive development and emotions than the one before it (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971). In the first level, very young children interpret behavior in light of its physical consequences. They are concerned with whether they will be rewarded or punished for their behavior. This level is called the preconventional level. At adolescence, older children define right as that which pleases or helps others. This second stage is called the conventional level. Adolescents seek to gain approval in this stage (Mischel, 1976). Lastly, the third or postconventional level requires the ability for formal-operational thought. These ethical stances are considered to be universal and are based on abstract principles. At this stage individuals are more

concerned with principles than with those who enforce them or even their effect on society.

Additionally, gender may also play a key role in emotional and moral development. In fact, Gilligan refers to this in her “Different Voice” model. “The problem” says Gilligan, “is that for women the perception of the self is ‘tenaciously embedded in relationships with others’ and women’s judgments of what is moral are insistently contextual” (p. 33). Gilligan believes that educators must be aware of gender and diversity in creating learning environments for students. Bardwick and Douvan (1971) believe that the pressures of gender-type behavior increase for adolescent girls. Girls may even begin to underachieve just to fit in socially. This research will now focus on and include the developmental differences of typical versus at-risk adolescents.

Developmental Differences

As shown in Table 2.1, theorists such as Piaget (1926), Erikson (1968), and Freud (1938) have studied normal development of adolescents. These theorists have identified competencies and stages that students universally experience in the maturation process. Other theorists such as O’Sullivan (1989), Steinburg (1996), and Brownlee (1999) have documented and contrasted at-risk students’ development with that of their peers. At-risk students often differ in their cognitive, psychosocial, emotional, and physical development from their peers. For instance, according to Steinburg (1996), at-risk students often experience a lack of connection with their peers. At-risk adolescents have a tendency to withdraw rather than socialize with their peers (Steinburg, 1996).

Table 2.1

Normal Development of Adolescents Compared to Development of At-Risk Adolescents by Theorist and What They Reported

Normal Development		At Risk		
Internal characteristics	<i>Theorist/ Research</i>	What was reported?	<i>Theorist/ Research</i>	What was reported?
Cognitive	Piaget (1926)	Logical thought, moral judgments	O'Sullivan (1989)	Attention problems Disruptive behaviors
Psychosocial	Erikson (1968) Campbell (1981)	Creativity or shyness develops Coordinate social relationships	Steinburg (1996) Brownlee (1999)	Lack of connection Withdrawing
Emotional /Self Esteem	Freud (1938)	Socialization is learned	Steinberg (1996) Brownlee (1999)	Lack of confidence Sense of injustice
Physical	Cole (1996)	Onset of puberty begins	Steinburg (1996)	Variations in onset of puberty

At-Risk Students

The at-risk students' determination to succeed is an important factor in determining their resiliency and academic success in school. O'Sullivan (1989) found some at-risk students to overcome early difficulties but begin to experience problems in school during the middle school years. Jacobsen and Hofmann (1997) found at-risk students to have several indicators that identified them as such. These indicators included attention problems, poor grades, absenteeism, lack of connection with the school, and behavioral problems.

Steinberg (1996) noted that at-risk students often lack confidence. At-risk students believe that success is beyond their grasp. Steinberg (1996) also stated that at-risk girls may be especially at risk for academic failure when they lack confidence and have limited goals for the future. McCann and Austin (1998) found that middle school students with low math and reading scores were often labeled at-risk.

Taylor-Dunlop and Norton (1997) confirmed Sternberg's work in their study with eleven at-risk female students. These students participated in focus groups and individual interviews. The results of this study found that female at-risk students need to have supportive links between themselves and the school. These links or mentors include teachers, counselors, and friends. Additional studies found that achievement and satisfaction in obtaining supportive links with teachers, counselors, and friends had a significant impact on at-risk students' persistence in earning a high school diploma (McMillan & Reed, 1993; Rosier, 1978; Williams, Clancy, Batten, & Girling-Butcher, 1980).

McCann and Austin (1988) define the at-risk student as exhibiting behaviors that interfere with themselves and others. These students have family background characteristics, such as poverty, that place them at risk. Batsche (1985) created a list of eight common characteristics that define at-risk students. She found at-risk students to have:

1. a history of school absenteeism,
2. poor grades,
3. low math and reading scores,
4. low self-concept,

5. history of behavioral problems,
6. inability to identify with other people,
7. low socioeconomic background, and
8. feelings of alienation and isolation (p. 1)

This information presented defined the at-risk student. I will now take this information and form it into theoretical proposition one.

Theoretical Proposition One

A student who is described as at-risk may be in danger of attaining the academic and social competencies required for successful participation in school (Batsche, 1985; Damico, 1989; Jacobsen & Hofmann, 1997; Steinburg, 1996; McCann & Austin, 1988; McMillan & Reed, 1993; Rosier, 1978; Williams, Clancy, Batten, & Girling-Butcher, 1980).

This first proposition lays the foundation for beginning to understand the external factors that lead to being labeled at-risk.

External Factors that Lead to Being Labeled as "At Risk"

Several external factors lead to a student being labeled at-risk. These factors include the student's family, poverty, education, social support, and ineffective strategies used to reach the student. I will now consider each of these five factors as they relate to students being labeled at-risk. I begin with family.

Family. Research shows the importance of a supportive family for the developing adolescent. Glasser (1992) found that the at-risk family often lacked a strong support system. Thus, students from an at-risk family had low self-concept and lacked the support they needed (McCann & Austin, 1988). In addition, parents in an at-risk family were less

able to set appropriate boundaries for their children (McCann & Austin, 1988).

According to Batsche (1985) the at-risk family has identifiable characteristics that put their children at-risk.

Batsche (1985) identified six characteristics of the at-risk family. These included:

1. family with several siblings,
2. father absent from the home,
3. father unemployed,
4. father did not complete high school,
5. mother absent from the home in early adolescence, and
6. little reading material in the home (p. 1).

These findings suggest that at-risk students lack the support and the resources they need.

Often at-risk families lack the resources they need due to poverty.

Poverty. Poverty is detrimental to an at-risk student's education (Anderson, 1998). At-risk children in poverty may experience poor nutrition, atypical learning styles, and illiteracy in the home. They come to the classroom unprepared to learn. Often much needed early intervention programs are avoided because of the cost needed to operate (Anderson, 1998). Even programs that have been proven to work, such as the Headstart program and TRIO programs, are dismissed due to the lack of federal funding (Urban & Wagoner, 1996).

Poverty often forces both parents to work outside the home. Lerner and Noh (2000) note that, although early adolescence may appear the ideal time for mothers to seek employment outside the home, it may not be. In fact, according to Lerner and Noh (2000) when the parents of at-risk middle school children do work, it is often for long

hours at low wages. This leads to the at-risk middle school student being left alone and unsupervised for several hours a day. In addition, Woods (1972) found that at-risk middle school children left unsupervised for several hours a day had lower test scores and lower cognitive abilities than their supervised at-risk middle school peers.

The voices of our at-risk children in poverty have not been heard by our society. Recently administration and Congress have become more vocal about the disparities between affluent schools and schools for the poor. In Goals 2000, former Vice President Gore gave an Agenda for Action speech (Gore, 1994). In this speech Gore advocated that barriers to participation for poor and minority students must be removed (Collins, 1993). In addition to poverty, at-risk students also must work through the external factor of education. Many at-risk students face barriers in their education that leave them with lower test scores and reduced cognitive ability (Woods, 1972).

Education. Kozol (1991) speaks of the visible barriers and dilemmas that at risk students face in school. He states that at-risk students often attend schools that are understaffed and lacking equipment and supplies necessary to teach. He paints a very realistic picture of at-risk students explaining that their educational needs have gone unmet due to the inequalities in the public school systems. He writes, "It becomes striking," says a parent in another urban district, "how closely these schools reflect their communities, as if the duty of the school were to prepare a child for the life he's born to...It hardly seems fair" (Kozol, 1991, p. 159).

In addition to barriers and dilemmas, at-risk students also differ in their level of social support (Kozol, 1991). These differences make it difficult to build a social support system through identification with a group.

Social support. A lack of social support factors is associated with students being labeled at-risk. Glasser (1992) found that students who lacked support and supervision were often also labeled as being at-risk. Kozol (1991) found at-risk students to lack a social support system and have difficulty identifying with their peers. These theorists suggest that at-risk students need one-on-one mentoring programs to help them build a social support system and to bridge the gap between what they are expected to know and what they can actually do.

One reason why at-risk students may have a gap between what they are expected to know and what they can actually do is because educators do not understand the development of the at-risk student. In addition, educators may not know how to assess and monitor the learning experience of the at-risk student. Thus, many educators may use ineffective strategies that misidentify the student's problem.

Ineffective strategies. At-risk students may face hidden barriers to their success in education (Schommer, 1996). One of these barriers is that a teacher may identify a problem an at-risk student is having; yet misidentify the source of the problem. This leads the teacher to engage in inappropriate interventions (Schommer, 1996). Thus, teachers and students continue to use methods and strategies that are ineffective and unrelated to the at-risk student's actual problem.

Table 2.2 identifies external factors associated with the at-risk label by theorist and by appropriate interventions and solutions.

Damico (1989) found that at-risk students who had good social support were more interested in school, and achieved higher grades. This information presented has helped

me to establish theoretical proposition two. It has begun to explain the needs of at-risk students.

Table 2.2

External Factors Associated With the At-Risk Label

External Factors associated with at-risk label	Theorist/ Research	Barrier	Success, Support—what works?
Family	Glasser (1992)	Lack of support	Parent education set appropriate boundaries
	McCann & Austin (1988)	Low self-concept Low math and reading scores	Small group tutoring and one-on-one mentoring programs
	Batsche (1985)	Little reading material in the home	Provide books and tutoring resources
Poverty	Lerner & Noh (2000)	Parents are absent working long hours at low pay	Provide supervised care
Education	Woods (1972)	Lower test scores reduced cognitive ability, ineffective programs	Student-centered education, early education
Social Support	Kozol (1991)	Lack of social support system	Build social support system through identification with a group
Ineffective strategies	Schommer (1996)	Misidentification of student's problem	Identify actual problem via testing

Theoretical Proposition Two

The educational needs of most at-risk students have not been met (Anderson, 1998; Chizmar, 1997; Kozol, 1991; Maeroff, 1999; Schommer, 1996; Sizer, 1996; Tyler, 1992; Woods, 1972).

Often because the needs of most at-risk students have not been met, they have a gap between what they are expected to know and what they can actually do. One reason that their needs are not met is often due to their schooling. Although schools have attempted to remain current in both understanding the adolescent's development and in keeping up with technology, they may have failed to reach at-risk students. In fact, the role of the school is critical in reaching the at-risk student (Bluestein, 2001).

The Role of the Middle School

“The middle school has become a dominant feature of the landscape of American Education” (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000, p. 703). Middle schools were designed to meet the intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and physical developmental needs of young adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1993; National Middle Schools Association, 1995). Many changes rapidly occur for young adolescents including rapid physical change, changes in moral reasoning, the onset of abstract thinking, and exposure to sex and drugs (Irvin, 1995). Effective middle schools are those that are able to develop appropriate programs, policies, and practices that enable students to experience these tasks in positive ways (National Middle Schools Association, 1995, p. 1). Ineffective middle schools are those still using behavioral expectations and instructional techniques that were needed 150 years ago to train a factory society in today's world (Bluestein, 2001). The ineffective

techniques of the middle school may lead the at-risk student to face the possibility of being undereducated and underemployed.

Middle schools have been able to incorporate new technology into their curriculum to remain current in today's changing society (Maeroff, 1999). While these schools have modernized and progressed in accommodating technological developments, they have failed to develop and update in their thinking, academic curriculum, attitudes, relationships, communication and language, and power dynamics. Schools are still using behavioral expectations and instructional techniques that were needed 150 years ago to train a factory society in today's world. Educators now live in an information society. Therefore, it is going to cause difficulties when educators teach our children with methods and models once needed for an industrial economy (Bluestein, 2001, p. 82). Thus, some schools have attempted to incorporate various programs that will better reach their at-risk students. I will now discuss some various school models for at-risk youth, and best practices for reaching at-risk youth.

School Models for at Risk Youth

One TRIO program has attempted to both keep up with technology and to understand the developmental needs of its students. Deema Silva (1993) has written an article that looks at a TRIO Student Support Services Program. She attempts to overcome invisible barriers by seeing education as almost a business. She uses a systems approach to enable students to analyze, overcome, and work through potential barriers to their success. She has created a program named Operation Success. Operation Success serves 250 low-income college students who are first in their families to attend college. The program is one-on-one peer tutoring with additional academic support services. The

program has to achieve measurable goals each year. In addition, it must deliver various enrichment classes to disadvantaged students. This program is able to both work with students' developmental level and allow these students to achieve measurable goals. It is effective primarily due to the one-to-one relationship formed between skilled teachers and students.

Best Practices: What Works and What Doesn't

Research shows that educational after school programs have been developed to meet the needs of young adolescents who are struggling with at-risk conditions such as poverty and low academic achievement (Manning, 1993). Seven characteristics have been identified as best practices for educational outreach programs. These seven include a comprehensive approach; an emphasis on self-concept; high expectations; focusing on improving social skills; agreeing on objectives; family involvement; and stressing the importance of motivation and success (Manning, 1993).

The Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS) is a successful program that exemplifies a comprehensive approach to reaching at-risk middle school students. This program focuses on the school's learning environment, student learning, basic skills, parent involvement, self-concept, and technology. JCCS utilizes a team approach to working with their students. They involve teachers, school administrators, counselors and families (Price & Swanson, 1990). This program is effective because it recognizes the relationship between self-concept and achievement of at-risk students (Manning, 1993).

Research shows that learners feel better about themselves when they achieve academically (Canfield, 1990). The Accelerated School for Disadvantaged Students program works with at-risk middle school students. This program enforces high

expectations and deadline. It works to bring all students up to grade level. This program involves parents, and it provides time for independent assignments (Hopfenberg, Lewin, Meister, & Rogers, 1991). It encourages adolescents to seek increased independence and improve academic growth through encouraging them to follow a rigorous academic curriculum and providing academic support.

Alderman (1990) suggests that effective at-risk programs use a model that helps students link their successes to their own efforts. He has developed a successful program entitled, "Links to Success." This program encourages students to foster self-responsibility and learning. Alderman (1990) believes that at-risk students need help learning responsibility and ways to achieve success. Alderman (1990) suggests that at-risk middle school students are capable of understanding cause and effect relationships. At-risk students can begin to understand how motivation and persistence affect their success through study skills instruction and peer-tutoring support and tutoring by professional staff.

Finn (1989) found that a low student-teacher ratio and concentration of resources worked well for at-risk middle school programs. Finn (1989) also suggested that at-risk middle school students perform better in educational outreach programs that meet in an environment that is different from their school. Callison (1994) discovered that at-risk middle school students could be challenged to perform academically. Furthermore, at-risk students in an educational program need to be able to have several choices and challenges available to them. Courses offered to at-risk students need to be challenging and offered by teachers with qualifications and training (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Mt. Olivet offers an after-school program for at-risk middle school students. These students have shown tremendous improvement in the academic skills (Posner & Vandell, 1994). This program seeks to assist students who are similar to a large number of youth in that they are unsuccessful with traditional school curriculum (Rush & Vitale, 1994). This program utilizes partnerships between school, community, and church. Students are successful because they have time spent in a structured environment away from television and the dangers of the streets (Halpern, 1992, 1999). Vandell and Corasaniti (1998) found that at-risk students enrolled in an educational outreach program benefited tremendously from such intervention. These students had better academic performance, conduct, and emotional adjustment than their peers who did not participate in such a program (Posner & Vandell, 1994; Shelley, 1984).

Research suggests that peer-mediated interventions also work well in after-school programs for at-risk middle school students (Gieseke, Cartledge, & Gardner, 1993). Peer-mediated interventions have been proven to increase on-task behaviors and improve academic achievement of at-risk students (Harper & Mallette, 2001). Studies show that students can effectively improve the behaviors of their peers (Cochran, Feng, Cartledge, & Hamilton, 1993). In addition, studies show that peer-mediated interventions allow students to see problem-solving tactics successfully incorporated by their peers and enable students to achieve common goals (Greenwood & Hops, 1981).

Another successful model of a program for at-risk middle school students involves strategic tutoring. Students are not only helped with academics, they are also taught how to study (Hock, 1995). After-school programs that incorporate strategic tutoring have been shown to help students acquire new knowledge and learn new skills

(Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1993). The TOPS program utilizes a strategic tutoring approach. In addition this successful program partners with police officers, volunteers and the mayor's office (Arnold & Parker, 1992). The Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program attempted to incorporate best practices to reaching its students in an after school format.

Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth Program

The Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program was piloted during the 1998-1999 year with 50 students in four school districts. Its curriculum was based on focus group input from target schoolteachers, guidance counselors, and principals. This program has maintained strong parent and school support. Students enrolled in the Success for Sixth program receive self-esteem and academic skill building. This initiative provides students with an element of after school accountability. Schools and parents requested expanding the program to six sites that correspond with weekly Talent Search tutoring sites.

While enrolled in the Success for Sixth program, students participated for 20 weeks. Class size was maintained at 12. An elementary certified instructor employed by the project implements this initiative. Each session lasted for one hour. Students received two sessions per week for 20 weeks. The program used small group sharing, self-discovery activities, and family focused out of class enrichment assignments. Activities were designed to encourage parental involvement. Prior to the first meeting, parents and students were invited to an orientation meeting where program goals and curriculum were explained.

Parents had the opportunity to discuss concerns and to participate in activities such as an awards night or pizza supper. The Success for Sixth discussion topics included responsibility, feelings, values, choices, disappointments, appreciation, asking, friendship, self-esteem, peer-pressure, and conflict resolution. This after school program enabled at-risk children to learn lessons that contribute to good decision-making, self-esteem and the skills to get along with others.

From these studies, it appears that at-risk students need a support network in place to provide the guidance, nurturing, and academics they need to achieve success in school. Choy (2001) found that successful student outcomes for at-risk students depended largely upon the courses the students took and the support for learning provided by the school and family. These findings lead to theoretical proposition three which states the following:

Theoretical Proposition Three

Educational after school tutoring/mentoring programs, in which skilled teachers provide one-to-one support, may reduce the gap between what students are expected to know and what they are actually able to do (Adler, 1998; Kaufmann & Adema, 1998; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Tolleson, 1997).

The previous three theoretical propositions have explained who at-risk students are, what their needs are, and what can be done to help them. One last area to examine is what happens when at-risk students are not helped. Some at-risk students began to face the possibility of being undereducated as early as middle school. Perna (2000) stressed the importance of helping at-risk students see that college is a realistic option by providing mentors and encouragement. In addition, Perna (2000) suggested involving

parents in program activities for at-risk students to increase their level of knowledge about college and their ability to be supportive of their children. Without programs such as those describe above, the at-risk student is at-risk of failing to gain the skills necessary for success in life. Theoretical proposition four states:

Theoretical Proposition Four

Without support at-risk students face the possibility of being undereducated, underemployed, and under prepared to participate in society (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; McMillan & Reed, 1993; Rosier, 1978; Steinburg, 1996; Williams, Clancy, Batten & Girling-Butcher, 1980).

Summary

An historical overview of the history of education is necessary to fully understand the complexity of our current educational dilemmas. For the past century, new programs and philosophies have been adapted in response or reaction to historical events. Our leaders have used federal funds to give a boost to the sagging educational climate and communities of the United States of America. Just as new and different programs and policies have evolved to meet the changing needs of our society, so have new and more complex problems arisen just as quickly in spite of them.

No longer do educators merely face needing to train and educate a workforce. Educators now must also begin to examine the societal ills that have been a direct result of poverty, discrimination, stereotyping, hunger, war and so forth. While much research has been conducted on our at-risk children, little research has been done while listening to them. The at-risk early adolescents of our communities have not been given a voice to express their educational needs and concerns. Research has shown that adolescence is a

critical time of development and change. In order to meet the needs of our at-risk youth, we must begin to listen to their experiences.

The Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program was designed as an after school program for sixth grade students. Each site has twelve participants and a certified elementary school teacher. Participants meet for one hour two times a week for twenty consecutive weeks. Parents are encouraged to discuss concerns, and to participate in activities and awards ceremonies. This program is part of the federally funded TRIO program. This program targets at-risk students who are the first generation in their family to eventually earn a four-year college degree.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study used a descriptive case study approach. The following sections are described in this chapter: Research Approach and Rationale, Setting, Participants, Data Collection Procedures, Ensuring Trustworthiness, Data Analysis, and Researcher's Perspective.

Research Approach and Rationale

I chose a qualitative descriptive case study approach to give the students who are normally powerless a voice in telling how they have experienced their education. I wanted to show this in a holistic way. I wanted to use a multi-perspective analysis to show the reader how these students experienced the program. I was guided by the theoretical propositions that I developed in Chapter Two. I then applied pattern matching based on the patterns that became evident in my review of the literature.

One dynamic in the case that I noted is that students in the Success for Sixth program sometimes perceive themselves as powerless when they are not asked for their input or given an opportunity to be listened to. I gave a voice to the powerless and voiceless initially by merely listening to the 12 at-risk students and documenting their words. As this study progressed, I gave a voice to the students through their interviews and drawings by capturing a framework of meanings, understandings, and interpretations of the students' presented themes (Patton, 1987).

I wanted to capture a holistic understanding of how 12 at-risk middle school students experienced the Success for Sixth program. This means I wanted to ensure that alternative explanations were always examined to the data. Additionally, a holistic understanding means that my analyses of the data were built by explaining the case.

In addition, I chose the case study format because I wanted to study the Success for Sixth program in depth and detail by using multi-perspective analysis. Using multi-perspective analysis I was able to examine multiple sources of evidence including an interview with the students, student drawings, field notes, reflective teacher notes, and one focus group meeting with the students' parents. I considered not only the voice of the individual students, but also of the entire group of 12 students and the interaction among them.

I chose the case study approach because of my desire to rely on theoretical propositions that led to this case study. These propositions shaped the data collection and helped me to focus attention on certain data that related directly to the project and to ignore other data. These theoretical propositions were my guide as I continued to analyze and reanalyze data. These propositions also helped me to organize the case study and guide the analysis. I wanted to provide a detailed examination of the Success for Sixth program that I believed exhibited the theoretical propositions (Mitchell, 1983). I wanted to specify how the data in the case were related.

In addition to writing and describing the case and its history, I also employed a pattern matching approach. I developed a prediction that if certain types of processes were happening with this case, I would see this pattern in the data I collected. I used the

pattern matching approach to analyze the data. The pattern matching approach involves seeing patterns that correspond to the data I observed (Yin, 1989).

Much of this relationship was linked through patterns that built upon each other, similar to the links in a chain. For instance, when certain types of processes were happening within this case, I would see this pattern in the data I collected. An example of this was when I noted a pattern that several students described the Success for Sixth program as fun when they were allowed to direct their learning and activities. When I attempted to control the sessions with lectures, directions and instructions, the students showed a pattern of experiencing the program as less fun. Thus, I utilized pattern matching to understand and build explanations about the Success for Sixth program being examined.

In addition I was able to use inductive logic by constantly comparing the data and deciding if they fit into a predicted pattern. The descriptive case study format allowed me to better understand the Success for Sixth program in a holistic way. It helped me look at it as a dynamic not static. By utilizing a case study approach I was able to gain an awareness of the perspectives of the program participants. Additionally, I was able to better understand the dynamic developments in the Success for Sixth program as it evolved (Weiss, 1998).

This means that I analyzed the data by constant comparative analysis building up an explanation of how the data fit into patterns. I examined the data to find evidence for the relationships between the patterns. Thus, the data collection strategy for analyzing this qualitative data was constant comparison.

Setting

The setting for this study was Iowa Lakes Community College. The college is located in rural northwest Iowa. The 12 student participants were bussed to the college after school from their local middle school. The participants met from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. for 20 sessions.

Each session began with snack time in the cafeteria of Iowa Lakes Community College. Students had the opportunity to share with the group how their day had been. For this snack time students were seated in the college cafeteria around circular tables and given foods such as pizza, cookies, ice cream, hot dogs, and beverages such as cola or fruit juice. Students were allowed to talk with their friends during the snack time. At the beginning of the snack time, students opted to sit at three separate tables with about four students at each. By the end of the 20 sessions, all 12 students opted to sit at the same circular table during the snack time.

Following the snack, students walked from the cafeteria to the library conference room and worked on various curriculum activities with me as the instructor and one college-aged tutor. The TRIO Director at Iowa Lakes Community College selected the curriculum for the Success for Sixth program. The curriculum included video segments, small group sharing, self-discovery activities, family focused and out-of-class enrichment, and behavior modeling activities. *The Power of Choice* by Live Wire Video Publishers video segments served as the backbone for the 20 curriculum units. These units included the topics of cooperation, responsibility, feelings, values, choices, disappointment, self-appreciation, asking for help, being friendly, self-esteem, peer-pressure, conflict resolution, communication, relationships with parents, questionnaire,

volunteerism, friendship skills, peer-pressure resolution, emotional intelligence, and celebrating successes. Each session concluded with students sharing with me what they had learned from the session.

Activities were specifically designed to encourage parental involvement. Parents and students were invited to an orientation meeting where program goals and curriculum units were explained. Parents had the opportunity to discuss concerns and ways they could be supportive of the program. Parents were encouraged to participate in family night activities and an Award's Ceremony. An annual Award's Ceremony was utilized to recognize student and parent participation.

Participants

The participants consisted of all 12 middle school students who were enrolled in the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program from January 2002 through May 2002. Participants are described more completely in Chapter IV. There were nine females and three males. All 12 students were identified by their school guidance counselor as at-risk of failing to complete high school, as low achievement, and as low socio-economic status.

The guidance counselor considers low achievers students who currently were earning less than a 2.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or earning less than average grades. The term "low socioeconomic status" means that students qualified for free and reduced lunches and that their family's income was at the poverty level. The poverty level for a family of four is \$24,000 according to the TRIO regulations and guidelines. In addition, all 17 parents of the 12 students were invited to attend one focus group meeting.

Four parents participated in the focus group meeting, and they represented four of the 12 students.

Data Collection Procedures

I collected program data through interviews, student drawings, field notes, my reflective teacher notes, and one parents' focus group. These methods represented appropriate data collection techniques for this qualitative descriptive case study approach.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with the students were conducted in the library conference room of Iowa Lakes Community College approximately eight months after the students had completed the Success for Sixth program. These interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each. Participants were asked to describe their experiences in the Success for Sixth program. The questions used in the interview included the following:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Please tell me about your experiences in the Success for Sixth program.
3. How do you describe the program when you talk to your friends, parents, and others?
4. What in the program has been the most helpful, interesting, and fun for you?
5. What in the program has not been important to you?
6. What do you think would make the program better?

Follow up questions such as, "How did you feel when you did that?" or "What was that moment like for you?" were asked at appropriate times. All interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed for data analysis.

Student Drawings

At their final session, students were asked to create a drawing that would let others know what their time in the program had been like for them. Students worked individually with markers and crayons and drew pictures that represented their perceptions and experiences in the program. Students worked quietly as they drew. It took the students approximately 15 minutes to complete their drawings. Students then were given an opportunity to share their drawings and talk about their experiences in the program with the group. I wrote the student stories in my field notes that they used to describe their drawings.

These documented stories provided rich accounts of their perceptions of the program and provided insights into meanings for these participants. Britton (1987) suggests this type of freeze-frames practice so that the experience can be interpreted and understood from the perspective of the student participants. Myers (1985) suggests that capturing student drawings and statements allows the researcher to suspend judgment and gain insider knowledge of the students from their perspective.

Field Notes

For the field notes I documented specific statements and opinions that the students expressed to me throughout the 20 Success for Sixth sessions. It was important for me to capture as close to verbatim as possible what the students were saying throughout the five months of the Success for Sixth program to better understand their experiences. At the Success for Sixth sessions, I would write down direct quotes that the students shared with me along with my own perceptions in a large notebook. Each session had its own page in the notebook, and it usually was filled with comments and stories the students had shared

on that particular day. Calkins (1985) stresses that field notes allow the researcher to understand the perspective of the participants and to more thoroughly capture their experiences. Thus, field notes allowed me to analyze the Success for Sixth program from another perspective.

Reflective Teacher Notes

In addition to recording field notes, I also compiled reflective teacher notes of the 12 individual students. For each student, I documented my observations for the months of January, February, March, April, and May 2002. These documented student observations allowed me to collect data over a five-month period. This writing process and five month time line allowed me to utilize an interpretive frame to better understand how the students were experiencing the Success for Sixth program.

Through reflective teacher notes, I recorded the students' experiences chronologically in the program. I captured stories, thoughts, and perceptions the students shared with me at the Success for Sixth sessions, as I added my own predictions, assumptions, thoughts and reflections.

For my reflective teacher notes generation process, I began by taking brief notes in the sessions. I gave myself permission to write freely. Some thoughts were not always polished. However, they provided insights that shaped the rest of my reflective note-taking agenda.

The use of generating reflective teacher notes for research writing is strongly supported by Ely (1991, 1996), Barone (1997, 2002), Connelly and Clendenin (1990), Greene (1994) and Richardson (1994).

Parent Focus Group

Four parents representing four of the 12 children came together for one focus group meeting and asked for feedback regarding their respective child's experience in the Success for Sixth program. This session met for approximately one hour. Parents were given an opportunity to talk about their child's experiences and to share their experiences of having a child in the Success for Sixth program.

The initial questions used in the focus group included:

1. Tell me about your child's experiences in the Success for Sixth program.
2. How did your child describe the program when talking to you?
3. What in the program was most helpful for your child?
4. What do you think would have made the program better for your child?

All focus group conversation was audio taped and then transcribed.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

The methods used to ensure trustworthiness for this study began by presenting in-depth descriptions and interpretations of the Success for Sixth experience and by showing how the theoretical propositions formed in Chapter Two fit into the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These methods were also discussed in Yin's (1994) text on qualitative data analysis and Creswell's (1998) text on qualitative inquiry and research design.

Triangulation allowed me to compare the findings derived from two or more data sources of information. By utilizing this technique, I was able to assess emerging findings to see if they were consistent or inconsistent among data gleaned from different sources. In other words, triangulation was used to ensure that the information I captured matched reality (Merriam, 1988).

By working with the students for the 20 sessions I had a prolonged field experience. Through peer examination I discussed my research findings with colleagues who worked with other at-risk students at Iowa Lakes Community College, and they helped me to identify my biases and keep them separate from the student data.

Throughout the study, I compared findings derived from student interviews, student drawings, field notes, reflective teacher notes, and parent focus group. This process insured that the findings were grounded in the data. I used a code-recode strategy that involved coding the same data twice to see if the results were similar. The retention of transcriptions and documents provided an audit trail of the key choices I made during the research process.

I also employed a stakeholder check or member check by involving the students and taking my findings to the participants to see if they were consistent with their program experiences (Merriam, 2002).

Thus, trustworthiness was a key issue for this qualitative study. Trustworthiness for this study was based on a systematic collection of data, using appropriate research procedures, critically analyzing the procedures used, utilizing reflexivity, prolonged field experience, triangulation, member checking, peer examination, audit trail and code-recode strategies, and a stakeholder check.

Data Analysis

I analyzed data from the student interviews, field notes, student drawings, reflective teacher notes, and one parent's focus group. All of my data sources resulted in verbal or written text with the exception of the student drawings. When dealing with written text I used constant comparative analysis by analyzing the written material to find

emergent themes. I explain this in greater depth in the Interview section. For the student drawings I used my own analytical eye to identify what they had drawn and compared this to the students' descriptions of their drawings.

Interviews

I began analyzing the interviews by reading through the entire interview transcripts several times to get a feel for them. Afterwards, I talked with the students to ensure their interview had been transcribed accurately. Then I began analyzing the data using open codes. I spread out all 12 interviews and working line by line, I generated initial codes. This initial sorting out process included jotting down notes in the margins of the text.

Next, I developed axial codes to aggregate the data by pulling like open codes together. For instance, the category of "fun" was examined. The final coding level was select coding. In developing the select codes I found axial codes which seemed to fit together and form a select code of a larger umbrella. By constantly comparing my data I moved from open codes to axial codes to select codes or major themes. Denzin (1989) found that interviews assume that meanings, understandings, and interpretations cannot be standardized. In other words, for this study I needed to break the interview data down into categories and then link them together by explanation building based on the participants' statements.

Field Notes

For my analysis of the field notes data I used the same analysis and coding techniques as with the interviews. My initial review began by using open coding. I generated codes line by line and became very familiar with the data. I read through the

text and made margin notes to form initial codes. Next, I used axial coding to make connections between a category and its sub categories developed during open coding. Then, I used selective coding to form the data into theoretical frameworks.

Student Drawings

I initially analyzed the student's description of their drawings using the same techniques as with the field notes. I then analyzed the student drawings by noting the pictures drawn and relating them to my previous findings. I began to establish patterns in the pictures themselves and looked for a correspondence of themes between two or more drawings. Both their drawings and the words the students wrote to describe their drawings suggested this connection between codes. The student drawings were analyzed using the representative field notes and my analysis of the drawings themselves.

Reflective Teacher Notes

My reflective teacher notes, as I discussed under data collection, involved recording the students' experiences chronologically in the program. I captured stories, thoughts, and perceptions the students shared with me at the Success for Sixth sessions, as I also added my own predictions, assumptions, thoughts and reflections. First, I read through all the reflective teacher notes in their entirety. I began my initial review of the reflective teacher notes by using open coding. I generated initial concepts from the data such as relationships and peer-pressure. I became very familiar with the reflective teacher notes data. I read through all the data to discover key codes. In addition, I reviewed which participants voiced various themes and when these themes chronologically took place. For instance, several students had difficulty dealing with peer-pressure in January 2002 at the start of the Success for Sixth program.

Next, I used axial coding to make connections between codes. For example, student relationships were defined through the reflective teacher notes as fun and mediated by food. I identified themes that emerged such as, "Peer-pressure could be experienced by the students as both positive and negative." While in school a student might be criticized, ostracized and left out because of negative peer-pressure. While attending the Success for Sixth program, that same student might experience belonging, friendship and empowerment because of positive peer pressure. Selective coding was used to form the data into theoretical frameworks.

Parent Focus Group

The parent focus group contained 4 parents representing 4 of the students. The parent focus group session lasted an hour. I audiotape the session and then transcribed the tapes into notes. I treated the transcription in the same way I did in the interviews using constant comparative analysis using open, axial and select coding. The initial analysis of parent focus group data utilized open coding. I examined the statements made by parents to generate initial codes from the data. I read through all the data and made margin notes to form initial codes.

Next, I used axial coding to make connections and to develop and link data into conceptual families. I established a simple code for each theme. Upon completion of this step, I used selective coding to form the data into theoretical frameworks. Lastly, I used constant comparative analysis to compare the parent focus group statements and themes to the student interviews, student drawings, field notes, and reflective teacher notes to develop categories until no new relationships were generated.

Connecting the Themes

The final data analysis stage involved pulling the themes together and forming a picture of how the students experienced the Success for Sixth program. I did this by first identifying the major student themes presented. I then used the theoretical propositions in Chapter Two and information from the literature to pull these themes together into a student story. I found a way to illustrate or tell the students' themes through this story. The themes presented by the students linked together and built upon each other similar to building blocks. Themes built upon each other through their relation to the theoretical framework in Chapter Two and formed a new tower of holistic understanding from the student's perspectives.

Researcher's Perspective

My role as the researcher was to gather data, address the most significant aspects, and then use my prior knowledge to further the analysis. In addition to being the researcher, I was also the teacher for the 20 sessions with the students. Thus, my role as researcher was impacted by my role as teacher in that I developed relationships with the 12 students that allowed them to feel comfortable sharing and disclosing information with me.

My role as researcher was also impacted by my role as teacher in that I had to learn to take off one hat or role and put on another. I had to stop often and ask myself if I was documenting the student's statements or my own perceptions. In June 2003, I moved several states away from Iowa to a new job. This physical move allowed me to cut my role as teacher and focus on my role as researcher. I was able to utilize distance to enable me to listen more clearly to the student voices.

My assumptions, values, and biases also came into play with this study. For instance, I believe that at-risk students often experience repeated failure from an early age. I think they are vulnerable to the stress produced within their family, community, school, and themselves due to their lack of coping skills. I believe that caring and qualified educators have the ability to empower at-risk students to acquire the skills and motivation they need to be successful in education and in life.

I also believe that students pass through various developmental stages by experiencing conflict and by being challenged to test their perceptions and beliefs. Some students come to TRIO programs after they have experienced academic failure so often that it has become ingrained. These students accept the label of failure or dropout. I believe that all students should have the opportunity to learn, regardless of their life situation.

Summary

In addition to writing and describing the case and its history I also employed a pattern matching approach. Thus, patterns became the basis for creating the overall themes that were discussed in Chapter Four. Open, axial and selective codes were used to analyze the student interviews, field notes, reflective teacher notes and parent focus group data. The student drawings were analyzed using the representative field notes and my analysis of the drawings themselves. Rather than merely ending the data analysis process with a list of themes from each data set I took those respective themes and I created a student story that connected the themes that expressed how the students experienced the Success for Sixth program. The data collection and analysis procedures enabled me to

capture a holistic understanding of how 12 at-risk middle school students experienced the Success for Sixth program.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Theoretical Propositions

When I was a child I was mesmerized with a toy given to me called a talking View Master. In addition to allowing me to view beautiful three-dimensional pictures, this toy allowed me to listen to a narrator explain what was happening in the picture. The narrator was able to talk through a tiny-recorded album that began playing when the slide of the pictures came into view. I remember that if I covered up one eye, sadly the picture no longer looked three-dimensional. It was only through the combined two lenses that the picture took on an incredible depth of perspective. The narrator's voice and story that accompanied the pictures added great details and interesting information that I had not previously known.

I would like to use this analogy of a talking view master to explain how I presented the four theoretical propositions that were first formed in Chapter II. The reader will view these four propositions through two distinct lenses. The first lens will be that of the literature reviewed in Chapter II. I will weave ideas and thoughts from educators to shed light on the meanings of each proposition. The next lens will be my findings in the research. I will refer back to the five data sources and explain how they relate to the four theoretical propositions. Lastly, the students' voices will serve as the talking view master's record. Their details, information and insights will give the reader a more in

depth perspective of how they experienced the Success for Sixth program as retold in a story format.

Each theoretical proposition will be examined in its numerical order so the reader may easily refer back to them in the literature review. The first theoretical proposition deals with the dangers at-risk students face in gaining what they need to be successful both in school and eventually in society. The reader's glimpse will begin with proposition one, through the lens of the literature review.

Theoretical Proposition One

A student who is described as at-risk may be in danger of attaining the academic and social competencies required for successful participation in school (Batsche, 1985; Damico, 1989; Jacobsen & Hofmann, 1997; Steinburg, 1996; McCann & Austin, 1988; McMillan & Reed, 1993; Rosier, 1978; Williams, Clancy Batten & Girling-Butcher, 1980).

This first proposition has three parts to it. These parts consist of the at-risk student's academic competencies, social competencies, and successful participation in school. I will examine these parts in the order they appear beginning with the at-risk student's academic competencies.

Academic competencies. The literature reveals that at-risk students often lack common academic competencies. Frequently these students struggle with school subjects such as reading and math. McCann and Austin (1988) describe the at-risk student as having a history of school absenteeism, poor grades, and low math and reading scores. Similarly, Jacobsen, and Hofmann (1997) found at-risk students to have indicators such

as attention problems, poor grades, and absenteeism that identified them as potentially not succeeding academically.

The Success for Six Students struggle with academics in terms of their grades and self-reported lack of motivation for school. For example, I wrote in my January 2002 reflective teacher notes that students mentioned that they were struggling with grades and reading and math at school. I also wrote in this set of notes that these students were struggling with additional academic competencies such as map reading and study skills. Chloe captures her struggle “I need help with stuff like math.”

Several of the students mentioned they were bored at school. At the start of the Success for Sixth program, I wrote in my field notes that students described their school experiences as boring. Students talked about the fact that they were not engaged in the classroom. When I asked students to tell me what was boring about their school experiences, four of them mentioned that having to listen to teachers lecture was boring. Katelynn speaks of this very issue when she says:

School is boring. All we do is sit around in desks all day. The teacher tells us not to talk; it is time to read silently. Then, the same teacher begins to tell us all about his home life. Boring!

I recorded in my field notes that students shared that sedentary school activities such as sitting and listening were boring. They said that the majority of their school experience revolved around listening to lectures and observing others rather than actively participating. Conversely, they talked about school activities with movement, such as P.E. or field trips, as fun and engaging aspects of their school experience. Unfortunately, P.E. classes met only twice per week for 30 minutes and they had attended only one field trip for the academic year 2001-2002.

Joey attested to the fact that he was struggling in school with his academics with an interesting twist. In addition to talking about his academic concerns, he also mentioned gender stereotypes. He shared that he felt like girls get better grades than boys do. He states, "Boys always get the bad grades. Only girls get the good ones." Generally speaking, in the Success for Sixth program he was correct, but Ann certainly did not fit into Joey's stereotype. Her perception of her academic performance shows the link between academic success and self-concept. She reveals, "I think I am doing really bad in school and in my life. I wish I had a different life." Her sad statement shows how an at-risk student's failure in school can lead to negative self-esteem and feelings of isolation.

Social competency. At-risk students also struggle with social competencies. They often share similar social concerns and may have low self-concept, a history of behavioral problems, an inability to identify with other people, a low socioeconomic background, and feelings of alienation and isolation (Batsche, 1985). In the data I collected, Success for Six Students' social competencies are bounded by their poor self concept, and their feelings of alienation from their peers, which in turn lead to behavior problems. A picture drawn by Katelynn reveals this theme. Her picture of an unhappy girl with large buck teeth and a frown shows how before she participated in the Success for Sixth program she struggled socially with feelings of negative self-esteem. She has captioned the words brat, freak, downhearted, buck-teethed and loser to illustrate in her picture how she felt socially before joining the program. By examining this drawing, I see a student who is telling me she does not feel good about herself at the start of the Success for Sixth program. Perhaps Katelynn sees herself as not measuring up socially to her peers.

Student alienation was evident in descriptions of friends. For example, according to Emily, “Sometimes I was sort of, you know, lonely before I joined the Success for Sixth program. It was like everybody else had friends and all and I didn’t.”

David expounds upon very similar feelings when he says:

Sometimes the other kids are mean and I feel bad about myself. I feel sorta worthless. There are some kids that are just going to be mean. They will make fun of stuff and tell you to shut-up all the time. It’s easy to feel bad about yourself when you hang out with them.

Additionally, Christy’s drawing helps to visualize how dealing with these social competencies feels like a lack of connection to an at-risk student. She has drawn a picture of a cat barely able to continue hanging on or connecting to a tree branch. You can see the cat’s fingernails desperately attempting to grasp the tree branch. The cat’s eyes are wide open and they look fearful. The tree branches appear very complex in the picture. They seem to spiral into many smaller and tangled spikes much like the confusing social relationships that at-risk students experience. This cat appears to be waiting for its eventual fall. It is barely hanging on, much like at-risk students experiencing a lack of connection with their peers, family, school, and community, with little hope or support.

Tyler (1992) discusses the fact that some educators view at-risk students as hopeless cases or irritations to their heavily scheduled routines. David is able to express this best when he says; “I have a bad reputation at school. The teachers just expect me to be bad.” Marilynn was similar to many at-risk students in that she had a long history of behavioral problems. Marilynn was able to verbalize her previous experiences with a history of behavior problems. Here is her quote from a session of Success for Sixth:

Like before I joined the program, like kids use to talk me into doing stupid junk. I’d get in trouble and they’d just sort of laugh and all. I wanted friends so badly

that I almost didn't care if I got in trouble. I mean nobody wants to be all dorky and be by themselves and all.

Successful participation in school. Due to this lack of academic and social competencies many at-risk students are unable to successfully participate in school. Hoffman (1997) states that many at-risk students have a lack of connection with their school that puts them in danger of successful participation. The lack of connection is seen when students do not join school programs and it is also evident in students' classroom engagement. Focus group parent members confirmed Hoffman's concern when they discussed how their children did not have very many connections with the school or chances to participate in activities both at school and at home due to the parents' work schedules and time demands. Parents spoke of the importance of their children having the chance to participate in activities they normally wouldn't be able to do.

Christy shows how poor participation is reflected in classroom behavior. In my January 2002 reflective teacher notes I begin by mentioning how shy and withdrawn Christy is. I note that she does not successfully participate in our program activities. Christy shares with me that she does not participate in school either. She describes her lack of school participation by stating:

I use to be really shy and insecure before I came to this program. When I was in class, I never would raise my hand or ask a question. I use to be afraid of what the other kids would think of me.

The fact that Christy does not engage in the class discussion may have an effect on her academic performance and on her teacher's perception of Christy's academic skills.

Katelynn suggests that the lack of participation is related to her self-concept and relationship to other students with being able to take a stand for what is important to her. She says, "It's hard to stand up for anything at school. Kids are always putting you down

and saying what you believe is stupid.” As difficult as school is for at-risk students, their home life is often more difficult. Katelynn’s statement links participation to social competency.

Maeroff (1999) draws an interesting parallel between the at-risk student’s home life and school life. He believes that at-risk students can not successfully participate in school when their home lives are chaotic and lacking a strong support system. Perhaps Chloe’s own true recount of her abandonment best describes the chaotic and unsupportive home life many at-risk students live with that often exceeds their negative school experience:

When I was ten years old, my mother gave me some money and sent me into McDonald’s to get some food. She said she would wait in the car because she wasn’t feeling too good. She had been drinking and taking drugs. When I came out of McDonald’s she was gone. I was really scared and didn’t know what to do. I had to go live in foster care. When they found my mom she said she didn’t want me. My dad didn’t want me either. Nobody ever wanted me. I never had any friends who wanted me either until I came to Success for Sixth. I wish somebody from here would adopt me so I could stay with them for always. Would you adopt me?

Chloe’s home life was a perfect example of being both chaotic and lacking a strong support system. She had difficulty successfully participating in the Success for Sixth program because she had difficulty trusting her peers. She seemed to lack a connection with them and others. According to Steinburg (1996) at-risk adolescents often experience a lack of connection with their peers. Additionally, O’Sullivan (1991) found at-risk students to be disruptive in social settings.

These descriptions fit Chloe perfectly. Chloe drew a picture of a tentative and questioning student wondering if there would be enough food for her to eat. In this picture, she is apparently questioning and thinking about the snacks on the table and the

12 other individuals. This is a big step for Chloe to think before she reacts or grabs the food off the plate. At the start of the Success for Sixth program my reflective teacher notes reveal Chloe acting in socially inappropriate ways. She is pushing, shoving, and fighting to obtain a snack or a turn at a game. Just like in the picture of the snack, Chloe often felt like she needed to grab the attention of others through inappropriate means.

Summary

Chloe is not an isolated example of Success for Sixth students who are at-risk and in danger of attaining the academic and social competencies required for successful participation in school. All 12 students attested throughout the program to feelings of isolation, anger, frustration and a lack of connection to either peers or adults in their lives. This first proposition had three parts to it and paralleled what the data and the students were saying about at-risk youth. These parts consisted of the at-risk student's academic competencies, social competencies, and successful participation in school.

The literature, data, and students revealed that at-risk students often lack common academic competencies. Some of these academic competencies included math and reading skills. At-risk students also often lack social competencies. These social competencies included fitting in, participating, taking turns, delaying gratification and relating to peers. These themes were well supported in the literature, data and student voice. Lastly, many at-risk students do not successfully participate in school. They feel left out, isolated, withdrawn and sometimes overlooked.

The students confirmed this picture with their own stories. They explained from their perspectives what it was like to be at-risk. These students saw school as a boring place where they were expected to listen and observe. Students spoke of their frustration

with the school experience and their lack of coping skills, academic skills, and social skills. Others shared true accounts of conflict and abandonment. Perhaps Christy's picture of a cat barely hanging on and barely connecting best shows what it feels like to be at-risk for these students.

Theoretical proposition one was supported by the literature review, the data findings, and the student voices. I will now examine theoretical proposition two which discusses how the educational needs of at-risk students are going unmet.

Theoretical Proposition Two

The educational needs of most at-risk students have not been met (Anderson, 1998; Chizmar, 1997; Kozol, 1991; Maeroff, 1999; Schommer, 1996; Sizer, 1996; Tyler, 1992; Woods, 1972).

One reason the educational needs of at-risk students are not being met is because these students have negative beliefs about who they are and what they are capable of achieving.

Negative beliefs. Steinberg (1996) notes that at-risk students share a common negative belief. Often they believe that academic success is beyond their grasp. Because of their negative belief, Steinberg (1996) sees at-risk students as lacking the confidence they need to succeed academically. Joey talks about his negative belief that was reinforced by his peers at school:

I always felt like I was slow or dumb. There were kids at school who picked on me and called me names. Some kids called me stupid and stuff like that. It made me so mad and sad inside.

Manning (1993) also believes that at-risk students with negative beliefs may have less of their academic needs met. My field notes from January 2002 reflect that several of the

Success for Sixth Students who earned less than a 2.0 or C average were discouraged and unhappy about their report card results. They used words such as slow, stupid, and dumb to describe how they felt about their lack of academic achievement and struggle at school.

Joey addresses wanting his educational needs met when he says, "The Success for Sixth program could help me do better in school by helping me to understand better at school and to get my homework done." Hock (1995) supports Joey's statement and stresses that at-risk students need to be taught how to study in a supportive nurturing environment in order for their educational needs to be met at school. However, many at-risk students do not have a supportive or nurturing environment either at school or in their home life.

Lack of support resources. Many times the at-risk student does not have the support and help at home to be successful at school. Perna (2000) states that at-risk students need more academic support from their family in order for their academic needs to be met in the school setting. Katelynn's comment verifies how her parents were unable to help her at home with her schoolwork.

Before I joined the Success for Sixth program I was always down on myself. I never understood how to do things like fractions and decimals at school. I just never got it. My parents don't get it either.

Several of the Success for Sixth Students stated in the field notes that normally they came home from school to an empty house. They had no one at home to help them with their schoolwork. Often times they had few resources such as computers or reading materials at home to help them complete their homework. Sometimes a lack of support

and resources both at home and at school put these at-risk students behind further academically.

Data from the parent focus group shows that one parent talked about the lack of computers at the school and the fact that she did not have computers or the Internet in her home either. She stated that the Success for Sixth program gave her daughter the opportunity to learn computer skills and use computers after school for her homework. In our technological society, students may need to know how to use computers eventually for their careers. Students began using the computers after the Success for Sixth program to type papers for their classes at school. Often their middle school teachers requested that their reports and papers be turned in typed on typing paper. Because these students did not have computers at home and did not have access to them at school, they often had to turn in hand-written papers on lined paper. Thus, the computers provided by the Success for Sixth program allowed these students to meet their educational needs.

In addition, five of the 12 students drew pictures of computers to represent how the Success for Sixth program had helped to meet their educational needs. These computers appear to be plugged in and working. Students often mentioned in my field notes how important it was for them that they had the chance to use computers in the program because they had little access to them at school or home.

Another lack of resources included the time teachers had to spend with students individually at school. According to Julie:

My teachers at school were always too busy to help me understand. There were a lot less kids at Success and I could get the help I needed to understand better.

Kozol (1991) noted that the educational needs of some at-risk students, such as support and resources, are not only unmet, but they parallel the inequalities in their communities.

He states, "How closely these schools reflect their communities, as if the duty of the school were to prepare a child for the life he's born to" (Kozol, 1991; p. 159).

Hopeless feelings. These negative beliefs and lack of resources often led the students to believe that they would never amount to anything. They felt like it was pointless to try and achieve academically when they would never excel anyway. The following student statements reflect this learned hopelessness among the students.

Marilynn:

I was doing really bad in school and the teachers were always telling me that I wasn't working up to my full potential. I felt sorta hopeless.

David:

I always felt like I was never going to grow up and be anything anyways. I didn't think I'd ever be able to do anything except like work in a factory. I thought I'd just end up a big waste and maybe even just drink all the time.

These students were living in poverty and had grown accustomed to home and school environments that were lacking support and resources. In addition to affecting their outlooks, their poverty was also affecting their unmet educational needs.

Social justice. Anderson (1998) states the effects of poverty are detrimental to an at-risk student's education. Joey's statement supports this thought that poverty is another reason why at-risk student's academic needs go unmet.

I didn't know I could be good at school. I didn't think I could be anything different or better. I thought this was all there was for me because my family doesn't have any money or good jobs and all.

Batsche (1985) noted that at-risk students in poverty often have little reading material in the home thus putting them at a disadvantage for reading and meeting their educational needs. A lack of reading material in the home may put at-risk students behind in their vocabulary and reading comprehension ability. The statement made by Joey confirms that

he saw himself as a product of his environment. Before enrolling in the Success for Sixth program he did not feel he had the power to change his situation. He felt victimized by his poverty.

Several other students voiced the injustice that they had fewer opportunities to try things such as non-school related sports and hobbies than their more affluent peers. This is supported in the literature by Kozol (1991) and Taylor-Dunlop and Norton (1997) that at-risk students often feel a sense of injustice over their life situations. Several students talked about not having the same clothes, house, last name, and options as their peers. They spoke of feeling a sense of injustice over their poverty. Christy was one of these students.

As expressed in my reflective teacher notes, Christy was a shy and sensitive member of the Success for Sixth program. She often sat quietly during the sessions and would look thoughtfully as other students shared their problems and concerns. It took Christy a long time to be able to verbalize her concerns in the group and to voice her sense of injustice over her life's situations. When asked to draw a representation of how she experienced the Success for Sixth program, Christy's drew a guardian angel.

This drawing of an angel represents Christy remembering her own injustice. My reflective teacher notes show that Christy had a close cousin who was one of the few people she had allowed into her life. Her cousin Andrew was very nice to Christy and had spent time encouraging her to develop her talents. This cousin had been murdered by a group of intoxicated teenagers who went out joyriding in their car on a Saturday night. They had seen Andrew walking down the street and then repeatedly ran over and over him. Eventually, they dragged him behind their car to his death. In her picture, Christy

has drawn a serene angel. The angel's eyes are expressive and thoughtful, much like Christy's own eyes. They are looking sideways and appear to be reminiscing. What is most striking about Christy's picture are the angel's wings. The angel's wings are spiraled and form into many pointed angles. They appear to be heavy, as the angel's shoulders are sagging beneath their weight. It is as if this angel must carry the burden of these heavy angular wings. The social injustice Christy has experienced resembles the angel's wings. There have been many jagged and difficult situations that Christy has had to balance and carry on her shoulders throughout her short lifetime. She has had to carry social injustice, murder, rejection from her peers, and poverty.

In addition to the social injustice of murder, theorists such as Piaget (1926), Erikson (1968), and Freud (1938) support the fact that at-risk students also sense they are experiencing an injustice when their peers have opportunities and advantages they don't. This sense of injustice often causes the at-risk student to withdraw or become shy (Steinburg, 1996). According to Christy, "I use to be really shy and insecure before I came to this program."

Summary

I examined theoretical proposition two which discussed how the educational needs of at-risk students are going unmet. One reason the educational needs of at-risk students are not being met is because these students have negative beliefs about who they are and what they are capable of achieving. Joey talked about his negative beliefs that were reinforced by his peers at school:

I always felt like I was slow or dumb. There were kids at school who picked on me and called me names. Some kids called me stupid and stuff like that. It made me so mad and sad inside.

Another reason the educational needs of at-risk students are not being met is because these students may lack support at home. Many times the at-risk student does not have the support and help at home to be successful at school. Katelynn's comment verified how her parents were unable to help her at home with her schoolwork.

Before I joined the Success for Sixth program I was always down on myself. I never understood how to do things like fractions and decimals at school. I just never got it. My parents don't get it either.

Another reason at-risk students' needs go unmet may be due to a lack of resources both at home and at school. Many times at-risk students begin to feel hopeless about their situation. Lastly, poverty may also affect an at-risk student's education. Anderson (1998) states the effects of poverty are detrimental to an at-risk student's education.

Thus, this section discussed theoretical proposition two which stated that the educational needs of most at-risk students have not been met. Several theorists gave possible reasons for the unmet needs of most at-risk students not being met. These reasons included the low self-esteem of the at-risk student, poverty, lack of family and community support and a lack of opportunities for these students to have the tutoring and support they needed.

My five data sources revealed similar findings to the literature review. I cited several examples of students worried about their grades and feeling inadequate about their report cards. Both the parent interviews and the student drawings discussed the importance of computers in the Success for Sixth program for the students. Students had been unable to access their school computers and to gain the computer skills they needed to be successful in high school. The Success for Sixth program had provided them with an opportunity to both use computers and develop their computer skills.

Student stories had a similar theme of students struggling in school and having many unmet academic needs. These academic needs focused primarily on reading and math. However, some students mentioned specific skills such as spelling or map reading as areas in which they were deficient. Several of the students mentioned through their stories that they had been teased at school because of their academic unmet needs. They expressed feeling bad about themselves and experiencing the pain of not being able to understand their school curriculum.

Theoretical Proposition Three

Educational after school tutoring programs, in which skilled teachers provide one-to-one support, may reduce the gap between what students are expected to know and what they are actually able to do (Adler, 1998; Kaufmann & Adema, 1998; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Tollesfson, 1997).

I will begin by weaving ideas and thoughts from the literature to shed light on the meaning of this proposition. Many educators advocate that at-risk students need a strong support system in order to be successful in their education.

Supportive links. The literature strongly suggests that at-risk students need supportive links between themselves and the school in order to reduce the gap between what students know and what they are expected to do (Taylor-Dunlop & Norton, 1997). The literature defines these links to include teachers, counselors and friends (McMillan & Reed, 1993).

Additionally, several researchers found that by merely obtaining supportive links the at-risk students' persistence in earning a high school diploma greatly increased (Rosier, 1978; Williams, Clancy, Batten & Girling-Butcher, 1980). Glasser (1992) found

that students who lacked support and supervision were often also labeled as being at-risk. Maeroff (1999) strongly advocates that at-risk children need a stronger support system than what they are currently receiving at home and school. He sees at-risk children as individuals and believes that their lives change one at a time.

Although the Success for Sixth program was not specifically a one-to-one tutoring program, it provided many opportunities for students to work directly with me or with their friends. My field notes show that students craved my attention and support and their friends' support, which they received in a small group setting. Several times in the field notes students asked to talk with me privately for one-to-one support regarding a problem or issue they were facing in their lives. They began to use the Success for Sixth program to gain the emotional support they needed to cope with their personal problems and school related issues.

Gaining social skills and friendships. In February 2002 students mentioned in the field notes that they now felt listened to and respected at the Success for Sixth program from both me and their new friends. It was noted in these data that the students were beginning to gain the social skills and friendships they previously lacked in the program. A parent addressed this very point.

I think at this age our kids are really starting to develop social skills. I think it was fun for them to develop cliques and friends through the program. Actually, this was the first group she was ever part of.

Social skills such as acting politely and treating each other with respect were becoming visible among the students in the March 2002 reflective teacher notes. Peer relationships among program participants were also beginning to matter very much to these students. Christy speaks of the benefits she gained from attending the small group sessions.

Christy:

Success for Sixth was good and all because it gave me a chance to hang out with my new friends; you know to socialize in a small group. I got to talk and to get to know them. I liked it that we had a small group just for sixth graders. I guess that I learned to look at people from the inside and to be more open to other kids and all because I felt that I had one or two kids who accepted me.

These students appeared to be very interested in their new friendships formed in the program. They expressed very strong opinions about wanting the other students in the program to treat them with respect and kindness as evidenced in these examples:

Marie:

Lots of the kids are nice now but sometimes they can still be mean. I think that all the kids should be nice to each other and get along.

David:

I think the other kids (in the Success for Sixth program) should practice listening. I also think maybe they should be nicer and make sure they aren't being mean and all.

Katelynn:

People in the program didn't like make comments about it like mean or rude comments. And, you get to have a bunch of friends there. And they didn't ever say anything mean to you.

Reflective teacher notes reveal that Chloe continually wanted one-to-one attention and tutoring to help her cope with her at-risk background. Chloe would often lag behind the others at the end of the program and ask to stay beyond the program's ending time to talk with me one-to-one about her life. She frequently called into the program and asked to speak with me on the telephone. These data reveal that at the start of the Success for Sixth program that Chloe was almost unable to relate with the other students. She would frequently push her peers away so she could have individualized attention from the teacher. Chloe's statement shows that these one-to-one talks were important for her.

Chloe:

When you join Success for Sixth you will feel like you are important. You won't be left out like at school. We talked in small groups about how to feel better about ourselves. I liked getting to talk to Laurie about life and stuff like that. We talked about understanding, communication, and other life skills like self-esteem.

Student interview data reveal that it was important to the students to have one-to-one time with the instructor or with a small group. According to Julie, "I like it when we get to talk and when we get to do activities with our friends in Success for Sixth."

Timothy expresses a similar remark; "I like to talk and spend time hanging out with my friends at Success." Additionally, computers provided one-to-one time for the students as they individually worked through programs designed to help them discover their individual learning style and their career preferences. Marie mentioned how important her individual time on the computers had been to her in the student interview data.

Marie:

And, then I liked on the computers when we did the career thing about what we would be good at. I liked taking that career test.

Students also enjoyed having the opportunity to disclose new insights about their strengths and abilities to others. According to Julie, "I felt like Success was preparing me for my future because it gave me a chance to let others know who I was."

The student interview data also show several students benefiting from the socialization provided by the program. Often this socialization occurred on a one-to-one setting with students confiding in the teacher about dilemmas they were currently facing in their lives. These self-discovery and disclosure skills are necessary for students throughout their entire lives. Choy (2001) stressed that at-risk student outcomes depend greatly upon the encouragement of mentors to allow these students to discover who they

are and disclose this information to others. These students will need to be able to relate to others in order to get and maintain an eventual career and reduce the gap between what they know and what they are expected to be able to do.

Summary

After school tutoring programs, in which skilled teachers provide one-to-one support, may reduce the gap between what students are expected to know and what they are actually able to do (Adler, 1998; Farr, 1998; Hancock, 1994; Hock, Schumaker & Deshler, 1998; Kaufmann & Adema, 1998; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Tollefson, 1997). The literature strongly supports theoretical proposition three. Students frequently mentioned in the five data sources that they were able to learn new skills in the Success for Sixth program that helped them to be more successful in school. Students mentioned learning computer skills, friendship skills, arts and crafts skills, writing skills, typing skills, problem-solving skills and communications skills while in small groups or one-to-one in the Success for Sixth program. The student stories parallel the literature and data review. Students talk about how they needed the one-to-one attention they received in the Success for Sixth program to learn skills they were previously lacking.

Theoretical Proposition Four

Eventually, at-risk students face the possibility of being undereducated, underemployed, and under prepared to participate in society (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; McMillan & Reed, 1993; Rosier, 1978; Steinburg, 1996; Williams, Clancy, Batten & Girling-Butcher, 1980).

At-risk students may exhibit detrimental behaviors that continue their cycle of poverty.

Detrimental behaviors. McCann and Austin (1988) define at-risk students as exhibiting detrimental behaviors that interfere with themselves and others. These detrimental behaviors often occur because of a lack of fit between social institutions, especially schools, and the developmental needs of young adolescents (Lipsitz, 1977). Katelynn shared an example of a time when she lied and attempted to steal. Behaviors such as lying and stealing put the at-risk student in danger of overcoming their background.

Katelynn:

One afternoon I was sick and tired of having to baby-sit at home. I was bored and wished that I had something fun to do. Then I had a crazy idea. I called the local pizza restaurant and ordered 12 large pizzas. I told them that I was my neighbor. Then, I hung up and waited to see what would happen. About 30 minutes later, I saw the pizza delivery truck pull up to my neighbor's house and come to the door. The delivery guy had 12 pizzas with him. He rang the doorbell and the neighbor answered. The neighbor kept shaking his head no while the delivery guy kept shaking his head yes. Then, the delivery guy left with all 12 pizzas. I started to get scared. Pretty soon, my phone started ringing. I was too scared to answer it. It turns out that the pizza place had caller I.D. They could tell that the call had been made from my house. They made my Dad buy all 12 pizzas. Then, they told me I could end up in a residential facility for troubled kids if I didn't shape up. I got in lots of trouble at home. I had to eat all 12 pizzas for every meal for many days. I got really sick of pizzas. The cops came to my house and all my friends found out about it. Now, when I walk down the hall, they all whistle and still call me the pizza prankster. If it weren't for my friends at Success for Sixth, I wouldn't have any fun or friends. I am grounded like forever.

Marilynn shares a similar story to Katelynn's. She shares how her peers persuaded her to participate in activities that were detrimental to her success at school and in life.

Marilynn:

Like before I joined the program, like kids use to talk me into doing stupid junk. I'd get in trouble and they'd just sort of laugh and all. I wanted friends so badly that I almost didn't care if I got in trouble. I mean, nobody want to be all dorky and be by themselves and all. But like anyways, when I joined the Success for Sixth program, I learned about peer pressure and all. I mean I learned not to let others do that to me, pressure me into being bad and all. I think the Success for

Sixth program helped me to get good friends who aren't going to get me into trouble.

O'Sullivan (1989) found some at-risk students to overcome early difficulties but begin to experience problems in adolescence during their middle school years.

At-risk adolescents and vocational plans. Lipsitz (1977) describes adolescence as a critical developmental stage in the life span. In addition to staggering physical changes, the period of adolescence is a time of growing independence. These students must begin to separate from family and consider their position in the world as an independent entity. It is crucial at this time that the at-risk students are helped to create educational and vocational plans (Bromberg, Commins, & Friedman, 1980). Cole (1996) found that these at-risk children are often negatively affected by adult's lack of expectations and educational and vocational plans. Steinburg (1996) found at-risk students to believe that success is beyond their grasp. He further states that at-risk adolescents may be especially at risk for academic failure when they lack confidence and have limited goals for their future expectations and vocational plans.

Choy (2001) found that successful student outcomes for at-risk students depended largely upon the career planning and courses the students took and the support for learning provided by the school and the family. Perna (2000) stressed the importance of helping at-risk adolescents to see that college is a realistic option by providing mentors and encouragement. Christy shares a statement that reveals how important it was to her that the Success for Sixth program encouraged her to develop her talents.

When you are in the Success for Sixth program you get the chance to do stuff that you don't get to at school. Success for Sixth program is a very educational program that helped me get self-confidence. Like before I went to the program, I always felt like I couldn't do anything. You know, like I wasn't that good at

school stuff and all. But, then with the program I felt like I could do things, like important things.

Katelynn also discusses how the Success for Sixth program helped her to realize that her career goals were achievable.

Well, like before the program, I thought maybe when I grew up I would be like a secretary or a cosmetologist. I thought that was all I could do. Then, we took career tests and I learned I could be anything I wanted to be. Like I could be a doctor for kids or a vet or maybe even a manager. No one ever told me anything like that before. It gave me a good feeling and it made me feel more self-confident.

In addition Chloe's statement further adds to the picture, "I learned how to study better and I learned how to learn better at school in the Success for Sixth program. It prepared me so I could do better in the classroom and in life." Emily expresses a similar comment; "This is a super good program that will give you college opportunities."

Joey felt the Success for Sixth program increased his possibilities of eventual careers. "It made me feel like I could do important stuff if I was a good person and if I tried hard and all."

Summary

Theoretical proposition four states that eventually, at-risk students face the possibility of being undereducated, underemployed and under prepared to participate in society. McCann and Austin (1988) define the at-risk student as exhibiting detrimental behaviors that interfere with themselves and others. Lipsitz (1977) describes adolescence as a critical developmental stage in the life span. Cole (1996) found that these at-risk children are often negatively affected by adult's lack of expectations and educational and vocational plans. This proposition was viewed through the lenses of the literature review and my findings in the research. The literature review and the data sources supported this

proposition. The student's voices added additional information and insights to give the reader a more in depth perspective of how students saw themselves as being undereducated and under prepared to participate in society. Students confirmed that they had limited vision and hope for their futures before enrolling in the Success for Sixth program. They spoke of the Success for Sixth program expanding their vision and possibility for their future. They also mentioned that the program provided them with the skills they were lacking in the school setting.

Conclusions

An analogy of a talking view master was used to explain how I presented the four theoretical propositions that were first formed in Chapter II. The reader viewed these four propositions through two distinct lenses. The first lens was that of the literature review. Ideas and thoughts from educators were woven to shed light on the meaning of each proposition. The second lens was my findings in the research. I referred back to the five data sources and explained how they related to the four theoretical propositions. Lastly, the student's voice served as the talking view master's record. Their details, information and insights gave the reader a more in depth perspective of how they experienced the Success for Sixth program as retold in their own words. Each theoretical proposition was examined in its numerical order.

Although much of the data related to the theoretical propositions examined thus far, some of the data did not appear to fit with any of the four theoretical propositions. This miscellaneous data will now be discussed.

Unintended Findings

Field notes data show that food was an important aspect in how the students experienced the Success for Sixth program. Yet, the category of food did not specifically fit into any of the four theoretical propositions. In addition to students talking specifically about the various foods they ate in the program, students also talked about the socialization and the relationships that occurred around the snack table. In early field note entries students are sitting at four different tables and are only sitting by those individuals with whom they feel comfortable. In these early entries, students ask to have food used as a reward for good behavior and effort. They refer to food as part of a celebration for good grades they earned on the report cards. As the field notes progressed, food appeared to be mentioned less by the students. Instead, students began to mention their relationships within the program. This is best exemplified by all 12 students sitting around the same snack table at the end of the program.

Reflective teacher notes also show the importance of food to the students. Several students talked about how hungry they were. They used words like starving to describe what their hunger felt like. Several students mentioned in the reflective teacher notes that the snack at the Success for Sixth program was the first food they had eaten all day. Students frequently referred to the group snack time as fun. Once, Julie is quoted, as saying that the snack time was, “the most fun thing I’ve done all day!”

Data from the student interviews were filled with comments about the food in the Success for Sixth program. One student talks about how important it was for her to communicate at the table surrounded by the food. Thus, this student pulls together the socialization aspect of the snack time for some students. This same student goes on in the

interview to talk about the importance of spending time around the snack table talking about how their day was and how they felt. The student interview data show that food was an important aspect of how these students experienced the Success for Sixth program.

Several of the student drawings have pictures of food on them. Students drew pictures of ice cream cones, pizza, fruit, juice, and cookies. Chloe used her drawing to illustrate the conflict she had over there being enough snack for her to eat. Data from the parent focus group did not mention food per say as being a key aspect to how their students experienced the Success for Sixth program. Instead, parents talked about the activities their students were involved in and the relationships their students formed in the program while they sat around the snack table.

Our Story

My name is Chloe, and you probably just read a little bit about me in the theoretical propositions. I wanted to let you know what's going to happen in this next section of Laurie's paper. Well, Laurie has promised us that we would have an opportunity to tell our story to you now. You see, she told us that if we let her cut up our conversations into pieces in the theoretical propositions, that she would make a special section where we could talk without being interrupted or having our ideas cut and pasted into sections. We wanted a chance to say everything at once in our own words.

You are probably wondering how we decided who would be able to actually tell the story you're about to read. I mean after all there were 12 of us kids in the Success for Sixth group. It wasn't easy deciding who would get to talk! And, in case you are wondering, I wasn't the kid that was picked. Don't get me wrong, I think that one day I

might like to be the kid picked to tell the story. However, I'm not ready for that today! I'm not ready to get up and talk in front of all you adults yet. I know I've come a long way from where I began in the program. I'm just not quite there yet.

So, Marie was picked to tell our story instead. It's like this, Marie came to the Success for Sixth program already super confident and wanting to get up in front of others and talk. She is sort of a natural at leading discussions and stuff like that. You know what I'm saying? Marie is the kind of kid who got others to come to the program and stay at the program. She's fun and she's cool and she's nice. That's why I think it's good that Marie gets to be the one who tells our story.

Well, I guess they already told you that it's me, Marie. It is so totally cool that everyone picked me. I have so much to say and Laurie has already told me I have to keep it short and to the point. I told her I could talk like forever about this kind of stuff. I mean, I think it's important for adults to realize that kids aren't all that different from them. It's not like we don't have problems and issues just like them. I mean, my parents are always worried about stuff and stressed out and tired and all. Well, so are we. We worry about what other kids will think of us. You know, we worry if we're cool and all. We wonder if people will accept us because a lot of us don't have the money for cool clothes and bikes and stuff like that. It's no secret at school who is in and cool and who is a major reject. All that pressure from the popular kids really stresses us out.

Even the teachers seem to treat the rich and popular kids different from us. You know, they spend more time with them. They just expect them to get things right. Subjects like reading and math are super hard for most of us. Math is the hardest. The teacher just gives an assignment but never explains it. A couple of times I tried to get my

parents to help. They didn't get the fractions or decimals either. They give out these super hard tests every year called the Iowa Basic Skills Tests. I don't even try to get the answers right. Most of us just play connect the dots. Stuff like that is way too hard and confusing. Besides, the teachers act like we're going to bomb them anyways. A bunch of us have bad grades on our report cards. So, why try?

A lot of the teachers treat us as if we are a bother to them. They either ignore us or put us down like we're annoying them when we have a question. Guess what? One time one of the rich kids and I both had the same answer written down on our tests. I got the answer wrong and he got the same answer right. Another time, I was really getting into a writing assignment that the teacher gave. Right in front of everyone the teacher accused me of writing notes to my friend and not doing the assignment. The teacher wouldn't even read what I had written but just threatened that the next time I'd get a detention if I kept goofing off. Stuff like that happens all the time. It really makes me mad.

A bunch of us have had detentions at school for getting into fights or for stealing and other stuff like that. I won't say whom, but one of us is even on probation for stealing. When he was busted the cop said, "It doesn't surprise me. It's another one of the ----- kids." You know, meaning that this kid came from a bad family and they sort of already knew to be on the lookout for him. I know that school could be a lot better for us if we fit in better and if we acted more like the smart of rich kids. Many of us don't fit in because we are behind in reading and math and because we are constantly either getting picked on or fighting back.

And another thing, only kids with certain last names get to actually play on the sports teams like basketball and baseball. Sure, we're allowed to join the teams. We're

just never allowed to play in the games. During the practices, the coach just ignores us or worse yet uses us as an example of what not to do. Kids like us have to sit on the bench and just watch. I guess what I'm trying to say is that kids like us are sick of sitting on the bench and just watching. That's why Success for Sixth was so cool for us. I mean, for the first time there was this program that was just for us and we got to actually do all the stuff, not just watch. The program was the most cool when Laurie would let us pick the activities and decide on the projects. It felt really amazing to get to pick what we did and to decide how we would do it. Sometimes Laurie bossed us around and made all the decisions. That was o.k., but it was also BORING! There is more than enough bossing around at school!

Most of us liked the program best when we got a chance to work one-to-one with Laurie or in small groups. At school the teachers never have time to work with us individually. Almost all of us go home to empty houses in the afternoon. So, it was great when someone at Success would work individually with us and help us. Usually we got help with the problems that we were having with our friends or family. You know, like not getting along with others and stuff like that. But, sometimes we even got help with our homework. Sometimes Laurie helped us read or do our math work. It made a lot more sense when she explained it and there weren't any distractions going on. Besides, it felt really cool to get help with stuff like that at the college. I mean, it made us feel sort of smart and all.

It was cool that the program met twice a week. We all liked knowing a time when the program was going to meet. When Laurie said she'd be there, she was. She used to meet our bus after school. We'd all run up to her and be laughing and yelling and talking

all at once about what had happened that day. Everyone would be asking what was for snack because we were all starving. Half the time I hadn't had lunch or even breakfast and I could hardly wait to eat at Success for Sixth. Hardly any of us kids ever have anyone at home to meet us and give us a snack after school. In fact, for a lot of us the snack at Success was the first food we'd eaten all day. Almost all of us would qualify to get a free lunch. I would just die if someone found out my parents were that broke. No way! So, most of us just pretend we're not hungry at lunchtime during school.

It felt sort of nerdy but also sort of nice to have an adult meet us after school and just hang out. Lots of times our parents promise us that *someday* we'll do something. They usually say things like maybe or perhaps we can. We never do though. That's why it was so important for us that the Success for Sixth program always met when they said they would. Like one day even though our school was closed, Laurie still was there and met us at the college doors. We had a hard time getting to the college that day. We had to ride our bikes through the snow. We knew that if we made it there we would have food and fun and get to do something other than just watch TV all day.

We were always saying to Laurie that we wanted to do even more activities and fun stuff at Success for Sixth. We also wanted a chance for everyone to get to pick activities, not just the loud or bossy kids. You know, like some of the kids wanted to do art stuff and some of them wanted to do sports stuff, and some of them just wanted to hang out and talk. We don't really get to do a lot of those things at school or even at home. It wasn't that bad trying some new things either. I mean, I guess we felt good enough about ourselves to do junk that we normally wouldn't of. Like the time that I

actually tried spending time with residents in the Nursing Home, I didn't think I would like it. But, I went and it was fun.

This next part is sort of personal and all and I'm not even sure how to say it. But, here goes. It's not that easy for kids in the sixth grade. I mean your body is totally freaking out and all. Like one day I'm all up and happy and the next day I'm totally depressed. Just about the time that I think I'm o.k. then my face breaks out or I start to think I'm fat or ugly. A lot of kids at school say super mean things. Sometimes they don't even say anything they just give a super hateful look and act like they wish you would go away. Well, because of that, it was important for all of us kids to not be that way at Success for Sixth. I mean, come on, we had enough of that at school and all.

At first Laurie didn't really get what we were really going through at school. She just thought all kids were picked on and we weren't any different. She didn't know that when rich kids were picked on they had more ways to fight back. They had more friends to pick from when someone was picking on them. It's like we were cars that were always running just barely above empty. It didn't take a lot of put-downs to totally destroy our self-esteem. I think we finally got Laurie to understand what it was like to be us when we did the role-plays. After that, kids started to really be cool with each other at Success for Sixth. We all started to eat snack at one table. We didn't let anyone put down anyone else in the group. It's like we were all cool because we belonged.

Which brings me to my next point, which is that none of us were ever recognized at school for doing anything good. Success for Sixth was like the first time for us that we ever won any awards or did good or stuff like that. It felt super good to not get yelled at during Success for Sixth. It was awesome to have a teacher tell us that what we did was

creative or interesting or good. I think some of our parents were shocked when we got awards instead of detentions!

Oh yah, I wanted to say some more about what happened to me one time at school. A teacher at school gave me an assignment that was sort of like what we had been doing in Success. I think the teacher at school wanted us to write in a journal about our hobbies or something. Well, normally I would have just sat there and sort of zoned out and all. But, instead, I just started writing about Success and all my friends there and about visiting the Nursing Home. Before I knew it, the class time was over. As I left the class the teacher said, "Were you writing notes to your friends during the journal activity?" I said I wasn't but the teacher wouldn't believe me. The teacher said, "I'm going to let it go this time, but I know you were wasting your class time as usual."

It's like the teachers at school just expect us to do bad and all. Well, the weird thing that happened was it didn't bother me. I thought, "It's too bad that teacher didn't read what I wrote because I did a great job!" I took my journal to Success for Sixth that afternoon and Laurie let me read it to the group. All the kids thought it was cool that I had written about them and all. I guess I'm starting to realize that not all adults think I'm a total reject. It's cool that some adults at the college think I'm smart.

When I first started going to Success for Sixth I really thought that one day I'd be a factory worker or maybe if I were lucky I'd be a secretary. I never thought I could do anything else because I my parents were broke. Well, we took these career tests and I found out I could be a doctor or a lawyer. I could be anything I wanted to be. I learned that it doesn't matter if you are poor. There are scholarships and grants and ways to be able to afford to go to college. I was so excited. Guess what? I even got to go and spend

time with a veterinarian. The cool thing was she was a woman. I learned that if I studied hard and went to college I could be a veterinarian too! I started to really try in math since I learned how important math would be one day on my job. I mean I don't want to give an animal the wrong amount of medicine or whatever. Success helped a bunch of us start dreaming bigger about our futures and it helped us learn about really cool careers.

The last thing I want to talk about is adults. It can be so totally annoying when adults pretend they know what it's like and what we are going through. You know, like when teachers say, "When I was your age we use to blah, blah, blah." Who cares what it was like back in their days? They don't have to deal with being picked on and put down. They don't have to deal with kids pressuring them into stealing, lying, and other junk just to be cool. At least adults have the money to be able to buy stuff and do things. They aren't just stuck at home watching T.V. Adults should know that kids like us don't have enough power or enough stuff to feel like we can just be ourselves. Success for Sixth was the first place where we could do a lot of the things that the rich and popular kids have always been able to do.

I am not saying that Success for Sixth was perfect or anything. There were some dumb parts where we were treated like babies and had to do a bunch of teacher planned activities. There were also embarrassing parts where we *had* to sit next to new people or visit with strangers at the Nursing Home. No kid likes to be forced to do stuff. But, the Success for Sixth program was good because an adult listened to us and was there for us.

Success for Sixth taught us how to be there for each other and how to be cool with who we were. I guess that's what I have to say. That's how I see it. Laurie keeps looking at me and telling me to wrap it up. You know, not to keep on saying the same thing over

and over. So, I guess I just want to say that I hope other kids who are in sixth grade can have a program like ours where they can be cool and accepted without all that pressure to do bad stuff. I hope that other kids can be able to have friends and fun and someone who will listen to them and keep them excited about their future. I think that because of the Success for Sixth program all of us kids are a lot more excited about who we are and what we can do when we're given the chance.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

In the previous chapter I discussed the four theoretical propositions. These theoretical propositions were woven through the literature review, the five data sources and the student voices. In this chapter, I will begin by addressing two core themes of relationships and identities, which became evident as I analyzed the data. These two core themes and the support themes expand the four theoretical propositions and answered my research question about how students experienced the Success for Sixth program. I will begin to answer the research question that was first posed in Chapter One by developing these two core themes of relationships and identities, and relating them to the literature.

The research question I examined in this study was: How do at-risk sixth grade students in Northwest Iowa experience the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth TRIO program? The first way that students experienced the Success for Sixth program was through relationships that they developed.

Relationships

Initially, the relationships among the students in the program were limited. For instance, as the students ate their snack, they sat at several different tables and only spoke to a few students with whom they felt comfortable. In fact Christy sat by herself at her own table and appeared to be invisible as she read a book. Batsche (1985) defined at-risk students as similar to Christy in that they have feelings of alienation and isolation. Before

the Success for Sixth program, Christy had only one friend. This friend had moved away. At the start of the Success for Sixth program Christy had no friends and isolated herself.

Many students shared in their interview and referenced in my field notes that by the tenth session they now enjoyed spending time with their new friends in the Success for Sixth program. Several of the students believed that at this halfway point in the program the relationships in the Success for Sixth program kept them from feeling lonely and isolated. Christy in particular felt a main purpose of the Success for Sixth program was to make friends. Around this same time, the students experienced having an opportunity to visit informally with their program peers as both fun and exciting, and they derived energy and excitement from talking and spending time with them. All twelve students stated that spending time informally with their peers was a new experience for them.

Around the tenth session, the students found the new relationships in the program to be similar to those in a support group when their peers listened to them and allowed them to express themselves. These new relationships formed through the Success for Sixth program helped me better understand how the students experienced the program. For many in the program, the chance to develop these relationships into new friendships was instrumental in determining how they experienced the Success for Sixth program.

Friendships

Students initially came to the Success for Sixth program because they wanted to make friends. As time went by and the sessions progressed, students did begin to form friendships among the group members. In fact, by the completion of the program the theme of friendship was prevalent throughout 11 of the 12 student interviews. Taylor-

Dunlop and Norton (1997) found that at-risk students need the connection of friends and supportive links between themselves and the school. Many of the students shared in their interviews that the Success for Sixth program gave them friends and a source of support to better deal with the stresses of school.

In addition, by the completion of the program, some students shared that they had grown more confident in their ability to approach adults as a result of the Success for Sixth program. Rather than viewing adults as authority figures, a few students were now able to view their teachers and other adults as friends. McMillan & Reed (1993) stated that friendship with teachers, counselors and friends had a significant impact on at-risk students' persistence in earning a high school diploma. These friendships also enabled students to effectively begin to deal with peer-pressure.

Peer Pressure

Most students agreed that these friendships were a very important key to dealing with peer pressure within the program and at school. At the start of the Success for Sixth program, many of the students were confused by their relationships with their peers. Peer pressure to be accepted confused them; thus, these peer relationships were in constant flux. One day a student felt popular and accepted; the next day that same student felt rejected and ostracized. Students had strong emotions that paralleled their feelings of acceptance within the group. It was not until the twentieth and final session that all 12 students felt accepted and safe enough to sit around the same table and share both a snack and themselves with the entire group. These relationships were important because they helped the students learn to deal with peer pressure in a supportive atmosphere.

The opinions and pressure of others in the Success for Sixth group were important to these students by program completion. They were invested in their new friendships and took feedback from the group members seriously. They expressed strong opinions about wanting to be treated with respect and kindness and to be accepted for who they were. They wanted to be seen as smart, responsible, and capable of attending college. It mattered to these students if their peers within the program accepted them and viewed them positively.

By the conclusion of the program, it was so important for these students to belong to the Success for Sixth program that they became anxious if their group acceptance were threatened by mean comments or rude remarks. It was as if they sensed they might be excluded from the Success for Sixth group based on another member's negative comments or remarks. Students did not want anything to keep them from belonging to the Success for Sixth program or from fitting into a more successful image.

Several students shared that they had no previous training or help in dealing with peer pressure in their relationships. This is important because if students are not receiving such information in middle school, they may be unprepared for the ever-increasing peer pressure challenges of high school. They may make poor choices due to peer pressure that will affect them for the rest of their lives. These students may be at-risk of not having the skills needed to make wise choices about their futures. Students shared that through the Success for Sixth program they learned how to stand up to peer-pressure both within the program and at school. They were able to use their new positive group identity to help them stand up to their peers and avoid making poor decisions.

O'Sullivan (1989) found that middle school was a difficult time for at-risk students. It is a time of increased peer pressure in relationships. O'Sullivan (1989) stated that many at-risk children succumb to peer pressure during their middle school years. This has a detrimental effect on their educational attainment. Steinberg (1996) also found at-risk middle school students to be very vulnerable to peer pressure. This vulnerability left them with less self-esteem and a sense that success was beyond their grasp. However, Damico (1989) found that at-risk students with a social support system were able to avoid peer pressure and achieve more school success through positive relationships. These more successful students often had higher self-esteem.

Self-esteem

At the start of Success for Sixth, some students seemed to gain self-esteem by knowing they had peers in the program who liked and supported them. All 12 students wanted friends before the program, and each gained at least one friend through program participation. This is key because without the program these students may have failed to make a friend and gain this self-esteem. This self-esteem was important because their new peer group provided them with friends who had similar college goals and who also wanted to be recognized for leadership and community service rather than getting into trouble. This increased self-esteem led to increased self-confidence.

Self-Confidence

In addition to wanting control, Glenn (1990) emphasized that middle school students also want to be listened to. Students who are listened to often gain self-confidence. Students were very eager to be listened to in the Success for Sixth program. They showed significant self-confidence gains and comfort level to share their opinions

at the end of the program than at the very start of the Success for Sixth program. Glenn (1990) stated at-risk children want to know that they matter in this world and that their lives have significance and meaning. It was interesting to note that by the 10th session the students began to form into a unit. Around the 10th session, Marie made friendship bracelets for all the group's members and insisted they wear them at all times. The friendship bracelets became an outward symbol of the student's new inward self-confident identity. I observed this new confident identity as they participated in the program activities.

Activities

Students shared in their interviews that they were able to find a new identity and integrate their new adolescent roles through activities in the Success for Sixth program. Students had the opportunity to try out their new relationship roles amidst their Success for Sixth peer group. Conger (1977) emphasized the importance of the peer group for middle school students. All 12 students confirmed that their peer group had a significant role in determining their identity. Several students mentioned that they wanted their peers to approve of their projects, and they wanted their peers to include them in activities. All four parents mentioned in their focus group that the activities of the Success for Sixth program kept their student returning to the program for all 20 sessions. These parents also mentioned that their students had gained a new identity through their participation in the program's activities.

Summary

The first way that students experienced the Success for Sixth program was through the relationships they developed. These relationships were limited initially.

However, by the 10 session of the program most students had gained new friendships with others in the program. These relationships were important because they helped the students learn to deal with peer-pressure in a supportive atmosphere. Students also gained self-esteem through their new relationships. This self-esteem was important because their new peer group had similar college goals. Students also gained self-confidence and a new identity through their participation in the program's activities. This second core theme of identity was key to understanding how the students experienced the Success for Sixth program.

Identity

Erik Erikson (1968) proposed that during adolescence students must deal with a crisis stage in which they attempt to achieve their identity. Erikson (1968) suggested that teens must explore new groups of friends, new ideas, and new ways of behaving to eventually achieve a successful identity. According to Erikson (1968), if a student achieves this identity, they tend to have high self-esteem, be socially skilled, and do well in life. If they do not achieve their identity, these students may have low self-esteem, trouble making friends, and less success in their eventual careers. Students were able to achieve their new identity through the friendships they formed in the Success for Sixth program.

Friendships

The students at the beginning of the Success for Sixth program had not yet formed friendships or achieved a positive identity within the group. For these students making friends and achieving their identity was a way they eventually experienced the Success for Sixth program. According to Erikson (1968), it was important for them to be

associated with a group or organization and to make friends to help them explore identity options. The Success for Sixth program gave students a chance to find a positive social identity by making friends in the group, which allowed them to resolve their identity crisis. This identity was based on the fact that they eventually felt heard and also felt important and valued within the Success for Sixth program. These feelings of belonging and being listened to increased students' self-esteem and self-confidence, and feeling that they belonged. This positive identity also enabled them to withstand peer-pressure at school.

Peer Pressure

Glenn (1990) found that at-risk middle school students want to have control over their activities. Several students talked about liking or disliking certain activities based on how much control they had over them. They talked about wanting to either add to or take away various activities based on their likes and dislikes. The students were eventually able to assert control and voice their opinions beginning around the 10th session. Likewise, it took about 10 sessions for me to give up control and realize the students were capable of making their own choices and decisions. At this point the students voiced what was fun and helpful for them in the activities and what they needed to do to gain their new identity. Through this new identity and control the students were able to resolve negative self-esteem and poor self-confidence issues. Their new identity allowed them to try new behaviors out, such as resisting peer-pressure, in a safe and predictable environment. With their new identity, students reported an increase of self-esteem.

Self-esteem

This increased self-esteem also appeared to increase the students' desire to try harder in school. For some students their Success for Sixth participation coincided with higher grades. Some students mentioned their increased self-esteem, allows them to interact with their teachers and request additional help or explanations when needed. Thus, the Success for Sixth program taught them how to ask questions and voice their needs. In addition, this increased self-esteem motivated the students to begin to reexamine and reframe their identity according to their new self-image.

Five students emphasized this theme of self-esteem throughout their interview. All five students stated that their participating in the Success for Sixth program, improved their self-esteem. Students said they felt listened to in the Success for Sixth program, and by being listened to their self-esteem increased. When asked how their self-esteem had improved, students had various answers. Some students said they had more confidence. Other students discussed standing up to peer pressure. While other students mentioned increased feelings of control, happiness and hope for their futures.

Anderson (1998) suggested at-risk students could be encouraged to overcome class, social, academic and cultural barriers by society investing in their education. Students confirmed this in the five data sources. Five students felt that their self-esteem had been raised by the program's investment into their education and learning. Students confirmed Anderson's research by specifically stating that the Success for Sixth program had given them the drive, ability and encouragement to take charge of their own learning and to reframe their previous life experiences with new hope for their futures. This new hope came in the form of gaining a new identity through the program and gaining the

dream of attending college and earning a degree that would enable them to rise above their current life circumstances. This new hope produced strong feelings of self-confidence in the students.

Self-confidence

Perhaps the best answer to how the students experienced the Success for Sixth program is that it allowed them to gain a new identity that was more self-confident. Following their increased self-confidence, students experienced a change in their belief system. It was the student's increased self-confidence that changed their internal belief system and allowed them to feel comfortable about their new behaviors and identities. They were able to feel comfortable acknowledging their successes and speaking of areas that were strengths for them. They were then able to voice their experiences in the Success for Sixth program as being both positive and beneficial.

The students experienced the Success for Sixth program as changing their life metaphor. For instance, at the start of the Success for Sixth program, many students saw themselves with negative metaphors. They saw themselves as "barely able to hang on," "losers," "failures," "rejects," "hopeless," and "trailer trash." Through their experiences in the Success for Sixth program these students found new metaphors to describe their lives. Some now saw themselves as "smart," "talented," "capable," "important," "leaders," and "college bound participants." These new self-descriptions allowed the students to dream and predict brighter futures. This new positive identity gave the students hope for their future and a new direction for their present. This new positive identity was also gained as a result of the students' participation in the program activities.

Activities

Initially, it appears that activities theme was the most relevant in explaining and building a foundation that answers how the students experienced the Success for Sixth program through the core theme of identity. In fact, all students initially discussed the importance of having structured activities that helped them identify their strengths in a setting that was different from their school. Campbell (1981) postulated that middle school students are trying to find out who they are and what their strengths are. Many students discussed how the initial structured activities helped them find out more about themselves and discover what they could do well. In addition to discovering their strengths, Erikson (1968) also noted that middle school students had an important task to achieve their quest for identity. By about the tenth session, students had begun to form a new identity.

The student's new inward identity, control, and significance gained through the program's activities helped them mature and make better behavioral and educational decisions. Several parents shared that their students had matured and grown through the activities that the program offered. One parent stated that her student's definition of fun had changed throughout the course of the Success for Sixth program. This particular student no longer found it fun to break rules. Instead, this student had found the fun activities a substitute for the fun of getting into trouble at school.

The students also gained social skills through their program participation. Manning (1993) identified activity characteristics that were best practices for outreach programs. The seven characteristics identified were: a comprehensive approach, self-concept, high expectations, social skills, objectives, family involvement and motivation

for success. All 12 students identified many of these characteristics when they described how they experienced the activities in the Success for Sixth program.

The Success for Sixth program utilized an approach to reach middle school students that provided a safe and nurturing atmosphere that was different from the students' school. Finn (1989) stressed the importance of outreach programs meeting in an environment different from the student's school. Several students shared that they enjoyed meeting at the college rather than at their middle school and thus, appeared to be a key factor in helping the students achieve a new identity in a new environment. It also appeared to be a key factor that students felt safe enough to gain the support they needed to change their identity.

As per review of the Success for Sixth notes in the Appendices, several students spoke of how important it was to them to have a place to go where they felt safe, important, and supported. Choy (2001) stressed that at-risk student outcomes depend greatly upon the encouragement of mentors. I recorded in my journal that by the 10th session students were to be racing to be the first one to receive encouragement from me. I also noted that students formed a strong relationship with me and felt supported by the middle of the program. Perna (2000) supports the fact that at-risk students need support and encouragement to increase their options and opportunities in life. Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, and Wasik (1993) support the theory that at-risk middle school students need a comprehensive program that both supports and challenges them to achieve goals.

It is evident that the two core themes of relationships and identity and the support themes of friendships, peer-pressure, self-esteem, self-confidence, and activities

overlapped and intertwined. I will now attempt to integrate both core themes and the support themes into a more cohesive framework.

Integrating the Themes

Relationships and identities were the foundation upon which the support themes of friendships, peer-pressure, self-esteem, self-confidence, and activities were built. These themes established a pattern for how the students experienced the Success for Sixth program. Basically, the students came to the Success for Sixth program because they wanted to make friends. As they made friendships in the program, they were increasingly able to stand up to peer-pressure both at school and in the program. By withstanding negative peer-pressure their self-esteem increased. As their self-esteem increased, they had more self-confidence. As they had more self-confidence, they wanted and were given more control over the activities in the program. They then began to view these self-directed activities as exciting. The exciting activities were also mediated by food. It was around the food table that students began to first form new relationships and friendships within the program and thus the positive spiral toward an achieved identity continued for the students.

These new relationships helped the students begin to deal with peer pressure and social concerns. However, their self-esteem and self-confidence were not raised until they were able to form a new identity. This new identity was sometimes similar to their old, as in the case of Marie. However, it was sometimes also quite dramatic, as in the case of Chloe. I will now expound upon this integrated identity theme that the students needed to create a new identity and alias for themselves in order to fully heal and improve their self-esteem and self-confidence.

The 12 students in the Success for Sixth program were all at-risk although they were at-risk in varying degrees. For instance, Marie came much more confident and outgoing than Chloe. While Marie was dealing with issues of boredom and making friends, Chloe was dealing with being abandoned by her mother, being physically and sexually abused, and moving from one foster home to the next. The program benefited each student in varying degrees. The changes students made from beginning to end of the program were different for each student. Even considering these differences, all 12 students seemed to be giving me a consistent and similar message concerning the new identities they gained in the program.

I believe the students' messages were saying even though they were only in the sixth grade, they already had a pretty well established identity at the start of the Success for Sixth program. Based on their family's last name, their family's income, their emotional baggage, and their undeveloped talents they had a pretty good idea of who they were. For the vast majority of students, these identities were negative. Teachers, other students, parents and society seemed to be agreeing with this negative identity and reinforcing it. This had formed an internal belief system for the students that went something like, "Well, I guess this is my life. I guess this is who I am."

This negative identity caused them pain. Many of the students felt lonely, worthless, victimized, silent, scared, and depressed. Then, they were enrolled in the Success for Sixth program. When the students arrived, they brought their old tried and true negative identities with them. They acted up and had difficulty following the rules. The curriculum or activities of the program initially confirmed their old identities as I nagged, ordered, scowled and attempted to create an atmosphere similar to their school's

environment. As the sessions progressed I began to allow the students to direct the activities. These self-directed activities challenged the students' assumptions of who they were. At this point, students went through a storming stage and acted out their confusion and uncertainty of both who was in charge and who the participants were. Eventually, they began to accept their new positive identity while they were attending the Success for Sixth program.

Interestingly enough, while they were at the Success for Sixth program, students became very unhappy and defensive when other students tried to re-script them back to their former negative identities. They felt excitement, happiness and fun when they were experiencing their new identities of purpose, goals, being worthwhile and having power to change their lives. When the other students put them down, they felt as if someone were blocking their goals or taking away their power. This made them fighting angry. It was as if the two identities were in a battle. With this new identity, students experienced a rush of good feelings, fun, excitement, happiness, improved grades, and even improved energy. However, this research was unable to discover if this experience was temporary or long-term.

The literature review in Chapter II discusses the history of educational outreach programs and what society and Presidents have focused on to reach at-risk students. These educators implemented plans to assess standards and accountabilities of the education basics reading, writing and arithmetic. However, what they failed to assess or monitor was the student's internal belief system. If the students perceived themselves as unintelligent or worthless, all the academic standards in the world would not help them learn or enable them to achieve academically. If the students did not identify themselves

as college materials, how could hours of academic tutoring get them enrolled at college and keep them there?

I believe that the student's new identity needs reinforcement after the Success for Sixth program is completed. They need a mentor to keep reinforcing who they now are. They need a continued support network to maintain their progress. I further believe that the students were saying that the Success for Sixth program was an intensive way for them to gain a new identity. However, they now need help and continued support to maintain this new identity. They were saying that academic skills are secondary to self-concept and self-esteem. For them, their identity was more important than their rank on a standardized test of basic skills. These findings lead me to ask some questions.

Questions for further research include:

1. Can at-risk students maintain a new identity without at least one source of support to reaffirm their new belief?
2. Should federal funds be allocated toward providing support for this new identity and less towards academic standards and homework tutoring?
3. Does this new student identity have further reaching consequences and impact beyond the students themselves?
4. What are the long-term changes and consequences for the students as a result of participating in the Success for Sixth program?

Implications for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to find out how 12 at-risk middle school students experienced the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program. It is my hope that this inquiry will provide educators with some tools to understand from a student's

perspective how they experienced the Success for Sixth program. Educators need to be aware of the impact of the themes that students discussed in their interviews. Perhaps the most important implication for this study is the fact that at-risk middle school students are rarely listened to or empowered in their educational endeavors and they desperately want someone to help them achieve a new identity. These children face numerous hidden obstacles that may permanently scar them if caring educators do not know how to address them. Unless they are given the chance to voice their frustrations, and change their identities, many at-risk students will suffer in silence and isolation.

It is important to measure these themes in a quantitative format with instruments that are both valid and reliable measures of these themes for future information. Further, it is essential to ascertain if students from different socioeconomic status and backgrounds report similar themes. More research needs to be done to further listen to the voices of our at-risk youth.

Summary

It was apparent that these 12 at-risk middle school students had the ability to voice their Success for Sixth program experiences through the five data sources. These students were eager to share and to be heard. Listening to twelve middle school students was both a satisfying and a revealing process. It was surprising the number of students who mentioned the importance of achieving a new identity in the Success for Sixth program. Before the program, these at-risk students did not have the identity to be successful at school. Rather, they were often viewed as hopeless cases or irritations to teachers and others in the community. It is sad that so few programs are available to reach at-risk middle school students in an environment that is different from their school

and to help them achieve a new identity. This qualitative dissertation was aimed to better understand how 12 students experienced the Success for Sixth program. In addition to explaining how students experienced the program it also revealed ideas that might help other programs effectively reach their at-risk students.

Recommendations

In this section I would like to present my personal recommendations regarding the Educational Talent Search Success for Sixth program based upon the data findings. I believe it is very important for educators to develop a caring and supportive relationship and atmosphere with at-risk middle school participants where these students can feel safe enough to experiment with several new identities. I further believe that educators in at-risk programs should treat their students as if they already have achieved a positive identity. In other words, it is important to see the finished product before it is completed. It is important to help these students envision how they could be through verbal and nonverbal affirmations.

I believe it is very important for educators to give at-risk students the impression that they are extremely important and capable. At-risk students are very aware of what others think of them. They are extremely sensitive to even the smallest of put-downs or disrespect. Personally, I use to pretend that my 12 students were talented and gifted. I would affirm their answers and make comments to them such as, "Wow, that's fascinating." I believe that by treating these at-risk students with honor and respect that an environment was created whereby they could successfully try out a more positive identity.

These students are vulnerable and going through many transitions in their young lives. Students in the Success for Sixth program stated that they felt important and special because the time was taken to personally interview them and listen to their stories. They also felt safe enough in the Success for Sixth program to work through their problems and achieve a new positive identity. Several students shared that during the Success for Sixth program was first time that an adult had seriously listened to their thoughts and opinions. Further research would benefit at-risk middle school students by confirming for them that they are important and worth listening to and by helping them to gain a new identity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Letter of Solicitation

Dear -----,

This is a request for you and your child's voluntary participation in a research study being conducted by Laurie Ann Schmidt, a doctoral student in the Community College Leadership program at Colorado State University. The title of this research is "Voices of Talent Search Sixth Grade Students: A Case Study of their Program Experiences. The purpose of this study is to document the experiences of sixth grade students who were enrolled in the Success for Sixth program from January 2002 to May 2002 and to also learn about your perceptions regarding the program. The findings from this study will be beneficial to other educators as they seek to meet the needs of middle school students.

Participation in this study will involve about 2 to 3 hours at most of your child time. This time includes an initial interview that takes about 1 hour or 1 and ½ hours during which your child is asked his or her impressions of the program including what they liked and what they didn't. Your child may later be asked to explain or clarify what they said in the interview but this clarification will take no more than an hour of your child's time in total. Further, Ms Schmidt will review your child's class file that includes completed projects, assignments, grades, attendance reports, and observation notes compiled by Ms Schmidt.

Your participation is also requested. We hope that you are willing to participate in a focus group with other parents whose children were in the program to provide us with your insights about the program. The information you provide us will be used to make program improvements and be used to help other similar programs through-out the country to improve. Strict confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research process . You have the right to choose not to participate or not have your child participate and the right to withdraw or withdraw your child once the study has started.

Thank-you for your assistance. More information about this project is found on the attached Consent Form. Please feel free to contact Jean Lehmann at lehmann@cahs.colostate or Laurie Schmidt at 712-852-5340 or by email lschmidt@iowalakes.edu if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Jean P. Lehmann
Professor
School of Education

Laurie Schmidt
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B
Informed Consent Form

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: Voices of Talent Search Sixth Grade TRIO Students: A Case Study of their Program Experiences

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jean Lehmann, PhD

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Laurie Ann Schmidt (doctoral student)

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: Laurie Ann Schmidt (712) 852-5340

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this research is to understand how twelve middle school students experienced the Success for Sixth program.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:

We are gathering information from both you and your child for this study. For your child we are asking that we be allowed to conduct; a) 1 hour- 1 ½ interview with your child addressing his or her experiences with the Success for Sixth program. This interview will be conducted on the Emmetsburg Campus of Iowa Lakes Community College, tape recorded, and later written or transcribed. In addition we would like permission to include information that directly relates to the current research from your child's Educational Talent Search program file including grades attendance records, the teacher's observation notes and student projects such as drawings and posters students completed while in the program. Children may also be asked to participate in 1 follow-up interview in order to clarify statements made in the first interview. We are also asking that you attend a group meeting called a focus group, to help us further understand your perceptions of the Success for Sixth program. A focus group allows people to come together to talk about issues and concerns. All focus group conversation will be audio taped and then written. The focus group meeting will last about an hour and a half.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

We do not anticipate any risks to you or your child because the study focus is on the school program. However, we are asking students and parents not to respond to questions that they find to be upsetting in any way. If we observe that your child appears agitated in answering a question, we will end the interview. In terms of the focus group meeting, if you are uncomfortable responding, we ask that you not answer the question. If the discomfort continues, please leave at anytime. We have also scheduled a short break during the focus group meeting to make leaving easier if you feel you need to. We would like to call you later to determine the reason for your leaving and to see if you are willing to answer the questions in a private setting. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. Further, we have implemented several procedures to safeguard your confidentiality after data collection that are described on the next page.

Page 1 of 3 Subjects initials _____ Date _____

BENEFITS:

There are few direct benefits for you and your child associated with this study. We do think that it is of benefit to be listened to. The information gained from this research will be used to evaluate the Success for Sixth program and it will be available to middle schools, TRIO programs, area education agencies, and community colleges throughout the country considering methods to increase school success.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All gathered materials will be identified by pseudonym so that no actual names will be associated with student's responses. Additionally, the names of the schools and community will be disguised in the study. Any information that can be linked to individual responses will either be omitted from the findings, significantly altered or reported as group data so that it is difficult to identify the source of information.

Interview material and audiocassettes and student records will be stored in a locked cabinet and will not be available to any persons other than researchers. The audiotapes will be destroyed following transcription. The written research document will be made available to each participant.

LIABILITY:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about subjects' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563

PARTICIPATION:

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary. Your participation in the focus group is also voluntary. If you decide for your child, or yourself, to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop their participating, or yours, at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

Parent name (printed)

Participant name (printed)

Parent signature Date

Participant signature

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Page 2 of 3 Subjects initials _____ Date _____

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian you authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to you by _____ and you are satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

Minor's date of birth

Parent/Guardian name (printed)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Page 3 of 3 Subjects initials _____ Date _____

Success for Sixth Student Consent Form

I understand that Laurie Ann Schmidt is completing research and studying about our Talent Search Success for Sixth program. The name of her research is "Voices of Talent Search Sixth Grade TRIO Students: A Case Study of Their Program Experiences." Laurie would like to talk with me about things I remember from the Talent Search Success for Sixth program. She will talk with me in the Library Conference Room of the Emmetsburg Campus of Iowa Lakes Community College. She will talk with me for about one hour. Everything that I say to Laurie will be tape-recorded. Laurie will then write what has been recorded on the tapes. I will only share with Laurie what I want to share. I will have permission to leave the Conference Room at any time. I give Laurie permission to talk with me about my experiences in the Talent Search Success for Sixth program. I understand that what I share with Laurie will be used to help her learn more about our Talent Search Success for Sixth program.

(Student Name) (Date)

(Witness to Signature—Project Staff)

APPENDIX C
Success for Sixth Field Notes

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 1: JANUARY 2, 2002

Session Theme: Pre-curriculum Questionnaire & Cooperation

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Mint Cookies and Fountain Drink

Students were very excited to meet each other and form as a group. Our meeting began by catching up with each other and talking about the holiday break. Katelynn began talking by saying; *"I was really disappointed that I didn't get any clothes for Christmas."* Emily replied, "Wow. I would have just died if that happened to me. I got lots of new clothes for Christmas." *David stated, "Yah, my break was boring. There wasn't anything to do at home."* I asked the students if they were looking forward to returning to school. Several students shouted in unison, *"No way!"* I asked them why they were not looking forward to going back to school. Katelynn answered, *"School is boring. All we do is sit around in desks all day."* On the way to our snack, I noted that Christy looked down and did not make eye contact with the other students. During the snack, students talked about the topic of cooperation and getting along with others. Ann questioned, *"Can we talk about people who are mean?"* She went on to say, *"I know a girl who is mean. I've tried to be her friend, but she just swears at me. She even smokes after school."* Ann then said, *"Some kids have parents who smoke, they sometimes put out cigarettes that aren't used up. This girl picks up those, or steals them out of her mother's open pack."* Katelynn said, *"Yah, a lot of kids in the sixth grade smoke."*

Session One: Pre-curriculum Questionnaire: January 2, 2002

Today twelve students had the opportunity to respond to a series of five questions regarding how they viewed their school experience and what they felt they needed help with in order to be successful in school. Students were informed that their responses would be kept anonymous. They were identified by using a letter instead of their actual name to maintain their confidentiality. Students responded to the following questions as follows:

1. I wish that our school would let us do more _____ and less _____.
 - A. I wish our school would let us do more fun things and less boring things, like art projects, religion fair, etc.**
 - B. I wish that our school would let us do more talking and less taking tests.**
 - C. I wish that our school would let us do more activities and less homework.**
 - D. I wish that our school would let us do more fun, and less homework.**
 - E. I wish that our school would let us do more extra credit and less tests.**
 - F. I wish that our school would let us do more talking and less being quiet.**
 - G. I wish that our school would let us do more talking and less work.**
 - H. I wish that our school would let us do more activities and less tests.**
 - I. I wish that our school would let us do more things and less work.**
 - J. I wish that our school would let us do more stuff and less homework.**
 - K. I wish that our school would let us do more trips and less math.**

L. I wish that our school would let us do more fun things and less junk.

2. *I think school is boring when* _____.

A. I think school is boring when the minutes seem like hours, and a teacher is giving a boring lecture.

B. I think school is boring when we have to do homework.

C. I think school is boring when the teachers talk and gab too much.

D. I think school is boring when the teachers talk for hours and hours.

E. I think school is boring when we have homework.

F. I think school is boring when we have study skills.

G. I think school is boring when I have math.

H. I think school is boring when I have to sit all the time.

I. I think school is boring when I have to do work.

J. I think school is boring when we can't do anything fun.

K. I think school is boring when we don't do anything.

L. I think school is boring when we just listen to lectures.

3. *I think school is fun when* _____.

A. I think school is fun when we do projects, like art or a history fair.

B. I think school is fun when we don't have to do anything.

C. I think school is fun when we go on field trips.

D. I think school is fun when it's time for P.E.

E. I think school is fun when we have study halls.

F. I think school is fun when we get to go places.

G. I think school is fun when we get to talk to our friends.

- H. I think school is fun when we have P.E.**
- I. I think school is fun when we get to work in groups.**
- J. I think school is fun when we get to do stuff.**
- K. I think school is fun when we get to make things.**
- L. I think school is fun when we get to play games.**

4. *Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by _____.*

- A. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by helping me make friends.**
- B. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by helping me do better in school.**
- C. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by improving my ability to talk to others more easily.**
- D. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by doing homework.**
- E. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by understanding better.**
- F. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by letting me get on the computers.**
- G. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by letting me do reports.**
- H. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by talking to Laurie.**

- I. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by doing fun things.**
- J. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by teaching me to be a friend.**
- K. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by help me to control my temper.**
- L. Success for Sixth could help me do better in school by helping me to not be so shy.**

5. *I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about _____.*

- A. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about school.**
- B. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about boys**
- C. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about life.**
- D. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about friends.**
- E. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about school.**
- F. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about being adopted.**
- G. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about my Mom.**
- H. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about their lives.**
- I. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about a lock-in.**
- J. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about cheerleading.**
- K. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about winning.**

L. I wish I could talk to the Success for Sixth teachers about what happened to me when my Mom was at work.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 2: JANUARY 7, 2002

Session Theme: Being Responsible

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie,

Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Bars and Fountain Drink

Today students began the session with a snack in the cafeteria. The majority of students sat at one table with a counselor. They asked questions about what to expect, and many participants shared what they hoped to gain from the program. When asked how their day went, one student replied, *"Bad. Everyone keeps teasing me and saying that I like someone when I don't."* Another student shared, *"People make fun of us because we aren't popular."* She went on to define popularity. She said, *"Being popular means that you have a good last name and that you have a big and expensive house. It also means that you are pretty and have a boyfriend."*

Following the snack, students went to the Library Conference room to discuss the topic of responsibility. We began by having the students give a one-word response to how their school day went. Students gave the words: slow, boring, tired, headache, stressful, dull, okay, bad, tiring, pass, uninteresting, and awful. Students then shared areas where they had responsibilities. They talked about their pets, homework, housework and so forth. We then generated ways to be responsible in each of these categories. The session concluded with students having the opportunity to tell further about their school experience. One student said, *"The teacher tells us not to talk, it is time to read silently. Then, the same teacher begins to tell us all about his home life."*

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 3: JANUARY 9, 2002

Session Theme: Dealing with Feelings

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie,

Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Hotdogs and Fountain Drink

Today was unusually warm. Students arrived carrying their coats. David and Timothy talked about their school day. They said, "*Today we got to go roller skating. It was lots of fun. We tripped people on purpose. We tried to make them think that we were hurt, but we weren't.*" We then discussed how tripping someone might make them feel. David and Timothy shared that they just wanted to have fun. It never occurred to them that their fun might be hurting someone else.

One the way to the Cafeteria for snack, David tripped Timothy on purpose. This led our group to discuss our behavior rules. Students then enjoyed a snack of hotdogs. Students shared that they were tired after roller-skating at school. Following the snack, students returned to the Library Conference room to discuss feelings further.

Students began creating a self-esteem poster that allowed them to express their feelings through drawings, pictures, and so forth. Each student was also given an opportunity to share about their day while others listened. Although Katelynn and Ann were very talkative, Christy and Chloe did not share. The remaining students all took a turn at sharing. We began to talk about visiting with the elderly residents of a local Nursing Home.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 4: JANUARY 14, 2002

Session Theme: Acting on Your Values

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Cheese Balls and Fountain Drink

Today students had the day off due to a teacher's inservice. Students were very excited about being able to eat cheese balls for today's snack. One student said, *"Cheese balls are my favorite. I never get to eat them. I never get to eat in any restaurants."* Several other students then commented on how little there was to do for fun in the town, especially during the winter.

Following the snack, students had the opportunity to talk about acting on their values. Students also continued to color their self-esteem posters. We talked about the importance of taking a stand for what we believe in. Students were encouraged to share a time that they had taken a stand for their values. One student said, *"It's hard to stand up for anything at school. Kids are always putting you down and saying that what you believe is stupid."* We then spent time role-playing various ways to take a stand among peers.

The session ended with students writing down on a piece of paper a thoughtful deed they had done for someone else in the last week. All the papers were collected, and one name was selected at random. That student received a teddy bear to keep. The student said, *"This is the first time I've ever won anything!"*

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 5: JANUARY 16, 2002

Session Theme: Doing the Right Thing

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Ice Cream and Fountain Drink

Today several students excitedly raced to be the first to show me their report cards. A student asked, *"Can we celebrate our report cards with ice cream for our snack today?"* I assured them that we could. While we were having our snack, students began to compare report card results. I noted that students who earned less than a 2.0 or "C" average were discouraged and unhappy about their results. These students referred to themselves as "slow, dumb and stupid." Joey stated, *"Boys always get the bad grades. Only girls get the good ones."* This led our group to discuss what it is like to be male and female in the sixth grade. I asked the students, *"Which is it harder to be in the sixth grade, male or female?"* The students all replied in unison, *"It is harder to be female."* Even the male students agreed to this. I then asked them why it was more difficult to be female than male in the sixth grade. Ann replied, *"Girls can get pregnant. Girls have more fights about things than boys do."* Katelynn stated, *"Girls are always getting their feelings hurt or being upset about what people say."*

Our group then went to work on posters in the Library Conference room. I noted that Timothy had a large bruise by his eye. I asked him what had happened. He replied, *"An eighth grade boy came up to me at my locker. He slammed me and punched me. He thought I said something to him that I didn't. I'm always getting into fights at school."*

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 6: JANUARY 21, 2002

Session Theme: Dealing with Disappointment

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Pizza and Fountain Drink

The following eight students all eagerly hurried to the cafeteria to eat their snack: Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, David, Timothy, Joey and Sally. The remaining four students walked by themselves: Christy, Marie, Ann and Julie. The second group of students did not talk or make eye contact with the first group of students. While the first table of students was noisy and boisterous, the second table of students was quiet and reflective.

Following the snack, the entire group of students walked back to the Library Conference room to talk about the theme of dealing with disappointment. While we were working a student questioned, *"Can I share the good deed that I did for someone else this week?"* Students were then encouraged to use their best listening skills as this student shared. Students discussed times in their life when they were disappointed. Several students shared about times when they were overlooked or times when they failed to receive similar toys and clothes as their peers. One student described disappointment as, *"It's like when everyone else is getting things and doing things and you're just left at home to watch your brother and clean the house."* Students then brainstormed ways they could effectively deal with disappointment in their own lives. Suggestions included exercising, reading, calling a friend, talking, and journaling as ways to cope.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 7: JANUARY 30, 2002

Session Theme: Appreciating Yourself

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilyn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Granola Bar and Fountain Drink

Today students had the opportunity to visit with elderly residents at a local nursing home. Students were transported in groups. As they arrived, the Activities Director greeted them. Working in teams, students were able to visit with the residents. Six teams were assigned residents to work with. I walked around with a team that was assigned to meet with a former schoolteacher. This resident had taught middle school for 49 years. She shared how students in those days had to walk across town to a different building for lunch. She also shared about football games and dances. She explained to the students how to conduct a circle dance. Students then asked the resident the following questions:

Question 1: "Were you a cheerleader?" (Katelynn)

Response: "No, I was too busy talking and being with my friends to lead cheers."

(Resident)

Question 2: "Did you have any children?" (Christy)

Response: "No, I was married, but didn't have children." (Resident)

Question 3: "Was it fun being a teacher?" (David)

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 7: JANUARY 30, 2002

Session Theme: Appreciating Yourself (Continued)

Response: "No, I wouldn't call it fun. If you do it right it is hard work. I told my husband that I couldn't both teach and take care of the house. He never understood. I always wanted to be able to go back and get more education at college." (Resident)

Question 4: "What did you do on your summers off?" (Katelynn)

Response: "My summers off? I lived on a farm. I didn't have my summers off. I did everything including planting too many flowers." (Resident)

Question 5: "What is your favorite flower?" (Christy)

Response: "My favorite flower is those purple ones." (Resident)

Question 6: "Tulips?" (Christy)

Response: "Yes, purple tulips were always my favorite."

Question 7: "When in your birthday? (David)

Response: "My birthday is in May. May is a nice time of year. I love the springtime." (Resident)

Students concluded their visit with the residents at 4:30 p.m. They shared that they would like to host a fund-raiser to help the residents purchase board games. Students then spent some time generating fund raising ideas. Students stated that they enjoyed having the opportunity to talk with the residents. They said they were eager to return for future visits. Christy volunteered to share her visit with the rest of the group.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 8: FEBRUARY 4, 2002

Session Theme: Asking for Help

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Cookies and Fountain Drink

Students spent time today at the local nursing home. They decided to split into teams to interview the residents. The first team of students met with an elderly resident who was in her nineties. This resident suffered from senile dementia. She believed that Chloe, Emily and Marie were her daughters. At first the students were unsure how to respond to the resident. Her condition was explained to them. We then talked about the importance of asking for help when necessary. Once they understood the resident's medical condition, the students were eager to continue their visit.

Following their visit, Chloe had several questions. She asked, *"How come the resident thought I was her daughter?"* Emily asked, *"Why did the resident think we were baking pies in her kitchen?"* This led us to discuss aspects of memory loss and confusion that can sometimes be associated with old age. Students decided that regardless of people's memory, or state of mind, they need to be treated with kindness, respect and dignity. Marie said, *"At first, I was afraid of the resident. I was scared to ask for help. But, after I understood her condition, I had lots of fun pretending to play house."* Another student said, *"I never realized how lucky I am to be able to run and even walk."* Students enjoyed sharing their visits with other teams in the van. Students hope to raise \$25.00 for local residents to purchase board games for the recreation room.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 9: FEBRUARY 11, 2002

Session Theme: Being Friends

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: French Fries and Fountain Drink

Today students had the opportunity to watch a video that dealt with the theme of being friends. Students listed and identified various acts of friendship they had witnessed on the video. The video featured the Butter Cream Gang. This was a group of middle school students who were known for their anonymous and random acts of kindness and friendship. The students appeared to be very interested and engaged with the story plot. As they watched, one student noted that the Butter Cream Gang members always told the truth to their friends.

Katelynn noticed that on the video, the kids took the time to help an elderly lady who had fallen. Katelynn stated, *"That's sort of like us. We helped the residents out at the Nursing Home and they helped an elderly person who had fallen."* We then talked about friendship skills and the importance of helping others. Students then shared how they had begun to look forward to the Success for Sixth sessions.

Students said that at Success for Sixth, they felt listened to and respected. I've noticed that students are doing a much better job of acting polite and treating each other with respect. Christy has begun to make eye contact with the other students. She is starting to talk to the other and eat snack with them. Chloe is starting to let others get their snack before she does. David and Timothy have been less confrontational.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 10: FEBRUARY 13, 2002

Session Theme: Self-Esteem

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie,

Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Nachos and Fountain Drink

Today, students had the opportunity to raise their self-esteem through learning various story telling techniques. Our guest speaker began the session by telling a story in Spanish. Based on her facial expressions, tone, and gestures, students tried to interpret the story from Spanish into English. The story was about several mice that live in fear of a large cat. The little mice were able to outsmart the cat using dog language. The moral of the story was, "It pays to learn a foreign language."

Students then had the opportunity to work in teams to tell a story using only one word at a time. For instance, the first team member would say, "once" and the second team member would add another word. This project was very humorous. Students had to predict what their partners were going to say. Students stated that they enjoyed this hands-on approach to story telling.

Students asked if they could create a performance for their parents. The guest speaker agreed to this. Students will continue to work on their presentations next week. It was interesting to note that all students actively participated and were able to share with the group. We had no incidences of fighting or conflict throughout this activity. Students are looking forward to learning how to use greater expression and enthusiasm when sharing stories in front of a group. Students appeared to be actively participating.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 11: FEBRUARY 18, 2002

Session Theme: Coping with Pressures

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilyn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Cheese Pizza and Fountain Drink

Today students had the opportunity to talk about coping with peer pressures. They worked on a fingerprint activity. Students created several of their fingerprints with ink. They then compared their prints with others in the room and created pictures. Students shared pressures that they are currently facing in their life. They then generated what they needed from the program in order to successfully cope.

1. *"I need to learn more about self-control."* (David)
2. *"I want to gain more self-esteem."* (Ann)
3. *"I need to learn how to set goals."* (Julie)
4. *"I need to learn how to not be so shy."* (Christy)
5. *"I hope I can gain knowledge from this program."* (Marie)
6. *"I want to get high self-esteem from this program."* (Chloe)
7. *"I hope this program can help me with my grades."* (Joey)
8. *"I hope this program can help me learn how to make the honor roll"* (Katelynn)
9. *"I need to learn how to get along with others and not fight."*(Timothy)
10. *"I want to get help with making friends."* (Marilynn)
11. *"I need to feel like I am cool and accepted."* (Sally)
12. *"I need help with having more fun activities to do."* (Julie)

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 12: FEBRUARY 20, 2002

Session Theme: Resolving Conflict

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Tacos and Fountain Drink

Today students had the opportunity to learn how to resolve conflict through storytelling exercises. Working in teams, students were able to learn how to project their voices, use expression, look at an audience, and add meaning to their words. They learned that they need these same skills when resolving conflict.

As the hour started, Chloe began to share with me. She said, *"When I grow up, I'd like to change my name to Jennifer."* I asked her why she would want to do this. She replied, *"I don't like my name. I don't have the same name as the family I live with."* I asked her if she wanted to share more. She said, *"When I was younger my Dad took off and I haven't seen him since. When I was 10, my Mom dropped me off at McDonald's and never came back."* Chloe then shared how she had been placed in foster care. She said, *"I don't think the new family I am with likes me very much. I wish I could change my name."*

The session ended with students brainstorming on possible performances to present to their parents. Students were given stories to practice reading and memorizing. Students were allowed to work in teams and to decide who should read which role. Enthusiasm and interest seem to be very high with this activity.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 13: MARCH 6, 2002

Session Theme: Communicating with Parents

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: French Fries and Fountain Drink

Students seem to be enjoying the routine and predictability of our program. Today, as they ate, students shared about their day. Students are beginning to be more considerate about others in the group. The teasing and name-calling has seemed to disappear. It is becoming quite common for the students to say please and thank you. This is a huge accomplishment for this group.

Following the snack, students had the opportunity to discuss the topic of communicating with their parents. Students are becoming more open with their thoughts and impressions. Christy said, *"I use to be really shy and insecure before I came to this program. When I was in class, I never would raise my hand or ask a question. I use to be afraid of what other kids would think of me. I feel a lot better about myself now."*

Timothy stated, "I think this program has helped me be more confident and more of a leader."

David shared a bit more about himself today. He said, *"I used to be really down at school but this program has helped to raise my self-esteem. Now, when I have a problem, I deal with it and shrug it off."* Timothy said, *"Yah, I think I'm finally starting to make new friends and not get in so many fights. I like the new friends that I've made in the program."*

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 14: MARCH 14, 2002

Session Theme: Your Relationship with Parents

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie,
Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Bars and Fountain Drink

Student Observation

The following vignette, in the form of a classroom observation is reported as follows:

Observer: Laurie Ann Schmidt
Subjects: 12 Success for Sixth Students
Location: Library Conference Room

Chloe and Katelynn came running down the hallway, flushed and anxious to be the first students to reach me. They came on the first bus. Soon, Marie and Timothy followed. Timothy chased after Marie and attempted to toss his sweatshirt on her. Marie laughed and ducked under a nearby table. I asked, *"How was school?"* Chloe and Katelynn both stated, *"Boring!"* I asked them why it was boring. Chloe stated, *"It's always that way...dry, dull and BORING!"* Katelynn added, *"Yah, all the teachers do is lecture and get off the subject. I need help with stuff...like math. I wish the teacher would explain it to me and not just give out an assignment."* I then turned to Timothy and asked, *"How was school?"* Timothy was out of breath and said, *"Great!"* He grinned and began to chase Marie again. The remainder of the students came on the third bus. In unison they asked, *"Can we go down for snack now?"* Ann added, *"I'm starving. I haven't eaten anything yet today."* I asked the tutor to take nine students down for snack. I kept the

remaining three with me. They asked, *“Are we in trouble? What did we do?”* I replied, *“It’s not what you did, but what I don’t want you to do. I don’t want you to run and chase each other down to the cafeteria. Classes are going on, and we don’t want to disturb the other students.”* We then walked quietly to the cafeteria and sat with all twelve students at the table.

Today, the students made it a point to make sure that everyone sat at the same table. At first the table was very quiet. Then students began sharing about their day. One student looked at Timothy and said, *“What happened to your shirt?”* Timothy had attempted to iron his own shirt and had scorched it in several places. Timothy said, *“I tried to iron my shirt this morning. I guess I burned it.”* At this remark, several of the girls around the table began to laugh.

Students cleaned up their area and walked down to the Library Conference Room. I began by stating, *“Today our project will help us to get along better with our parents. Today we will create cards for our parents that share with them how much we care for them.”* Students were informed that they could use markers and crayons and paper. As students began creating cards, they also began to talk and share among themselves. Chloe asked, *“Does anyone have any chap stick? My lips are dry and chapped.”* Another student said, *“Don’t write than on your card. These cards are for our parents. Try to write something they would like to read.”* This student had written the words “cool” and “babe” on their card. Christy made a sign and wore it on her glasses. The sign read, “I am cool.” I asked the class to look at Christy. I said to them, *“People often wear invisible signs that let others know about their self-esteem. What types of things show that you*

have high self-esteem?" Julie answered, "Respecting ourselves, waiting our turn, and listening."

Joey jumped out of his chair and turned on the music. He began to dance back to his seat. Marie said, *"Joey is always so happy and likes to have fun. Sometimes though he hurts other people's feelings by his comments."* She further went on to say, *"Like when he tells me to get a life. Sometimes when he apologizes I think he is just being sarcastic."*

Students then began to share their cards. Several of the cards had surprises on the inside. For instance, one card had pretend money just behind the cover. Emily said, *"I think our parents will like to get cards with surprises in them. I love to get surprised. I hardly ever get anything though."*

Ann appeared to be very quiet and reflective. She said, *"I think I am doing really bad in school and in my life. I wish I had a different life."* At this point Ann began to cry and went back to working on her card. The room became quiet and students appeared to be reflecting. Chloe then said to me, *"You have a pretty smile. I like you. Will you adopt me and let me be your child? I wish you were my parent. I want you to have this parent card and remember me when you see it."*

Timothy then announced that it was time to leave. Julie rushed to be the first one out of the door. Timothy said, *"I am going to beat everyone out the door."* Julie replied, *"No way dude. Girls rule!"* Both students then rushed out the door and the remaining students followed.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 15: MARCH 16, 2002

Session Theme: Post-Curriculum Questionnaire

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilyn, Marie,
Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Bars and Fountain Drink

Today students had the opportunity to complete a post-curriculum questionnaire.

Students responded to the following questions:

1. How does the Success for Sixth program help you?

It helps raise my self-esteem (four students said this)

It makes me see my friends more.

It makes it so I am not hungry.

It helps me meet other people and have fun.

It helps me learn how to do my homework.

It helps me by giving me career choices in life.

It helps me believe in myself.

It helps me get along with others.

It helps me by giving me something to do.

2. Would you recommend this program to a friend? Why or Why not?

Yes, because it is helpful.

Yes, because if they had a bad day it could raise their self-esteem.

Yes, because you get free food, and you get to go on field trips to places.

Yes, because you get free food.

Yes because it is very interesting.

Yes, it is fun.

Yes, I would recommend this program to a friend because it helps you gain confidence and you get to meet cool people.

Yes, I think it is a lot of fun for the kids.

Yes, because it is cool.

Yes, because we have a nice program and a nice teacher.

Yes! It is very fun.

No, because I tried to and they didn't want to listen to me.

3. **Would you like to continue in this program for grades seven and eight? Why or Why not?**

No, because they would act stupid and it wouldn't help the kids that need it.

No, they would be a little weird.

Yes, just fun, fun, for everyone.

Yes, because it is fun!

Yes, only if Laurie is in it.

Yes, if Laurie will still help.

Yes because it will give you college opportunities.

Yes!

Yes, because you could have fun and get involved in things.

Yes, because it lets me do things and get to know people.

Yes! Because it would still be fun.

I'm not sure. I have made some friends.

4. **If you could change something about the program, what would it be?
I wish the program could be held during school.**

Nothing.

I wish the program lasted longer than 1 hour.

No more partner stuff!

Do more independent work and less working in teams.

I would like to make t-shirts.

I would like to have the program everyday after school, not just twice a week.

I would like to see even more activities.

I would like to have more time just to talk with my friends.

5. What do you still need from the Success for Sixth program?

I am getting everything I need from the program.

Nothing now that I have good grades.

I don't need anything else.

I feel like I get what I need in Success for Sixth. They make me feel special and important.

I am getting everything I need from the program.

I need the feeling of family that I get from this group. I need for Laurie to adopt me into her family.

I need help with my homework.

I need more self-esteem.

I need to learn how to do more things around the house.

I need to learn how to make friends at school.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 16: MARCH 22, 2002

Session Theme: Volunteering at Nursing Home

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilyn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Bars and Fountain Drink

Students were transported to the local nursing home. The nursing home is attached to the local hospital. We began the visit by helping the residents to create Easter cards. Next, students were assigned a resident to individually interview and meet with. Some of the students asked to be allowed to work in teams. This request was accommodated. Timothy was assigned to meet with a male resident who had served in the Marines in WW2. Timothy appeared to be very captivated by hearing a live history lesson.

Two other students, Katelynn and Chloe, met with a female resident who had formerly been a schoolteacher. Students shared with the resident what school is like for them. This resident had traveled extensively around the world. Katelynn and Chloe enjoyed discussing various foreign countries and shared their favorite foreign foods.

Ann spent time talking by herself with a female resident. She stated, "*She was really cool. It was great to be able to talk to her. I felt like she really understood what I am going through right now. Can I come back and see her again?*" I told all the students that we could go back for another visit at another time.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 17: MARCH 2, 2002

Session Theme: Keeping Friends

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Cookies and Fountain Drink

Our session began today with students remembering their trip to the nursing home. Ann shared the following comments:

During the trip to the Care Center we had fun by talking to the older people and seeing what their days are like and how much they miss their families. They also talked about the advantages and disadvantages of living there. It seems that the majority of people don't mind living there at all but some are so sick they think they are still in their own houses. When I sat down to talk to them it made me realize how lucky and grateful I am to be me!

Joey shared this statement about his visit to the nursing home.

Parc Hall was a fun place to go to a visit. I hope can go again sometime. It was very fun there and we had doughnuts and coffee. I didn't try the coffee. It should have been good anyhow. We should go there again sometime to do something like that. It is really fun to be able to talk to the elderly.

Students spent the remainder of the time talking about ways to keep their friends. They generated the following ideas to help them keep their friends:

1. Recognize your strengths and weaknesses.
2. Be a good influence on your friends.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 18: MARCH 11, 2002

Session Theme: Resolving Peer Pressure

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Hot Dogs and Fountain Drink

Today the students did not have school. They were on spring break. They came to Success for Sixth eager to have something structured to do. Marie stated, "Wow! I can't believe we get to eat all of this food!" Julie stated, "This is so great. I am grounded all week. This is the most fun thing I've done all day." Following the snack, students returned to the Conference Room.

Students were given four cards to read and observe. Each card contained a series of pictures, words, and descriptions. Students were instructed to pick the card that most represented their personality. Students selected the cards as follows:

8-Orange: Adventure, Skill, Excitement and Charisma-This student prefers learning about subjects that focus on action: athletics, art, drama, music and ceramics.

1-Green: Knowledge, Capability, Solutions, Innovation-This student prefers learning about subjects that focus on ideas: science, math, and architecture.

1-Gold: Responsibility, Security, Tradition and Authority-This student prefers learning about traditional subjects: reading, writing, math, and history.

2-Blue: Feeling, Nurturing, Affection, Peace-This student prefers learning about subjects that focus on people: literature, music, drama and the arts.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 19: MARCH 13, 2002

Session Theme: Emotional Intelligence

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Pizza and Fountain Drink

All students sat around one table for snack today. Several students mentioned various conflicts they were having with their friends. Students asked for advice and input as they shared their day with the group. Following the snack, students returned to the Library Conference room. We planned an activity that would help students raise their emotional intelligence. They had the opportunity to write down difficult situations that they had recently experienced with friends or family members. Julie shared the following story:

Recently, my sister and I got into a fight. It started out with only words. Later, we were punching and hitting each other. I went to my friend's house one day and she wouldn't talk to me. The next day she still wouldn't talk to me. She told me she was moving. I tried as hard as I could to let her talk to me. Finally she did talk to me. She didn't want to tell me because she thought I might hate her for moving away. Later, I found out that I was moving away too.

Students spent the remainder of the hour brainstorming ways to improve their emotional intelligence. They acted out role-plays and made up skits to portray their recent life experiences. Some of the skits were humorous while others were more serious. Students shared that they have difficulty knowing how to talk to teachers and how to relate.

SUCCESS FOR SIXTH SESSION 20: MARCH 22, 2002

Session Theme: Celebrating Our Successes

Students: Christy, Chloe, Katelynn, Emily, Marilynn, Marie, Ann, David, Timothy, Joey, Sally and Julie

Snack: Buffet and Fountain Drink

Tonight was our last session for the Success for Sixth program. Students were asked to draw pictures of how they were feeling. One student drew a Ms. Humpty Dumpty. She said that the “bad self-esteem” picture was how she felt before enrolling in the Success for Sixth program. She said the “good self-esteem picture” is how she feels now. She used words such as “loyal” and “kewl” to describe good self-esteem.

Another student sketched a picture of a guardian angel. This student said, “My cousin was murdered this fall. I made this sketch in memory of him. He was one of the nicest persons in the world.

A third student mentioned that she wanted to one day become a children’s psychologist. This student shared, *“When I was in the second grade, no one could get me to talk in school. This program has helped me to finally be able to talk to everybody. It feels awesome to finally be able to talk!”*

Students then spent time discussing what they had gained from the Success for Sixth program. Joey shared the following, *“Before Success we use to feel as if we were treated badly because of our last name or because of the way we dressed. No it’s like we are o.k. with who we are. Now there are fun things for us to do too.”*

Field Notes—Christy

Christy is a 12-year old Caucasian female who lives on an isolated rural farm. Christy shares that she has one older sister and a mother and father. Christy loves to read. She constantly has a book in her hand. Because Christy lives on a farm, she has few friends nearby to play with. Christy says she often avoids social situations by reading books and being aloof. Her school guidance counselor recommended Christy to the Success for Sixth program. The form her guidance counselor completed states that Christy is very shy and lacks social skills.

Today Christy shared that she is very proud of the fact that she is a Girl Scout and she is also involved in 4-H. Christy is very bright and has excellent grades on her report card. She has a large vocabulary and relates well to adults. Christy wears large glasses that seem to engulf her tiny features. She has long hair that she frequently allows to cover most of her face. Christy makes it a point to always be kind and considerate to others. Christy describes herself as quiet and smart.

Before attending the Success for Sixth program, Christy said she had few friends and few opportunities to interact with her own peers. She lives in an isolated farm with an older sister and parents. She has not participated in many events during the school year before this program. She was able to participate in Success for Sixth because the school had provided transportation to get to the program.

Christy took a long time to make friends within the program. She related much better to adults than to her peers. Frequently, she would initiate conversations with the Success for Sixth instructor, but seldom with her own peers. By the end of the program, Christy had gained confidence to approach her peers. As she mentions in her interview,

she frequently “*watched other people*” without interacting with them herself. Christy went from merely watching to talking and interacting with her peers by the end of the program.

Christy has often stated that students should act friendly when they attended the program. She said, “*I think people should be friendly and helpful when they attend. I think people should be like me and don’t talk about other people behind their backs or call people names.*” At the start of the Success for Sixth program, Christy could not give a definition of what friendship meant. At her interview, she had strong feelings about what being a friend meant.

I think being a friend means that you are nice to other people and you don’t be mean to them. I think being a friend means that you don’t say one thing to one person and act another way to another. I hate people like that. I want people to be real and to say what they mean in a kind way. I have learned about being a friend in this program.

Christy mentioned today that the Success for Sixth program had built her self-esteem. She shared that the program helped her become more “*self-confident*” and that she no longer felt fearful of how the other students view her. Today Christy wrote an add for the Success for Sixth program:

When you join Success for Sixth you will feel like you are important and you won’t feel left out. Everyone gets a chance to do stuff and not just the same old people. We learned about self-image and how to feel better about yourself. I learned that looks don’t count and I was able to build my self-esteem. I liked going to talk about life and stuff like that. We talked about understanding, communication, and other life skills like self-esteem.

Christy mentions that she felt the program had given her self-confidence and the ability to feel good about her accomplishments. Christy talked today about how the program had specifically helped her:

Success for Sixth is a very educational program that helped me get self-confidence. Like before I ever went to the program, I always felt like I couldn't do anything. You know, like I wasn't that good at stuff and all. But, then with the program I felt like I could do things, like important things. Like, I could help elderly people have a better day and I could be nice to kids when other kids were picking on them. I felt like I could make a difference and all.

Today Christy drew a picture of a cat hanging by the toenails on the branch of a tree. The cat is thinking in the picture, "I bet this never happens to you!!" According to Christy:

For a long time I didn't really have any friends except for my cat. Lots of days I felt like I was just barely hanging on at school. I mean the kids can be so mean and all. The Success for Sixth program helped me make some friends and have some fun things to do. I hope that other kids will see my picture and will know that they are going to be o.k. I want to help other kids be nice and learn to get along with each other. I think this is a good program and all.

Like I used to have one friend, but she moved away. We don't really talk to each other any more. We live out on a farm, and there aren't any other kids around.

Field Notes—Chloe

Chloe is a 12-year old biracial female who is currently living in foster care. Chloe shared that she is a Ward of the Court. Chloe moved frequently throughout her childhood. She shares that she was abandoned by her mother at a McDonald's restaurant when she was ten years old. Chloe states that she struggles in school. She frequently loses her assignments or just does not turn them in. Chloe is very thin and often dresses in clothing that is too small or too light weight for the elements. Chloe mentioned that she is often teased and made fun of. She states that her peers often question whether she is black or white. Chloe said she longs for a nice family to adopt her. She frequently asks adults if she can become part of their family. Chloe especially enjoys discussions and chatting with new friends via the Internet. Chloe describes herself as abandoned and lonely.

Today Chloe talked about aspects of the Success for Sixth program that she most enjoyed. She talked about being able to do activities with others.

...it's lots of fun 'cause I get to interact with others and I get to do a whole bunch of activities. We colored big posters to get to know each other. We did booklets...Yah, and then we did newsletters too. We have fun and we communicate and do lots of fun projects

When asked today what she thought would make the program better, Chloe talked about activities. She said, "*Probably more like more like complete group activities just like on occasion.*"

Chloe describes herself as having "*fun all the time*" and having lots of energy. She feels that the program is fun because it gave her an opportunity to be with her friends.

Well, I've learned a lot of things and like I get along with others a lot. And it's really fun just to hang out with them and like I get along with others a lot. And it's really fun just to hang out with them and talk with them and just know how their day was and to be able to help others with their problems.

When Chloe first began attending the Success for Sixth program she stated that she had “*lots of problems.*” Chloe was in foster care. She had recently been placed in the school system and had few friends. Other students had been hesitant to interact with Chloe because they saw her as new and different.

Chloe is biracial and often states that she feels different than her peers. Through the program, Chloe has found a safe format to talk about issues, such as race, that had been troubling her. Through the program, Chloe recently did a report on Black Women in History. She gained a new source of self-confidence. She became eager to talk to others of her heritage. She described working on her report as fun and enjoyable. Chloe stated that she most enjoyed “*the communication between everyone at the table.*” It was at the table that Chloe found a safe forum to voice her loneliness, fear, uncertainty and her most precious gift, her heritage.

Today Chloe refers to being able to interact with others. She talks about how sometimes other children are hesitant to get to know her because she is a foster child and moves frequently. Chloe said that her friends in the Success for Sixth program are like a family to her. Her mother abandoned Chloe when she was ten. Today Chloe shared the story of how this happened and how it related to friendship.

When I was ten years old, my mother gave me some money and sent me into McDonald's to get some food. She said she would wait in the car because she wasn't feeling too good. She had been drinking and taking drugs. When I came out of McDonald's she was gone. I was really scared and didn't know what to do. I had to go live in foster care. When they found my mom she said she didn't want me. My dad didn't want me either. Nobody every wanted me. I never had any friends who wanted me either until I came to Success for Sixth. I wish somebody from here would adopt me so I could stay with them for always. Would you adopt me?

Chloe came from a very at-risk family situation. She frequently was hungry and lacked proper clothing. When Chloe mentions food, she also mentions that the food is free.

I say, well first of all we get free food. And it's really fun just to hang out with them and talk with them and just know how their day was and to be able to help others with their problems.

At the start of the program, Chloe always had to be first in line to get her snack. She sometimes would steal other student's snacks. In addition, she would cry if she felt that another student received more snack than she did. By the end of the Success for Sixth program, Chloe actually allowed another student to get their snack ahead of her. She no longer worried that we would run out of snack before she had received some.

Today Chloe talked quite a bit about experiencing conflict with her peers. She spoke of feeling uneasy when other students swore at her or when they were mean to her. She shared a bit about how it feels to be in the sixth grade and experience conflict with her peers and with her family.

Before my Mom left me at McDonald's and before I was in foster care, my parents fought all the time. My Dad was always yelling and hitting my Mom. I was so scared and felt sick inside. Now, when other kids are swearing at me and being mean and all I feel the same way. I feel like scared and like wonder if they are going to start hitting me and stuff like that. Most of the times in Success for Sixth the kids were nice and it was fun. But sometimes someone who all of the sudden get really mad about something and it made me scared and all.

Chloe often used the term hunger in the program. She talked about being hungry for snack and hungry for friends. She once stated, "*Sometimes I feel hungry for love.*" Often Chloe was found using the internet to talk or chat with boys via e-mail. She also called many adults and asked if they would adopt her. She talked about her feelings of hunger.

The snacks at Success for Sixth were really good. I was always so hungry after school. I wish I had more friends, I mean boyfriends. Sometimes I feel hungry for love. I wish I had a boyfriend or a family to adopt me. I don't think it's fair that other kids get adopted and have families and I don't. I never have enough to eat or enough love. I just want people to love me. Why can't they love me? Why can't I ever have enough of what I need? Would you adopt me? I promise I would be good and I wouldn't always be asking for stuff.

Today Chloe drew a picture of a teenage biracial female who is standing by a table of snack foods. In the background of her picture are the faces of the program instructor and the other eleven students. Chloe drew a question mark above the teenager's head. According to Chloe:

This is a picture of me in the Success for Sixth program. You can see my new friends from the program in the back part of the picture. I use to think that if I didn't hurry up and eat my snack that I wouldn't get any. I was afraid to share and scared that there wouldn't be enough for me. Before the program other kids use to think that I was greedy. Now I can share with other kids and not be so scared that there won't be any for me. The girl in the picture is deciding that it's o.k. to share with her friends and it's cool just to be her. You know, she's o.k. with being different and all. I guess I'm o.k. too.

Field Notes—Katelynn

Katelynn is a 12-year old Caucasian female. It has taken me some time to really understand her needs. She appears to be somewhat outgoing. Today Katelynn described what it meant to party. She defined a party by saying, *“Like hanging out with your friends, having fun, every once in awhile listening to music and dancing.”* Katelynn also disclosed, *“I am often left home to care for my younger brothers and sisters.”* Katelynn shares that she enjoys calling attention to herself through story telling and extraverted behavior. She shares that has a great sense of humor. She often laughs and shares humorous events with her peers.

Katelynn states that she is an average student. She talks about participating in very few extracurricular activities. Katelynn has a mother and father who both work several jobs in order to make ends meet. She is expected to come straight home after school to care for her siblings. Katelynn is full of energy and constantly on the go. She describes herself as liking to party and to be surrounded by friends.

Katelynn began today by talking about the things she liked to do and to participate in the Success for Sixth program. She described activities as being the most helpful, interesting and fun for her. She said, *“The activities that were best for me were students talking to counselors, having fun, doing homework.”* When asked what would make the program even better, Katelynn talked about activities. She said, *“I would like to see us do even more group activities.”*

Katelynn described her experiences in the Success for Sixth program as being *“very fun.”* She felt that the program was very fun and exciting. Katelynn was a student who lacked excitement in her life. She spent many hours babysitting for younger siblings

and working around her house. Before attending the Success for Sixth program, Katelynn had attempted to make excitement of her own. She had been caught shoplifting and ordering items without paying for them. Katelynn had a nickname of the “pizza prankster” at her school. She shared the following story.

One afternoon I was sick and tired of having to baby-sit at home. I was bored and wished that I had something fun to do. Then I had a crazy idea. I called the local pizza restaurant and ordered 12 large pizzas. I told them that I was my neighbor. Then, I hung up and waited to see what would happen. About 30 minutes later, I saw the pizza delivery truck pull up to my neighbor's house and come to the door. The delivery guy had 12 pizzas with him. He rang the doorbell and the neighbor answered. The neighbor kept shaking his head no while the delivery guy kept shaking his head yes. Then, the delivery guy left with all 12 pizzas. I started to get scared. Pretty soon, my phone started ringing. I was too scared to answer it. It turns out that the pizza place had caller I.D. They could tell that the call had been made from my house. They made my Dad buy all 12 pizzas. Then, they told me I could end up in a residential facility for troubled kids if I didn't shape up. I got in lots of trouble at home. I had to eat all 12 pizzas for every meal for many days. I got really sick of pizzas. The cops came to my house and all my friends found out about it. Now, when I walk down the hall, they all whistle and still call me the pizza prankster. If it weren't for my friends at Success for Sixth, I wouldn't have any fun or friends. I am grounded like forever.

Katelynn said she wanted to have time to “hang out” with her friends. She felt that the Success for Sixth program was a great way to make friends and be able to spend time with them. Katelynn often brought up friendship issues while in the program. She shared a story that related to friendship.

There is a girl at our school who is also in the sixth grade. She is super fat and everyone hates her guts. She is sort of bossy and smelly. The other kids play mean tricks on her. I use to too. But, then you said that we had to do three nice things for others. Like right away I thought of this girl. I knew I had to do something nice for her. At lunch, she was sitting all by herself. I went and sat down by her. She thought I was going to be mean to her. I told her that I just wanted to be her friend. Then, do you know what she did? She cried. She said that no one had wanted to be her friend and that I was the first one. When I got to know her, I found out that she wasn't so creepy after all. She was sort of cool. She had a really cool house and lots of video games and stuff. Other kids said mean things to me about being her friend and all, but I just ignored them. I tried to get her to come to Success for Sixth but she wouldn't. I'll keep trying.

Katelynn talked about others in the group who sometimes talked behind her back. She described how it felt to overhear being talked about. She described feelings of powerlessness, anger, and embarrassment.

Like this one time I knew these girls were talking about me. When I walked over by them they suddenly quit talking and changed the subject. I heard one of them say that I was a loser. I felt so mad inside. I knew if I said anything that they'd just pretend I was making it up and all. I felt really dorky and stupid. I hate it when kids treat me like that.

Katelynn spoke of self-esteem often during the program. She felt that the program “raised” her self-esteem by giving her a better opinion of herself.

Success for Sixth raised my self-esteem by teaching me to believe in myself. Life before I went I was always down on myself and I felt like I should have a big letter L on my forehead. But now I think I'm o.k. and I know I can do anything if I work hard enough.

Katelynn also mentioned self-confidence today. She talked about how the Success for Sixth program had given her the belief that she could accomplish almost anything.

Well, like before the program, I thought maybe when I grew up I would be like a secretary or maybe a cosmetologist. I thought that was all I could do. Then, we took career tests and I learned that I could be anything I wanted to be. Like I could be a doctor for kids or a vet or maybe even a manager. No one ever told me anything like that before. It gave me a good feeling and it made me more self-confident. It made me feel like I could do important stuff if I was a good person and if I had high morals and stuff like that. You know, like if I studied and tried hard and turned in my homework.

Katelynn drew a picture of three students having a party at the Success for Sixth site. Two of the people she drew are female and one is male. According to Katelynn:

I drew a picture of friends just hanging out and having fun. Like I think the Success for Sixth program is good and all because it really helped me to make new friends and to be able to hang out with them and not get in trouble like I usually do. I guess the program really taught me to not judge people and not care so much about what they look like and all. Before, I would have worried that people would think I liked a guy if I hung out with a boy. But now it's just like normal and nobody thinks anything. We're all just like really good friends and we like to hang out and do fun stuff in the program.

Field Notes—Emily

Emily is an 11-year old Caucasian female who is an only child. Emily shares she has a mother and a father who both work long hours at low paying jobs. Emily describes herself as very quiet. She said she does very well in school. She frequently is left home alone. She shares that she has a pet dog that accompanies her on frequent walks. Emily speaks of feeling lonely during the summer months. She enjoys being with other children her own age. Emily has both a television and a radio for company in her bedroom. She enjoys walking to the public library and chatting online with her school friends. Band and choir are important activities that Emily enjoys participating in. She also enjoys track and softball. Emily describes herself as smart and shy.

Emily began today by talking about various activities that she experienced in the Success for Sixth program. Emily talked about going to the local Nursing Home and visiting with elderly residents.

We got to go to the Nursing Home and it was really fun. There were old people there with mental problems and disabilities. They were really nice and seemed to want us to visit with them.

Emily expounded upon this visit by further describing the activity of visiting the elderly. She said, “*We just like visited the old people because some of them were kind of lonely. It was fun because you knew they really enjoyed that.*”

Today Emily described the Success for Sixth program as “*fun*” and she felt it was enjoyable. Emily talked about visiting the elderly at a local Nursing Home. She sensed that the residents were lonely and that they enjoyed her company.

We got to go to a Nursing Home and it was really fun. There were old people with mental problems and disabilities. We just like visited the old people because some of them were kind of lonely. It was fun because you knew that they enjoyed that. It was really fun.

Emily is no stranger to loneliness. She is an only child with two working parents. Her parents were older when they had Emily. Therefore, she has no young cousins or family members to play with either. Emily spends many long hours at home alone. She frequently spends the entire summer alone at her house. She is very responsible, and her family trusted her to be alone during the day since she was in the second grade. Emily spends many hours watching television and listening to the radio. She states that she identified with the Nursing Home residents because she often is alone too. She is very creative in thinking of fun games for the Nursing Home residents to participate in.

Emily often refers to the other students in the Success for Sixth program as her friends. In fact, when she describes the program today she uses the word “we” rather than “I”. She said, “*We got food after school. We visited the old people.*” Emily said that the program is a way for her to get friends. She is an only child and said she often wishes she had more friends. She shares that before she joined the Success for Sixth program that she often felt “*kind of lonely*” and that she didn’t like to feel that way.

Sometimes I was sort of, you know, lonely before I joined the Success for Sixth program. It was like everybody else had friends and all and I didn’t. I had my dog Lucky though. I would take my dog for a walk and see other kids playing and stuff. But, I just pretended I didn’t see them or I jogged or something to look busy and all. Now I feel like I have my own friends and I don’t have to pretend all the time anymore.

Emily began today by talking about food. She used food to describe what she enjoys at the Success for Sixth program. She said, “*We get food after school.*” She then went on to talk about food by saying that more food would make the program even better. According to Emily, “*More food pretzels, cheese, fast food; I don’t know you’re just hungry and want to eat.*”

It became apparent today that food might represent more to Emily than just snacks. For Emily, food means an opportunity to not feel “*kind of lonely.*” Through food, she seems to find an opportunity to “*get my self-esteem up sometimes.*” Emily is an only child. She comes home after school to an empty house. She frequently has to eat her meals alone. Success for Sixth provided Emily with a family type atmosphere where she could talk and hang out with others.

Today Emily drew a picture of the nine females in the Success for Sixth program. She also included pictures of an ice cream cone, rainbow, snacks, flowers and sunshine.

According to Emily:

I had a great time in the Success for Sixth program. I drew a picture of all the girls at Success for Sixth. We all are very good friends now. We love to go outside and run around and all. I think that all the girls in the program are my best friends. We get to do so many fun things together. Like we get to eat ice cream and snacks. We also love to be outside and just hang out. My grades have even gotten better with the program. It's cool to have friends and to have more fun stuff to do than just being at home alone and all.

Field Notes—Marilynn

Marilynn is a 12-year old Caucasian female who is an only child. Marilynn shares that she lives with her single parent mother. Marilynn's mother works long shifts at her job. Thus, Marilynn is often left at home alone and unsupervised. Athletics come very easy for Marilynn. Marilynn describes herself as very active and constantly on the go. Marilynn says she enjoys chasing other students in the program and energizing the group by grabbing other student's books or jackets.

I've noticed that Marilynn frequently moves her legs and feet even while sitting. She states that she enjoys talking with others and always wants to be at the table with the most students. Marilynn says she is frequently told by her teachers that she is not working up to her full potential in school. Marilynn describes herself as athletic and strong.

Marilynn began today by describing the Success for Sixth program as a place where she is able to do activities. She said, "*It is interesting because we get to stop doing what we normally do after school and go to Success for Sixth.*" When talking about peer pressure, Marilynn describes it as an activity that people make her do. "*Peer pressure is things that people make you do.*" She talks about learning to not let others "*do that to you*" or force you into activities that you don't want to participate in through the Success for Sixth program.

Marilynn talked today about the activities in the Success for Sixth program. She said that she is able to do things that she normally wouldn't be able to. She said, "*Like we get to work on newsletters. We get to take that thing, that test, to tell us how we learn best.*"

Marilynn now describes the Success for Sixth program as being really fun. When she talks to others about the program she tells them how much fun they could be having in the program. *“It was fun and if they weren’t already going that they should belong to it.”* Marilynn brings many visitors to the Success for Sixth program. Marilynn states that the program is fun because it had allowed her to belong. Although Marilynn had been very athletic, she had not always excelled in academics. Her teachers have often told her that she is not working up to her potential. She has a hard time concentrating and often paces rather than sitting down at the tables for Success for Sixth.

Marilynn enjoys momentum and is always on the go. Marilynn always wants to know what fun things we have planned for the day at Success for Sixth. She races off the school bus to be the first to know what the program meeting holds for that particular day.

Today Marilynn shared how before the program she had friends who pressured her into doing things that she shouldn’t. She shared that her new friends from the Success for Sixth program helped her learn to stand up for herself. She shared how her old friends use to encourage her to get in trouble.

Like before I joined the program, like kids use to talk me into doing stupid junk. I’d get in trouble and they’d just sort of laugh and all. I wanted friends so badly that I almost didn’t care if I got in trouble. I mean, nobody wants to be all dorky and be by themselves and all. But like anyways, when I joined the Success for Sixth program, I learned about peer pressure and all. I mean I learned not to let others do that to me, pressure me into being bad and all. I think the Success for Sixth program helped me get good friends who aren’t going to get me into trouble.

Marilynn stated that the Success for Sixth program could be even better with greater quantities of food. When asked what types of food she would like, Marilynn began to list her favorites. *“I would like nachos and French fries, cheese balls and pizza.”* She also said that she would like bigger quantities of food served to her. She stated that

she wished the program met for five days a week instead of two. Marilynn has come to every single session of the Success for Sixth program. She was very quiet when she first began to attend. She would never assert herself or ask for specific requests. Now, upon completion of the program, Marilynn is able to voice her own opinions. She feels confident to ask for what she wants.

Marilynn shared today that the Success for Sixth program is helpful because it provides "*help with peer pressure.*" Marilynn explained in her own words that peer pressure could be defined as "*things that people make you do.*" She shared that she learned in the Success for Sixth program how to stand up for herself and how to avoid letting others bully her into inappropriate activities.

I learned that you shouldn't let others do that to you, you know, make you do stuff you shouldn't. In Success for Sixth you learn how to be more mature, how to get along with other people that you never thought you could. You learn to accept yourself. You learn that it is o.k. to be different and you don't have to look like a super model, you should be happy with yourself. And, don't try to change for somebody else. A lot of kids in 6th grade try to get other kids to do stuff Which I think people who do that are not true friends.

Marilynn drew a picture and her mother surrounded by 5 red hearts. She also drew scenes with pizza, soda, computers and a large yellow bus. According to Marilynn:

I drew a picture of me and my Mom. I learned how to be friends with my Mom inn the Success for Sixth program. I drew the good snacks that we have in the program. I also drew a computer and a bus. The Success for Sixth program is super fun and gives kids stuff to do instead of just being at home all lonely and all.

Field Notes—Marie

Marie is a 12-year old Caucasian female who is very upbeat and has a bubbly personality. Marie says she constantly practices cheers for the group. She says she dreams of one day becoming a high school cheerleader. Marie has a mother and father and two younger siblings. She wears her hair in bouncy pigtails. Marie earns excellent grades in school. She is very outgoing and personable. Other students often want to sit with and talk to Marie. She is very engaging and energetic. Marie shares that she hopes to one day become a cosmetologist or a physician. Marie describes herself as pretty and peppy.

Marie began today by talking about various activities that she enjoys in the Success for Sixth program.

We went to the Nursing Home and it was super fun. I liked to look at the older people's faces when they saw we were coming. They were like, "Oh, kids are finally coming here." They never get to see them. And, then I liked on the computers when we did the career things about what we would be good at. I liked taking that.

Marie went on to talk about other activities associated with the program.

You get to go to camp. The funnest part of camp is the dances. I think we should have two dances. The classes were lots of fun. Some were a little boring, because they didn't have any hands on stuff. But, you could like sit through those and just talk. I mean you could just whisper, you know what I mean?... We played truth or dare and one of my friends had to be a ballerina in the dark. We just liked talked all night long. Like it was super fun to just talk with your friends.

Marie described the Success for Sixth program as being really fun. She felt that everyone should participate in Success for Sixth, not just the 12 who attended. Marie has often stated that she hopes to be a cheerleader in high school. She feels that being young should be upbeat and fun. She frequently wears her hair in bouncy ponytails and wears sporty and bright colored clothing. She often makes up cheers about the other students.

During free time, Marie asks the other students to invent cheers with her. She thought it was fun to look at the Nursing Home resident's faces as she visited with them. Marie is very caring and very encouraging. She often asks to be able to play the game truth or dare.

Marie stated today that she thinks dances are fun. In many ways, Marie is dancing through the sixth grade. She maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average. She attended several extracurricular school events. She made it a point to know others. She appears to be very extroverted. Marie acts like a magnet for the program. Students came to the program and stay with the program because Marie invites them. Marie is very popular with both the students and the teachers. She talks about the Success for Sixth program constantly. Many of the students see Marie as the program's mascot of fun!

Marie began today by stating how much she "loved to just hang out" with her friends. Marie enjoyed talking individually to each friend of hers in the Success for Sixth program. Today she shared how much her friends mean to her.

My friends are totally great. I mean just being able to talk is cool. Like just being able to get your feelings out there. People didn't like make comments about it like mean or rude comments. And, you get a bunch of new friends there. I just had a bunch of my own friends at the Success for Sixth program.

Marie talked about wanting to be a good friend for new students who joined the program. She frequently is the first student to introduce herself to newcomers in the group. Marie encourages her friends to wear identical clothing and jewelry so they could be identified as a friendship group. Marie often asks to be able to make friendship bracelets to share with her friends.

Marie talked about the importance of food in the program. She described the snacks as being "pretty good". Marie started the program out feeling somewhat self-

conscious. She was several inches taller than the other girls. Although she was an excellent student, she frequently was cautioned to stop talking and socializing at school. She often worried that she was overweight or too big. However, she appeared to be very slender. Marie sometimes would play with her snack and hold her snack as she talked. Yet, she often did not actually eat her snack. It often was thrown into the garbage.

Marie talked about the pressures of being in school with other mean and cruel students. She often skipped lunch at school to avoid being made fun of. She contrasted this to the Success for Sixth program where students were more caring. She said, "*During snack, people didn't make like mean or rude comments. And, you get to have a bunch of friends there. And they didn't ever say anything mean to you.*"

Marie felt that the entire group had higher self-esteem as a result of attending the Success for Sixth program.

Success for Sixth is like so totally cool. I mean, everyone, all of us had our self-esteem raised by the program. I always tell my friends that they are so much more cool and together since attending the Success for Sixth program. We now tell younger kids that they just have to try the program. It can really raise people's self-esteem and all.

Marie drew a picture of herself before and after the Success for Sixth program.

Marie shows herself as having bad self-esteem before the program. She uses words such as brat, freak, and down hearted to describe how she felt before the Success for Sixth program. She describes herself as nice, sporty, and kewl, after experiencing the Success for Sixth program. According to Marie:

I love the Success for Sixth program. I mean it is so cool. My picture shows how I use to be before the program. I was like so down hearted and depressed and all. I use to shop so I would feel better about myself. I thought if I had cool stuff that I would be o.k. But it didn't work. On my picture it shows me after the program. I now feel pretty good about myself. You know, not so down and all. The Success for Sixth program showed me that it's not about having stuff. It's more about

being stuff. You know, it's more about being kind and respectful and listening and stuff like that. My picture is just really fun. It is a funny way to show what it was like for me to be in the Success for Sixth program.

I had to think a bit about Humpty Dumpty. He was broken into pieces and no one could put him back together again. Had Marie been in pieces before the Success for Sixth program? Had the program helped her to reconnect and feel whole again?

Field Notes—Ann

Ann is a 12-year old Caucasian female who is an only child. Ann says she lives with her single parent mother. Ann talks about being considerably taller and more physically mature than her peers. She describes herself as having few female friends. However, Ann shares that many older boys attempt to spend time with her outside of school. Ann's shares that her mother is frequently absent due to long hours of employment. Ann has moved around frequently throughout her childhood. She and her mother are currently staying with another family. Ann describes herself as grown up and independent.

Ann talked today about enjoying activities in the Success for Sixth program such as meeting new friends and learning friendship skills. She also talked about the social activities of the Success for Sixth program.

It's like really cool because you get to go to the college and stuff and make new friends. You get to have a lot of fun and stuff and social activities and probably stuff like that.

When asked what in the program had been the most fun for her, Ann mentioned activities. She said, *"I thing that the social activities and probably stuff like that have been most fun"*. She further described social activities.

Like talking and conversation and stuff like that you know. It means talking to each other and getting to know others. It means having a chance to just hang with my friends and get to know them better.

Ann described the program by saying, *"I think it is pretty fun."* She went on to talk about how she enjoyed leaving her own school and coming out to the college. She said that she thought it was *"cool"* to be able to meet outside of her school. Ann had never been considered cool at her school. She was an only child and was very awkward in social

settings. She had difficulty making and keeping friends. She appeared to be far more advanced physically than her peers. She commented that boys often teased her and taunted her as she walked down the hall. High School boys had frequently asked Ann out on dates or attempted to call her. According to Ann, *“They don’t really like me or anything. They just think that I would be fun to do stuff with.”*

Ann also mentioned that during her normal school day she had very little time to socialize with her peers. Ann frequently avoided going to lunch at school because she thought she was too fat. She often was tired and moody at our Success for Sixth meetings. Ann’s mother worried that other students might take advantage of Ann due to her mature physical development. Ann’s mother stated that, *“Even though she has the body of a 16 year old, she had the heart and emotions of a 12 year old.”* For Ann, the Success for Sixth program provided a safe and fun environment where she did not have to worry about being taken advantage of.

Today Ann stated that she was able to make new friends by coming to the Success for Sixth program. She said she had friends before the program, but she never had the opportunity to do very many activities with them. She said that at her school, students had very little time to talk with their friends.

We hardly have any time to just talk to our friends. Well, just like at lunch and in the halls and in study hall sometimes. I wish that Success for Sixth could also be held in the summer so that I could see my friends more.

Ann said that friends were very important to her. She said that her friends in the Success for Sixth program helped her deal with difficult days when she felt overwhelmed. She said, *“Like they were there for me and they helped me realize that I was going to be o.k.”*

Ann discussed in her interview the importance of eating at the college. She associated eating at the college with making new friends. She said, *“It’s like really cool because you get to go to the college and eat stuff and make new friends.”*

Ann came to the Success for Sixth program very shy and nervous. She had frequently been picked on at school. Other students had teased her because she had poor coordination and poor grades in school. For Ann, the Success for Sixth program helped her achieve a new identity. She was no longer judged by what she couldn’t do. She had the opportunity to make friends by merely eating and talking. She was not forced to compete athletically or academically.

Ann drew a picture of a tall female girl who is standing amidst a computer, book, pizza, basketball and pizza. According to Ann:

Ummm...I drew a picture of me at the Success for Sixth program. I am standing by all the things that I like about coming her. I guess I really like the snacks the best. I also love being able to play on the computers because my Mom and I don’t have one. People are always telling me that I should play basketball because I am tall and all. But, I like to read and to spend my time doing more grown up stuff.

Field Notes—David

David is a 12-year old Caucasian male who lives with his single parent father and three younger siblings in poverty conditions. David shares that he is often hungry and lacks appropriate clothing for the elements. Social workers have become involved with David's family situation. His guidance counselor suggested that David join the program to meet friends and to have a fresh start. David shares that he has a reputation for getting into fights with his peers. He says he has a short temper and little patience for criticism and thoughtless comments from other students.

He talks about his frequent fighting and conflicts with other students his age. David describes himself as tough and easily bored. David began today by talking about activities that he liked to participate in the Success for Sixth program. He said, *"It's better than just going home and doing my homework after school. And, I don't know. It's a place where I can see all my friends."*

David further described his favorite activities in the program.

It was when we got to make those posters. And, we got to let other people know about us as well. The most helpful thing we did and the most fun was letting other people know what we like to do. We got to show everyone else what we like to do.

David was new to the school when he joined our Success for Sixth program. His parents had recently been divorced. David frequently came to the program wearing mismatched or dirty clothing. He was often hungry. David loved to read by himself. When he attempted to have fun with others it frequently backfired. David often got into trouble over things he did with his peers. He was left home alone and unsupervised for many hours at a time. He said once that he felt he had a *"bad reputation"* at his old

school. He wanted to start fresh at this new school. He hoped the Success for Sixth program would be the fresh start that he needed at this time of his life.

David defined the program as being very fun. He then went on to clarify by adding, *“It’s very fun except for some of the people aren’t very nice.”* David felt that other students often blamed him for times when their fun got out of hand. David felt that others just assumed he was at fault because of his background and reputation. Before coming to the Success for Sixth program, David would not look adults in the eye. Through his participation in the program, David learned to talk more easily with adults. He grew brave enough to stand up for himself and let teachers know when he was not at fault.

David defined the Success for Sixth program by saying, *“It’s a place where I can see all my friends.”* David shared that friends were very important to him. He said that his friends in the program were *“cool”*. He felt that the program let his friends know more about him. David had created a poster while in the program that let others know his likes and dislikes. On David’s poster, he had written that friends were a big part of the Success for Sixth program. David talked about the importance of his friends in the program.

My friends say that I’m funny and that I’m smart. I think that maybe I am both of these things. It’s friends that help you make it through the tough times. Like kids at school pick on me and call me fat. My friends in the program stand up for me and tell them to “shut up” and that sort of thing.

David spoke today of conflict with his peers. He described Success for Sixth by saying, *“It’s very fun except for some of the people aren’t very nice.”* David went on to explain his statement.

Some of the kids aren’t very nice all the time. They just make fun of stuff you say and they tell you to shut up all the time. It makes me angry. And, it makes me kind of sad because they won’t listen to what I have to say.

David then shared that he had tried confronting his peers on their behavior. He felt that he was powerless to change their actions. He said, *"I've tried confronting them. But they just go at it again and tell me to shut up."* He seemed very reflective and thoughtful as he talked about conflict with peers. He concluded by saying, *"I guess not everyone realizes how mean they are at the time. Maybe they feel bad about it later."*

David shared that sometimes he feels *"bad about himself"* when other students are mean to him. He said, *"Sometimes the other kids are mean and I feel bad about myself. I feel sorta worthless."* David then went on to share how sometimes even confronts his peers. However, he feels this doesn't help.

There are some kids that are just going to be mean. They will make fun of stuff and tell you to shut-up all the time. It's easy to feel bad about yourself when you hang out with them. Success for Sixth taught me to have better self-esteem. I learned to just blow off what they said and not really think about it too much. Success for Sixth is a place where I can see all my friends. It's cool. I liked it when I got to let other people know about me and they didn't make me feel bad. I mean they didn't like make fun of my stuff or tell me anything bad.

David drew a picture of students in the Success for Sixth program playing outside. A large spiral sun is shining in the background. An ice cream cone is also floating through the air. A star is placed in each corner of the picture. According to David:

Yah, like I drew a picture of us hanging around outside in the afternoon. We are all just chilling and soaking up the rays and that sort of stuff. No one is fighting or anything. They're all just having fun and hanging out. My picture shows an ice cream cone because like all the kids are wishing they had one to eat. The stars in the picture mean that all the kids are special and important and part of the group. When I first came to the program I didn't want to be here. Like they made me come and all. But I really like it and I think it is good for kids to have something to do other than just getting into trouble and all.

Field Notes—Timothy

Timothy is an 11-year old Caucasian male who lives with his father and two younger siblings. Timothy shares that his parents have recently divorced. Timothy recently moved in with his father following conflict in his mother's home. Timothy says he is angry about moving to Iowa and having to make new friends at school. Timothy shares that he struggles in school. However, he says he enjoys reading. According to Timothy, he frequently reads books about sports, hunting and fishing. He enjoys wearing a camouflage jacket and hiking boots. Timothy says he also enjoys creating wildlife pictures with colored pencils.

Timothy describes himself as artistic and strong. Timothy talked today about activities he enjoys in the Success for Sixth program. He said, "*Like I like talking with kids and counselors and stuff.*" Timothy discusses further the activity of listening to others. He says that he can tell whether others are listening to him by what they do. Timothy was able to describe a counselor who does not listen.

...They kind of act like they're listening, but you can tell they're not...Sometimes they are talking on their phone during the middle of the time and they aren't listening.

Timothy talks about the Learning Style Analysis test that he was able to take. He describes this test as being very helpful to him. He said, "*I guess that one test that we had to take about ourselves. It was that one about our learning styles. Yah. That was the one.*" Timothy feels that the program could be even better by allowing students to play more games and activities. He said, "*And, yah, like being able to play more games too. I would like to play games and do more activities as a whole group and not just in small groups.*"

Timothy began today by stating that the Success for Sixth program is fun.

Timothy has little fun in his life. His parents are divorced. His mother lives several states away. Timothy lives in a dilapidated farmhouse with two younger siblings. He feels that no one really listens to him. When talking about the Success for Sixth program he stated, *“It’s fun and like the food is really good. And like, some of the counselors they really don’t listen.”* Timothy also feels that his mother has not listened to him when she forced him to move to Iowa to live with his father. He said, *“My Mom felt she couldn’t handle me, so she sent me to live with my Dad.”* He went on to say, *“She wouldn’t listen to me. She just went ahead and sent me.”*

Timothy drew a picture of several stick figure people standing outside on the grass. His picture includes a large computer screen plugged into an outlet. In addition, he included a picture of a piece of pizza, soda, chocolate, nachos, a lemon drop, and a sucker. According to Timothy:

I drew a picture that shows what it was like to be in the Success for Sixth program. I drew lots of kids being able to play outside and have fun and all. The kids in the picture are getting ready to play some sports I think. They just got done doing some junk on the computers. They had lots of snacks, and there was enough for all the kids. They are glad to be in the program and they like being in Iowa. Iowa is a good place for them because they can do lots of stuff and have fun and all.

Field Notes—Joey

Joey is a bright and energetic 12-year old Caucasian male student. Joey shares that he enjoys sports and spending time with his friends. Joey shares that he lives with his parents and two younger sisters. Joey stated that he especially enjoys being able to spend time outdoors with his friends. He enjoys watching movies and mimicking funny lines from television shows. He feels that he is animated and has a good sense of humor. Joey stated that sometimes his teachers have to remind him to stay on task and to control his urge to talk constantly with those nearby. Joey is usually surrounded by several of his peers. Joey describes himself as funny and fun to be with.

Joey mentions the activities that he likes to participate in the Success for Sixth program. Joey shares that he enjoys doing activities with his friends in the program. He says, *“I like it when we get to talk and when we get to do activities with our friends.”* He also talks about the activity aspect of the Success for Sixth program. He shares, *“I like the fun stuff that we do in Success for Sixth but it might be better if we went outside.”*

Joey described the program as being really fun. He went on to say that, *“We have good times.”*

Joey is an avid sportsman. He enjoys playing outside, hunting and fishing. His mother and stepfather are raising him. Joey’s stepfather does not enjoy doing anything outside. He and Joey have a difficult time of relating to each other. Joey has a difficult time of relating to others in the group. He thinks that some of the activities are unnecessary.

Sometimes we do stuff that I think is a little bit dumb. Like that booklet about yourself, about do you respect yourself and stuff like that. I didn’t really think that was something that I needed. That was probably my worst favorite thing. I like the fun stuff that we do at Success for Sixth but it might be better if we went outside.

Joey said the Success for Sixth program is helpful because it gives him a chance to interact with his friends. He said, "*I like it when we get to talk and when we get to do activities with our friends.*" Joey also said that not everyone who attends the program is his friend.

Some students who attend can be like jerks. Like someone who either makes fun of you or talks to you and then as soon as you reply then they just run around and walk away and don't let you finish what you are say.

Joey said he had experienced difficult friendships before the program. Some of his friends had done things to get him in trouble at his school. He said he had found a few good friends in the Success for Sixth program.

Joey mentioned conflict with his peers. He described some of his peers as "*jerks*" and felt they often made fun of him or ignored him. He shared what it was like to be in conflict with his peers.

Most of the times in Success for Sixth are pretty good and all. But sometimes like other students attending can be jerks. Like someone either makes fun of you or talks to you and then as soon as you reply they just turn around and walk away and don't let you finish what you are saying.

Joey expressed anger and frustration over conflict with his peers. He said, "*They can be so dumb sometimes. They make me so mad. Why can't they just get over it?*"

Joey described other students who succumb to peer pressure as "*jerks*" and felt these students were acting irresponsibly. He described these individuals as "*someone who either makes fun of you or makes you do stuff you shouldn't.*" He went on to talk about students he knew who were experiencing peer pressure.

There are some people that feel sad because they are having peer pressure. They get made fun of and they should really go to some group stuff like Success for Sixth because they do projects and they have fun. So they should try it out and get to have some fun with other people and maybe meet some people they have never been friends with before and become their friends,

Joey drew a picture of several stick figure students standing in a line. He included a chocolate chip cookie, a plate of pizza, an ice cream cone, a pan of popcorn, and a computer plugged into the wall. The computer screen states, "Pugs Rule!!!" According to

Joey:

I drew a funny picture of me and my friends in the Success for Sixth program. We're all just hanging out and talking and sharing jokes and stuff like that. One of our jokes is "Pugs Rule!!" That means that kids in the Success for Sixth program are the coolest and that we have a good time just joking around and having fun and all. The word "pug" doesn't really mean anything. We just use it as a name to chat with on the chat lines. It's just funny and cool and all.

Field Notes—Sally

Sally is a 12-year old Caucasian female who lives with her mother and father in the country. Sally says she has three older siblings. She talks about how she enjoys wildlife and art. She talks quite a bit about her involvement with the local County Fair. Sally says she is proud of her ability to be able to create prize winning arts and crafts projects. She said that she enjoys competing by herself. However, Sally is quick to mention that she dislikes competing on teams. She describes herself as quiet and shy.

Sally states she enjoys talking one on one with her peers. She has beautiful expressive eyes that seem to reflect the colors around her. Sally feels she is very conscientious and well behaved. She states that she always earns excellent grades for citizenship and behavior at school. Sally describes herself as artistic and thoughtful. Sally began her interview by talking about the various activities that she enjoyed in the Success for Sixth program.

Specifically, she shares about some of the activity projects she completed in the Success for Sixth program. She shares, *“The projects we did were fun. And, even though I ‘m not too smart with computers, these are pretty easy. And, I liked the writing assignments.”* For Sally, creating the self-esteem poster was an important activity that she worked on.

...when we were doing the posters, which I didn't get done all the way. It was pretty fun because we got to color. I'm not into coloring, but that was pretty fun. And so were our computers.

She described her frustration when other students kept her from completing an activity.

Well, even though it was supposed to help us, like partnership and everything, some of the activities that we did the kids didn't listen to that much and it wasn't too fun.

Sally mentioned today that the program has been fun for her. Sally typically does not have fun at school events. Typically, her peers pick on Sally. She often talked about feeling lonely and isolated and different from her peers. She appeared to relate better to adults than to her peers. Sally stated the following about her experiences in the program.

It's been fun but there might have been a couple of times that some people weren't nice to me. The counselors have been really helpful to me in this. The projects we did were fun. And, even though I'm not too smart with computers, these are pretty easy. And, I liked the writing assignments.

Sally often expresses herself eloquently through writing. Her peers see and hear a different side of her at the Success for Sixth program. Sally appears to gain more confidence through sharing her writings with the group. She describes the writing projects as fun.

Sally also mentions that a self-esteem poster collage that she had created was fun. She said, *"It was pretty fun because we got to color."* As Sally colored her poster, she began to form new friendships and relationships with others in the group. By coloring, Sally's focus went off of herself and onto her drawing. This seemed to ease her awkwardness and give her a sense of control in the conversations. Just like her artwork, Sally developed into a lovely collage of new experiences, hopes, friendships and dreams.

Sally talked today about being able to *"actually interact with each other"* in the Success for Sixth program. She said that even students who were her enemies at school treated her nicely in the program.

Even though some people might be your enemies, they are nice to you there. I had that happen to me. There were kids who picked on me and called me names. Some kids called me fat and stupid and stuff like that. It made me so mad and sad inside. Anyways, when they came to Success they weren't mean to me there.

Sally said that there had been a few students in the program who “weren’t nice to me” and who picked on her. However Sally felt that this was an improvement over what she dealt with in the school setting.

Sally speaks frequently of conflict with her peers. She describes one particularly painful incident that she had with her peers. She talked about the emotions of anger, fear, and frustration.

One time I got really tired of these girls picking on me. I don't know what got into me but I just sort of lost it. I know I shouldn't have, but I called one of them a bad name. I called her a dancing slut. I mean she thinks she's so cool and all because she's on the dance team. Her Mom got really mad at me and said she'd call the cops the next time I harassed her daughter. I was so mad and scared at her. She calls me names all the time. This was the only time I called her one. I just couldn't take it anymore. I get really sick of her always being so mean to me.

Sally talked about peer pressure during her interview. She said that the Success for Sixth program helped her deal with peer pressure.

There's been some times when other kids have sorta forced me to do stuff to be cool and all, you know. Anyways, when I'm at Success for Sixth, it teaches me not to let other kids talk me into dumb junk. I think I learned not to always do what other kids tell me. Now, I wish I could go to Success for Sixth like every day. I like the program because it helped me learn how to deal with my peers.

Sally drew a picture of several girls standing outside on the grass. She included a rainbow, sun, flowers, pencil, book, and an A+ on her drawing. According to Sally:

I drew a picture of some of us kids playing together outside. We are getting ready to play my favorite sport, which is soccer. Everyone is smiling because everyone gets a chance to play and everyone is good at soccer like me. I also drew an A+ because I learned how to be a good friend and how to get along with all sorts of new kids in the program. In my picture, even the sun is smiling and is wearing shades. The Success for Sixth program brightened up my life and now I smile all the time because I have cool friends and fun stuff to do you know.

Field Notes—Julie

Julie is a 12-year old Caucasian female who lives in a blended family. Julie says her father works several jobs to support their family. She talks about her stepmother who is a full time college student. Julie shares that she has several siblings. Her youngest sibling suffers from a disease that leaves him disabled. Julie says she spends much of her free time caring for her younger sibling. Julie shares that she enjoys swimming, bike riding and games.

Julie often worries that she will arrive home late from the program and be grounded by her parents. Julie describes herself as being able to laugh and cry easily. She says she is very sensitive and thoughtful. Julie talks about how she enjoys helping others. She states that she especially enjoys being able to come to the Success for Sixth program after school. She shares that sometimes she feels overwhelmed trying to care for her disabled brother. Julie talked about wishing that she had more free time to spend with her friends. Julie describes herself as caring and friendly.

Julie's began today by describing various activities that she has been involved with in the Success for Sixth program. According to Julie, "*We have snacks. And, then we do activities in a group. Like we did newsletters. It was fun.*" Julie felt that the program was a good place to "*learn new stuff.*" She said she learned how to behave while in the program through the various activities she participated in.

Julie describes the Success for Sixth program as a fun place to go. She said that she "*liked coming here after school because it gives me time to hang out with my friends.*" Julie's life lacks time for friendships. Julie lives in a blended family. Her stepmother is a full time college student. Her father is working three jobs trying to

support the family. Julie has several siblings. Her youngest stepbrother has severe birth defects that required much of Julie's time after school babysitting and caring for him. Julie often acts older than her peers. She has a difficult time relaxing and having fun with others. She constantly watches the clock and is nervous about being late going home after the program. If she is late she will be grounded. If she is grounded, she can not come back to the program. She thinks the program would be even more fun if it could meet for a longer period of time. She also thinks the program would be more fun if it met daily instead of twice per week.

Julie shares that the Success for Sixth program provides her with an opportunity to "hang out" with her friends. When she speaks of the program she uses the word "we" frequently.

We have good times you know. We get to hang out together and to meet new people. It's a good place to learn new things and to try new things with your friends. We learn how to be friends and how to meet new people. It is super fun to make new friends with people that you didn't know that well before.

Julie mentioned food today. She talked about having snacks while also having time to hang out with her friends. Julie began the program by being extremely boisterous and active. Frequently, she has picked on others during the snack time. We have worked on this issue with Julie, trying to encourage her to say kind words to her peers. Julie stated during today that snack time at Success for Sixth had taught her "how to behave." She now eats snack with the others and does not harass them or give them angry comments. Julie stated today that the program had been a "good place to learn new stuff." Julie also said that the Success for Sixth program gave her a chance to "socialize" with her friends. Julie frequently finds little time to socialize with friends outside of the

Success for Sixth program. Her days are filled with schooling, babysitting, and helping around the house with cooking and cleaning.

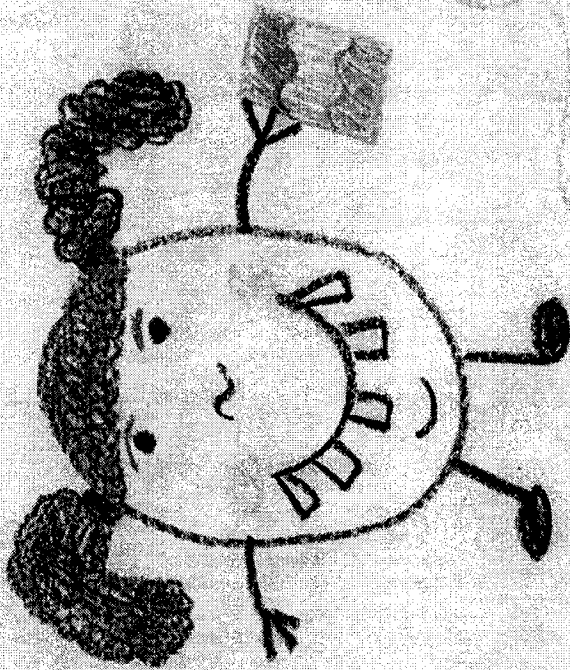
In Success for Sixth I had a chance to socialize and just spend time with my friends and all. I felt like Success was preparing me for my future because it gave me a chance to let others know who I was. I never felt left out when I was in the Success for Sixth program. I felt like I had the chance to talk and be with my friends. I wish the program was longer.

Julie drew a picture of two girls listening to music. In the background of her picture is a chocolate chip cookie, an orange ice cream cone, a plate of nachos, and a laptop computer that is plugged into an outlet. According to Julie:

I drew a picture of how fun it is to hang out in the Success for Sixth program with my friends. We have lots of fun and we get to eat snacks and play fun games and all. The girls in my picture are happy and they aren't worried about having to baby-sit or anything. It's like they can forget about all the junk that worries them when they come to Success. My picture is happy because I feel happy and good when I'm at the Success for Sixth program.

APPENDIX D
Student Drawings

Bad Self Esteem



Brat

Freak

Down -

Hearted -

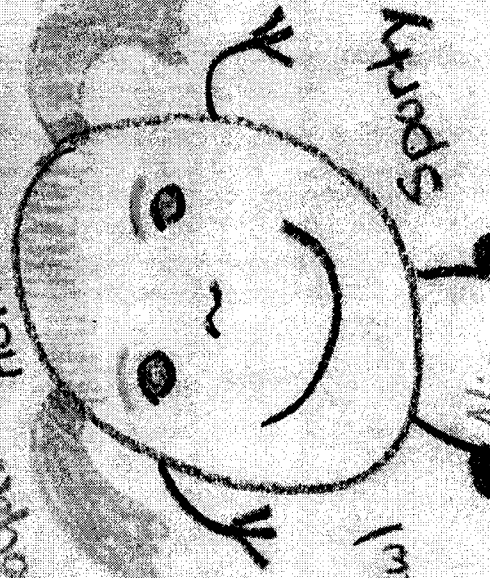
Back -

Teethed

-oser

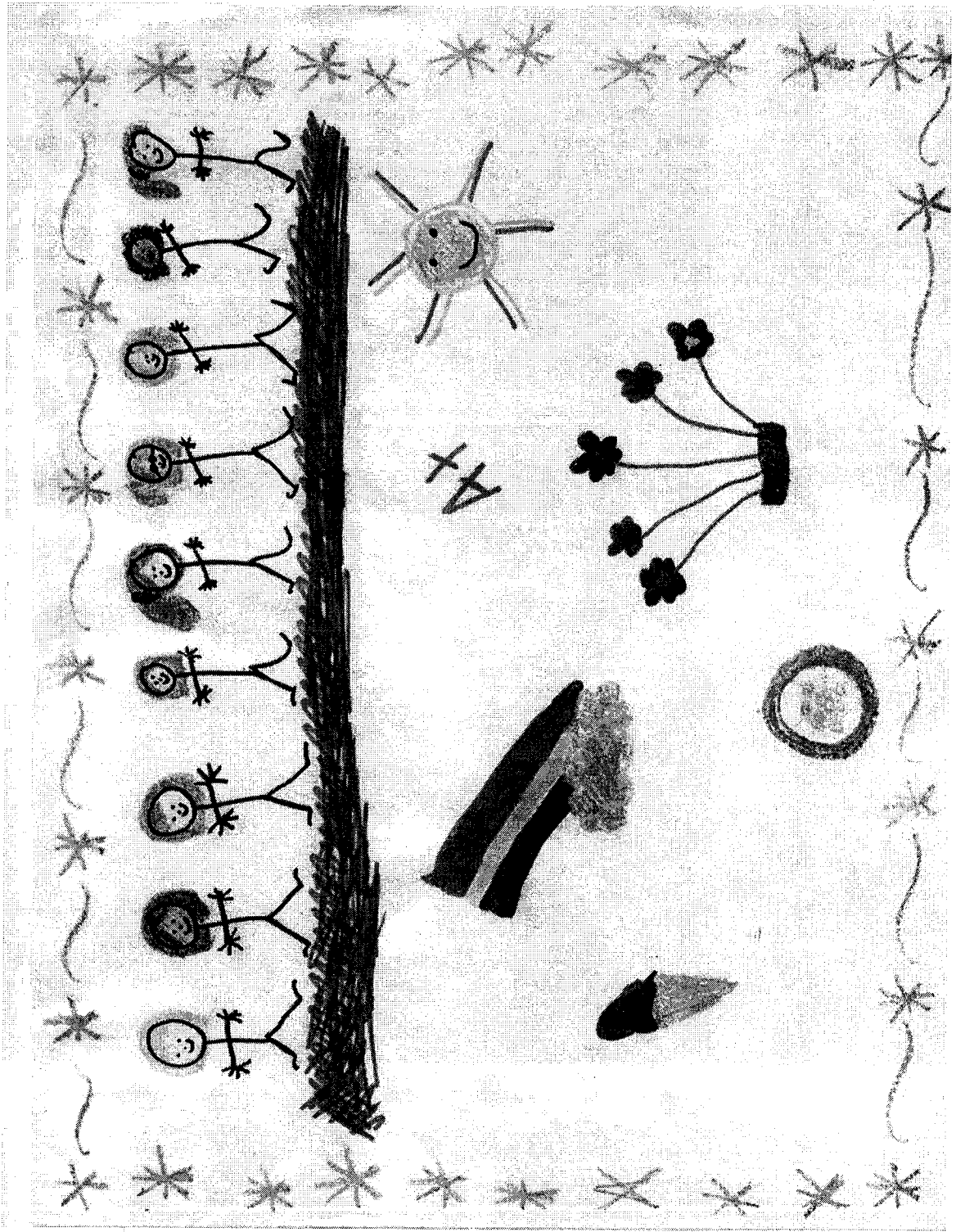
Ms. Humpty Dumpty

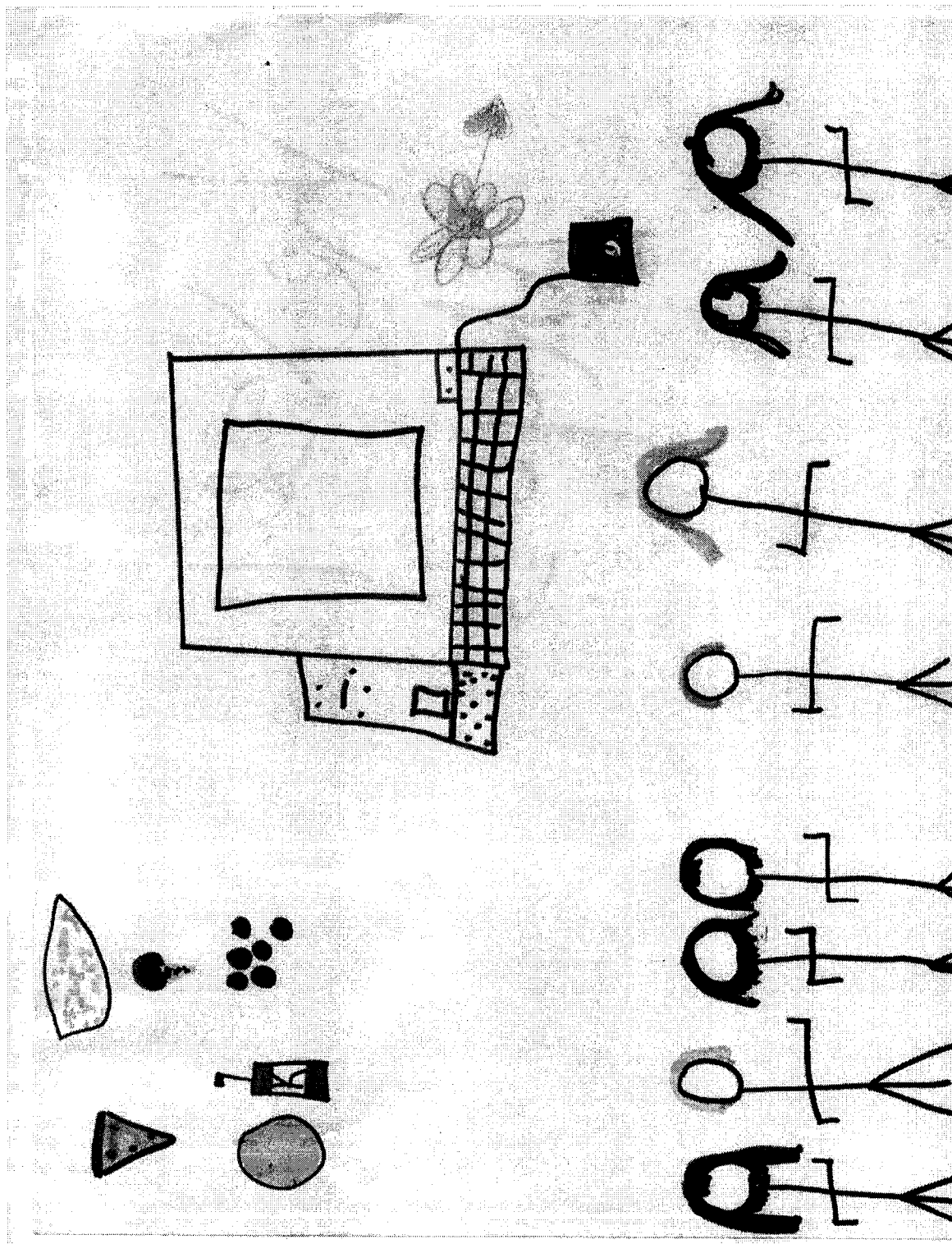
Good Self Esteem
Hott
Whore

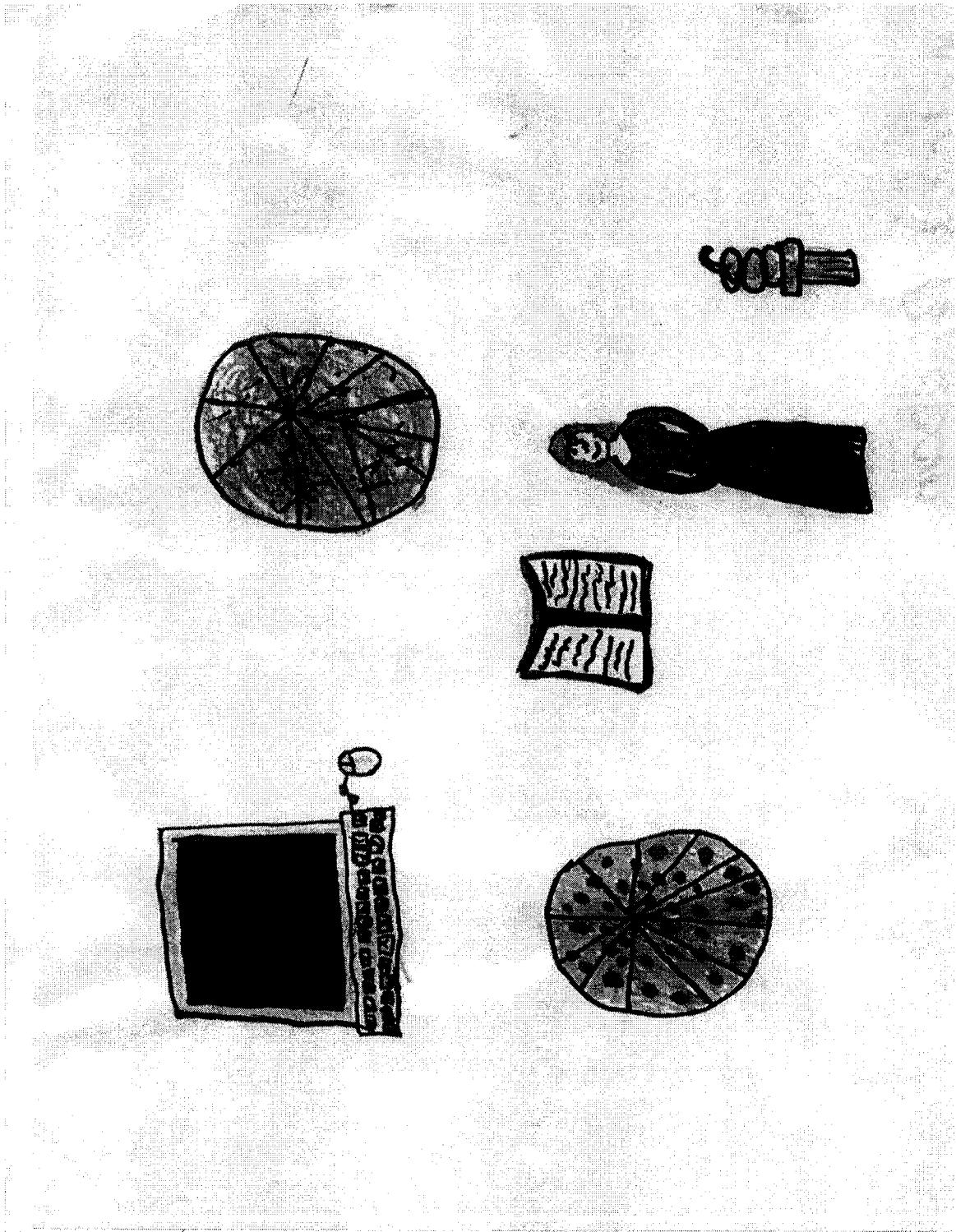


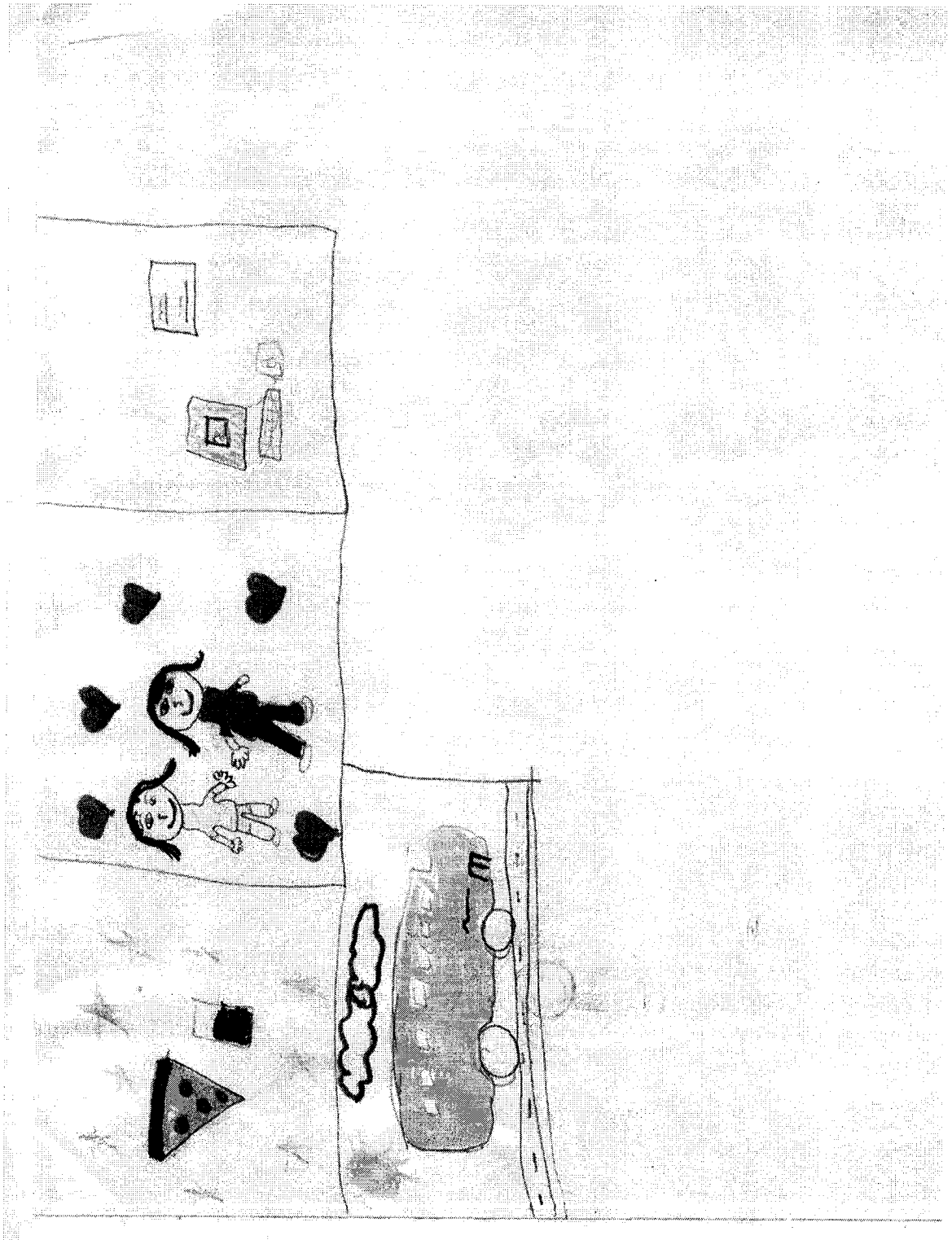
Kewl

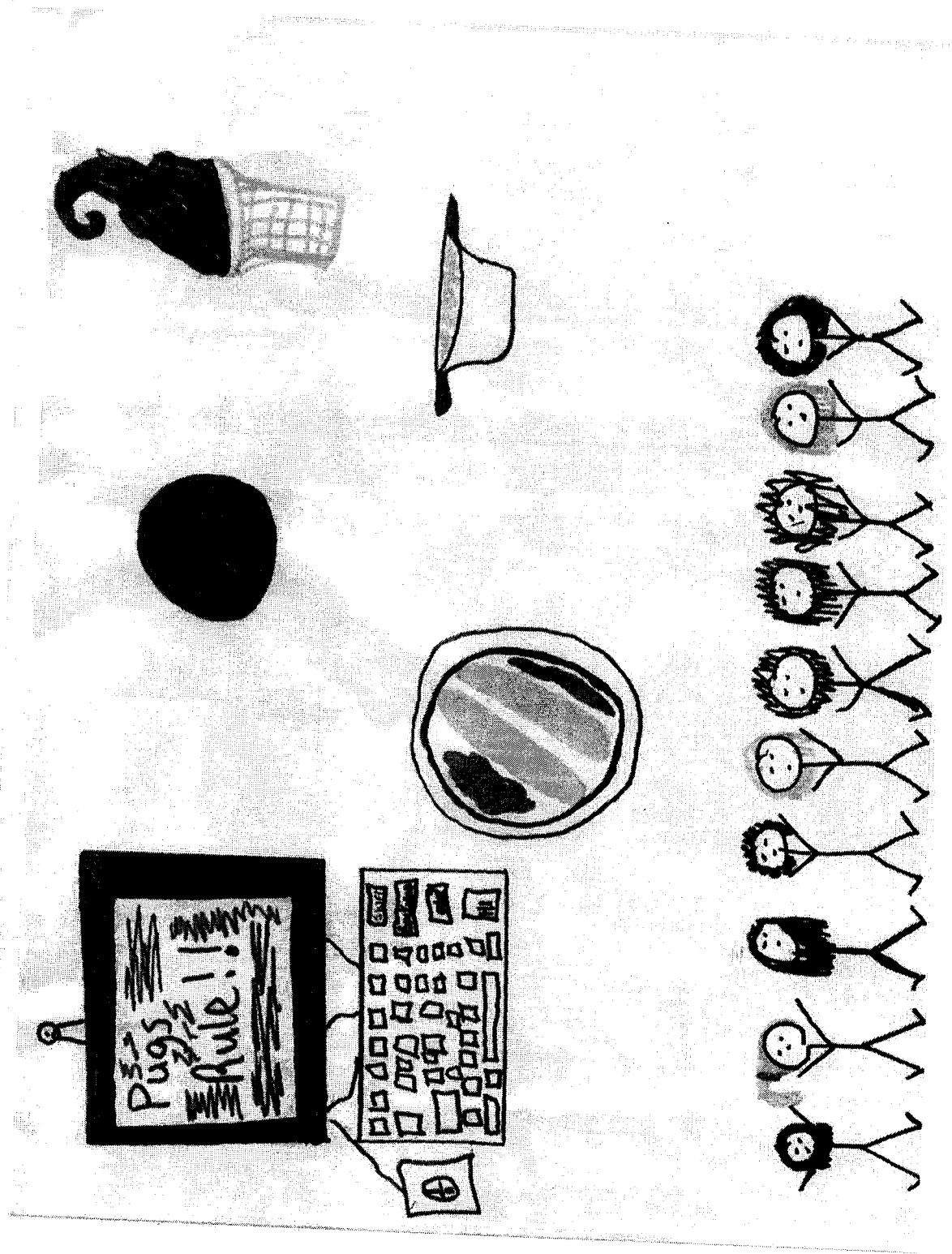
Sporky

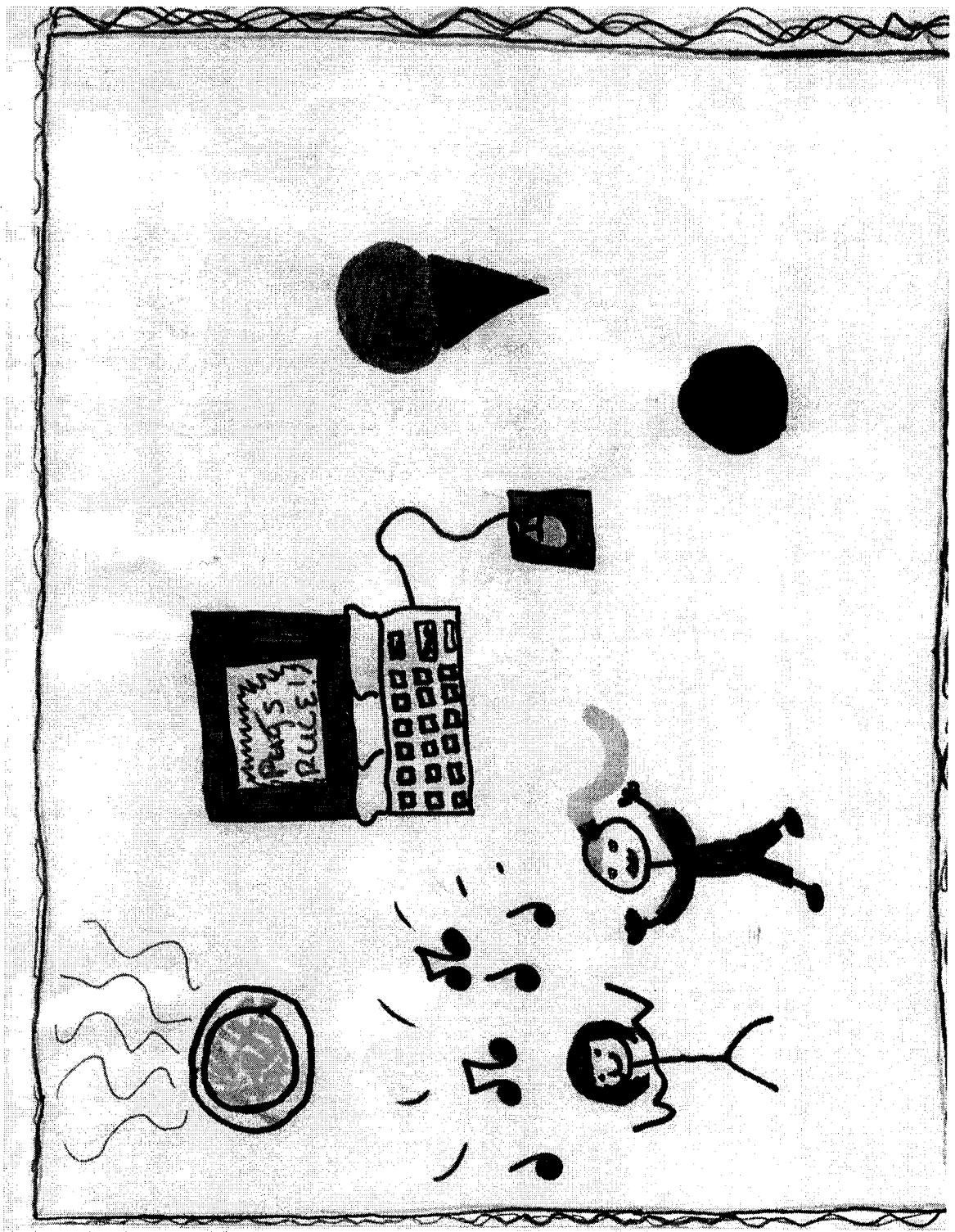


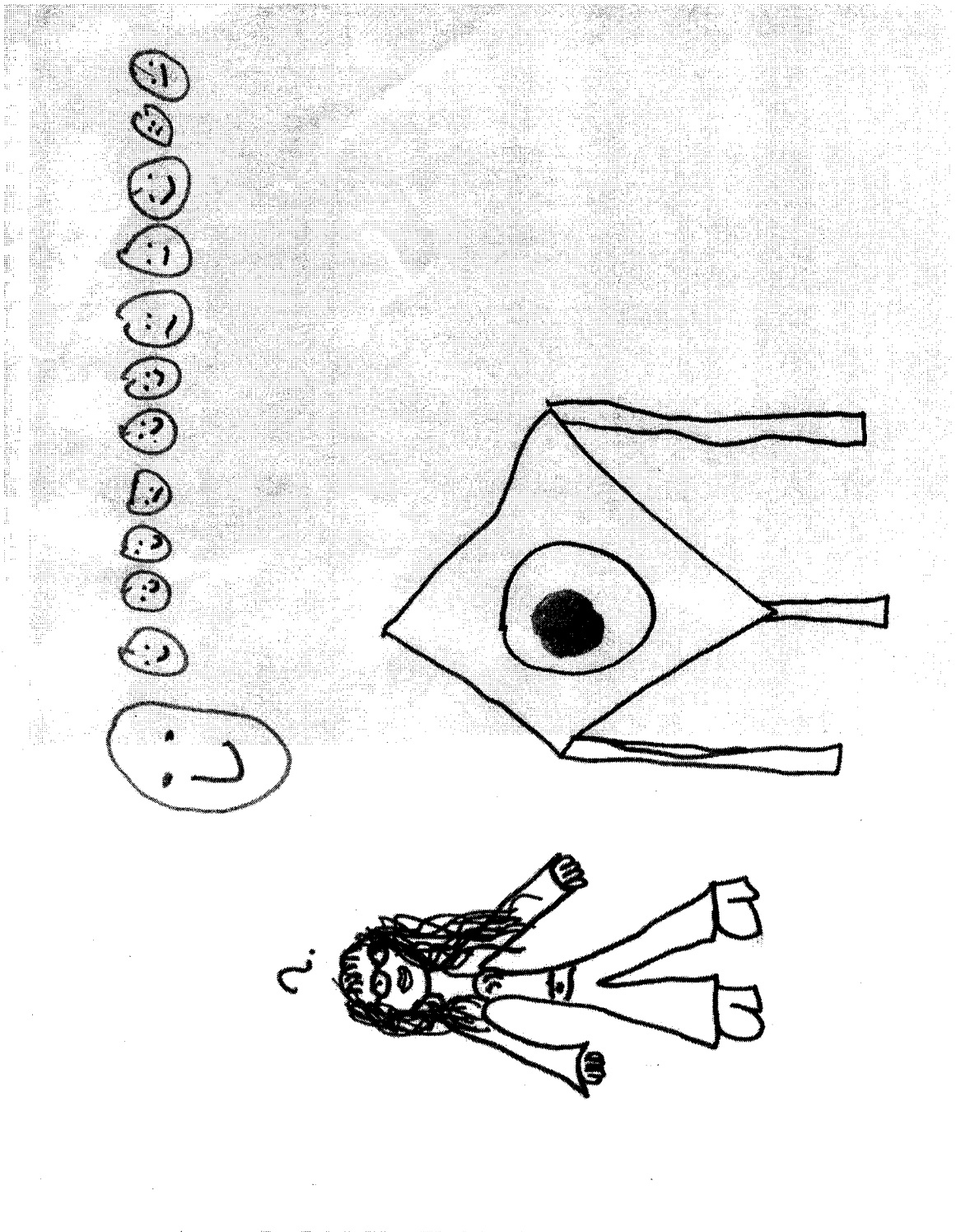


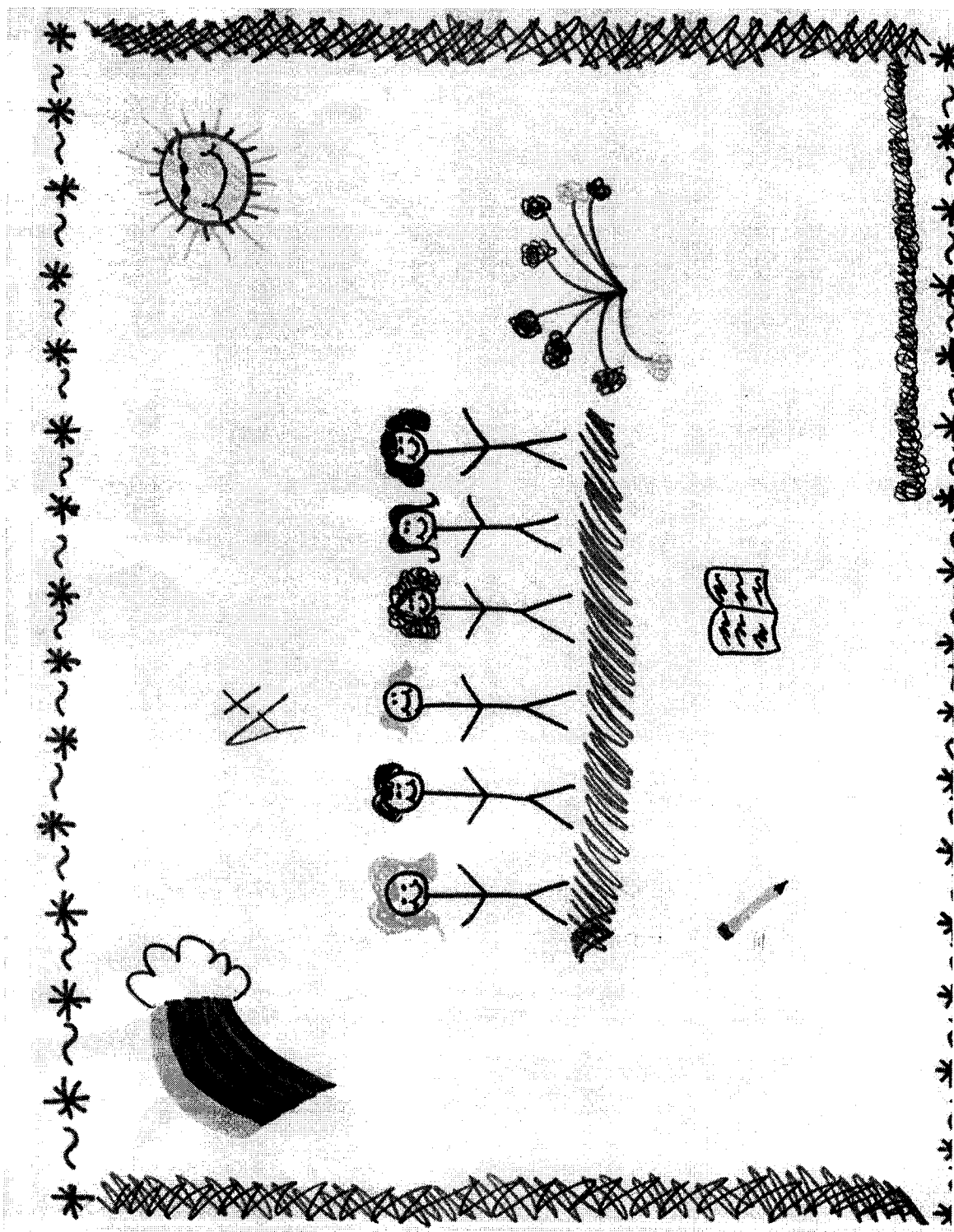


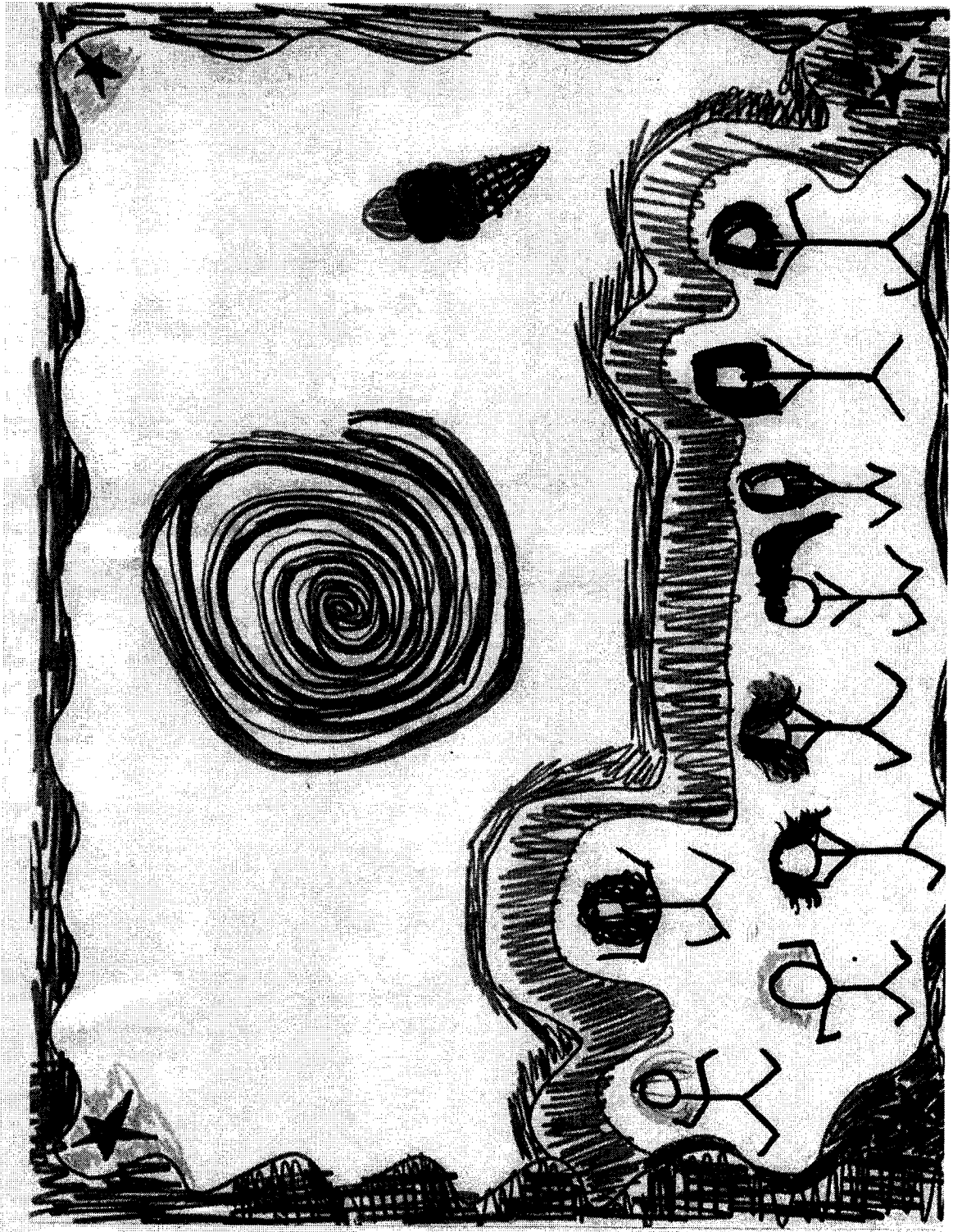


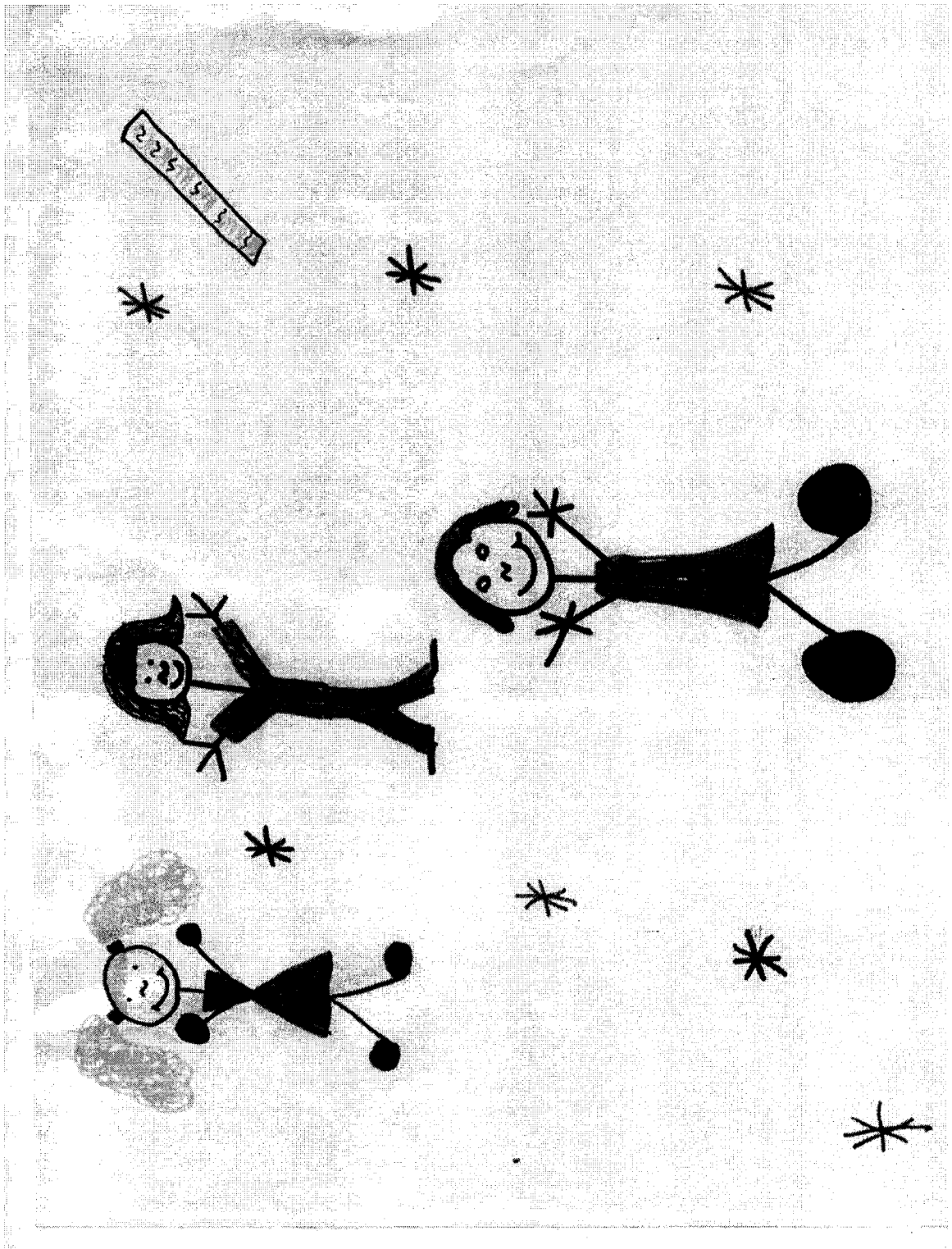


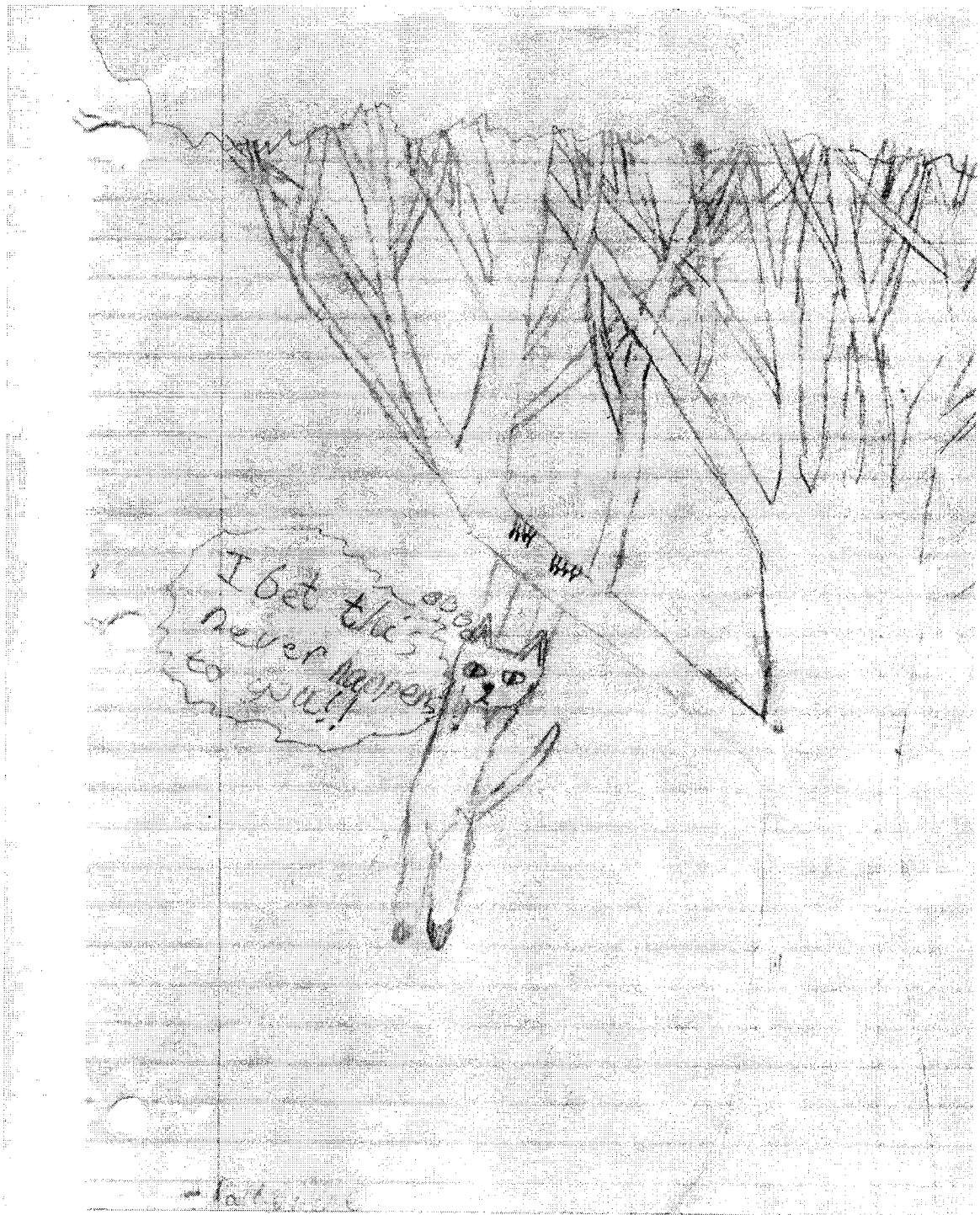












Guardian Angel

Every time I think
of the words
"Guardian Angel"

I think of my
cousin Andrew
Auston, because

He truly was one.
He was the nicest
person I knew in

the world. Even though I
didn't know him very well I miss
him, because he was murdered.
So I made this in memory
of him.



APPENDIX E

Reflective Teacher Notes

Participant #1-Christy (female)

January 2002

Christy joined our Success for Sixth program at the suggestion of her school Guidance Counselor. She appears to be very shy and withdrawn from the other students. Christy wears large glasses that seem to engulf her tiny features. I've noticed that she seems to hide behind her hair. Christy refuses to eat snack with the other students. She brings her own snack. Christy talks about not having any friends. However, she does mention having cats on her farm that she plays with. Christy appears to enjoy reading. She constantly has a book in her hand. She doesn't want to sit at the snack table with the other students. Christy tends to be aloof and appears to relate much better to adults than to her peers. I've noticed that Christy tends to avoid looking others in the eye.

February 2002

Christy is beginning to talk more during the program. She shared about her Girl Scout troop and how much she enjoys the Girl Scout activities. Christy brought in a copy of her report card. Her marks were excellent. I am amused by Christy's vocabulary. She speaks like a little adult. I've noted that Christy is always very careful to be kind and considerate to the other students. Today when I asked Christy to describe herself in two words, she said she was quiet and smart. I would agree with her choice of adjectives. Christy could not give a definition of the word friendship.

March 2002

I've noted that Christy relates better to adults than to her peers. However, she is slowly beginning to make friends in the Success for Sixth program. I've noticed a growing confidence in Christy to be able to approach her peers and interact with them.

Christy is now eating her snack with the rest of the students. She appears to be watching her peers less and interacting with them more. Christy is smiling much more frequently. In fact, she is making eye contact with her peers.

Christy amazed me today by actually initiating a conversation with her peers. This is a big step for Christy! Christy was able to define the word friendship today. Today she described being a friend as being nice and not mean to other students. Christy is starting to be more open with the daily teasing and tormenting she receives from her peers at school. Christy appears to be very sensitive and hurt when others are cruel to her. Today Christy shared with me that her cousin was murdered. She drew a guardian angel picture to express how she felt about this tragic event.

It's been fun to watch Christy's journey in this program. She began the program by being incredibly shy and withdrawn. She now is confident and able to talk freely with her peers. She is a quiet and reflective individual who cares deeply about her new friends. Other students in the group are starting to confide in Christy and ask her for advice and help with their problems. Christy brings an incredible maturity and caring to her new relationships. Christy continues to talk about her friends at the Nursing Home. She still remembers the big bag of candy that one resident gave her!

Participant #2-Chloe (female)

January 2002

I received paper work for Chloe to join the program. Her social worker said that Chloe is a Ward of the Court. Background notes show that Chloe has moved frequently and changed schools a variety of times. From her report card, it appears that Chloe is struggling in school. However, when talking with Chloe she certainly appears bright and verbal. Chloe is biracial. She is extremely thin. Her lightweight clothes hardly seem warm enough for our cold January winter. Chloe is constantly asking for permission to go on the Internet and chat with her friends. Chloe will push and shove to be the first student to get their snack. It's almost as if she fears we will run out of food.

February 2002

Chloe was upset today that her peers are constantly asking her if she is black or white. She cried today because she felt that other students received more snack than she did. When asked to give two words that describe her, Chloe picked abandoned and lonely. She talked today how she often felt different from her peers. She said that she has lots of problems. Currently she is having difficulty fitting into her foster family. She said she is new to this school system and has few friends. I've noticed that other students are hesitant to interact with Chloe. I am encouraging Chloe to research and write a history about her black heritage. Chloe is excited about this paper.

March 2002

Chloe said that she is having fun and enjoying writing the paper about black heritage. She is beginning to discuss her heritage at the snack table. Other students are warming up to Chloe and including her in their discussions. She appears to be much more

self-confident and willing to listen to others. Today for the first time Chloe let other students walk in front of her for snack. She wasn't concerned that there wouldn't be any snack left for her. Chloe shared with me today that she is feeling less lonely and less afraid of her peers. Chloe said she is constantly hungry.

Today Chloe really opened up with me. She shared how her mother had abandoned her in a McDonald's restaurant. Chloe cried as she shared and ended the conversation by begging me to adopt her. Chloe said if I adopted her that she would do whatever I said and that she would try to be a good person if I would please just give her this chance. When I shared this information with her social worker, I was told that Chloe is simply being manipulative and doesn't know what she is asking for. Chloe shared that her father left when she was three and she hasn't seen him since. She shared that her father was black and her mother was white with blonde hair. Chloe has beautiful dark brown eyes, brown skin, and very curly black hair.

Chloe shared today that she is actually starting to feel good about who she is. She shared that this is the first time that she has ever felt good about herself. Chloe said that she is feeling more mature. I've noticed that Chloe is much more confident and far more patient around her peers. She no longer gets angry and upset with her peers.

Participant #3-Katelynn (female)

January 2002

Katelynn came to the program very active and eager to talk with the other students. I've noticed that she draws attention to herself through her storytelling and extraverted behavior. She said that she is often left at home to care for her younger siblings. Katelynn showed me a copy of her report card. She appears to be an average student. Her mother called and asked me to make sure that Katelynn comes straight home from the program to watch her siblings. Her mother also shared with me that she and her husband are currently working several jobs to make ends meet in their family.

February 2002

Today I asked Katelynn to pick two words that describe her. Katelynn said that she likes to party and to be surrounded by friends. So, she picked the words party and friendly to describe her. I've noted that Katelynn is constantly moving and on the go. Katelynn shared that before enrolling in the Success for Sixth program she had been caught shoplifting and ordering items without paying for them. Today Katelynn shared with me a story of how she earned the nickname the "pizza prankster." She shared how she had ordered pizza and pretended to be her neighbor. When the pizza was delivered to her neighbor's house, Katelynn had been found out. She was forced to accept the consequences for lying and pretending to be someone she wasn't. She shared that she was afraid she might end up in a residential treatment for juvenile offenders.

March 2002

Katelynn has been practicing the art of friendship at school. I encouraged Katelynn to do three nice things for a peer at school. Katelynn shared with me that she

reached out to a girl who normally sat by herself at lunch. She shared that this girl was frequently teased and rejected because she was overweight. When Katelynn approached the girl, she was rejected at first. Eventually, the girl accepted her friendship and even cried in relief. Katelynn appears to be more sensitive and caring towards others. She is starting to think before she acts impulsively.

Katelynn shared today that sometimes her peers talk about her behind her back. She talked about feelings of powerlessness, anger and embarrassment. Students are still calling Katelynn the pizza prankster. Katelynn said that the Success for Sixth program is raising her self-esteem. She said that the students in the program treat her with respect and kindness, unlike the students in her school. She shared that she is becoming less hard on herself and more accepting of who she is. She is also willing to work harder at school for her grades.

Katelynn appears to really enjoy spending time with her friends at the Success for Sixth program. She shared that she is judging people less and accepting them more. She is starting to talk and share with the boys in the program more. She seems to be less concerned about what her peers think of her. She is smiling more often and stated that she wants to change her reputation from that of a troublemaker to a good kid.

Participant #4-Emily (female)

January 2002

Emily arrived at the program today as quiet as a mouse. She shared that she is an child and that both her mother and father work for long hours at their low paying jobs. She shared a copy of her report card with me. She is a very good student with high marks. She talked quite a bit about her dog Lucky. She talked to me about often feeling lonely and isolated. Emily arrived carrying her band instrument. She shared that she enjoys both band and the sports of track and softball.

February 2002

Today I asked Emily to pick two words that described her. Emily said that she is smart and shy. She talked today about how much she enjoys talking on the Internet with her friends. She referred to this as chatting with her friends. She also talked today about her radio and television that keep her company in her bedroom. She is currently practicing a song for her choir. Emily appears to really be enjoying visiting with the elderly at the Nursing Home. She referred to the Nursing Home residents as being lonely like she is.

March 2002

Today Emily realized that summer is just a few months away. She seemed to speak with regret about the loneliness she experienced during the summer. Emily shared that she spends her summer days all alone while both of her parents are at work. She said that she takes her dog Lucky on frequent walks to get out of the house. She said that although she sees other children she pretends she does not. Emily said she finally has made some friends of her own in the Success for Sixth program. She hopes that she can

continue to see them when it is summer. Emily shared today that her parents are the same age as other children's grandparents. Emily said that her father had recently suffered a heart attack. He was now on a special diet to lower his cholesterol.

Emily shared how much she enjoys eating snacks with the others. She talked about how much she hated eating by herself at home. She said she felt better about herself when friends in the Success for Sixth program surrounded her. She talked today about how much she enjoys just being able to hang out with other children in an informal atmosphere. Emily claims to be feeling less lonely and more hopeful about her future.

Although Emily is still quiet by nature, she is much more open and eager to participate in the Success for Sixth activities. Several friends frequently surround her. Emily claims that her grades have improved since joining the Success for sixth program. She now refers to the other girls in the program as her best friends. I have noted that Emily is much more confident and willing to open up and express her opinions and ideas. She is talking less about her dog Lucky and more about her peers. Emily has begun to invite some of the Success for Sixth students over to her house to socialize with them outside of the program. I have seen Emily become much more willing to listen to others and to participate in the group activities. Emily's mother called and thanked me for allowing Emily to participate in the program. She said that she has seen a huge growth in her once shy daughter. She claims that her daughter Emily is much more confident now.

Participant #5-Marilynn (female)

January 2002

Marilynn came to the program quiet. She did not appear comfortable asserting herself or asking for anything specific for herself. She shared that she is an only child and lives with her mother. Marilynn talked about spending a lot of time at home alone since her mother works long shifts. Marilynn appears to be very athletic and wears sports clothing. I've had to ask her to stop running and chasing the other students in the program. Today she kept grabbing other student's books and jackets. Marilynn shared with me that her schoolteachers often tell her she is not working up to her full potential. Currently, she shared that she has a 2.0 grade point average.

February 2002

Today I asked Marilynn to pick two words that describe her. Marilynn said that she is athletic and strong. She talked today about how much she enjoys running, walking and being on the go. We have been talking about the issue of peer pressure lately. Marilynn shared that before coming to the Success for Sixth program that other students were able to pressure her into doing things she didn't want to. Marilynn has been bringing visitors to the Success for Sixth program. She appears to be a magnet for new friends. She shared that she is starting to be able to concentrate better at school. I have encouraged Marilynn to pace and walk as she studies for her tests. She seems to learn better while she is moving.

March 2002

Marilynn constantly races off the bus to be the first student to the program in the afternoons. She always wants to know what fun activities we will be doing on a particular

day. She seems to need constant movement and she is continually on the go. Marilyn has not missed a session of the program. I have noticed that she is finally starting to voice her own opinions. She is also growing more confident in her ability to voice what she wants or needs.

Today Marilyn shared that she learned it is o.k. to be different. She said that she no longer worries about not looking like a super model. She talked about being much more happy with herself and not so pressured to do what other children asked her to. Marilyn had a long discussion today about what it means to be a true friend. She shared that her true friends were now in the Success for Sixth program. Marilyn made friendship bracelets for her friends at home and brought them to the program. The other students were delighted with their friendship gifts.

I have seen a transformation of Marilyn. She no longer chases the other students or attempts to bother them. She still is very active and needs a lot of movement. Marilyn has begun to express her opinions much more openly and confidently. She is not getting into trouble at school. Her grades have improved since she began utilizing movement in her studying. Marilyn talks a lot about looking forward to track meets.

Participant #6-Marie

January 2002

Marie came to the program quite bubbly and upbeat. She arrived off the school singing songs and practicing cheers. She wore her hair in two bouncy pigtails. Marie was wearing a very brightly colored striped shirt. As Marie talks she frequently swings her head from side to side causing her pigtails to bounce up and down. Marie is very animated when she speaks. She makes it a point to place herself in the direct center of the group. She appears to make friends very quickly and easily. She talks very rapidly and never stops!

February 2002

Today I asked Marie to pick two words that describe her. Marie said she is pretty and peppy. Marie talked about one day becoming a high school cheerleader. She then said that one day she would also like to be either a cosmetologist or a physician. I had to laugh at the contrast! Marie talks a lot about her mother and father and two younger siblings. She is very outgoing and personable. Marie constantly talks about either shopping or playing volleyball. In some ways, Marie's life appears to be far less conflicted than her peers in the program.

March 2002

Marie has now started making up cheers about the students in the Success for Sixth program. For instance, "Ann, Ann, she's our woman. If she can't do it no one can." She talked today about noticing the faces of the Nursing Home residents. This is a new side of Marie. I hadn't realized that she was this thoughtful or reflective. I wonder if her constant conversation and activity is a cover up for a more sensitive and reflective girl?

Marie shared that she currently has a 4.0 grade point average. She often asks to be able to play the game of truth or dare. She is quick to invent new cheers or dance steps. She told me today that dances were fun. I remember thinking that Marie seems to be dancing through the sixth grade. For Marie, sixth grade appears to be less painful and confusing than for her peers. Perhaps it is not and Marie is simply not disclosing the entire picture of her school experience. She is certainly a sweet and cheerful child.

Marie has made it a point to get to know the other students in the group. She appears to be very extroverted. Marie acts like a magnet for others in the program. She is very popular among the other students. Marie's mother said that her daughter talks about the Success for Sixth program all the time. Some of the other students have suggested that Marie should be our Success for Sixth mascot. She is a very likable student with a friendly and outgoing personality. I have noticed that Marie enjoys talking individually to all the students in the Success for Sixth program. She has frequently talked about how much her friends here mean to her. Frequently Marie has been the first student to introduce herself to new students in the group. She has encouraged her friends to wear identical clothing or jewelry to the program so they could be identified as a friendship group. Marie often asks to be able to make friendship bracelets for those in the group. She is always eager to share with her friends.

Participant # 7-(Ann)

January 2002

I was surprised to find out that Ann was a student in the Success for Sixth program. I would have certainly guessed that she was much older. She is taller and much more physically mature than the other students. Ann shared that she is an only child and lives with her mother. Currently she and her mother are living with another family. Ann said she has very few friends. She mentioned that high school boys are always calling her and trying to get her to do stuff with them. Ann's mother called and shared that Ann has permission to go home alone after the program. Ann's mother can't pick her up because of her work hours.

February 2002

Ann shared today about how frequently she has moved around throughout her life. I asked Ann to pick two words that described her. Ann said that she is grown up and independent. Ann has begun to share how uncomfortable and awkward she feels at school. She especially feels uncomfortable during the school's physical education classes. She dreads the locker room and having to change clothes in front of her peers. She said that she has had a hard time making and keeping friends. She said that boys often tease her and taunt her as she walks down the hall. She has talked quite a bit about being too fat and skipping lunch at school.

March 2002

Ann appears to be relating to her peers in the program now. She has been less tired and moody at our meetings. I received a call from Ann's mother. She was worried that other students might attempt to take advantage of Ann due to her mature physical

development. Her mother shared that, “Even though she has the body of a 16 year old, she has the heart and emotions of a 12 year old girl.” I assured her mother that the Success for Sixth program was a safe environment for Ann.

Ann shared today that during her normal school day she has very little time to interact with her peers. Ann claims that she has made many new friends in the Success for Sixth program. She said that she has been feeling much less stressed and overwhelmed since joining the Success for Sixth program. Ann talked about how she was no longer bothered so much by going to school. She said that students at school had often teased her about her poor coordination and poor grades. She feels that the program is helping her get a new identity. She said she likes just being able to talk and do non-competitive activities with her friends in the Success for Sixth program.

Ann mentioned how much she enjoys working on the computers in the Success for Sixth program. She shared that she and her mom don't have a computer at their home. She has also started to enjoy eating a snack with the other students in the program. She no longer talks about being too fat or bigger than the other students in the group. Ann has started a friendship with Christy. They have been exchanging books that are their favorites. I'm pleased to see their excitement as they talk about the various books.

Participant #8-David (male)

January 2002

David's Guidance Counselor called me and recommended that David join the Success for Sixth program. He shared with me that David has been getting into fights at school with his peers David lives with his father and three younger siblings. He also stated that social workers have become involved with David's case. They are concerned about the poverty conditions that David is living in. David was somewhat hesitant about joining the group. I noted that David often wears mismatched or dirty clothing. He is always hungry and teasingly tells me that he is starving. I have noted that David enjoys reading. He is new to this school system.

February 2002

David shared today that he is often left at home unsupervised for many hours at a time. He also is worried about his bad reputation at school. Today I asked David to pick two words that describe him. David said that he is tough and easily bored. He shared with me today that the Success for Sixth program has been a fresh start for him. He no longer has the reputation of troublemaker while in the program. David has begun to make many friends through the Success for Sixth program. His friends are now describing David as funny and smart.

March 2002

David has become much more self-confident and self controlled during the Success for Sixth program. He no longer gets angry or threatens to fight the other students if they don't agree with his opinion. David has been enjoying having an opportunity to interact with peers his own age outside of the school setting. He has also

been wearing cleaner clothes. David shared how the social workers helped his father obtain a washing machine and dryer. David mentioned that his grades have been improving at school because he is now remembering where his assignments are and to turn them in on time.

It's been interesting to watch the changes that David has experienced as a result of attending the Success for Sixth program. He now talks about belonging and the fact that he has eleven other friends. He shared that he is no longer so angry about not having any friends that accept him and like him for who he is. Rather, he is enjoying being able to go outside and spend time playing with his friends who accept him and don't pressure him into being someone that he isn't.

David came to the program with a new shirt and pair of pants today. He said his father had recently purchased them for him. David has been sharing openly with the group about what it is like to live with only his father and siblings. Since sharing, many of the students have been nicer to David and more accepting of him. David has been calling less attention to himself through inappropriate behaviors. He now tries to be helpful and will often volunteer to help clean up following the Success for Sixth session. David shared that he has been helping his Dad out at home also and that he feels good about being able to make a difference.

Participant #9-Timothy (male)

January 2002

Timothy arrived to the program wearing a camouflage jacket and hiking boots. He was carrying a wildlife sketch that he had completed on the school bus with colored pencils. Timothy shared that he lived with his father and two younger siblings. He said that even though he was a good reader he earned poor grades in school. Timothy loves to talk about sports, hunting and fishing. He was able to share how angry he had been when his mother forced him to move to Iowa and live with his father. He talks frequently about how exciting his life had been before he moved to Iowa. He said that he was having difficulty getting along with his mother, so she made him move back to Iowa to live with his father.

February 2002

Today I asked Timothy to pick two words that described him. Timothy said that he was artistic and strong. Timothy has frequently been angry during the program and claimed that others were not listening to him. He thrives on activities and continually wants to be able to play a game with the other students. Timothy does not like it when the group divides up into small groups. He worries that his small group is going to miss out. Today Timothy shared that he felt his mother never listened to him. He shared confusion and hurt over why she felt that she couldn't handle him. Timothy is constantly worrying that others are not listening to him.

March 2002

Timothy appears to get along better with the females in the group than with the males. He has begun to chase the girls in the program and tease them unmercifully. He has been avoiding the two other males in the group. Timothy shared that he doesn't play sports and that he doesn't have the time or money to play sports. He said that the coaches don't allow people with certain last names to play. He felt that his last name would keep him from being able to play very frequently on the team.

Timothy has been less aggressive and more cooperative lately. He has especially enjoyed doing activities on the computer. He shared that he has been happier living in Iowa than he first thought he could be. He no longer wishes he could move back in with his mother. He shared that he is starting to get along better with his Dad. He also felt that his father is beginning to listen to him. Timothy is no longer accusing others in the group of not listening to him.

It has been fun to watch Timothy progress in the program. He now appears to be so much more mature and confident. I've enjoyed watching him play outside with the other students in the program. He has left his camouflage jacket at home. He now wears brightly colored t-shirts. Timothy has been working on some colored pencil drawings of fish and other wildlife. He's hoping that his father will allow him to go hunting in the fall. He has been talking about wanting to take a Hunter Safety course that is being offered at the college for free this summer. Timothy appears very relaxed and happy.

Participant #10-Joey

January 2002

Joey had the entire group laughing over his jokes today. Throughout today's entire session Joey quoted lines from movies and mimicked funny lines from television shows. Joey shared with the group that he enjoys sports and spending time with his friends. He said that he lives with his parents and two younger sisters. Joey said that his teachers are constantly reminding him to pay attention and to quit talking. I've noted that Joey is always surrounded by a group of friends.

February 2002

Today I asked Joey to pick two words that describe him. Joey said that he was funny and that he was fun to be with. Joey appears to be very bright and energetic. He often talks about how much he enjoys playing sports. He has also shared that he enjoys spending time with his family. Joey constantly asks if we can go outside for the program. He shared that he is living with his mother and stepfather. Joey shared that although he enjoys sports like hunting and fishing, his stepfather doesn't. He talked about conflict at home between himself and his stepfather. Joey has been having a difficult time relating to others in the group.

March 2002

Today we talked about the importance of being a true friend. Joey shared that before the Success for Sixth program some of his friends had tried to get him in trouble. He felt that he had made some true friends in the Success for Sixth program. He stated that these friends didn't try to get him into trouble. Joey said that kids who get other kids in trouble are nothing but jerks!

Joey appears to really enjoy the time that our group spends on the computers. He has been chatting with his friends on the Internet and discussing various friendship issues. Joey likes to read and he likes to express his opinion. He has an excellent memory and can remember entire scenes and dialogues from movies. He would make an excellent actor. He is able to produce a variety of funny faces and voices as he quotes long lines from his favorite movies and television shows.

Joey shared this his mother may be divorcing his stepfather. Joey said that he felt bad about this but also glad. He said he is glad that he won't be getting into arguments with his stepfather anymore. He said his mother is glad to have made this decision. Joey appears to be more quiet and reflective during our group sessions. He is always talking about how this group has given him true friends and fun things to do outside of the school classroom. Joey said that he is looking forward to this summer when he can play outside for as long as he wants. He has been busy getting the phone numbers of the other children in the group so he can contact them this summer. As Joey asks for each student's phone number he uses a different voice and a different character's expression. He had the other students falling off their chairs with laughter over his exaggerated antics. He certainly is bright and has an excellent memory to be able to recall so many details from his favorite shows.

Participant #11-Sally (female)

January 2002

I have enjoyed meeting Sally today. She is very quiet and shy. Through talking with Sally I learned that she lives with her mother and father in the country. Sally talked quite a bit about her involvement with the local County Fair. She also talked about how much she enjoyed creating crafts and projects. Sally appears to be very artistic and sensitive. She tended to avoid the large group and spent much time talking individually to her peers. Sally has beautiful expressive eyes that seem to reflect the colors around her. Sally told me that she always tries to do the right thing and be well behaved. She shared that she always earns excellent grades for citizenship and behavior at school.

February 2002

Today I asked Sally to pick two words that describe her. Sally said she is artistic and thoughtful. Sally enjoys staying on task. She gets frustrated when other students attempt to distract her from completing a project. Sally shared that she lives in the country and enjoys completing projects outside on the farm. Sally said that her peers often pick on her at school. She said that she hates school and she hates always feeling so lonely and isolated. I've noted that Sally relates far better to adults than she does to peers her own age. Sally is quite a good writer. She is very expressive and eloquent. I've noted that Sally appears to gain confidence through sharing her writings with other students in the Success for Sixth group.

March 2002

Sally appears to especially enjoy coloring activities in the Success for Sixth program. As she colors Sally seems to be forming new friendships with those in the

group. As her focus shifts from herself to her drawing, she appears to gain confidence. She is appearing less awkward and more in control of her conversations. I've especially enjoyed seeing some of the colorful collages that Sally has recently created. In some ways, these collages represent new dimensions and experiences for Sally.

Sally made an interesting comment today. She said that students who were normally her enemies at school were her friends in the program. She said that other children had frequently called her fat and stupid. She was happy that very few children picked on her in the Success for Sixth program. Sally shared that at school some of the other children had forced her to do things to get in trouble. Sally had been bullied and went along with the other's pranks. She had been afraid to stand up to her peers.

Sally has been bringing a soccer ball to the Success for Sixth program. She claims that soccer is her favorite sport. She said she likes soccer because everyone gets a chance to play. Sally has been more confident and outgoing lately. She stated that she has learned how to be a good friend to others. She also stated that she has learned how to get along with a variety of students since joining the Success for Sixth program. Sally seems to be smiling all the time now. She no longer walks by herself. Sally's friends frequently ask her to draw them pictures, as Sally is a very talented and expressive artist.

Participant #12-Julie (female)

January 2002

Julie came to the program and appeared to be very concerned about the time. She shared that she could not be late going home or she would be grounded. Julie talked about having to rush home to watch her disabled younger brother. Julie appeared to be very sensitive and thoughtful. Julie talked about being from a blended family. Her stepmother attends college. She shared that her father works several jobs to make ends meet. Julie has several brothers and sisters. She talked about enjoying swimming, bike riding and games. Julie always wants to help others. However, she is very boisterous and active. It surprised me to see the way Julie picked on other students during the snack time.

February 2002

Today I asked Julie to pick two words that describe her. Julie said that she is caring and friendly. She also said she wishes she had more time to spend with her friends. Julie feels that she spends a lot of time watching her younger brother. Julie shared that sometimes she doesn't know how to behave in certain situations. She still constantly watches the clock and is nervous about being late going home after the program. She worries that her parents will ground her if she is late. If she is grounded she will not be able to come back to the Success for Sixth program. She often jokes that she wishes the program would meet everyday after school instead of just two afternoons per week.

March 2002

I have noted that Julie is no longer so boisterous and active. She no longer picks on other students during the snack time. Her angry comments have seemed to stop. Julie

continues to be nervous about the time and getting home. She shared that she is learning friendship skills and how to get along better with others. She said that she has been spending a lot of time at home cooking, cleaning, and helping around the house.

Julie shared how happy she is on days when she is able to attend the Success for Sixth program. She talked in some detail about how good it feels to have friends and to just be able to hang out and do fun things. The other students have been more open to including Julie in their group discussions. She is no longer angry or critical of the peers in this group. Julie laughs and cries easily. She almost appears overly tired or worn down from the demands of homework and housework.

It has been fun to see Julie's transformation over the past several months. She has settled down quite a bit. She is no longer active, boisterous and angry. She has become much more quiet and reflective. She is practicing her listening skills with her new friends in the Success for Sixth group. Julie shared that her stepmother was stressed out over finals the other night. Julie said she was able to help her stepmother by quietly entertaining her younger brother. She said she felt good to be able to help her stepmother and happy that she had a little brother to play with.