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Access Issues in Kenyan Primary Education

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Typical Kenyan classroom.

Prior to the British colonization of Kenya, indigenous people had a flourishing educational system, which was conducted in the context of family, community, clan, and cultural group (Mungazi, 1996). This traditional system of education was informal and carried out through a continuous life-transforming process involving age groups related to the acquisition of experience in their order of seniority and wisdom. The existing literature argues that the objective of traditional education was to build the capacity of individuals to be responsible citizens, as well as to contribute significantly to meeting the needs of their community (Mungazi, 1996, p. 40). Additionally, traditional education in Kenya was conducted through "immersion in traditions, dance, song, and story, involvement with learning groups, exposure to cooperative work, and ancestor spirit of worship that cemented kinship ties and obligation" (Mungazi, 1996, p. 40). This form of education provided individuals with practical and relevant skills to help address the emerging needs of the society (Busia, 1964, p. 17). It is argued that traditional education in "old Africa encouraged social responsibility, political participation, work orientation, morality and spiritual values" (Fafunwa & Aisiku, 1982, p. 10). This traditional education system flourished, particularly in Kenya and other Africans countries, because it integrated components such as "child character building, intellectual training, manual activities and physical education" (Fafunwa & Aisiku, 1982, p. 10).

The Western system of education in Kenya was first introduced by the early missionaries in 1557 along the Kenyan coastal towns such as Mombasa and Lamu with the intent to spread Christianity, and teach technical subjects such as carpentry and gardening (Battle & Lyons, 1970; Ojiambo, 2009; Sheffield, 1973). The partition of Africa in 1884 led to the establishment of the British occupation in Kenya, which opened up the main land for more missionary schools through the Church Missionary Society (CMS) as a means to convert more Africans to Christianity as well as to serve as rehabilitation centers for freed slaves from the Arab traders (Battle & Lyons, 1970; Ojiambo, 2009, Sheffield, 1973). The

construction of the Kenya-Uganda railroad further encouraged more missionary settlement in Kenya, resulting in the introduction of a Missionary Board of Education representing all denominations to foster the development of three-tier racially discriminated schools for Europeans (Whites), Asians, and Africans (Anderson, 1970; Bakari & Yahya, 1995; Battle & Lyons, 1970; Ghai & Court, 1974; Ojiambo, 2009; Sheffield, 1973).

The critics of the colonial education in Africa such as Apollo Rwomire argue that economic inequality has a significant impact on access to education in that it leads to social stratification which, in the long run, leads to internal neo-colonialism within the country. In addition, the curriculum model designed by the colonialist did not take into consideration African culture and needs, meaning it was viewed to be largely inadequate and irrelevant to the local population (Rwomire, 1998). Uchendu also contests that "the British system of education [has] brought in issues of rural-urban disparities, ethnic and geographic inequality of access, and differences between mission and nonmission-based education" (Uchendu, 1979). For example, the traditional roles of education, socialization of the youth, and cultural transmission have been submerged by the political mandate that schools must function as the servant of government policy. In addition, this system of education promoted economic exploitation under the era of colonialism in the country (Moumouni, 1968). The western system of education brought some benefits to the country as a result of missionaries and colonizers in school infrastructural investments, particularly in urban coffee, tea, and sisal plantation areas to serve the smaller population of interest (Swadener, Kabiru, & Njenga, 2000). To date, communities such as the Maasai and Samburu living in rural areas realize the need to embrace the Harambee (Swahili word meaning pulling together) teamwork spirit to work on development projects such as nursery and primary schools in their community for younger children to access education (Swadener, Kabiru, & Njenga, 2000).

After obtaining independence in 1963, with Kenyatta as the first African president, the government formed a commission led by Ominde in 1964 to review the critical issues in the education system in order to promote social equality and national unity and to develop the highly skilled individuals needed to foster high productivity in the country. This commission recommended that educational facilities be well distributed in the country, particularly in underprivileged regions, and that the religious beliefs of all people be safeguarded and respected (Anderson, 1970; Ghai & Court, 1974). In addition, the commission stated that there is an urgent need to expand the educational facilities for those districts and provinces that had been educationally marginalized in terms of quality education and number of schools developed, and enrollments for them to be at par with other regions in the country (Ghai & Court, 1974). However, to achieve a balanced educational system throughout the nation required equal distribution of qualified teachers from highly concentrated areas such as Central and Nairobi to those long–standing educationally disadvantaged areas such as Narok in the South Rift Valley and Turkana in Northern Kenya (Oucho, 2002). This redistribution was needed because "the development of formal education in Kenya as a British colony led to a regional distribution in educational facilities and opportunities which consolidated inequalities between regions and ethnic groups in the 1960s and 1970s" (Oucho, 2002). This system mainly favored the White settlers' highlands in central Kenya in the allocation of government resources for any kind of development between 1963 and 1978. During this period, the Kikuyu tribe benefitted more than any other tribe as a result of working as laborers at the settlers' plantations as well as having access to well-established schools

in Central and Nairobi regions where the British invested their development heavily (Oucho, 2002).

The British left Kenya 50 years ago, and since that time, there have been regional disparities in education as a result of fewer schools, difficult access to schools due to poor roads and lack of transportation facilities, and socioeconomic disparities, particularly in regions such as North Eastern and the Coast (Kimalu, Nafula, Manda, Mwabu, & Kimenyi, 2002). Therefore, Kenya inherited an educational system created by the colonial masters and the postcolonial period (ruling elite) who continued to promote unequal treatment based on racial discrimination and ethnic criteria (Kimalu et al., 2002; Ojiambo, 2009; Owino, 1997). Despite the wishful reforms the government attempted to put in place, this system has not changed much. For example, a bigger portion of government resource allocation goes to the national schools such as Alliance, Mangu, Starehe, and Moi Forces Academy, followed by provincial schools and, at the bottom of the table, district schools (Kihato, 2008). The regions most marginalized in the country by this type of educational system include North Eastern, Coastal Provinces, and some districts in the Rift Valley such as Narok, Kajiado, Samburu, Turkana, and West Pokot. The prevailing conditions in these areas make it hard for students to go to school and their parents cannot afford to pay for their children's school fees. This system of education has encouraged economic disparities instead of attempting to bridge the widening gap as communities in less developed regions/districts have higher rates of poverty (Kimalu et al., 2002; Ojiambo, 2009; Owino, 1997).

Additionally, severe poverty makes it unrealistic for many Kenyan children to obtain an adequate education (Sen, 1999; Streeten, 1994; World Bank, 2013). A recent World Bank (2013) report estimates the poverty rate in Kenya to be between 34% and 42%, which according to the report could be eliminated by 2030 by targeting a two percent rate reduction each year. However, for this reduction to be achieved, growth must go hand in hand with development and reduction in inequality in the country (World Bank, 2013). Sen (1999) argues that lack of education is both a part of the definition of poverty and a means to long-term improvement in productivity, supporting Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, and Hunt's (2007) assertion that access to basic education lies at the heart of development. As a result, the Enhancing Sustainable Livelihoods Through Education Project began in May 2012 to assess the factors that influence access to primary education in the study area. The overarching project goals are to analyze these factors and provide strategies to help improve student access to education as well as encourage a high rate of retention in Kenyan rural schools.

The purpose of this article is to present findings from the first year of a two-year study to document challenges Kenyan primary-aged students face in obtaining and excelling in education in their native land. Through the use of photo methods, the participants and researchers illustrate barriers to education and provide solutions for change.

Methods

The participants in this ethnographic study were 24 public school teachers from the Maasai Mara Region, Narok County, Kenya, selected using purposeful sampling based on the criteria that they had to be primary school teachers from the area (Babbie, 2008). In keeping with the participatory and advocacy focus of photo methods (Wang & Burris, 1997; Werts, Brewer, & Mathews, 2012), multiple sources of information were used in this

study to allow for the analysis of data collected by both the participants and the researchers, specifically participant-generated photographs and semistructured interviews. Data were collected over a two-month period between May and June 2012.

One of the researchers visited the schools that were the target of the study and met with the school administrators and teachers. During their discussions, he shared with them the purpose of study as well as recruited them to participate in the study. Each of the 24 participants were outfitted with Kodak and Fuji disposable cameras, each having 24-exposure film, and were asked to document the impact of free primary education as well as school feeding programs in the region. These participants were asked to take photographs of places or things at both day schools and primary boarding schools that they felt had positively or negatively affected student access to education. The respondents were given the cameras for a week, and during that time, they were asked to take as little or as much time as they wanted to take photos of different impacts. However, the actual photography took only two to three days. At the end of the week, the researchers collected the cameras from the respondents and printed the photos at a lab in Nairobi. The researchers returned to meet with the respondents at the prearranged time, place, and venue to conduct the photo-interviews. In Kenya, day schools are attended by students from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, while Kenyan boarding schools, similar to their counterparts in the United States, provide on-site learning, activities, and housing for admitted students.

After the participants took the photographs, the researchers conducted 30-minute (approximately), semistructured interviews at their schools to assess the meaning of the images. The researchers conducted an inductive thematic analysis process to identify themes through "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Rice & Ezzy, 1999) to analyze the photographic images. This process identified categories/themes found in the data collected and also used the interviews to identify themes that represented the challenges Maasai children face in obtaining a primary education: poverty, discrimination, transportation, and looking to the future. The poverty theme illustrated the access issues created by the lack of general economic resources in Kenya; the discrimination theme and the sexism in Kenya, particularly against females, and its impact on education; and the transportation theme, the extreme conditions and lengths that students endure in order to get to school. Finally, the look-to-the-future theme emphasized that the lack of willingness to learn was not the underlying factor holding the Kenyan education system back, rather it is the systemic barriers and environmental impediments that impact student access to education.

Poverty

As a result of rural poverty in this area, access to primary education is unevenly distributed and based on household wealth and the ability of families to afford schooling for their children (Seers, 1977). This inequality in family income and social status has a significant impact on a child's future and his/her ability to escape poverty. As various participants indicated during the interviews, if students from certain households/families are denied access to education due to costs associated to schooling or any influencing factor, then they would be more likely to miss the benefits accruing from education. This reality is supported by existing literature, with Spring (2011) arguing that "access to education can help students escape poverty by giving them the tools and character traits needed to advance in the free market system." Spring (2011) further argues that "children in early

childhood education programs are more likely to score higher in reading and math, more likely to graduate from high school and attend college, more likely to hold a job, and more likely to earn more in that job and thus, break the cycle of poverty." Study participants indicated that poorer students may not be able to attend school on a regular basis due to the need for children to help support the family, as illustrated in picture of a school boy tending a goat farm for the well-being of his family. As participants explained, this work infringes on student study time as well.

Students help their families survive.

Some students are fortunate enough to have parents who can walk with them to and from school in order to provide protection from environmental hazards. Unfortunately, participants indicated that most families are not economically stable to provide this type of luxury and students miss school due to this as well. In addition, for those who do get to school, many arrive exhausted by their long and treacherous treks to get there.

A parent protects her children.

Approximately 80% of Kenyans live in rural areas with less than 20% of its land suitable for agriculture (Langinger, 2011). These communities often are too poor to build enough classrooms to sustain the growing student enrollment in primary schools. Teachers are also forced to teach students in outside classrooms under the trees due to limited or no space available in the few existing structures.

Classes meet outside when no classrooms are available.

Some of these issues concerning attendance and the energy necessary for learning have been mitigated by the introduction of food programs in most rural nomadic communities in Kenya. These free meals serve as an incentive for students to stay in school, especially during periods of drought. The communities, which rely on livestock as their primary livelihood, move extensively in search of pasture and water (Goyal, 2005). Participants acknowledged the benefits of the program, mentioning that school vegetable gardens provide sustainable food security and balanced diets for primary students in boarding schools, while others acknowledged that this program is not as effective for students in day schools who suffer from malnutrition as a result of being fed only with boiled dry beans and/or dry white corn-maize throughout the semester. Worse yet, sometimes the schools run out of food and in some cases, students in public primary day schools lack a balanced diet as a result of the cost involved in procuring food for the school.

Facilities and structures are improving, albeit slowly, in the country. The provision of facilities and equipment in rural communities, such as desks and spacious classrooms by the government through community development funds, has encouraged school attendance rates, particularly among young children between grades one and four.

As a result of the collaboration between the local community and tourism developers in the area, more schools are now being constructed with an attempt to encourage younger children to begin schooling at the required age as well as to encourage local residents to see the importance of educating both boys and girls. The majority of the children, in particular girls, are now being given education sponsorships by donors as an incentive to encourage parents to send them to school through their teenage years. Nongovernmental organizations, such as A Better World Canada, are donating food to help sustain underprivileged children in schools.

Malnourishment continues to be a problem, though school vegetable gardens may provide a bit of balance for some.

Rural development is needed.

Private donors help to build a new school.

Kindergarten children enjoy food donated by nonprofits.

The introduction of school farms as a homegrown school feeding program in rural areas in Kenya is seen as one way to sustain the program as well as to create an incentive to minimize school dropout during the drought period.

School farms sustain school feeding programs.

In contrast to the day schools, students in private schools in Kenya enjoy the comfort of available resources such as learning materials, spacious classrooms, qualified teachers, and a quality learning environment, with teachers being assigned a manageable number of children to teach in a single class. Primary boarding schools have also been the beneficiaries of donors whose support has significantly motivated the local community to send their children to school in large numbers as well as reducing the dropout rates in the area. Participants mentioned that "the provision of food and other necessary learning materials by donors in this school has not only saved children from walking long distances, but also improved child health, hygiene and educational performance." This special care given to

students in private schools has improved the quality of the health in the country as well as the performance on national examinations in Kenya. Unfortunately, very few families can afford private education for their children, especially for female students.

Private schools have more resources.

Discrimination Against Females

Parents in rural communities, particularly the Maasai in Kenya, believe that it's a waste of time and money to invest in a girl's education. These communities foster a significant gender gap, especially in education, as boys are given more favors and opportunities. Acknowledging that supporting girls' education in such indigenous communities will not only assist in increasing women's wages and their well-being and productivity, but also provide them access to rising job markets is important for the country of Kenya. Females in Kenya are rarely afforded the option of education given to young men.

Girls in a classroom are a rarity.

Girls are not only denied access to education, but they are also used as a source of income, commonly working on sugar plantations or as housemaids/house girls for low wages with their salaries frequently being used to pay school fees for the sons of the family. As a result, few girls in rural areas attend school, and those enrolled rarely complete the eighth grade because they become sexually active, seeking money, love, and comfort from men (Mpangile, Leshabari, Kayaa, & Kihwele, 1996). Once they become pregnant, their families, especially fathers and brothers, disown them because of various religious and cultural beliefs (Chege & Sifuna, 2006).

One of the most significant observations of this study involves the researchers' perception of the Maasai women. Researchers found them reluctant to speak honestly about their feelings or opinions in the presence of men, particularly to those who do not speak their language; however, when speaking with them alone, the researchers were impressed with their knowledge and insight. In fact, the female participants offered more specific and well thought out information than the men did. This intelligence and insight needs to be recognized and nurtured, as it can be harnessed for the good of the Kenyan society as a whole. Encouraging young ladies to attend school will strengthen the country (Chege & Sifuna, 2006).

Inside a school for girls.

Transportation

In Kenya the day starts early as young children have a multitude of before-school responsibilities, dealing with home and family life issues not encountered in first world countries such as the United States, Britain, and Canada. Then, as the participants indicated, they have to walk or run to school, trips often ranging between five and seven miles one way, which are exhausting under the best circumstances, and debilitating for children with very little to eat. At the end of the day, they repeat the trek to return home. Young children are often unable to attend school because they cannot walk long distances nor keep up with the older students. More importantly, the lack of nourishment has been found to affect brain development in young children. According to Lempinen (2012), "a host of recent studies show that growing up in poverty can shape the wiring and even the physical dimensions of a young child's brain, with negative effects on language, learning, and attention" (p. 428).

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Long walks to school.

Furthermore, often-sick students are unable to make the arduous trip to school, leading to a variety of problems. Participants commented that corporal punishment is used by teachers to discipline students (well or otherwise) for missing school, thus providing an incentive for those who miss school for one reason or another to stay at home, eventually dropping out for fear of punishment. Even students who are able to handle these disciplinary problems must work through the mental and physical exhaustion of these trips.

In addition, the majority of Kenyan schools require students to wear uniforms, and since few families are wealthy enough to afford more than one, students who find themselves walking home through the frequent afternoon rainstorms are left with few viable options. Participants said that they can attend school without wearing their uniforms and risk corporal punishment, or they can stay home, receiving their punishment when they return to school. School attendance is further impacted by the fact that most students who walk to school are unable to afford shoes to protect their feet. Even though older students sometimes assist the younger ones by carrying them on their backs, participants stressed that the lack of shoes was a hindrance to school attendance.

Bare feet make the long walks more difficult.

In addition to these problems, Kenyan wildlife also poses a dangerous situation for children traveling to school. African students have to be mindful of lions, elephants, and puff adders—a venomous snake species found in wilderness areas. Participants further explained that the need to learn survival skills also requires students to use time that they could otherwise allocate towards more traditional academic pursuits. Furthermore, due to these physical dangers, female students are often encouraged to stay home. Environmental factors are among the primary reasons leading to the extremely low completion rate of 42.3% for primary school (Ruto, Nyamauncho, & Mugo, 2009).

Dealing with wildlife: A student carries
a makeshift spear to protect himself.

In contrast, board school compounds can provide sanctuary from worries of attack from dangerous wildlife and the debilitating effect of the long walk to school. These compounds appear to provide students with a safe, secure environment, giving them the freedom to concentrate on their schoolwork and physical fitness/well-being.

Happy students playing freely in a
primary boarding school compound.

Looking to the Future

In the photo below, we see a group of excited young boys, their smiles indicating the joy they feel after receiving sporting and educational materials. In response to this photograph, our interviewee described the hope on the faces of these boys. The picture illustrates that when proper resources are provided, Kenyan students are interested in learning. The participants echoed this idea as well, saying Kenya is not in need of a dramatic change of will; it simply needs the resources to allow children the opportunity to learn. The hope and excitement seen in these boys' faces is found in both pictures below.

Students are eager to learn.

Volunteers are needed.

While a variety of agencies and institutions from around the world send volunteers and supplies to assist the children in this country, Kenyans are also encouraging their young people to get educations—but at the same time not forgetting their heritage. Exposure to cultural elements can also motivate and encourage students to stay in school.

Cultural exposure motivates students. Students in a girls' primary boarding school perform a traditional dance for the Kenya Music and Cultural Festival.

Discussion

This study examined the challenges to education faced by students in Kenya. While the small size of the participant sample limits the ability to draw significant conclusions about the larger Kenyan educational experience, it emphasizes the educational phenomena that must be addressed in order for Kenya to take its place in the knowledge economy and in the global world of the 21st century. More importantly, challenges hindering student access to education in rural areas need to be addressed by education stakeholders to improve the country's general quality of life. The most prevalent issues identified were the difficulties the students faced in getting to school and the physical impediments that prohibit them from obtaining an education. Here we see an unfortunate cycle—if Kenyans fail to obtain an education, they will fail to break out of poverty, the condition that often prevents them from obtaining an education.

A variety of solutions have been identified in this study to help alleviate this situation. Boarding schools enable students to avoid the daily long, treacherous walk. School food programs, gardens, and donations from various charities provide an incentive for malnourished students to make the treks. In addition, education in traditional Kenyan cultural activities and exposure to cultural events provide incentives for school attendance as well as retention in educational programs.

More importantly, it is essential that Kenya address its discrimination against women. This exclusion from the educational system limits the potential and capabilities of the Kenyan workforce, and this discrimination leads to the sexual objectification of women,

resulting in their identification as simple reproductive mechanisms. Young women become pregnant, more children are born, and the unmet demand for education increases.

The most important implication of this study is that hope exists for Kenya. The semistructured interviews and photographs indicate that Kenyan youth do have a desire to learn. Currently, this desire is frequently being met by the donations and volunteers from outside the country. While this strategy may work in the short term, it is not functional over time. As a country, various stakeholders involved in the Kenyan education system must take the necessary steps to generate new ideas about how we can fulfill this desire by relying on ourselves and using the resources we have within our boundaries. We need to educate our youth to be citizens of the modern world—and then to pass this knowledge and experience on to the next generation. Doing so will move Kenya from a developing country into a developed one.

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One Is Too Many: Personalized Guidance for Retrieving Early School Leavers

Yvette Daniel and Finney Cherian

Abstract

This study profiles the efforts of one Ontario school board in its reintegration practices for early school leavers through an initiative called Opportunity Diploma (OD), a program which enables these students to accumulate their high school credit requirements using cooperative education. We adopt a case study methodology using interviews with eight students, the program coordinators, and the city employment services coordinator; field observations; and document analysis. For the purposes of this paper, we focused mostly on students' perspectives and the coordinators' feedback that form one aspect of this research. A review of the recent literature on this topic led us to identify five key themes: the value of outreach and personal support, the importance of student self-determination, the reluctance of early leavers to return to a traditional high school experience, the value of personalized programs, and the importance of community partnerships. We anchored our open-ended interview questions in these themes to investigate whether these are applicable in identifying the characteristics of the OD program, and found several parallels between the themes identified in the literature and those generated from our data analysis. We believe that focusing on the processes at work where individuals "succeed" against all odds can highlight the potential for future policy interventions. Our aim is to influence policies and practices to better meet the needs of early school leavers through programs like OD, which motivate disengaged early school leavers to reclaim their education.

In an era when Ontario is ranked high on international testing, and the success of its educational system is touted in prestigious reports (Field, Kuczera, & Pont, 2007; Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010), a study on early school leavers[1] might seem irrelevant. However, even in such circumstances, there are still those who struggle and leave school without completing their high school requirements (Janosz, Bisset, Pagani, & Levin, 2011; Tilleczek, et al., 2011). We contend that even one student who leaves school without a high school diploma is one too many. Fairness and social justice demand that we cannot ignore this problem, for the rising requirement for skills and lifelong learning has relegated high school diplomas to merely a minimum requirement in our increasingly complex, diverse, and global economies. Researchers point to a protracted form of degree inflation or "credential creep" in North America and Europe (Bollag, 2007; Collins, 2002; Marshall, 2004). Collins (2002) defines degree inflation as the combined circumstances where the degree becomes a requirement for more and more jobs and professions, while at the same time becoming an insufficient entry requirement for others. Such circumstances necessitate an urgent and sustained commitment from educational institutions to address the needs of early school leavers.

We present a case of one retrieval program that seeks to reintegrate students via non-traditional pathways for completing K-12 education in Ontario, Canada. Our study profiles

a local program, Opportunity Diploma (OD), initiated by a local school district and implemented mainly due to the creativity and perseverance of two educators, Mr. Paul Boots and Mr. Chris Stollar,[2] who motivate disengaged early school leavers to reclaim their education. They believe that students who have "fallen through the cracks"[3] have a right to a second chance. The program aligns processes, structures, and outcomes to enable students to complete their high school credits.

Chris and Paul carry out this task with a conviction that early school leaving is a decision that can be reversed (Goldman & Bradley, 1997), and that students are active agents in shaping their own lives. They found that the important guidance work of retrieving early school leavers worked well in nonthreatening environments, such as coffee shops, not associated with traditionally structured schooling. Paul remarked:

> School is the last place they want to meet and talk about coming back. Many blame school and teachers for their leaving. We have gotten kids back over relationships started over coffee and donuts. Schooling is about relationships and that's what many early leavers never had with educators.

Paul's comments concur with the findings from the *Child Trends* reviews:

> Engaging out-of-school youth in a training program of any sort can itself be very difficult. These youth, unlike their in-school counterparts, are typically disconnected from institutions and disaffected with structured learning environments. This lack of connection can make it difficult for training programs to identify and enroll prospective participants (Aron, 2006, p.15).

The purpose of this paper is to profile the OD program, for it exemplifies the efforts of one school board in its reintegration practices and its scaling-up options for early school leavers. We seek to understand the multiple and complex facets of this program, as well as its teachers and participants, in the context of the Ministry of Ontario initiated *Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy* program that has enabled students to accumulate their high school credit requirements. Like Davey and Jamieson (2003), both Chris and Paul believe that focusing on the processes at work in those cases where individuals succeed against the odds can help positively influence future policy interventions. This paper is divided into three sections: First, we frame our study in the five key themes identified in the literature; next, we provide details of the context and the particulars of the research project; finally, we provide relevant findings and implications for practice.

Literature Review

A review of the recent literature on recovery programs, also termed "second chance" education, has revealed important aspects regarding the reengagement of early leavers. The literature on recovery programs is sparse, particularly in Canada,[4] compared to studies that focus on reasons for early school leaving and on prevention programs. Our study, however, examines the characteristics of successful recovery programs. Among studies that identify effective practices within second chance programs, five main themes emerge: (a) the value

of outreach and personal support, (b) the importance of student self-determination, (c) the reluctance of early school leavers to return to a juvenile high school experience, (d) the need for tailored and practically bent recovery programs, and (e) the importance of community partnerships.

The Value of Outreach and a Personal Level of Support/Encouragement

The first step in retrieving early school leavers is outreach. Allen and Wolfe (2010) describe an effective program in which an organized outreach and marketing campaign resulted in high enrollment. Multiple studies extol the benefits of such outreach, recommending that schools and districts actively contact students who left school early (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Radwanski, 1987; Suh & Suh, 2006). The Radwanski (1987) report recommends that schools be mandated to make contact with those students who drop out (pp. 118-119). By way of recent and convincing testimony to this principle, Princiotta and Reyna (2009) refer to a specific case in Texas of a successful recovery program:

> Volunteers, including district superintendents, visit the homes of students who do not return to school in the fall. The program has recovered more than 5,500 students in Houston since 2004 and has spread to 17 other school districts in the state. (p. 30)

Several studies indicate that student-teacher relationships are especially important when it comes to student reintegration. Wyn, Stokes, and Tyler (2004) also list the quality of relationships with staff as one of the key features in facilitating marginalized young peoples' participation in second chance education. Furthermore, the quality of relationships with staff is especially vital for early leavers, given that these young people are often trying to access education after experiencing failure or exclusion (Tilleczek et al., 2011; Wyn et al., 2004).

The Importance of Student Self-Determination

Self-determination plays an important role in the decision made by early school leavers to return. Zhang and Hasto Law (2005) link self-determination with high school success and lowering dropout rates, and recommend a school environment in which teachers nurture self-determination. Suh and Suh (2006) also studied the relationship between educational engagement and high school degree attainment among early leavers and found that self-concept engagement factors have a long-lasting impact on degree attainment. Those students with an internal locus of control (i.e., were intrinsically determined to succeed), were the most successful.

The Reluctance of Early School Leavers to Return to a Juvenile High School Experience

Successful recovery programs often provide an atmosphere that deliberately stays away from that of a traditional high school. When students express disillusionment with their former high school experiences and are often older than typical high school age—no longer thinking of themselves as children, but as adults—a traditional high school classroom experience may be seen as juvenile, even regressive. Almeida, Steinberg, Santos, and Le (2010) found that "another promising development has been a growing recognition

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that dropouts and off-track students benefit from acceleration, not remediation—in their curriculum and instruction" (p. 5).

In a successful program, students are promised a path toward career and adulthood rather than "back" to their days in high school (Allen & Wolfe, 2010). An example of one such program located in Dayton, Ohio, runs hands-on programs in construction, nursing, and computer technology, and treats students as apprentices rather than secondary students. Participants hone their skills by completing authentic projects which include building homes in low-income areas of the city, rebuilding donated computers, and participating in realistic medical situations (Martin & Halperin, 2006). All of these learning sites position students as adults in a workplace rather than as students in a classroom.

Also important is ensuring that program curriculum and teaching pedagogy are relevant and forward-focused. Metzer (1997) argues that "there is a strong need to reduce lecturing time and increase student involvement" (p. 25), and that more responsibility should be allocated to students in directing and evaluating their own learning (Ungerleider, 2008). Further, Brodigan (2002) argues that students should be the authors and managers of their own learning: empowered to control their own progress and working at their own rhythms, but accompanied by a constant mentoring process on the part of the tutor. Cole (2004) observes that "effective programs negotiate goals and the methods for achieving those goals with their students" (p.10).

When examining the elements of consistently successful programs, Tyler and Lofstrom (2009) include, among other things, "curricular reforms that focus either on a career-oriented or experiential approach" (p. 93). Lamb, Dwyer, and Wyn (2000) include making school programs more relevant and inclusive as one of their three major policy recommendations for second chance education.

Connected to the need for improved curriculum and teaching methods is the oft-cited need for more flexibility and choice, along with students' needs to be treated as independent young adults. Goldman and Bradley (1997) found that reenterers strongly favored being treated as adults by their institutions, and that adult teaching strategies and ambience encourage reenterers in their academic study. Wyn et al. (2004) report that students in Australia are attracted to the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and Adult and Community Education (ACE) programs because of the flexibility in the mode of delivery, the choice of study areas available, and the opportunities for personal autonomy they provide.

Te Riele and Crump (2002) examined programs at alternative colleges in order to identify some of their most productive policies and strategies. They noted that one of the colleges' greatest strengths is the fact that students feel that teachers treat them like adults, which is important to many teenagers and young adults. They found that students perform and behave better when they are treated like the adults they believe themselves to be. When students are treated as adults and authoritarian structures are eliminated, students begin to understand that they are at school by choice.

Disassociating dropout recovery programs from traditional high schools in these ways helps to erode the idea that "there are no incentives for dropouts to return to an experience in which they had already failed once" (Field et al., p. 75). Creating a vital adult atmosphere may be accomplished with flexible and autonomous curriculum; greater workplace and real-world experience; and links to, and preparation for, postsecondary classes and programs.

The Need for Tailored and Practically Bent Recovery Programs

Perhaps more than any other consideration, the literature on successful recovery programs emphasizes the need for education that is tailored to students and aligned practically with students' personal goals as well as appropriate employment trends and opportunities (Allen & Wolfe, 2010; Piiparinen, 2006; Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Steinberg & Almeida, 2004). Piiparinen (2006) advocates a "bottom-up" method of recovery program planning where the interests of the students are considered along with the demands of the local labour market (p. 18). Piiparinen (2006) also emphasizes the importance of fitting recovery education to the individual needs, levels, goals, and interests of specific people; a sensible consideration when one takes into account the varying ages, knowledge levels, and number of years removed from school that characterize the dropout population. Allen and Wolfe (2010) second this emphasis and further recommend the benefits of targeted academic counseling and curriculum designed around the needs of incoming students. Researchers and participants alike agreed that flexible programming and an element of choice were essential to a successful program. When the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) put together a yearlong series of articles that examined the recommendations made in ACTE's high school reform position papers, one of the seven best practices they highlighted was to "offer flexible learning opportunities to encourage re-entry and completion" (Hyslop, 2007, p. 33).

The Importance of Community Partnerships

A number of studies (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Steinberg & Almeida, 2004) also advocate for community involvement in recovery programs, calling for schools and programs to form partnerships with various community agencies. These agencies could possibly help early school leavers on their way to a diploma through assistance with such areas as child care, financial resources, and health and well-being. Steinberg and Almeida (2004) write that "providing the diversified, flexible programming that some young people need will require districts to look across the various education, workforce, and public care systems (e.g., foster care, mental health, social services, juvenile justice) that address aspects of the needs of young people who disconnect from school" (p. 7). As an example of this, the successful Ohio dropout recovery *Fast Forward Center* provides on-site vision services, job counseling, and a clothes bank among many other user services—all at reduced or no cost to participants (Carter & House, 2010). As well, the importance and appropriateness of partnering with local colleges or postsecondary institutions is a consistent theme in the literature (Allen & Wolfe, 2010; Almeida et al., 2010).

The Research: Case Study

A qualitative case study was selected as the methodology best suited for researching the OD program and its staff. According to the seminal writings of qualitative researcher Sharan B. Merriam (1988), "a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process,

or a social unit" (p. xiv). Kenny and Grotelueschen (as cited in Merriam, 1988) confirm the appropriateness of using a case study format in educational research: "When it is important to be responsive, to convey a holistic and dynamically rich account of an educational program, case study is a tailor-made approach" (pp. 30-31). And since a central goal of this study is to influence policies and practices to better meet the needs of early school leavers through programs like OD, the authors are pleased that "case study has proved particularly useful for studying educational innovations, for evaluating programs, and for informing policy" (p. 33).

With this aim in mind, it is important to point out that case study as a method of research is inherently *not* theory building. "The purpose [of an intrinsic case study] is not theory building—though at other times the researcher may do just that," according to Stake (2005, p. 445). Case studies are designed to yield analytical generalizability rather than replicable results (Cooper & Christie, 2005). Hence, case study evaluators analyze data to offer theoretical insights about a phenomenon, which others can use to understand similar occurrences in their own research and practice (Yin, 1998).

The case study method is especially useful in generating knowledge about a significant social group that requires transformative curricula to meet their needs. Our study places a particular emphasis on program features and personal qualities that OD staff utilize to effect the successful reintegration of early school leavers back into credit recovery. The two teachers responsible for operating OD are performing unorthodox and exceptional work, and they accept the challenges and the rewards of working with early school leavers.

Our main data sources were in-depth interviews conducted with a small group of student participants;[5] agents from the local employment services; and the two teachers, Chris and Paul. Since interviewing is one of the major data collection methods used in case study research, it dovetails well with our aims, especially in light of what Fontana and Frey (2005) write:

> The new empathetic [interview] approaches take an ethical stance in favor of the individual or group being studied. The interviewer becomes an advocate and partner in the study, hoping to be able to use the results to advocate social policies and ameliorate the conditions of the interviewee. (p. 696)

Interviews were triangulated with field observations and document analysis. The documents studied include current literature on student reintegration as well as Ministry of Education policies on Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy. Further, we reviewed pertinent documents, and held several meetings and interviews with Chris, Paul, and their superintendent over the course of the research.

Each interview transcript was member-checked. Each member thematically coded notes from field observations and the transcripts. We held regular meetings to compare, reduce, add, or edit codes. The themes that were generated from the interviews were examined to determine if they were consistent with the findings from the literature and to establish anecdotal evidence to augment the literature. Through this layering of data, we triangulated our findings and helped ensure their validity and reliability, as well as their usefulness for those working to improve outcomes for early school leavers.

Opportunity Diploma: Program Context and Profile

In 2007-2008, the province of Ontario funded Student Success teachers in every school to work with struggling students to reduce the number of early leavers. Another strategy to retain students in school and reengage students who left school was an expansion of program options through cooperative education (co-op). The local school authorities used these policies as a springboard from which to establish a customized program to retrieve early school leavers.

In the 2007–2008 school year, the local school board received funding for two additional Student Success teachers. These two teachers work on a board-wide basis, specifically to reengage these early leavers. Paul and Chris became the board's Continuous Intake Cooperative Education (CIC) teachers and took over the existing program (not widely known at the time). In an analysis of early school leaving conducted by the school board, the key reasons were: conflict with teachers, irrelevant curriculum that led to disengagement, family issues, and choosing to work rather than study due to dire financial circumstances.

OD is under the umbrella of the Expanded Co-op initiative in which high school students can apply two co-op credits towards their 18 compulsory credit requirements (in addition to 12 elective credits) to graduate with a high school diploma. The Expanded Co-op (designed to help more students earn their 18 compulsory credits) gives students the chance to experience real-world, hands-on learning; develop essential skills and work habits, and provide valuable work experience to help build their resumes for postsecondary programs and future employment possibilities. Below are three examples of typical student cases:

1. Student A needed five credits in which four were co-op credits and the last was a Grade 12 English credit. She was 24 years of age with a young child at home. Upon completing her four co-op credits (which consisted of 440 hours) she registered for the English credit. After three months, she completed the English credit and graduated with her high school diploma.
2. Student B called after hearing about the program from others in the local community. He only needed three credits and was working in a busy Tool and Die Company. He has recently finished his 330 hours of co-op and was very excited to obtain his diploma.
3. Student C needed four co-op credits and an English credit. He completed 220 co-op hours at a local construction company framing new homes. He was registered as an apprentice and was paid for his last 220 hours. He is currently completing his Grade 12 English credit.

Chris and Paul retrieve student names from lists generated by the board software system for students who left without a diploma and are not currently registered in any program. Initially, both Chris and Paul (who come from a structured school environment) were perplexed with the autonomy they were given. However, they quickly realized the potential to reach students in unconventional ways. They adopted a proactive approach in contacting these students, rather than waiting for them to find their own way back to a high school diploma. Once they met with a student at a neutral site (usually a coffee shop), they created

a plan with the student for credit completion. They reviewed the student's transcripts to diagnose needs and discuss strategies. They worked from the premise that reentry was highly individualized and hence, as unique for every student as his or her biography, personal experiences, or social and economic status. Many factors were taken into account when they designed a feasible reentry plan.

Chris and Paul worked with local businesses to find co-op placements along with tasks geared toward credit completion. It was a combination of in-school and out-of-school learning experiences to earn high school credits. Furthermore, the use of current employment as a co-op placement made OD attractive, as students were able to continue to earn money while accumulating hours toward credits for graduation. Both Paul and Chris "lived" in their cars as they moved from one co-op placement to another to check upon, nurture, and support the reintegration of the students, and to ensure they completed their requirements for graduation. They also attended local job fairs held by Windsor's Employment and Social Services so that they could connect with employers to find placement opportunities. Due to the current economic downturn and layoffs in town, Chris and Paul had to use all their powers of persuasion to find placements for students.

The OD Program has a Web site (paidcoop.wetpaint.com) for the management of the experience where students can access and submit forms, assignments, documents, and journal logs. The site also offers resources and is used as a communication tool between teacher and student. In the first year of its inception, from September 2007 through April 2008, over 100 students returned to high school, and of this group 35 attained their Ontario Secondary Diploma. By the end of June 2011, 450 students were recruited through OD. Among them about one third (150) earned their high school diplomas, and the rest fell into two approximately equal groups: One group used OD to gain additional credits but did not qualify for high school graduation; while the second group "vanished" according to Paul and Chris. Some of the reasons given were self-sabotage, mental health issues, housing issues, and substance abuse concerns. It is important to clarify what these numbers mean. It is stated that in a typical year, 33% of students earned a diploma, 33% of students would use OD to earn needed electives or electives for substitution purposes, and 33% of students would not complete the program as outlined for them. Going by those estimates, 66% actually followed the individualized plan to completion, but some would need compulsory courses in order to complete high school diploma requirements.

Findings and Discussion

In coding our interview data for themes, we found a strong alignment between the themes in the literature and those generated from our data analysis: the importance of self-determination and postsecondary aspirations; the value of outreach; the importance of tailored and practically bent programming; the value of community partnerships; and the importance of providing adult, nonjuvenile, and flexible learning environments. We found evidence that these significant variables were present in the OD program when we analyzed our sample of eight student interviews and interviews with the coordinators and community liaison personnel. These findings are discussed below. All names (except Chris' and Paul's) are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

The Value of Outreach and a Personal Level of Support/Encouragement

The success of a recovery program such as OD often depends on personal connections between education professionals and potential students/students, as shown above in our literature review. Chris and Paul recognize the importance of marketing the program, rather than relying on students to stumble upon it on their own, or on overburdened school staff to recommend the program:

> We have been very proactive. We have presented the program over 60 times to various groups and organizations with the assistance of our community partners. It is through these presentations that potential students hear of us but think that it was "luck" that sent them our way. Really, we put our information everywhere that we think those 'potential students' might visit.

The job developer for Employment and Social Services in the city commented on the energy and enthusiasm that Chris and Paul brought to the program, stating that "their unique contribution resided in the fact that they not only helped clients plan for high school completion, but they also assisted them in putting a life plan in place."

While Chris and Paul were marketing the program in a broad way, they were also reaching out to students on an individual basis. Kerri, one such student, stated that the call she got from Chris took her completely by surprise. She could not believe that someone would care enough to call and encourage her to complete her diploma. Chris accommodated her schedule to arrange for the initial meeting in a coffee shop to discuss credit recovery possibilities.

Another student, Alex, explained that Paul was his guidance counselor at his old school. Paul was able to capitalize on that previous and personal connection to introduce Alex to the program. From there things moved quickly: "I think within a week he started setting it up. And then we were basically looking for jobs." Paul remained a constant source of support, providing resources ("he sent me journals and different things along the way"), checking in ("he would always keep up to date with you, see how you were doing"), and making sure the lines of communication stayed open while Alex completed his co-op hours. In the end, Alex earned the required credits and was enrolled at a local community college, taking a business program, considering university, and fine-tuning his entrepreneurial ambitions. He credited Paul with making his completion of high school a positive experience.

Adam also appreciated the emphasis on a personal connection during his OD experience:

> They [the OD coordinators] were great guys, first of all, and they wanted to be updated so they'd email you, they'd call you. They did not let up. Chris would call me at 7:00 a.m. and say, 'How are things going? Are you keeping up with your logs and your hours?' Sometimes they'd stop by the shop to see how things were going.

Chris and Paul went above and beyond to be fully present in their students' experiences, making sure their students knew they truly cared and wanted them to succeed. As Adam related, this sometimes meant contact at unconventional hours.

Kristina, on the other hand, described having a positive relationship with the teachers and staff at her high school, which contributed to her process of returning to school after leaving. In fact, Kristina's vice-principal introduced her to the OD coordinators when she announced her decision to leave school. Kristina explained, "I always had my teachers and my vice-principal, I could always go to them and talk to them and get help from them. My teachers were always encouraging me."

The Importance of Student Self-Determination

The theme of developing maturity and self-determination came clearly to the surface in our discussions with the OD students. Ashley spoke of being:

Very determined to get my grade 12 [to graduate]. People looked really down on me when I said that I had left school. . . . I just realized that dropping out of school . . . just wasn't something for me. I knew I could do better.

With the increased maturity that comes with age and having experienced the social stigma attached to leaving school early, many of the participants developed a renewed determination to attain their diplomas. Kristina experienced this renewed sense of determination, reflecting that "every time I feel like giving up, if I just think about what good is going to come from it, that it always looks better and it always is better."

Kerri spoke of the program giving her the chance to put her determination to succeed to work in an alternate format: "I wanted to get my Grade 12. I was going to do summer school. But I was done with school, like I said. I wanted to take a break and work and get my life together." Her frustration with traditional high school and her professional aspirations were at odds; OD provided her with a nontraditional route to success where she could put her aspirations to work. At the same time, she had Chris to encourage her determination: "Chris was just so good with helping me realize how important [school] is and that I could do it." Kerri described Chris as a "good teacher" because he encouraged her to achieve what he knew she was capable of without being pushy. She sensed his caring for her and was thus motivated to complete her education. Josiah found that the OD program itself inspired his postsecondary and career aspirations, reflecting that the work experience of co-op, "let me change my position in the workplace… pretty sure I don't really want to get an entry-level job, [but] a job that requires some sort of a[n] education . . . white collar."

Chris and Paul are able to capitalize on this increased maturity and determination, working with young people who have experienced life without a high school diploma, and find that their aspirations have grown: "Many times, students are contacting us in order to earn their credits—so, we don't have to convince students to return. Their current life experience has done that for us." Chris and Paul position program information strategically within the path of potential students, at "Social Services, Temp Agencies, Employment Ontario, and Youth Employment Services," and then allow their students to come to them. They put the decision to return squarely with the students they serve, presenting the opportunity and allowing students to choose for themselves. With a population that is not forced, but "discovers" the program (through the strategic exposure techniques employed

by Chris and Paul), efficacy becomes natural, as students take pride in having made their own decision to return to school, while developing their goals and owning their futures.

The Reluctance of Early School Leavers to Return to a Juvenile High School Experience

Describing his personal experience, Alex remarked, "I was never interested in being in high school. It was one of those things I just wanted to get out of." He later added, "It was just not something I was interested in anymore." As a consequence, Alex felt little motivation to excel even though he felt quite capable of getting good grades, so eventually he left school. As we have shown in our review of the literature, a strong theme of dissatisfaction was discovered with the juvenile and restrictive aspects of high school among dropouts. Our interviews with students elicited similar feelings. Participants like Alex frequently identified teaching strategies as an area that needs improvement in mainstream school or needs to be incorporated into second chance education. All our participants expressed a need for more student involvement. For some, more student interaction was desirable because it meant a more enjoyable learning environment. Ashley remarked that: "The people that I've spoken with who have also left early, they were tired of sitting in a classroom for an hour or an hour and a half, listening to someone talk."

Part of the issue with regard to flexibility is related to these students' complex lives that cannot easily accommodate a mainstream school schedule. Kristina, for example, lived on her own, and thus needed to work to support herself. She struggled to continue attending high school classes during the day while working full-time at night. Kristina sought more flexible learning opportunities, but was told that there were no other options. Eventually, however, Kristina was enrolled in OD, which offered the flexibility she sought. Through the program, she was able to work and earn credits simultaneously and eventually earned her high school diploma.

Most of the issues discussed above are linked in some way to students' wishes to be treated like competent adults. Wyn et al. (2004) write that offering students flexible approaches to education, freedom to participate "in their own way," and flexibility and understanding from teachers can be summed up as "being treated as adults" (p. 24).

Our participants expressed similar sentiments over and over again. Many students were frustrated about being treated "like kids," and about having no say in what they learned. Ashley described the atmosphere at her former high school as "aggressive." Kerri also felt that her teacher—with whom she had a negative relationship—focused too much on uniform rule enforcement, and she perceived his intolerance as aggression. Michael, along with the other participants, felt frustrated that there were "so many courses that we were just forced into but there's nothing you can do about it." The feelings of powerlessness and lack of independence in what happened at school led many participants to leave school entirely.

Participants also expressed frustration over what they described as a juvenile and immature atmosphere created by their peers. Ashley confessed to being "so tired of the whole high school drama. It just wasn't my place to be there anymore." Alex likewise spoke of high school as "a negative environment" and explained, "I just didn't want to be there. Basically it just felt like I was with a bunch of kids." Pat, too, expressed frustration with traditional school:

I think my main issue [with high school] was that I really didn't feel that I learned a lot. It wasn't because I was lazy or didn't want to go, I just had no interest in being there. I'd rather spend my time working and doing something productive.

Though there is an assumption that early school leavers do not complete their schooling out of academic incompetence or laziness, many of our participants demonstrated just the opposite. Frustration with immaturity amongst their peers and "high school drama" suggests that they are more mature and practically minded than their peers.

Keri expressed another problem that early leavers faced in returning to a traditional high school experience:

When you're older, it's really hard to want to sit in a class and do what you did in high school . . . you know, learning that way. Like, I have knowledge, and I'm not stupid. I didn't fail those classes because I wasn't sure what to do or I had a hard time with the work. So for me it was kind of different, because I already knew how to do everything.

Our study participants felt very reluctant to return to the kind of high school they had experienced in the past, whether that be for reasons of frustration with a restrictive school environment, irritation with teenage social life, or the feeling that they were too mature to return to traditional schooling. For these reasons, early school leavers need an alternative path that does not feel like a step backwards, a path that treats them as mature adults with a stake in their own education and career goals. Paul and Chris made sure to provide such an environment with OD, and do so by reminding themselves of the full lives of the adults they are working with. They commented:

Your empathy level requires an immediate adjustment in this role. You must be able to understand what the priority level is for each of your students. For some, Opportunity Diploma itself is priority one, while for others, finding a stable housing situation or getting their next meal takes precedent [sic]. Stepping away from your teacher role and understanding their lot in life is important.

The Need for Tailored and Practically Bent Recovery Programs

One of the things that the literature on recovery of early school leavers emphasizes most is the importance of programs individualized to students and their lives. Almost all of the students in our research expressed interest in being able to contribute to the direction of their program of study, and to be able to offer input into how classes were run. They felt that OD gave them more agency and input in determining the direction of their education, as well as more practical, real-world experience.

Along with poor relationships with teachers and ineffective teaching strategies, participants most often cited irrelevant and uninteresting curriculum as the strongest barriers to success in traditional schooling. In Alex's estimation, his school was not offering him training in the areas he actually found interesting and useful for real life, so he wanted to get out of it.

Participants' lack of interest in mainstream curriculum went hand-in-hand with their sense that the curriculum was irrelevant and impractical. The most frequent complaint participants offered was that they would never actually use the material they were getting from school in real life. As Josiah expressed it, "I know people always say you're going to use all this stuff, but 90% of it I'm never going to use in my entire life." Ashley expanded on this idea when she commented:

> Unless I'm going to go be some huge mathematician, I don't want to learn trigonometry, parabolas . . . I don't want to know any of that, it's going to do nothing for me in the future unless I'm doing something in that field.

Kristina remarked that educators ought to "figure some way to work out specifically how they're going to give you the things you need and not the things you don't need, that you're not going to use."

For many students feeling disengaged from school, vocational training seems more relevant to their aspirations. Such was the case for most of the participants, including Adam. He felt that the education system failed to teach him relevant math skills, whereas his co-op placement, through OD, allowed him to engage in math in a meaningful context. Adam felt that it took seeing math problems worked out in a meaningful, tangible context for him to grasp them. Likewise, many participants cited a need to "get out of the classroom" in order to engage in real-world learning and practical life experience.

All of our participants claimed that the OD program offered much more practical, relevant education than did mainstream schooling. When asked how OD differed from traditional schooling, Adam replied, "I was on the job, so everything was relevant to me. I was doing what I wanted to do." Adam appreciated the fact that his co-op placement was clearly connected to the job he aspired to and taught him the skills he would need in his career of choice.

Paul and Chris intend for the program to be practical and rewarding for every student they see:

> Many of our students (and people in general) are more comfortable in a "tactile" learning environment. Co-op very naturally provides a hands-on learning environment; this allows students to marry some of the theoretical information that they are exposed to within a school to real world situations.

They also feel that, "aligning the [student] placement to career goals is of the utmost importance to OD." They ensure that each student has an experience that matches their own aspirations.

The Importance of Community Partnerships

Finally, as found in the literature, early leaver recovery programs benefit from partnering with community organizations to provide comprehensive service and training. OD currently partners with community members in an informal way, through the links to various local

employers within the co-op program, as well as providing information to community groups. However, Chris and Paul admit that links with local employers may be tenuous in the current challenging economic climate:

> The economic drop off had a negative effect on Opportunity Diploma. While the need was still there, placing students in a traditional co-op placement became problematic. Employers could not rationalize taking a student in a co-op role when any of their employees were laid off.

With this in mind, we would suggest that the OD program might be ripe for growth in the area of community partnerships, and that students might benefit from a more formal and reciprocal link between both community organizations and local employers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we note that Chris and Paul have identified the reasons for early school leaving and found different ways to enable early school leavers to complete their high school requirements. It does not make sense to bring these early leavers back into the same environment that caused them to give up on schooling in the first place. Paul and Chris are cognizant of these issues; therefore, they design individual career plans for students. In the reintegration process, students are monitored and guided by Chris, Paul, and the employers in the co-op placements. The success of the OD program can be attributed to the dedication and resiliency of these two determined Student Success teachers in retrieving early school leavers in informal settings, allowing students to "discover" the program with their strategic marketing skills, and providing ongoing support and opportunities for students to achieve their goal of earning their high school diplomas.

To date, the OD program is still successfully assisting early leavers to complete their high school diploma requirements, and is also being considered more often by secondary schools as a possible pathway for students who are struggling; in some cases, before traditional in-school resources have been implemented. Currently, most early leavers are referred to the OD program compared to the previous practice of Paul and Chris seeking them out. Word of mouth has become the best marketing tool now, whereas in the initial stages of the program, they had to do several presentations in order to introduce the program to the community. Now, after nearly 60 presentations, Chris and Paul's OD program has established roots in the community. Their presentations have decreased, but the number of students they are retrieving has increased. Chris and Paul attribute this change to the paramount importance of community group cooperation.

The OD program is one small, highly individualized, local program that serves the needs of a specific cross section of early school leavers. It would be a large undertaking to implement a program of this nature at a provincial or national level. Nonetheless, the lessons learned from the success of the program could open up current educational policy discourses to develop future large-scale initiatives aimed not only at retrieving early school leavers, but also retaining students through nontraditional pathways to high school completion.

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Endnotes

1. We prefer to use the term "early school leavers" and not "dropouts," although the latter is used in the literature as well. Therefore, where authors use "dropouts" we have retained the term as is for the purposes of accuracy.
2. Both agreed to their names being used in this paper.
3. A picture book written by Carolyn Sollman, *Through the Cracks*, is a story of a child who fails to find meaning and value in school. The story is told through the eyes of two children who shrink and fall through the cracks because they cannot participate in meaningful ways in the traditional school system.
4. Although many Canadian school boards have implemented recovery, second chance, and adult education programs, the authors could not find recent (within the last 10 years) literature that discuss specific outcomes of Canadian programs that are comparable to OD with regard to identifying, retrieving, and engaging early leavers to complete their high school requirements.
5. These students were between the ages of 19 and 25—representative of the ages of most students in the program. Four were female and five were male. Generally in any given year, there are more males than females in the program as well. These students were between three to five credits short of graduation, which is also typical for most students enrolled in the program. The maximum credits students could gain were eight.

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Cap'Ten, Be the Captain of Your Own Project
ICHEC-PME – Brussels

Laurence Lievens

Preface

ICHEC, one of the largest business schools in the French Community of Belgium, took on the challenge of inspiring entrepreneurship in children ages 10-12 years. The college had already embarked in the early 1990s to better prepare its own graduates to work in the business world and to improve their management skills. Then, in 2003, the Cap'Ten initiative was created to develop entrepreneurial behaviour in young children. In doing so, and in providing tools and support to teachers, Cap'Ten has revitalized education for the thousands of students enrolled, increasing their engagement in their education through developing projects to serve their communities.

A Word of Introduction

All of the programmes of ICHEC-PME, from the *Pôle Jeunes* (Youth Focus) to the *Pôle PME* (SME, or Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, Focus; *PME Start; PME Plus*) share a common DNA. The key element of this DNA is the belief that what makes a project, or a company, is above all the person behind it. This is the person who is at the heart of the act of entrepreneurship; the person who will bring his own *colour* to the undertaking; the person who will make it a successful project; the person who will give it its added value and its personality, thus creating economic value, jobs, and prosperity as well as boosting the region's attractiveness.

That is why, in all our programmes, whether they are for young people or for seasoned entrepreneurs, the work always starts with the person behind the project before we move outwards to the specific tools, techniques, and skills.

This DNA of the ICHEC-PME programmes is the element that most clearly differentiates them from programmes offered by other operators.

In the youth programmes, this fundamental attention to the individual is expressed through:

- Working on meta-competencies in the three programmes, in order to learn how to learn, to transfer and apply knowledge in different contexts, and to be creative and think differently.
- Attention to self-knowledge, becoming aware of one's own functioning and one's assets (through the *Fourmiroir* tool in *Cap'Ten*, discovering one's own creativity in *Explor'Ado*, the questionnaire "*Pars à la découverte de tes talents*"—the *journey to the discovery of your talents*—in *Dream*) in order to create a personal entrepreneurial plan that matches the individual's personality.
- Making tools available to each participant, not just for the teachers, in order to encourage the autonomy of all involved.

- Giving a face to a profession, but also the process behind it, through the testimonials in Dream, in which the speakers talk about what they love and what motivates them in their jobs and/or organisation, in order to open young people's eyes to the importance of the coherence between the person/project.
- Anchoring: allowing each participant to experience entrepreneurship in order to give them a sense of what they like, what they don't like, their comfort zones, the joy of taking action. It is by making the participants actors (and not just spectators) that one can work deeply on that which drives them, what makes them become entrepreneurs. It is through personally, actively experiencing the joy of entrepreneurship that the highest rate of "repeat offenders" can be achieved
- Seeking to understand human functioning and development in order to only offer activities and programmes appropriate for each age (example: the first version of *Explor'Ado* was abandoned as not suitable).
- Positive orientation: Every young person has at least one talent, and the goal of the Youth Programmes is to help each one to discover and develop them by gaining the necessary skills to allow them to grow. We believe that each person possesses the resources for his own development, his own evolution.

And recognising these talents and positive mindsets is certainly needed for the economy of today and tomorrow. That is surely the reason why Harvard Business School started teaching positive psychology, which has in fact been their most popular course since 2006.

Cap'Ten

Cap'Ten is a plan and series of tools for project management, designed for students between the ages of 11 and 14. With *Cap'Ten*, children can work on skills such as curiosity, creativity, perseverance, problem solving, organisation, team spirit, and communication—all skills that they naturally have within themselves. In 2011-2012, over 15,000 young people in Belgium became the captains of their projects, with the help of over 850 teachers! In the eight editions that have been organised to date, more than 95,000 children and 4,000 teachers throughout Belgium have taken part in the programme. This makes it the first national programme for devel-

Cap'Ten helps develop the spirit of entrepreneurship in young people.

oping the spirit of entrepreneurship in young people. Over 15% of the participants attend schools with programmes for disadvantaged students. For 75% of the teachers, the participation in *Cap'Ten* noticeably improved the school performance of their students.

Thanks to *Cap'Ten* I have been able to give my students, who have been especially un-motivated this year, the taste for entrepreneurship as something serious, to be valued, and through which they can be proud of what they produce. I can assure you that they are thoroughly immersed in their projects and the ideas just keep coming. You can't imagine how much these tools have helped me.

—Fifth year primary school teacher, Belgium

Cap'Ten received the **European Enterprise Award**, issued by the European Commission. Cap'Ten was chosen as the best Investment in People programme out of 320 projects from throughout the 27 member states.

- C*ap'Ten* was designed and tested in 2004, and launched on a large scale in October 2004 in French-speaking schools in Belgium.
- *Cap'Ten* has been available in Dutch since 2008.
- *Cap'Ten* each year reaches between 10,000 and 15,000 young people throughout Belgium.
- *Cap'Ten* has been in the pilot phase since 2010 in Burkina Faso (West Africa).

Cap'Ten's Strengths

1. Enhances personal skills: manual, sport, artistic skills.
2. Gives to every child a **project within his reach**.
3. Contributes to **stimulation of entrepreneurship spirit**.
4. Is fitted to all children, whatever **the school level** or the socioeconomic environment.
5. Is fitted to children **not conversant with national languages**.
6. Is **free** for schools.

Visual Documentation

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntd-RSnucV8 (local television report)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouNPmhF-8wo (pilot phase in Burkina)
Other images and videos are also available online.

Photo Gallery

Cap 'Ten focuses on early intervention in preparing students to develop business and management skills.

Students in the Cap 'Ten programme in the West African country of Burkina Faso proudly display the entrepreneurial kits given to them at the start of their instruction in the initiative.

Youth are encouraged to embrace music and the arts.

A young entrepreneur in the Cap 'Ten programme in Belgium presents his creative project to a fellow student.

With voices and instruments, students in the Cap Ten programme celebrate their successful introduction into youth entrepreneurship. Shown on screen behind the youths are lyrics to an upbeat song about the Cap 'Ten experience.

About the Author

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The Importance of Addressing Complex Trauma in Schools: Implementing Trust-Based Relational Intervention® in an Elementary School

Karyn B. Purvis, Henry S. Milton, James G. Harlow, Sheri R. Parris, and David R. Cross

A significant number of students arrive at school each day, unable to remove the cloak of fear and distrust that has become their only source of protection in their own homes. For these children, the repeated maltreatment they have endured has shaped how they view and react to their world, both inside and outside of their homes. Bath (2008, p.18) states,

> The brain-based stress response systems of these children appear to become permanently changed as they focus attention on the need to ensure safety rather than on the many growth-promoting interests and activities that secure children find attractive and stimulating.

Looking at the statistics, approximately 68% of Americans have experienced some type of trauma during childhood (Copeland, Keeler, Angold, & Costello, 2007), and children from urban areas and ethnic minorities experience particularly high rates of recurrent interpersonal trauma, also called complex trauma (for a review see Overstreet & Mathews, 2011; Richards et al., 2004; Sedlak et al., 2010). Complex trauma includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and/or witnessing domestic violence, and is perpetrated upon children by their caregivers (Greeson et al., 2011). The resulting effects of complex trauma include developmental, psychological, and cognitive impairments that can significantly impact school behavior and performance (for a review see Overstreet & Mathews, 2011; Cole et al., 2005). We know that chronic fear obstructs both cognitive and emotional functioning (Anda et al., 2006; Perry, 2001), and when fear is reduced (as evidenced by a reduction in the stress chemical cortisol), there are gains in behavior, cognition, and language (Purvis & Cross, 2006).

With only a limited number of studies thus far exploring how a history of trauma impacts children in school settings, we do know that *preschool children* exposed to trauma exhibit lower levels of frustration tolerance, flexibility, and problem solving; and higher levels of anger and noncompliance (Egeland, Sroufe, & Erickson, 1983; Vondra, Barnett, & Cicchetti, 1990). *Elementary-aged children* exhibit lower persistence on, and greater avoidance of, challenging tasks (Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001). *Older children and adolescents* exhibit problems with attention, abstract reasoning, and executive function (Beers & DeBellis, 2002). In addition, *all ages of children* with histories of trauma: (a) are more frequently referred for special education and disciplinary action (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001); (b) have lower grades and standardized test scores; and (c) exhibit higher rates of academic failure, grade retention, and dropping out (Boden, Horwood, & Fergusson, 2007; Cahill, Kaminer, & Johnson, 1999; Eckenrode et al., 1993; Kurtz, Gaudin, Wodarski, & Howing, 1993; Leiter & Johnson, 1994). However, studies have shown that schools can play a mitigating role in outcomes and can promote resilience (Crooks, Scott, Wolfe, Chiodo, & Killip, 2007; see Heller, Larrieu, D'Imperio, & Boris, 1999).

Children with backgrounds of complex trauma are often in a persistent state of hyper-arousal—geared for fight, flight, or freeze (resulting from a home environment where they do not feel safe). Thus, some maladaptive behaviors may arise from this hypersensitivity and tendency to overreact to, or misinterpret, actions of others or certain elements in their environment that would go unnoticed by someone without a history of trauma. When schools implement measures to ensure that children feel safe, their voices are heard, and their needs are met, these children can begin the process of removing the cloak of fear and self-preservation that they brought from their home environment, and learn to engage with teachers and peers in a productive and healthy manner. Teachers and school counselors can benefit from training about complex trauma, its effects on children, including recognizing the types of involuntary behaviors that result from trauma, and ways to help children regulate such behaviors (O'Neill, Guenette, & Kitchenham, 2010).

Trust-Based Relational Intervention®

This article discusses Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®), an intervention designed to address the underlying issues behind persistent unmanageable behaviors for at-risk populations in any setting. In addition, examples of the intervention techniques and activities are also provided. Developed at the Institute of Child Development at Texas Christian University (TCU), this intervention has been used successfully in settings such as individual families, group homes, summer camps, and more recently, school environments. Through TBRI®, educators create conditions to help children succeed behaviorally through strategies grouped into three evidenced-based principles: (a) empowering principles—address biological and environmental issues, and promote a feeling of safety; (b) connecting principles—promote relationships, awareness of self and others, and playful engagement; and (c) correcting principles—teaching self-management. Other publications describe the components of TBRI® in more detail (Purvis, Parris, & Cross, 2011; Purvis, Cross, & Sunshine, 2007; Purvis, Cross, & Pennings, 2009), and empirical evidence supporting TBRI® (Purvis & Cross, 2006; Purvis, Cross, Federici, Johnson, & McKenzie, 2007). A brief summary of each of the three evidenced-based principles is provided below.

Empowering principles. First, the empowering principles address children's biological needs and provide an environment where they feel safe and nurtured (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Lickliter, 2008). Children who know their environment is safe and predictable are able to learn and practice new behavioral skills (van den Boom, 1994, 1995). They also can learn to trust others and develop healthy emotions and behaviors that are trust-driven rather than fear-driven (Knight, Smith, Cheng, Stein, & Helmstetter, 2004).

Because many of these children have not had a responsive parent to meet their basic needs on a consistent basis, having food and water available at school can alleviate their worries and reassure them that they will not go hungry. Also, hydration improves behavior and mental functioning, including attention and memory performance (Bar-David, Urkin, & Kozminsky, 2005; Edmonds & Burford, 2009; Edmonds & Jeffes, 2009; Wilson & Morley, 2003). Allowing children to keep water bottles at their desks can meet this need. Also, regularly scheduled snacks (recommended every two hours) help sustain adequate blood sugar levels, shown to be important in children's ability to maintain positive behaviors,

stable moods, and optimal cognitive functioning including attention and self-regulation (Benton, Brett, & Brain, 1987; Benton & Stevens, 2008; Gailliot et al., 2007).

Establishing predictable daily routines and creating a calm, positive atmosphere can be a great help. Transitions are particularly difficult for students who are fear-driven and struggle with self-regulation (e.g., transitioning from one activity or class to another, or at arrival or dismissal). Facilitating smooth transitions can reduce problem behaviors and wasted time that can occur during these times (Paine, Radicchi, Rosellini, Deutchman, & Darch, 1983). Transitions can be managed by providing children time to mentally adjust to the transition, such as giving more than one notification that an activity is about to change; or allowing children to move freely among available activities (Agler, 1984; Doke & Risley, 1972; Fowler, 1980).

Also, children with histories of trauma often have sensory processing disorders that can negatively impact behavior, social skills, motor skills, and academic performance (Cermak, 2009; Cermak & Groza, 1998). Behaviors that indicate possible sensory issues include breaking pencils or crayons (misjudging tactile pressure), misjudging a touch on the shoulder as painful pressure, reacting in an aggressive manner, intolerance of noisy environments, or many other signs (for more information about sensory processing disorders and symptoms see http://www.spdfoundation.net/about-sensory-processing-disorder.html). Daily schedules that include sensory activities and physical activity can significantly improve sensory issues (Dorman et al., 2009; Kranowitz, 2006; Miller & Fuller, 2007; Purvis & Cross, 2006). In addition, TBRI® teaches calming techniques such as deep-breathing exercises (Peck, Kehle, Bray, & Theodore, 2005; Stueck & Gloeckner, 2005) and use of weighted blankets and neck pads (Mullen, Champagne, Krishnamurty, Dickson, & Gao, 2008).

Connecting principles. Second, the connecting principles promote relationships, including awareness of self and others, and playful engagement. Building relationships can help reverse the adverse effects of early stress on the brain, reduce stress-related behavior, and improve psychosocial functioning (Fisher, Gunnar, Dozier, Bruce, & Pears, 2006). Engaging children with a playful tone of voice (in everyday interactions as well as when redirecting negative behaviors) instills warmth and trust in the relationship (Panksepp, 2000, 2002), disarms fear, promotes attachment, and builds social competence (Brown, 2009; Jernberg & Booth, 1999; Robison, Lindaman, Clemons, Doyle-Buckwalter, & Ryan, 2009).

Correcting principles. Third, the correcting principles are proactive steps that prevent disruptive behavior before it happens, including teaching appropriate behaviors for challenging situations (Colvin & Sugai, 1988; Colvin, Sugai, Patching, 1993). TBRI® proactive strategies are often taught in nurture groups (described below), and include verbal reminders, behavioral rehearsals, and role play with others or with puppets. Life value terms are used to teach social skills and include using respect, making eye contact, using words to replace negative behaviors, being gentle and kind, accepting consequences, accepting "no," asking permission, and others. While proactive strategies will reduce the number and intensity of behavioral challenges, when they do occur, TBRI® recommends using the IDEAL Response.© With this approach, the adult's response is matched in intensity to the level of the behavioral challenge, and the relational connection is maintained with the child during correction (for a review of the IDEAL Response©, see *The Connected Child*; Purvis, Cross, & Sunshine, 2007).

This next part of this article reports how TBRI® was brought to one school in Oklahoma, describing implementation and initial outcomes.

About the School

The school, Eugene Field Elementary School, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, U.S.A., was considered one of the worst schools in the state due to having the lowest state test scores for the two previous years. They had 33 teachers and 428 students in grades PreK - 5 during the first year of TBRI® implementation. Ninety-eight percent of the students in this inner-city school lived in poverty, and 75% had a parent or caregiver in prison. Student ethnicity was approximately 40% African American, 21% White, 20% Hispanic, 8% American Indian, and 1% Asian. These students had not typically responded well to traditional methods of discipline and classroom management. The school had already implemented Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) to the physical environment as recommended by an occupational therapist, and had installed consistent procedures for transitions throughout the day without tangible improvements in student behavior. The principal and staff had worked to turn the school around over the past eight years with some progress in test scores, attendance, and some individual successes, but the school was still lacking significant progress in the behavioral culture.

Implementation of Training

In June of 2010, TBRI® trainers met with school representatives who stated that their goals were for teachers and staff to obtain appropriate tools to successfully maintain classroom behavior standards and to create a more positive learning environment. Based on the discussion, TBRI® trainers provided school staff with training in (a) TBRI® principles and techniques, including strategies to connect with children and support them physiologically and emotionally; (b) insight into children's needs; and (c) resources to put TBRI® into practice. TBRI® trainers would conduct schoolwide staff trainings and individual teacher training in classrooms. In addition, a few school representatives would travel to TCU twice for additional training. TBRI® trainers also would be available by phone or email to answer questions.

Nurture group training. TBRI® trainers visited Eugene Field three times during the school year (August, September, and February) for nurture group training in classrooms. During each visit, trainers visited between 8-10 classrooms to demonstrate or assist teachers in implementing nurture groups (about 30 minutes each). Nurture groups are a key component of TBRI® because they are effective vehicles for developing relationships, promoting communication, and teaching self-regulation and social skills. During initial visits, trainers modeled nurture groups for the teachers. In later visits, teachers conducted their own nurture groups while trainers offered feedback. For nurture groups, students were seated in a circle either on the floor or at their desks. Teachers reported that individual discussions with trainers were very helpful in addressing specific questions and concerns about their own students. Also, through nurture groups, teachers were able to address current needs in their classrooms.

The basic structure of nurture groups consists of six steps. Steps 1-3 and 5-6 are Theraplay® activities (*Theraplay*® for groups; Rubin & Tregay, 1989) that provide a "wrapper" around the

4th step, which is sandwiched between them and provides social skills training. Nurture group steps are as follows:

Step 1. **Review Rules:** Participants review the three rules for groups: *stick together, have fun, no hurts*. These rules set the tone for how group members should treat each other.

Step 2. Check-In: This is a warm-up activity in which children take turns answering a simple, nonthreatening question about themselves. This activity helps participants find their voice and practice being heard in a safe context.

Step 3. Band-Aids®: In this activity, children tell about something that "hurts" on their body or emotionally. This is an opportunity for children to use words to express their feelings, and where they can learn not only to give, but to receive care. Next, partners apply a Band-Aid® on the area of the body that hurts, or over the heart for an emotional hurt.

Step 4. Social Skills: In this portion of the nurture group, children work on social skills such as "respect" and "making choices" through role-playing, puppets, and practice. For example, a social skill is explained to students who are also taught the language (scripts) for that concept. Next, students role-play the concept with puppets, peers, or their teacher. For example, on the topic of "respect," students practice both respectful and non-respectful behavior using puppets. "Puppets" who behave disrespectfully would get a "re-do" using respectful behavior.

Step 5. Feeding: Before the closing, children take turns feeding each other. Candy is generally used in order to connect a nurturing act with something pleasurable. As a bowl of candy is passed from one child to the next, children make eye contact with their partner and ask, "May I feed you?" The partner can either consent, or politely say, "No thank you," and feed himself.

Step 6. Closing: This is a time to celebrate the success of the group. The facilitator can make a comment such as, "Let's give ourselves a hand for being so awesome at _____ (for example, practicing respect)." The three rules are then briefly reviewed, and children are told about what they will be doing after the nurture group dismisses, to ease transition to the next activity.

Of critical importance is that nurture groups are loaded with playful interactions and opportunities for success. For the first few nurture groups, any child may be allowed to "pass" on participation if they do so with respectful words ("I'd rather not today"). As they learn that nurture groups are emotionally safe, they will soon become an active participant in the group.

Other training. In July, prior to implementation, several representatives from Eugene Field attended our Hope Connection Summer Camp at TCU to observe TBRI® in action. In October, TBRI® trainers conducted a two-day training at the Eugene Field campus for all

school staff which included an overview of TBRI® theory and methods, emphasizing practical application for the classroom and including the following topics: attachment; neurochemistry; sensory processing; and the empowering, connecting, and correcting principles. Much of this training was conducted in an interactive format (e.g., role-playing, practicing nurture groups). In November several school representatives attended a weeklong TBRI® training at TCU. Finally, in February, TBRI® trainers provided a two-hour refresher course for school staff at the Eugene Field campus that included a sensory experience workshop to highlight sensory issues that may cause behavioral problems in classrooms, and techniques to help children cope with these issues.

   Resources. At the beginning of the school year, TBRI® trainers supplied resources to Eugene Fields such as weighted pads and stress balls, which are effective calming tools, and materials for "engine plates" (these help children learn to gauge their level of alertness and self-regulate). Engine plates are based on the *Alert Program for Self-Regulation* (Williams & Shellenberger, 1996) and may also be used in TBRI® nurture groups.

Outcomes

   In the two years since TBRI® was first implemented, teachers, support staff, and counselors are now consistently using TBRI® to create a more positive learning environment. They report that children have made dramatic gains in developing positive relationships and overcoming various behavioral challenges. For instance, there are fewer violent outbursts and emotional meltdowns, social skills have improved, and teachers are reporting that students are less likely to act out to get their needs met. Children are now using words to get their needs met and making eye contact when talking to peers and adults. These are tremendous gains for children who are learning to control their behaviors and develop positive social skills that will last into adulthood.

   The year prior to implementation, 16% of enrolled students had three or more referrals to the principal's office. During the year TBRI® was implemented, the principal reported they "have fewer children acting out and more doing the right thing." Several of these students had no referrals and many others had only one to two referrals for minor issues. Also, incident reports decreased 18%, and the number of referrals from the top 10 most frequently referred students decreased by 23%. The principal reported that more referrals were for minor offenses because teachers were able to deescalate many situations by using TBRI® practices. For example, for some students, emotional meltdowns that had previously escalated into violent episodes lasting for two hours were now resolved in 10 minutes.

   Also, teachers, support staff, and counselors have created a more positive learning environment, and better understand how addressing basic needs can significantly improve a child's capacity for self-regulation, focused attention, and relationship building. The school staff have created a sensory-rich environment and daily schedules that now include a physical activity every two hours, and snacks and water are available in classrooms. Classroom rules now include, "Stick together," "No hurts," and "Have fun" (developed by Theraplay®). Nurture groups have been added to the school's morning routines, and teachers are using calming tools, all of which have helped reduce undesirable behaviors and improve students' attention.

Discussion

Given the promising results of this project, we have begun longitudinal studies implementing TBRI® in a large, urban school district, and also in a secondary charter school. Additional studies are planned. Through our ongoing research in schools, we are developing additional training and support materials to help schools ensure successful implementation of this program. We are encouraged by the preliminary data in the current studies because results are consistent with the positive results seen at Eugene Field. Also, a broader range of student and school outcomes are being assessed in these studies, and publication of these results will be forthcoming.

At Eugene Field, many of the teachers were skeptical about implementing yet another method that promised to help them with behavior issues. However, after the first few months, they could see that positive changes were occurring. Because there are many strategies for helping children at risk for complex trauma, teachers were able to choose a few strategies with which to begin, and then could add more over time; incorporate the strategies that work best for their own students and classrooms; and find ways to adapt strategies to fit specific needs. By giving teachers the information and tools to alleviate the effects of complex trauma, behavioral issues that do not respond to traditional methods of discipline may also be reduced while classroom learning is increased.

Feedback

The following is feedback received from school staff regarding TBRI® training:

As we have been educated about TBRI®, the staff at the school has developed a new level of empathy for our most challenging students. There is a greater awareness of the reasons so many of our kids hang upside down in their chairs, chew on their t-shirts, spin around in circles, or shut down completely in a noisy room. Instead of being punished, we have begun offering sensory experiences to these kids . . . Staff are encouraged to make corrections more immediate and leveled at the problem behavior. We have all reexamined our attitudes about children's behaviors and the meaning behind them . . . we hope to expand the scope by educating the greater [school] community to use the same practices and language. This will include all staff, volunteers, mentors, after-school programs, etc. . . . I think our environment is more positive, more sensitive to the needs of the children, and more equipped to face the challenges presented by most difficult students. TBRI® has influenced the way I interact with students and has enriched my practice at the school.—*School Counselor*

The impact I saw in my classroom was almost immediate. No, it did not eliminate severe behavior outburst, but it certainly helped reduce the amount of behavior outburst that would escalate into a child screaming, yelling, throwing chairs/desk, or destroying my classroom. When things like that happened, it meant that learning had to stop. The TCU training helped to equip me with strategies that gave my students choices—which gave them a sense of control. They were much more willing to compromise with me so that learning could take place.—*3rd Grade Teacher*

[Our staff] became believers in the TBRI® system because it gives us permission to be kind. There is a framework in place that assures the safety of the child and the adult, and the procedures allow us to "re-do" our behavior in an acceptable way. It is ultimately about respect of the child and the adult (in that order). I saw a drastic change in the way our "toughest kids" managed their own behavior. We now always ask—"What need is not being met?" for each child—we feed them, talk to them, listen and offer a "re-do" for success. We loved our book study of *The Connected Child* by Dr. Purvis and Dr. Cross. TBRI® is the school's missing link with making all students feel successful, loved, and safe. When you have all those in place all learning is possible.—*Principal*

Acknowledgments

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Youth Voice: The World Better Watch Out!

Hunter Mullis

Preface

Amy Meuers, National Youth Leadership Council, Saint Paul, MN

One of the single most important elements in getting youth to lead is youth voice. It can also be one of the most challenging aspects of high quality service-learning practice. Very little research supports the practice of youth voice, and what does exist doesn't usually connect youth voice to outcomes. Despite the lack of research, service-learning practitioners and youth know its value in ***engaging*** young people not only in their schools and communities, but in solving real-world problems such as the struggle for world peace.

> *"If we are to reach real peace in this world . . .*
> *we shall have to begin with children."~Gandhi*

Real peace: Where do we even begin to define the phrase real peace? No one knows, because there has never been a time in the world where everything has been peaceful. Though no one may know the answer, youth seem to have an idea of where to start. Youth voice is what should be leading America, because it is youth who see the day-to-day problems of their generation and know where to begin to achieve "real peace."

In the 1960s, where conformity was no longer priority, youth stepped out of their name of the silent generation and into the leading figures of protests. Youth voice seemed to take off in the '60s to lead us to where we are today. Starting with the Civil Rights Movement, young people were in the forefront to provide equal rights for everyone. What people did not understand was youth voice was important and powerful because youth worked together to overcome obstacles—obstacles that the government could barely control.

Since the '60s, youth voice has grown into something more, something much larger and deeper than it was. People are beginning to realize Gandhi's words when he said "we shall have to begin with children." Youth have done amazing things through service-learning. By using their voice, they have bettered the lives of every person they have come in contact with. Innovation, empowerment, and social justice all come from youth voice, each impacting not only my generation, but my parents' as well.

The innovation of youth today will inspire America tomorrow and lead this country to great things. No one expected youth to be impactful in the '60s, but look at the impact that generation made. Every idea and opinion a child has is considered youth voice. We use it every day; therefore, why not use it effectively?

The world better watch out because the youth are taking over!

Photo Gallery
(Photos provided by National Youth Leadership Council, Saint Paul, MN)

Students participate in the "Million Bones"
project during NYLC's National
Service Learning Conference.

Students design projects to address the achievement
gap at NYLC's National Youth Leadership Training.

Students present a workshop at the National Service Learning Conference.

NYLC's Youth Advisory Council members partner with the Presidio Trust to clean up the park.

Students partner with the Presidio Trust during NYLC's National Youth Leadership Training.

H. Mullis

Students address hunger in the community through community gardening.

Attendees plant a tree to honor National Service Learning Award winners during NYLC's National Service Learning Conference.

About the Author

Hunter Mullis is a Youth Advisory Council Mentor for the National Youth Leadership Council and a student at Lincoln Charter School in Denver, NC.

ENGAGE: The International Journal of Research and Practice on Student Engagement
Call for Manuscripts

The National Dropout Prevention Center is pleased to sponsor ENGAGE: The International Journal of Research and Practice on Student Engagement. This journal is available free online for a global audience. It supports online discussions among its international readers concerning issues raised in its articles. In addition, it enables multimedia to share videos, photos, and links to other Web sites. ENGAGE is internationally refereed and published online twice a year.

ENGAGE raises awareness of issues related to student engagement in school and in learning as it explores and shares strategies and solutions that work globally. Journal articles will point to the fact that all constituencies need to be engaged in the school experience: students, teachers, administrators, parents, members of the community, businesses, social service organizations, and others, to support student engagement.

FOCUS: Manuscripts should be original works not previously published nor concurrently submitted for publication to other journals. Submissions should be written clearly in English for a diverse audience. Photographs, and other visual materials, are highly encouraged for each submission. The readership, international in scope, includes professionals conducting research on and/or working with the issue of engagement in school to promote student success, e.g., school administrators, teachers, educational psychologists, mental health professionals, juvenile justice and youth workers, governmental agency leaders, researchers, and academics. The articles for ENGAGE offer a mix of academic and practical; accompanied by voices of young people from diverse cultural groups around the world who have disengaged, are reengaging, or have a story about engagement, disengagement, or reengagement with school.

FORMAT: Manuscripts should follow APA style. Details can be found at www.apastyle.org. Manuscripts should not exceed 25 typed, double-spaced pages in 12-point font, including all cited references. Additional items to supplement the manuscript may include Web links, videos, photographs, and other media. Please submit via email attachment in MSWord format (.doc or .docx) to engageeditor@dropoutprevention.org.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: Each article should include an up to 150-word, APA style abstract, with one difference: The final sentence or two should be composed as starter-questions to engage readers in a window of asynchronous discussion based on the article's points.

There are three categories of submissions:

1. Academic Research. In addition to the submitted manuscript, please include a cover page with the following information: the author's full name, title, department, institution or professional affiliation, email address, and phone number; and the full names of coauthors with their titles, departments, institutions or professional affiliations, and email addresses. Do not include any identifying information on the text pages. All appropriate manuscripts will be submitted for a blind review by two reviewers.

2. Practitioners. Manuscripts may include school and community-based research on services for youth or a description of successful strategies related to teaching, counseling, administrative procedures, or community engagement. Include all above information; however, in this category, the editor will be making the final selection, and there will be no peer review.

3. Youth Voice. These submissions represent the youth perspective on their school and/or community and should be submitted via their teacher, school administrator, or mentor.

Manuscripts may be submitted at any time for review. If accepted, the authors will be notified of publication by email. There is no publication fee.

DISSEMINATION: ENGAGE will be disseminated via the National Dropout Prevention Center Web site as well as through hard copy subscription via the NDPC/N Store or at www.dropoutprevention.org/resources/journals/.

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