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The efficacy of an alternative school

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THE EFFICACY OF
AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

by
Celeste Wilden

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
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of Rowan College
1995

Approved by _____

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ABSTRACT

Celeste Wilden
The Efficacy of an Alternative School
1995
Dr. Stanley Urban
LDTC Program

This study examines a self-contained day school for emotionally disturbed adolescents by evaluating whether changes produced by the intervention result in practical personally and socially worthwhile improvements. Such evaluation, often called social validation (Kazden, 1977) involves determining whether the changes have brought the student's performance within acceptable levels. Social validation deals with how closely the student's functioning fits expectations of appropriate performance in society (Haring & McCormick, 1990). This hypothesis was tested by the results of a questionnaire given to graduates from the program since DYFS withdrew its funding in 1983. Success was defined as having the ability to support themselves with or without further education and no public assistance, and also being law abiding citizens. To determine these factors the questions dealt with current family status, job/income, military history, and post high school education.

The graduates were successful according to this criterion. The respondents were well socialized and integrated into society. Out of 43 responses only 2 people were unemployed and 1 incarcerated, leaving a 93% employed population.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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This study examines a self-contained day school for emotionally disturbed adolescents by evaluating whether changes produced by the intervention result in practical personally and socially worthwhile improvements. This hypothesis was tested by the results of a questionnaire given to graduates since 1983. The respondents to the survey were well socialized and integrated into society on the basis of employment.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM.....	1
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	4
Definition.....	5
Interventions.....	9
Behavioral Theory.....	10
The Psychoanalytic Approach.....	11
The Psychoeducational Approach.....	11
Biogenic Theory.....	12
Ecological.....	13
Humanistic Theory.....	13
Efficacy.....	14
Summary.....	16
III. DESIGN OF THE STUDY.....	19
Sample.....	19

Measures.....	21
IV. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS.....	22
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	30
Summary	30
Conclusions	31
Discussions.....	32
BIBLIOGRAPHY	34
APPENDIX	
Questionnaire	37
BIOGRAPHICAL DATA.....	38

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1. Summary of Status of Respondents	25

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Contemporary special education for students with behavior disorders seems to have justified its existence, however controversy and needs in the field continue to exist. Public Law 101-476 (IDEA; amended PL 94-142) mandates education of all children be served by placement in the least restrictive environment possible. Today the emphasis in special education is to integrate exceptional children into regular classrooms. This trend has overshadowed the assumption that programs in special education can be provided for exceptional children which are in some measurable sense more effective than general education programs. Special educators have attempted to determine the efficacy of alternative educational programs.

In many respects, the field of behavior disorders presents a unique challenge to program evaluators (George, George, & Grosenick, 1989). The field as a whole is plagued with philosophical and conceptual differences concerning the nature of disturbance, the focus for intervention, and the ultimate aims and purposes of special programs (Morse, 1976). Without documentation of student progress, some would argue that there is little justification for continued use of specialized programs and curricula (Gardner, 1982). The thrust of evaluation has been to take a total program and judge it as

worthy or unworthy (Light & Smith, 1970). In contrast, this author proposes an approach that searches for those few versions which are working well, so that they can be improved and recreated in future endeavors.

This study examines a self-contained day school for emotionally disturbed adolescents by evaluating whether changes produced by the intervention result in practical personally and socially worthwhile improvements. Such evaluation, often called social validation (Kazdin, 1977) involves determining whether the changes have brought the student's performance within acceptable levels (social comparison technique). Social validation deals with how closely the student's functioning fits expectations of appropriate performance in society (Haring & McCormick, 1990). This hypothesis is to be tested by the results of a questionnaire given to graduates from the program since 1983. Success will be defined by the graduates ability to support themselves with or without further education and no public assistance, and being law-abiding citizens.

Unfortunately, there are several major obstacles in conducting this type of study. Since this is a private school, records are sent back to the sending districts leaving little information on the students' home address. Many of the graduates are from very chaotic backgrounds and obtaining information of where they are presently living may be difficult. Once the students are found, having them return the questionnaire may be another obstacle. These barriers will have to be considered when interpreting the data received from the questionnaires.

How to interpret evaluation of educational interventions, and indeed whether it is

even possible to evaluate objectively, will be considered in chapter II when the literature is reviewed. The map of operation for the evaluation process for this study will be discussed in its completion in chapter III. Once the data is received, a comprehensive analysis will be reviewed in chapter IV.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Too often adults fail to recognize that people of every age often experience great stress in everyday life. Stress and ways of managing it are not the exclusive problems of grownups. Certainly different events produce stress at different developmental levels. But we tend to forget that stressful events are defined from a highly personal viewpoint, as Harry Reasoner illustrates in his commentary on "Childish Concerns - and Stress".

Children, we think, are carefree. They have freckles and puppies and pockets full of little cars and chewing gum, and they do; but they also have problems. We adults think we have a lock on stress. We live in the rough, tough world without freckles and puppies and pockets full of comforting toys, and we won't have anyone diminishing our supply of stomach acid. We figure, arrogantly, that when the big dinner party goes bad, that's stress, whereas being knocked down by the school bully in front of all your friends, why, that's just part of growing up. And then, stress, well stress is having an hour left to do two hours worth of work, with the boss flying in from the coast and accountants on their way across town. On the other hand, to be lying awake with your thumb in your mouth because there's an alligator under the bed, that's childish. Nah, kids don't know about stress.

Stress is what you feel when you're stuck in a cab and you're already 20 minutes late for an important meeting. Not having done your homework because you found stunning evidence that your new baby brother is from Mars and you spent the night trying to warn your parents, so that you've got to tie your shoelaces all morning in class to keep the teacher from calling on you, that's just getting what you deserve.

We are parsimonious about stress, I think. It is a badge these days between adults, as well; but just think how you'd feel, now, if you were truly convinced that there was an alligator under your desk. (Source: Originally broadcast December 20, 1983, over the CBS Radio Network on the CBS Radio News, Harry Reasoner)

It is a truism that everyone has emotional ups and downs. Children who exhibit certain behaviors are more or less likely to be judged disturbed depending on age, sex, and the particular circumstances. A child's developmental level and the particular circumstances surrounding a given act, plus the child's typical emotional state, must be taken into account.

Definition

Normal variations in emotions and behavior complicate the problem of definition because we can almost never say that an act itself indicates emotional disturbance or behavior disorder. The term "behavior disorder" is often used to describe these children,

but it is a negative, stereotypical connotation and may result in a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby teachers perceive such children as incapable of learning.

Children and youth with behavior disorders are certainly not rare, and most of us have observed or dealt with such young people. Ironically, there is no generally accepted definition of behavior disorders. One of the major stumbling blocks to a universal definition is the varied and sometimes conflicting viewpoints concerning the nature of behavior disorders. Another issue is the subjectivity of standards for determining exactly what is a behavior disorder. Standards of normality can vary by age, sex, subculture, community, politics, and economic conditions.

When considering the characteristics of children who are disturbed, we might apply criteria developed by Bower (1969) that the problems presented be both acute (exist to a marked extent) and chronic (exist for a period of time). Bower's research into identification of students with emotional disturbance resulted in a description of behavior patterns that has become known as the "educator's definition" of emotional disturbance. It has been widely used since its publication, and was adopted for use in PL 94-142. Bower identified five behavior patterns that characterized these students:

1. Inability to benefit from academic instruction not attributable to intellectual capacity, hearing or vision problems.
2. Inability to develop and maintain positive interpersonal relationships with peers or adults.
3. Behaviors that are highly inappropriate to responses of environmental or social conditions.

4. Wide variations in mood (such as moods of extreme happiness or depression).

5. Frequent physical complaints or periods of tiredness that have no medical basis.

The behavior patterns noted by Bower may occur in any student in isolated instances; however, when they occur to a marked degree or for a long period of time they are cause for concern.

Research presents many different definitions for emotionally disturbed/behavior disorder. A few definitions selected from the dozens available will be discussed in this paper. Despite strong criticism (Executive Committee, 1987; Kauffman, 1989), the federal definition of seriously emotionally disturbed continues to be used by the Office of Special Education as it administers financial support and other federal activities related to research, teacher training, and state programs (Haring, McCormick, 1990). This definition states: Seriously emotionally disturbed children exhibit one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree.

1. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.

2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.

3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

4. General pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms, pains, or fears associated with personal or school problems. (Federal Register, 1977.p. 42478)

Diamond defines emotionally disturbed as students who “fall asleep in the middle of the day or express deep hostility in the absence of provocation, the child who displays bizarre behavior or dramatically withdraws, the one who changes a behavior pattern in a significant and obvious manner or talks or acts in regressed fashion” (Diamond, 1991). Another author uses the federal guidelines as part of the definition and defines it as a “disability characterized by behavioral or emotional responses in school so different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norms that they adversely affect educational performance. Educational performance includes the development and demonstration of academic, social, vocational, and personal skills” (McIntyre, 1993). Bauer gives the following profile in his definition of the emotionally disturbed: “severe degree of illness judged by a clinician, simultaneous indication of serious global dysfunction according to teacher and parent (e.g. several checklist factor T scores greater than 70), experience of multiple family stressors (especially abuse and parent psychiatric illness, and limited community mental health intervention)” (Bauer, 1991).

The proper identification of emotionally disturbed is hindered by the similar pattern of behavior manifested by both emotionally disturbed and learning disabled. Unfortunately, many learning disabled students are labeled lazy, willful, poorly disciplined and spoiled when actually they are trying their hardest (Alexander & Rolfe, 1991). These confusing signals are often observed by classroom teachers. The same behaviors could be used to describe emotionally disturbed students who are often characterized not only by depressed academic skills, but also by aggression and difficulty in socialization, a sense of rebellion and rejection of authority, low self-esteem, and

substance abuse and suicide (McIntyre, 1993). Therefore, children and youth with emotional disturbance are a heterogeneous group. Additionally, the behavior of troubled children is characterized by inconsistency and unpredictability, which are often responses to their chaotic environments.

Interventions

The probability of success for the emotionally disturbed is related to the degree to which instruction is based on individual differences in student characteristics. Perhaps in no other area of special education is it so important to see the total child as a person, class member, family member, and community member. Formal and informal procedures designed to assess intellectual, personality, sensory, academic, and social functioning are crucial to an understanding of the forces affecting the child. A multifaceted assessment with such components requires cooperative efforts by educators, mental health practitioners, and family to produce a comprehensive evaluation that in final form will yield insight into which teaching techniques, materials presentation and teacher responses will be of maximum benefit to the pupil (Meyen, 1990). Equipped with a comprehensive picture of the students with emotional disturbance drawn from academic, intellectual, ecological, personality and informal measures, the evaluation team can set realistic goals.

There are many different theoretical perspectives in use in the education of emotionally disturbed students. This is partly because the general category of emotionally disturbed embraces so many different behavior problems. But the major

reason for differing views goes back to something first mentioned in our discussion of definition--the problem of different conceptual models or theories.

Kauffman (1989) cited six conceptual models based on Rodes and Tracy's (1974) work of the early 1970s: behavioral, psychodynamic, psychoeducational, biogenic, ecological and humanistic. These models involve intervention principles and techniques compatible with their different views of behavior disorders. Some concepts are common to several approaches, and in practice we seldom find a really "pure" single viewpoint. But the views of one model can be incompatible with those of another. There is a limit to the extent to which a teacher can pick and choose techniques without it being self-defeating.

Behavioral Theory

Behavioral theory assumes that the essence of the problem is the behavior itself and that the behavior is a function of the environment (Kauffman, 1989). The assumption is that behavioral problems represent inappropriate learning and that emotionally disturbed children can be helped when their observable behavior is modified. Modification of behavior can be accomplished by manipulating the child's immediate environment.

The teacher must identify deficient behaviors to increase and excessive behaviors to decrease. Identified behaviors are measured often so that the teacher remains aware of behavior changes. The teacher teaches and reinforces adaptive social, academic, or other

behaviors to increase them. Maladaptive behavior must not be reinforced. Students can be taught to take control of their own education by learning to identify, measure, and reinforce behavior needing improvement. The focus of the behavior approach is on precise definition and measurement of the observable behaviors in order to change them.

The Psychoanalytic Approach

This particular approach was formulated by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists who believe that the problem is a pathological imbalance among the dynamic parts of the mind (McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994). Educational practices are designed to help uncover the underlying mental pathology in an effort to improve psychological functioning, as well as behavior and achievement (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1988).

The emphasis is on building a teacher-pupil relationship in which the child feels accepted and free to act out his or her impulses in a permissive environment. The primary concern of the teacher is to help the child overcome underlying mental problems. Little emphasis is given to academic achievement. There is a highly permissive atmosphere.

The Psychoeducational Approach

Involves both underlying psychiatric disorders and the readily observable misbehavior and underachievement of the child. The teacher must help students

understand their problems and effectively cope with them. This is best accomplished when the teacher develops a trusting and respectful relationship with students, teaches them to recognize and manage stressful situations, and helps them to develop appropriate personal strengths for dealing with future life challenges. School activities often need to be individualized for the student. (Haring & McCormick, 1990)

Biogenic Theory

Biogenic theory concerns itself with the organic origins and neurophysiological mechanisms of emotional disturbance; for example, metabolic error, genetic factors, biochemical imbalance, and brain dysfunction. This school of thought has some proponents among professionals and parents not only of children with emotional disturbance, but also of children with perceptual problems, developmental delays, and learning disabilities. Some of its strongest supporters are those concerned with individuals exhibiting characteristics of autism or schizophrenia. Rimland (1964) a major proponent of the biophysical theory, believes that biophysical or organic causes are rejected because of the limitations in current knowledge of human physical and chemical functions. Teacher responses based on this theory emphasize a structured, orderly learning environment with consistent class routine, detailed sequencing of tasks with repetition until skills are acquired, and reduced stimuli of all kinds to produce an optimum educational environment. (Meyen, 1990)

Ecological

Proponents of the ecological approach believe that the problem with the emotionally disturbed is that the child interacts poorly with the environment. The child is viewed as a disturber of the environment and his/her behavior is considered as disturbing as it is disturbed (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1988). The goal of this approach is to alter the entire social system so that it will support desirable behavior in the child when intervention is withdrawn.

The teacher must understand all parts of the disturbed system so that a variety of changes can be tried to eliminate disturbance. The student may be taught new competencies or helped to give up maladaptive behavior patterns. There is concern not only with effective teaching of the child in the classroom but also for working with the child's family, neighbors, and community agencies. The ecological approach requires teachers who are able to teach children specific useful skills (including academics, recreation, and everyday living skills) and to work with adults in the child's environment.

Humanistic Theory

The humanistic approach to educating disturbed children grew out of humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1962; Rogers, 1969), the open education movement and the revolt against traditional concepts of education beginning in the late 1960s. The basic problem, as humanistic educators see it, is that emotionally disturbed children are out-of-touch

with their own feelings and cannot find meaning and self-fulfillment in traditional educational settings. Proponents of this approach advocate self-direction, self-fulfillment and self-evaluation for emotionally disturbed pupils (Meyen, 1990).

The teachers function as a resource and catalyst for children's learning rather than as a director of activities. Children and teachers work together as learners, pursuing areas of interest to themselves and sharing information (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1988).

Efficacy

In many respects, the field of behavior disorders presents a unique challenge to program evaluators. The field as a whole is plagued with philosophical and conceptual differences concerning the nature of disturbance, the focus for intervention, and the ultimate aims and purposes of special education programs (Morse, 1976). Individual programs vary in the importance placed on academic versus social-emotional outcomes (George, Goldfarb, Lindsig, & Sugai, 1986). Some programs focus efforts solely on the child, whereas others attend more to family, school, and community factors (Apter & Conoley, 1984).

How to interpret evaluations of educational interventions, and indeed whether it is even possible to evaluate objectively, has been recently considered at some length by Cohen. Cohen points out many difficulties in evaluating any program with multiple goals. In some cases, due to political pressures, the goals may actually be at cross-purposes with each other. Because there is no consensus within the field regarding

desired program outcomes or standards for judging program effectiveness, special educators are using diverse evaluation criteria, many of which are not specifically tied to program goals or intended outcomes. The result is that evaluations of programs often reflect contradictory and at times disappointing outcomes. (Hawkins & Rogers, 1983)

Nelson and Schmidt described three characteristics of special education and its practitioners which inhibit the scientific pursuit of efficacy. First, special education adheres to the past, prompted less by empirical data than by common sense. Second, since special education is apparently satisfied with a problem-solving approach, issues which seem "self-evident" are seldom put to scientific test. For this reason, practitioners may value program description more highly than program evaluation. The third characteristic is the failure of the field to critically examine and make operational its fundamental concepts.

Beyond its failure to address the conceptual issues, efficacy research is also laden with serious methodological problems. First, different placement histories of exceptional children potentially interact with current program placement, making the results of efficacy studies impossible to interpret (Campbell, 1969). Another common weakness is the use of inadequate measurement instruments, particularly for personal and social adjustment. Personal social constructs are often ambiguously defined, and the instruments used to measure these constructs are less reliable than instruments measuring achievement (Brown, 1970). Finally, researchers have pointed out that efficacy studies fail to control for teaching procedures and curricula.

As this author has stated in chapter I, a successful program implies replicable results. This suggests that the search for features which may influence the success of a program should center on those which are not unique to a particular center. This does not minimize the importance of an exciting group leader or uniquely trained specialist. But if there are only half a dozen of these unique people in the country, then we must identify replicable features which increase program effectiveness.

Summary

Children and youth with behavior disorders are certainly not rare, and most of us have dealt with such young people. Ironically, there is no generally accepted definition of behavior disorders. One of the major stumbling blocks to a universal definition is the varied and sometimes conflicting viewpoints concerning the nature of behavior disorders. Another issue is the subjectivity of standards for determining exactly what is a behavior disorder, standards of normality can vary by age, sex, subculture, community, politics, and economic conditions.

Research presents many different definitions for emotionally disturbed. The current federal definition lists five characteristics, of which one or more may indicate that a child is disturbed if such behavior is exhibited to a marked extent and over a long period of time and results in an adverse effect on educational performance: (a) inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors; (b) inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (c)

inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms, pains, or fears associated with personal or school problems. Children and youth with emotional disturbance are a heterogeneous group. The behavior of troubled children is characterized by inconsistency and unpredictability which are often responses to their chaotic environments.

There are many different views regarding the education of emotionally disturbed/behavior disorder children. Kauffman (1989) cited six conceptual models: behavioral, psychodynamic, psychoeducational, biogenic, ecological and humanistic. The behavioral approach sees emotionally disturbed as representing inappropriate learning. The focus of this approach is behavioral management. Behavior modification strategies use positive and negative reinforcement, punishment, extinction, token economies, behavioral contracts, group contingencies, and self-management to alter behavior. The psychodynamic approach is characterized by a high degree of permissiveness, little emphasis on academic achievement, and reliance on individual psychotherapy for the child and parents to resolve the underlying causes of the disturbance. Psychoeducation techniques use surface behavior management, the live space interview, and several brief forms of psychotherapy. Teacher responses based on the biogenic theory emphasize a structured, orderly learning environment with a consistent class routine, detailed sequencing of tasks with repetition until skills are acquired, and reduced stimuli of all kinds to produce an optimum education environment. Ecological techniques call for modifications in the total environment and focus on improving the child's functioning in

natural environments such as the regular classroom and community. In the humanistic approach, disturbed children are considered to be out-of-touch with their own feelings and unable to find meaning and self-fulfillment in traditional educational settings.

Educational practices are characterized by a nonauthoritarian atmosphere in which the teacher functions as a resource and catalyst rather than as a director of activities.

The field of behavior disorders presents a unique challenge to program evaluators. The field as a whole is plagued with philosophical and conceptual differences concerning the nature of disturbance, the focus for intervention, and the ultimate aims and purposes of special education programs. Individual programs vary in the importance placed on academic versus social-emotional outcomes. Some programs focus efforts solely on the child whereas others attend more to family, school, and community factors.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Sample

The Alternative School began under a grant from DYFS in 1976, the school was envisioned as an “alternative” between residential placement and the public school systems for disruptive students. The school developed through the 1980s into a well respected day program for emotionally needy students. The school receives referrals from over 30 different public school districts from Mercer, Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Atlantic and Salem Counties. The school discontinued DYFS funding in 1983, and now financially relies on tuition from sending districts.

The Alternative School philosophy emphasizes understanding the student as a whole person with individual strengths and weaknesses as well as a learner in a classroom. To achieve this goal, a variety of counseling and educational services are offered to help the students utilize their strengths and special talents to address the problematic behaviors that initiated their placement. Therapeutic services include individual counseling, peer counseling, adolescent groups, crisis intervention, art therapy and behavior modification. A psychoeducational lecture series and parent support group are also available to families.

The academic curriculum includes basic courses in English, science, mathematics, and history with additional programs as needed or required by referring school districts. Physical education, health, and human behavior programs are provided with special focus on family education and anti-smoking and substance abuse curriculum. Computer assisted instruction is offered within many of the classrooms as well as in the Learning Center where students can receive additional individualized assistance in various subject areas including Scholastic Achievement Test preparation and remedial instruction.

The teaching strategies and methods used are conducive to both academic and emotional growth. Their educational staff must keep in focus the underlying emotional issues of each student while concurrently challenging them to strive for and achieve their academic goals and requirements.

The educational staff includes special education teachers, teacher aides and assistants, physical education/health instructor, learning center teacher, and discipline and suspension room personnel. The clinical department includes school psychologists, social workers, student personnel specialists and an art therapist, along with other specialty consultants and interns from several local universities and colleges.

The Alternative School accepts students who are experiencing adjustment, behavioral, and/or personality disorders. The school does not accept students with psychotic manifestations, significant drug or alcohol involvement, nor histories of violent behaviors.

Measures

This study examines a self-contained day school for emotionally disturbed adolescents by evaluating whether changes produced by the intervention result in practical personally and socially worthwhile improvements. Such evaluation, often called social validation (Kazdin, 1977) involves determining whether the changes have brought the student's performance within acceptable levels. Social validation deals with how closely the student's functioning fits expectations of appropriate performance in society (Haring & McCormick, 1990). This hypothesis will be tested by the results of a questionnaire given to graduates from the program since DYFS withdrew its funding in 1983. Success will be defined by the graduates ability to support themselves with or without further education and no public assistance, and being law-abiding citizens. To determine these factors the questions dealt with current family status, job/income, military history, and post high school education.

Unfortunately, there are several major obstacles in conducting this type of study. Since this is a private school, records are sent back to the sending districts leaving little information on the students' home address. Many of the students are from very chaotic backgrounds and obtaining information of where they are presently living should prove difficult. But once the surveys are mailed, having the graduates return the questionnaire might prove to be arduous. After the polls have been returned, they will have to be collated and results charted. The barriers mentioned earlier will have to be considered when interpreting the data received from the questionnaires.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

There were 110 graduates of the Alternative School from 1983 to 1993. A questionnaire was mailed to each alumnus. Unfortunately, the major obstacle in conducting the study was obtaining current addresses for the former students. Also, receiving a response to the mailings generated only a 38% success rate. Success, in this instance, was calculated based on 33 questionnaires being returned completely filled out and 24 questionnaires returned "addressee unknown". Information on 11 more students was gathered through conferences with staff. These were students who had returned to the school to visit during the year. Based on all responses obtained, there was a 62% response rate. Forty-four surveys were not returned.

The graduates who responded are "successful" according to the following criterion: Success is defined as being able to support themselves with or without further education and no public assistance, and being law-abiding citizens. Out of 43 responses, only 2 people were unemployed and 1 incarcerated, leaving a 93% employed population. The following definitions were used as guidelines for employment status:

Blue collar workers—of or relating to wage earners, esp. as a class, whose tasks are carried out in work clothes and usually involve manual labor

White collar workers--of or relating to salaried workers, whose jobs usually do not involve manual labor

Professional workers--an occupation or vocation requiring training in the liberal arts or the sciences and advanced study in a specialized field (Webster, 1984)

The breakdown of occupations is as follows: 26 blue collar jobs, 4 white collar jobs, 1 self-employed, 2 professionals and 4 exotic dancers. Eighty-six percent of the people employed are making better than minimum wage. Nineteen of the positions held required additional education. Out of the 43 respondents, 75% continued with their education: 13 went on to college, 16 technical school, and 4 went into the military. Education is not part of the criteria for success; however, it is impressive to see how many of the graduates took this path to achieve a goal for employment.

The dancers are successful according to the criterion but one must decide if scantily dressed dancing is an occupation that other agencies for education would consider to be successful. Even though it can be argued that these women are supporting themselves, probably at a high monetary level, their career choice is not socially desirable.

The success of the program for each alumna that responded in writing is reflected in their comments about a reunion and the facility. All respondents indicated that they would be interested in a reunion of some kind. All but one marked that they would want to be part of the reunion planning stage. Some graduates added additional comments and suggestions. Some proposed having an alumni baseball team or volleyball team in

addition to having an evening out to see everyone. One girl wrote a narrative that I feel articulates the feelings of these graduates, it is as follows:

Yes! I have always talked about a reunion, I think it would be a wonderful turnout. The school has helped me and other so much, It would be an honor to give back some and help with the planning. I think there are a lot of success stories that are waiting to be told due to this facility. Many troubled teenagers have now become successful adults because when everyone gave up on us, this facility was there to build up our confidence. I thank you, and I look forward to the reunion.

An analysis of the data has been presented in this chapter. The data for each question is presented in Table 1, Summary of Status of Respondents.

Table 1

Summary of Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Sex	Children	Education	Occupation
M	M	2	C/2	Maintenance
Sep	M	1	C/2	Warehouse Worker
S	M	1	C/2	Heating/Cooling
S	F	2	0	Self
S	F	0	T/2	?
S	F	0	C/2	Vet assistant
S	F	0	C/3	Waitress
S	F	0	T/3	Cosmetologist

Legend:

Marital Status:

D - Divorced

M - Married

S - Single

Sep - Separated

Education:

C/# - College/years

M - Military

T/# - Technical School/years

(table continued)

Marital Status	Sex	Children	Education	Occupation
S	F	0	T/2	Exotic dancer
S	M	0	T/1	Cashier
M	M	0	C/1	Auto mechanic
M	F	0	C/2	Sales administrator
S	M	0	C/2	None
S	M	0	C/2	Maintenance
M	M	0	0	Exterminator
S	M	0	T/2	Roofer
M	M	0	M	Carpet installer
S	M	0	0	Landscaper
S	F	0	0	Sales clerk

Legend:

Marital Status:

D - Divorced

M - Married

S - Single

Sep - Separated

Education:

C/# - College/years

M - Military

T/# - Technical School/years

(table continued)

Marital Status	Sex	Children	Education	Occupation
M	M	0	T/1	Guard
M	M	0	T/3	Chef
S	M	1	0	Fireman
M	F	2	0	None
D	F	0	T/2	Cosmetologist
S	M	0	T/2	Drug/rehab speaker
S	M	0	M	--
S	F	0	M	--
Sep	F	0	C/2	Sales clerk
S	M	0	T/1	Truck driver
S	F	0	0	Odd jobs

Legend:

Marital Status:

D - Divorced

M - Married

S - Single

Sep - Separated

Education:

C/# - College/years

M - Military

T/# - Technical School/years

(table continued)

Marital Status	Sex	Children	Education	Occupation
M	F	0	T/1	Paramedic
S	F	0	0	Exotic dancer
S	F	2	T/2	Exotic dancer
S	F	0	0	Exotic dancer
S	F	0	C/5	Special educator
S	M	0	?	Incarcerated
S	F	0	T/1	Police officer
S	F	0	T/1	Cosmetologist
D	M	0	M	Tattooist
S	F	0	C/2	Student
S	M	0	C/2	Sales rep

Legend:

Marital Status:

D - Divorced

M - Married

S - Single

Sep - Separated

Education:

C/# - College/years

M - Military

T/# - Technical School/years

(table continued)

Marital Status	Sex	Children	Education	Occupation
S	M	0	0	Stockperson
S	M	0	T/1	Machinist

Legend:

Marital Status:

D - Divorced

M - Married

S - Single

Sep - Separated

Education:

C/# - College/years

M - Military

T/# - Technical School/years

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This study examines a self-contained day school for emotionally disturbed adolescents by evaluating whether changes produced by the intervention result in practical personally and socially worthwhile improvements. Such evaluation, often called social validation (Kazdin, 1977) involves determining whether the changes have brought the student's performance within acceptable levels. Social validation deals with how closely the student's functioning fits expectations of appropriate performance in society (Haring & McCormick, 1990). This hypothesis was tested by the results of a questionnaire given to graduates from the program since DYFS withdrew its funding in 1983. Success was defined as being able to support themselves with or without further education and no public assistance, and also being law-abiding citizens. To determine these factors the questions dealt with current family status, job/income, military history, and post high school education.

The graduates were successful according to this criterion. The respondents were

well socialized and integrated into society. Out of 43 responses, only 2 people were unemployed and 1 incarcerated, leaving a 93% employed population.

Conclusions

A major secondary concern of the Congress was that the education of students with special needs take place in the most normal, typical, or regular educational environment possible. Application of the least restrictive environment principle for emotionally disturbed students directs our attention to their unique characteristics. The students to whom this label is appropriately applied are those for whom instructional adaptations alone do not provide the conditions necessary for satisfactory educational progress. It often proves difficult to adapt the behavior management procedures of the regular classroom to accommodate the needs of emotionally disturbed students. Because their behavior is often disturbing to teachers and their peers in the regular classroom, we have justified the placement of these students in situations that are highly segregated, a possibility countenanced by the law which notes that the principle requiring placement in the least restrictive environment may be violated if a student's behavior is so disruptive as to interfere with the learning of others (Wood, 1986).

Students are placed in special segregated programs because in order to benefit from education, they must have support services that cannot be delivered in a regular classroom setting. The graduates from the Alternative School were experiencing failure in the regular public school system. They became the focus for hostility from fellow

students and teachers. They needed the respite provided by the Alternative School. On the basis of the questionnaire sent out, the respondents to the survey were well socialized and integrated into society. Ninety-three percent were employed in a wide variety of occupations. Seventy-five percent continued with their education after graduation. All the respondents indicated that their experience at the Alternative School was positive and responsible for their successes. They felt that without this program they would have had no where to turn and would have become another statistic. These graduates prove to be well adjusted adults.

Discussion

Special education rests on the assumption that programs can be provided for exceptional children which are in some measurable sense more effective than general educational programs. Special educators have naturally attempted to determine the efficacy of those alternative educational programs which they have organized. Efficacy research, though important is not easy to plan and implement, and some considerable literature exists regarding the conceptual and methodological problems which have been part of the history of efficacy studies in special education.

At this time, written description of well-designed evaluation plans and procedures in the field of behavior disorders are sorely lacking (George, George, & Grosenick, 1989). The importance given to postprogram outcomes by society reinforces the call by professionals in the field to look beyond the daily interactions between students and

teachers toward the long-term effects on the students themselves, as they interact in family and community settings (Nelson, 1983). Ongoing evaluation is needed to provide accurate numbers for the efficacy of these programs. This author suggests that having the social security number of each student may prove to be valuable when conducting a postprogram evaluation. The social security number might provide the current address and employment information of these students. In the study conducted in this paper this proved to be an arduous task and not 100% successful.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Name:	Celeste Wilden
Date and Place of Birth:	June 3, 1961 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
High School:	Cherry Hill High School West Cherry Hill, New Jersey Graduated, 1979
College:	LaSalle University Philadelphia, Pennsylvania B.A. 1984
Experience:	Taught Elementary through High School students with a multiple of handicapping conditions since 1984.