CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF ITS GRADUATES

By

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ABSTRACT

Perceptions of students in an alternative high school for dropouts were used to assess school effectiveness and to relate various effectiveness factors to school outcomes. Actual effectiveness was measured in terms of achievement of the school's objectives and the success of its graduates.

Forty-six current students rated the presence of 14 factors of effectiveness. Six factors - strictly enforced rules, the availability of teachers for extra help, high academic expectations, clear goals, frequent feedback on progress and performance, and emphasis on basic skills - were considered the salient features of the school. Whereas the literature on alternative schools stresses the importance of school climate factors, these students highlighted structural ones.

Fifty-seven graduates provided data on those dimensions of effectiveness most important in helping them graduate. Consistent with the literature on dropouts, the two key factors were strictly enforced rules and encouragement from teachers. There were no significant differences in the respondents' perceptions of effectiveness according to their age, sex or labour-market status. The major contribution of the school to its graduates was a renewed belief in their capability to succeed.

RESUME

Les perceptions d'étudiants d'une école secondaire alternative pour décrocheurs ont été utilisées afin d'évaluer l'efficacité de l'école et établir les liens entre les divers facteurs d'efficacité d'une part, puis les résultats obtenus par l'école d'autre part. Dans le cadre de la présente recherche, l'efficacité de l'école a été definie et mesurée par la réalisation de ses objectifs et la réussite de ses diplômés.

En premier lieu, quarante-six étudiants actuellement inscrits se sont prononcés sur la présence de quatorze facteurs d'efficacité. Six de ces facteurs ont été considérés comme les plus représentatifs de l'école: règlements strictement observés, disponibilité des professeurs, attentes académiques élevées, objectifs clairs, commentaires fréquents au sujet des progrès et de la performance et, enfin, accent sur les habiletés de base. Alors que les recherches concernant des écoles alternatives insistent sur l'importance des facteurs liés au climat scolaire, les étudiants de cette étude mettent plutôt en évidence les facteurs structuraux.

En second lieu, cinquante-sept diplômés fournissent des données au sujet des plus importants aspects de l'école les ayant aidés à graduer. En accord avec les études sur les décrocheurs, les règlements strictement observés et le support des professeurs

se sont révélés des facteurs essentiels. En ce qui concerne les perceptions des répondants au sujet de l'efficacité de l'école, aucune différence significative n'est apparue en fonction de l'âge, du sexe ou de la situation en regard du marché du travail. La contribution majeure de l'école envers ses diplômés a consisté en une croyance renouvelée en leur aptitude à réussir.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

The high school dropout is a source of serious concern for educators and society at large. For educators, the dropout represents not only a sense of personal failure for teachers but also a failure of the school system as a whole to meet the needs of its clientele, not to mention the potential loss of jobs for teachers and funding for school boards. Dropping out of high school also incurs a wide array of individual and social costs. For the individual, failure to complete high school is linked with limited occupational and economic prospects and a rejection by society and its institutions. On a societal level, premature school leaving results in increased expenditures for government assistance, higher rates of crime, and the maintenance of costly special programs for employment and training (King, 1978; Levin, 1972). Recent statistics indicate that one-third of young people who enter high school in Quebec drop out prior to completion (Blouin & Martino, 1986). Given the magnitude of the problem, the question that must be addressed is what solutions are being sought to alleviate this growing concern.

Although much research has examined the characteristics of dropouts and the causes of dropping out, very few studies have considered alternative programs designed to help high school dropouts to complete their secondary education. One large urban school board in the Montreal area (PSBGM) has developed a network of independent publicly funded schools dedicated to the education of dropouts who wish to continue their high school education. Hatfield (1987) studied student satisfaction in these alternative schools and found that students are generally experiencing more satisfaction in them than in their previous high schools. It seems that the key to curbing the dropout problem is to provide programs that are attractive enough to hold these students and effective enough to promote their learning and development. In an attempt to understand better the nature of effective schooling for dropouts, this study examines the characteristics of effectiveness of one such high school for dropouts from the perspective of its graduates and of students currently enrolled. It looks at the extent to which students currently enrolled perceive their school to be effective. It also examines the extent to which the school is effective and identifies its factors of effectiveness.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.2.1 Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal

The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM) is the largest Protestant board in Quebec, with a student population in 1988 of approximately 31,500. It has traditionally served an English-speaking population, although that is slowly changing. At present, one-third of its 67 schools are French.

The PSBGM has been in existence for 142 years and prides itself in having an open, pluralistic approach to learning. As a board, it is open to innovation. For example, it was a pioneer in French immersion programs in North America. It currently offers a wide range of alternative programs catering to a diverse population. Several alternative schools (elementary and high school) attract highly motivated students with a strong academic orientation. Each such alternative has a mission and a particular philosophy or emphasis. The largest one, called F.A.C.E. (Fine Arts Core Education), is dedicated to the appreciation of the fine arts. It has an enrollment of over 1000 students and has an English and French stream of students from kindergarten to secondary V. One of the smaller high schools, M.I.N.D. (Moving in New Directions),

stresses the importance of independent inquiry in learning. Others have a predominant interest in science and technology or a central concern with sports. These public alternatives often have a "private school" flavour, which makes them all the more attractive to their particular clientele. In September 1988, for example, the PSBGM is opening a math/science elementary school which will include Jewish heritage studies as an option in its curriculum. The Board's aim, in this case, is to attract students back to the public school system from the private Jewish schools. In 1975, the PSBGM began developing a variety of alternative programs for high school dropouts. These programs are now referred to as the Outreach School System.

1.2.2 Outreach School System

In 1975, the PSBGM opened its first "storefront school" in an apartment in the west end of Montreal. The school was created in response to community pressure to alleviate the dropout problem in that community. Since then, ten alternative schools have opened to serve students who have dropped out of regular high schools but who are sufficiently motivated to seek admission to these alternative schools. This network of schools caters to students aged 14-20. Eight of the schools in the Outreach School System are

English and two French. Eight of the schools are academically oriented. The other two are vocational schools, focusing on job skills in a workshop environment.

Of the ten Outreach Schools, five have certain characteristics in common. First, they all have a mandate to accept dropouts from regular schools. Secondly, they are small, off-site, autonomous units coordinated by a head teacher rather than a principal. Thirdly, they operate in English and run an academic rather than a vocational program. Fourthly, they are under the jurisdiction of the Student Services Department of the PSBGM.

1.2.3 Options II

The development of and rationale for Options II grew out of the limited success of its forerunner, Options I. Options I was the second school to be established in the Outreach School System, in 1978. Its stated aim is to reintegrate dropouts into an educational setting, to develop an excitement toward learning, to increase self-esteem, and to help adolescents aged 15-18 redirect their lives by either returning to school or finding employment (Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, 1987). It was designed and implemented by three teachers, the author being one of them. It was felt that if adolescent dropouts were helped

intensively for three months on an academic and personal level, they could reintegrate into a regular high school and obtain their high school leaving certificate. However, time and time again, students who had been very successful at Options I returned to regular high schools and dropped out again shortly thereafter. It seemed evident that most of these students needed an educational alternative in which they could remain beyond three months and actually graduate. Clearly, there was a need for an expanded Options program that could teach all the required courses for a Quebec High School Leaving Certificate and accommodate a larger number of students and staff for a period of two years.

Thus, in December 1982 the author, with two other teachers, left Options I with a mandate from the PSBGM to design and implement a new alternative high school for up to 100 students. It was to be called Options II. Options II was founded on the premise that by providing adolescents aged 16-19 with a nourishing environment for academic as well as personal growth, they would be able to reconnect school with life and become high school graduates.

In examining the needs of these young people, certain common elements were discovered. It was found that they dropped out of high school due to academic, emotional and/or legal problems. The majority of Options II's target

population had poor family relationships or no families at all. As a result, many lacked personal contact and consistent control in their homes. Interviews with students held during intake revealed that in regular high schools they felt alienated and isolated; consequently, they spent most of their time skipping school and generally "hanging out". Because rules were not enforced, they felt that no one cared. The impersonal comprehensive high school environment did not seem to meet their needs. The designers of Options II believed that in order to succeed, these students needed a school with a climate that could make them feel important, like they "belonged".

As a public high school, Options II must conform to government regulations with regard to curriculum and the granting of High School Leaving Certificates. Its basic curriculum, therefore, is the same as that of any other public high school. The two stated aims of Options II are: (1) to help young people who were previously unsuccessful in regular high school to graduate; (2) to prepare young people to integrate into society beyond high school through

(a) gains in personal growth and development

(b) improved work and study habits

(c) improved basic skills.

The school has been designed to incorporate into a high school setting some of the sense of community generally identified with elementary schools. Within this societal structure, staff and students engage in critical inquiry as a preparation for life.

A quadruplex was found to create the feeling of a home rather than a school. A strict, clear and supportive structure was developed that would blend responsibility, respect and community with a striving for academic excellence.

The staff of Options II (seven teachers) are highly motivated professionals who take joint responsibility for establishing a climate of high expectations blended with acute sensitivity. They function as a team of educators with the leadership of a head teacher rather than a principal and thus have a great deal of professional autonomy.

Each student is assigned an advocate (one of the teachers) who serves as a mentor and is responsible for setting goals, outlining disciplinary measures and, in general, helping the student develop a "vision". Once a week the entire school meets in a life skills class. During life skills, there is open dialogue among students and staff - feelings are expressed honestly and respectfully, and

common problems specific to the students, such as sexuality, drugs, the law, or the school structure itself, are discussed.

The school has a strict set of enforced rules that revolve around attendance, punctuality, homework and attitude. It is the student's choice to come to Options II, and it is the staff's prerogative to dismiss any student who cannot work within the guidelines.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Recent evidence suggests that the failure of many students to complete high school is a serious social problem with implications that extend beyond the schools and individual students involved (Neill, 1979). Levin (1972), for example, attributed the decline in New York City's economy in part to high school dropout rates resulting in lost tax revenues to support welfare, unemployment and crime prevention. Morse (1972) goes further to say that those students whom no one takes seriously often drop out from society through suicide, drugs, or other means because no one listens to them or believes their perceptions about their life and experiences.

Dropouts enter the community undereducated. With bleak prospects for success in the labour market, they are almost

certain to become social liabilities and to face lifelong problems of unemployment and welfare. For this reason, it is imperative that effective alternative schools be established to deal with the particular needs of the dropout. In so doing, the problem of frustrated, unskilled, undirected youth flooding the market may be prevented.

School-related factors associated with dropping out, such as early academic failure, alienation and dissatisfaction, are now receiving considerable attention, particularly because many of these factors are ones that can be manipulated through practice and policy. Most previous research, however, focused on students' behaviour and performance in school, giving little attention to the influences of schools themselves - their organization, leadership, teachers, etc. (Rumberger, 1987).

The most common measure of school effectiveness is the school's ability to meet the goals of the official curriculum, i.e., to produce graduates. Duke and Muzio (1978) suggest that another indicator of a school's effectiveness can be the success of its graduates. Students' perceptions of the school's effectiveness represents a third measure. This study examines students' perceptions of effectiveness of one alternative high school for returning dropouts, Options II. It seeks to identify

the characteristics of the program that make it effective for its clientele.

A preliminary follow-up study showed that many graduates of Options II went to college or to work and did not return to the streets (Coleman, 1986). Thus there was preliminary evidence that the school was effective both in helping its clientele graduate and in allowing them to move forward in a more positive direction. That study sought factual information only and did not seek to analyze the underlying school-related factors that helped students graduate. This study, on the other hand, seeks to identify the school factors that help these adolescents graduate. It expands the definition of school effectiveness beyond graduation and determines what the graduates are doing now and what they learned from their experience at Options II. It was hoped that the investigation would provide insights into the characteristics of effective school programs for high school dropouts.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

College d'enseignement general et professionel (C.E.G.E.P.)

A public institution in the Province of Quebec responsible for the education of students after high school and prior to university. It is somewhat similar to the junior college in the United States.

Dropout

For purposes of the present study, the term "dropout" is defined as a student who leaves the regular public school system before reaching the level of schooling commensurate with that student's potential.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness is defined as the degree to which established goals are accomplished.

Options II

An alternative high school under the PSBGM, catering to dropouts.

Outreach School System

An association of small alternative schools under the jurisdiction of the PSBGM, catering to dropouts.

P.S.B.G.M.

The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, an autonomous public school board in the Province of Quebec responsible for the education of students who are not of the Catholic faith and who live in the city of Montreal and neighbouring suburbs.

2.0 REVIEW OF RESEARCH

2.1 INTRODUCTION

To study the characteristics of effectiveness of an alternative high school for dropouts, three distinct literatures had to be reviewed. For purposes of this study, it was impossible to do an in-depth, definitive review of three different literatures. Thus the emphasis was to focus on the major thrusts of each of the literatures and to establish the links among them. The overall intent was to:

(1) Present a systematic review of empirical evidence on: (a) High school dropouts;
(b) Alternative schools;
(c) School effectiveness.

(2) Integrate information from (1) a, b, and c to provide an informed perspective related to the nature of effective schooling for high school dropouts

(3) Specify an educational research agenda.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE DROPOUT PROBLEM

2.2.1 Characteristics of Dropouts

Cervantes (1965) and Yudin et al. (1973) describe the dropout as more likely to be male than female and less likely to have resided in a home with both natural parents present. Several studies noted a sharp correlation between low socio-economic status and a high drop-out rate (Bachman et al., 1972; Cervantes, 1965; Yudin, et al., 1973). Bachman et al. (1972) explain that while dropouts come from every social class and ethnic group, the overwhelming majority come from blue collar or lower white collar homes. Yudin et al. (1973) describe the typical dropout's school career as one marked by absenteeism, frequent transfers from one school to another, with a great likelihood of difficulty in school reflected by low reading and achievement scores. Blouin and Martino (1986) describe the typical Quebec dropout as male, aged 16-18, coming from a weak economic milieu and a broken home.

2.2.2 Correlates and Causes of Dropping Out

The decision to leave school before graduation is not an isolated decision but one based on many interactive factors, both personal and academic (Howard & Anderson,

1978). A lack of family support, for example, combined with academic failure and a sense of alienation in school, often lead to instances of "skipping school". These instances soon become established patterns of irregular attendance, resulting in more academic failure and generally negative school experiences. These factors often lead to adolescents becoming "fugitives from failure" (Schreiber, 1962).

Three major studies examining the causes and correlates of dropping out have shown that the reasons for dropping out, retrospectively reported by dropouts, and the causal factors identified in longitudinal studies of who drops out line up rather well (Bachman, Green et al., 1971; Bachman, O'Malley et al., 1971; Rumberger, 1981). For purposes of this review, these causes and reasons are grouped into two major categories: (1) non-school factors and (2) school-related factors.

2.2.2.1 Non-School Factors

Background and family issues represent one category of factors associated with dropping out. All the studies show that adolescents from a lower socio-economic class are more likely to drop out than their more economically privileged peers. The dropout is more likely to come from a family characterized by many children, absence of one parent, and

fewer material possessions (Bachman, Green et al., 1971; Bachman, O'Malley et al., 1971; Rumberger, 1981; Steinberg, Blinde & Chan, 1984). A student from a single-parent home is twice as likely to drop out as a student living with both parents (Neill, 1979). Conditions such as teenage pregnancy, marriage or marital plans are often cited as reasons for dropping out (Peng et al., 1983).

Economic issues constitute another broad category of factors associated with dropping out. More than a quarter of white and minority males report that they left school because they were offered a job and chose to work (McDill, Natriello & Pallas, 1985). D'Amico (1984) suggests that a very intensive work involvement is associated with higher rates of dropping out. From a prediction standpoint, holding a regular job while in high school is a very potent predictor of dropping out, for males and females equally (Pallas, 1984). Steinberg et al. (1982) suggest that there is a decline in school involvement and performance among students who work more than 15 hours per week.

2.2.2.2 School-Related Factors

According to McDill et al. (1985), school-related factors are the major causes and the best predictors of dropping out. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978), however,

contend that the cause of dropping out lies much more with the family than with the school. McDill et al. (1985) reported that one-third of students interviewed cited poor grades as the reason for dropping out, and one-third said that "school was not for me". The school experiences of the dropout are generally negative. These students were more likely to have been held back, received lower grades and expressed dissatisfaction toward school (Cervantes, 1965; Yudin et al., 1973). The Bachman studies indicate a strong correlation between academic test scores and school leaving. They show that reading and math aptitudes contribute to the prediction of school leaving above and beyond the contribution of social class.

The Montreal Catholic School Commission commissioned a series of research projects in an effort to understand and more effectively address the problem of early school leavers (Anderson, Rahming & Sklar, 1980). One of these studies sought an understanding of the problems associated with attending high school from an early leaver's point of view (Hum, Baker & Carlisi, 1980). The study indicated that early school leavers often found themselves in personal conflict with a particular teacher or administrator. Many early leavers did not consider poor academic achievement to be a major factor in their decision to leave school.

Rather, they emphasized "boring" course content, learning "useless stuff" and conflict with teachers as major reasons for leaving school.

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) probe the data obtained from the High School and Beyond Study (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1983) for insights into the characteristics of students' school experiences that may contribute to dropping out and that might be altered through policy interventions. They criticize the literature on dropouts for seeking to explain deviant behaviour rather than looking at the institutional character of schools that contribute to this problem.

The High School and Beyond Study provides the most recent longitudinal data in which students are systematically sampled before and after dropping out of school. It establishes that the three measures of student alienation from and rejection of school are: (1) Teacher interest in students, (2) Effectiveness of discipline and (3) Fairness of discipline. The study concludes that most students perceive high school as a place where teachers are not particularly interested in students and where the disciplinary system is neither effective nor fair.

2.2.3 Summary and Critique

Although the literature shows clear evidence that a combination of socio-economic disadvantage and early academic failure are good predictors of dropping out, very few studies put into question the social institutions that help push these adolescents out of school. Beck and Muia (1980) identify the heart of the problem as being the lower-class child's unwillingness and inability to conform to the school's middle-class standards of obedience, docility and scholarship. They point out that a child's heritage, language, morals, ideals and attitudes are deemed unacceptable to the school's middle-class standards, leading to a destruction of their concept of self worth and resulting in feelings of alienation from school and society.

Fine and Rosenberg (1983) state:

> Critical perspectives on social institutions are often best obtained from exiles, that is, persons who leave those institutions. This is perhaps why exiles' views are frequently disparaged as deviant and in some cases are conspicuously silenced. (p.257).

They challenge the prevailing ideologies of the high school dropout as a "loser" and suggest instead that many dropouts are fully capable of academic achievement and leave school with a critique of institutional inadequacies and discrimination. They contend that by focusing on

psychological problems, educational deficits and family problems of dropouts, the literature tends to silence the critical voice of the dropout. Fine and Rosenberg (1983) claim that the literature has categorically ignored dropouts' exposure of the hidden curriculum, their threat of hierarchical relations in schools, and their resistance to the trade-off between conformity and success operating in traditional schools.

2.3 ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Over the past ten years, a growing number of school districts across North America have established special programs and schools designated as "alternatives". According to Arnove and Strout (1980), alternatives have been characterized as expressions of a new responsiveness to a diverse society, a stop-gap measure to preserve a faltering system of public education, as devices to meet the needs and realize the potential of individual students, and as means to resolve, minimize, or avoid conflict over pressing social issues., Alternatives most frequently serve two types of students - those who are intellectually gifted or artistically talented, and those whose school experiences are characterized by failure.

This review examines the subset of alternatives designed for students who do not succeed in conventional schools and who have been described as disruptive, disenchanted or disaffected. They are likely to be "at risk" of dropping out or have already dropped out. The research on alternatives, or schools of choice, is mulitfaceted. The literature focuses on organizational features as well as program characteristics to explain the success of alternative schools. We will therefore examine structures and processes associated with alternative schools.

2.3.1 Organizational Characteristics

Raywid (1984) identifies six characteristics common to most alternatives: (1) the alternative constitutes a distinct and identifiable administrative unit with substantial effort devoted to creating a strong sense of affiliation with the unit; (2) structures and processes stress the importance of school climate; (3) students and staff enter by choice; (4) the alternative is designed to meet a particular need; (5) the impetus for launching the alternative, as well as its design, comes from the grass roots - i.e., teachers, students and parents rather than

from the top down; (6) alternative schools generally address the affective domain, not just the cognitive or academic.

2.3.1.1 Organizational Forms and Structures

Although schools of choice differ as to organizational types, most are small in relation to conventional schools; over half of U.S. schools have fewer than 100 students (Raywid, 1982). Some alternatives occupy entire school buildings, while others are housed in storefronts or other small quarters. They share two particular characteristics of success: enough separateness to sustain a distinct climate, and enough autonomy to allow the staff to develop and implement their own vision of schooling (Wehlage, 1982).

High school level alternatives seem to focus more on climate-related features than on curriculum (Raywid, 1982). They also represent a clear departure from the "one best system" approach to education and have become the mechanism for introducing departures - the means of institutionalizing diversity within a system highly resistant to novelty and change (Metz, 1981; Warren, 1978).

2.3.1.2 Organizational Processes

Schools of choice are noticeably different from conventional schools. They elicit quite different responses

and behaviour from the people within them. A considerable amount of research has sought to explain and identify their elements.

Many analysts have pointed to the importance of the element of choice in not only promoting an advantage to the chooser but also in serving to heighten the investment in what has been chosen (Erickson, 1982; Nault, 1975-76). The choice arrangement results in a more coherent group who share a particular type of educational mission.

The consequences of the smallness of alternative schools have also received a great deal of attention. The roles of both staff and students tend to be more expanded and diffuse. Since bureaucracy's elaborate divisions of labour are impossible, bureaucratic controls become unnecessary (Raywid, 1984). Staff and students share a sense of substantial autonomy. Teachers feel they exert considerable control over their own programs, and students feel much less like pawns than in other schools (Gladstone & Levin, 1982). Feelings of control over one's own fate are associated with a sense of ownership and affiliation, with teacher satisfaction (Wehlage, 1982).

Students in schools of choice often experience a strong sense of power stemming from three sources: (1) fewer rules and regulations (Duke & Perry, 1978); (2) retaining the

final power to opt out if they are sufficiently dissatisfied, making for a community of civility and respectful interaction; (3) "caring" teachers, leading to relationships marked by trust (Raywid, 1984).

Student attitudes toward school are widely reported to change for the better in alternative schools (Duke & Muzio, 1978). What is more, surveys of alternative school graduates suggest that those surveyed continue to regard the school very positively, as a place where they received help that has proved relevant to and useful in their post-high school pursuits (Nathan, 1981; Phillips, 1977).

2.3.2 Program Characteristics

Most schools of choice demonstrate concern with multiple aspects of development in their students, not solely cognitive growth or intellectual achievement. To serve the affective domain better, programs seem to be consciously designed to encourage social growth and such personal development elements as decision-making ability, moral maturity and self-knowledge. This developmental oriertation also leads to a stronger preoccupation with realizing individual potential. This, however, does not mean that there is an indifference to academic standards. On the contrary, many alternative school students report

working far harder in the alternative than ever before (Raywid, 1984).

Alternative school staff report instructional methods to be one of their main points of departure from conventional school practice (Raywid, 1982). There is also evidence, however, that instructional practices in alternative schools do not differ very much from the methods of other schools (Baker, 1976; Zahorik, 1980). It is interesting to note that teachers and students in alternatives think they do (Parrett, 1981).

As noted earlier, schools identifying themselves as "alternatives" are less likely to be marked by a particular curricular focus than by other elements such as pedagogical style or particular school climate. The staff of alternative schools often develop their own curricula (Raywid, 1982).

2.3.3 People in Alternatives

It would appear that schools of choice provide deeper satisfaction to the several groups most immediately associated with them - staff, students and parents. This review examines the impact on students and teachers.

Several studies substantiate that alternatives for the most educationally challenging groups (turned off,

disruptive, underachieving, at risk or dropouts) have provided incidences of impressive success. These schools seem to be particularly effective at improving student attitudes toward school and learning, self-concept and self-esteem, attendance and behaviour. For students considered to be "marginal" or "at risk", they also lead to greater academic success (Arnove & Strout, 1978; Foley and McConnaughty, 1982; and Welhage, 1982). The academic evidence seems positive, even though it remains tentative and somewhat scant (Raywid, 1984). Hatfield's study (1987) confirms that academic success is one of the major components of student satisfaction with their alternative school experience.

Alternative school teachers report unusually high levels of satisfaction, which they attribute to increased collegiality and to greater professional autonomy in their work. Although many report working harder in the alternative than in other schools, morale is greatly enhanced (Gladstone & Levin, 1982; Nierdenberg, 1977). Moreover, lessened adolescent-adult conflict and the consequent lack of discipline problems lead to a diminution of the division between student and staff subcultures (Raywid, 1984).

2.3.4 Summary of Findings

The evidence is strong in supporting the positive features of alternative school programs, although the literature does touch on some negative aspects. At their best, alternative programs represent, both organizationally and programatically, a set of conditions conducive to warm interpersonal relations, academic success, positive images for the future and enhancement of self-concept. The programs tend to be small, intimate schools with low student-adult ratio, individualized instruction, staffed by competent and caring teachers. Hatfield (1987) confirms the importance of teacher qualities as components of student satisfaction. Research suggests that the academic and interpersonal environments of alternatives contribute to a diminution in aggressive behaviour and the development of emotionally healthy individuals (Arnove & Strout, 1980; Duke & Perry, 1978).

Arnove and Strout (1980) also discuss some negative aspects of alternative programs. They contend that these programs tend to label youths, to segregate a disproportionate number of minority students, and to prepare these youths for only the lower rungs of the economic and social hierarchies of our society.

2.4 The Effective Schools' Literature

If the quantity of literature available on a topic is any indication of the importance of that topic to educators, then school effectiveness must certainly be a key issue of the 1980's. School effectiveness is complex and multidimensional. Many educators would agree that effective schools have certain characteristics in common, such as a positive climate, clear attainable goals, high academic expectations, staff involvement and discipline. With the only widely accepted measure of effectiveness being the standardized test and the variables of effectiveness increasing even as one studies it, effectiveness is very difficult to gauge.

The significance of the effective schools research, therefore, lies more in the ideology underlying it than in the validity of the empirical results. In light of the above, several researchers advocate using effectiveness research as a basis for a reform, i.e., the improvement of schools, rather than as a science (Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Ralph & Fennessey, 1983).

2.4.1 A Definition

Curran (1983) defines the effective school as a purposeful organization whose members seek, through common effort, to achieve established goals. For the purposes of this review, Curran's definition will be used.

2.4.2 Types of Studies - An Overview

A review of the effective schools research (Purkey & Smith, 1983) shows that the literature falls into four major groups: outlier studies, case studies, program evaluations and other studies. All the studies indicate that one can differentiate between effective and ineffective schools, but there is no consensus on characteristics of effective schools nor on strategies for how to alter schools to make them more effective.

Outlier studies explore a strategy of identifying statistically highly effective schools (positive outliers) and unusually ineffective schools (negative outliers). Characteristics of these two types of schools are then assessed by surveys or case studies to determine the reasons for the schools' outcomes (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

The study by Rutter et al. (1979) stands out in the case studies effectiveness literature. It was a longitudinal study and it attempted to measure school

outcomes in terms of students' in-school behaviour, attendance, examination success and delinquency. Rutter's general argument is that variations in school outcome are associated with the characteristics of schools as "social institutions". He believes that it is the school's guiding beliefs, or "ethos", that influence students as a group. In his definition, school ethos includes the style and quality of school life, patterns of student and teacher behaviour, how students are treated as a group, the management of groups of students within the school, and the care and maintenance of buildings and grounds.

Many evaluations of educational programs have been carried out over the last fifteen years (Purkey & Smith 1983). Anderson (1986) profiles four basic program evaluation issues: (1) Rationale, i.e., to what extent objectives are relevant and activities and outputs consistent with mandates; (2) Effectiveness, defined as the degree to which a program achieves its objectives; (3) Impacts and effects, referring to both intended and unintended results of carrying out the program; (4) Efficiency, dealing with the issue of cost-effectiveness.

The basic findings of the various program evaluation studies create a generally consistent pattern. Purkey and Smith (1983) report that these studies are methodologically

stronger than the preceding two types of research; however, their common findings are remarkably consistent with the outlier and case studies. The Michigan Studies (Hunter, 1979), for example, list the following school variables that characterize effective schools: high teacher expectations and morale, a considerable degree of control by the staff over instructional decisions, clear leadership, clear goals, and a sense of order in the school.

Several "other studies" of school effectiveness have been done. Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore (1981), for example, did a comparative study of U.S. public and private secondary schools and contend that private schools are academically superior to public schools. They add to the body of effectiveness literature by identifying those characteristics of private schools that encourage academic performance, i.e. better attendance, more homework and more extensive academic demands.

The Safe School Study (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1978) was concerned with identifying the elements that make schools safe, nonviolent, orderly institutions of learning. Their findings point to a strong relationship between a school's "structure of order" and its students' academic success.

2.4.3 Ingredients of Effectiveness

In order to analyze effectiveness, one must explore both "process" and "content" variables. Content variables refer to identifiable characteristics of schools and personnel, whereas process variables refer to the way in which schools actually operate and change (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Content variables differ greatly from study to study. However, all the studies seem to present a consistent picture. For example, the Safe School Study (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1978) presented the following list of variables that contribute to a school's effectiveness: (1) rules that are clearly stated and consistently, fairly and firmly enforced; (2) teachers with high job satisfaction; (3) cohesiveness among teachers; (4) material and moral support from central administration; (5) emphasis on academic success; (6) class size or school organization calculated to increase the sense of personal relationship between student and teacher; (7) high staff morale; (8) strong school spirit; (9) students' belief that their curriculum is relevant and valuable; (10) students' sense that the school as a social system is not a meaningless environment in which they have little control over what happens to them.

Process variables refer to the process by which people within schools interact to determine goals, conduct every-day business, and accommodate conflict and change (Rutter, 1981). The literature on school effectiveness is dominated by studies of content variables which, for the most part, offer simplistic recommendations for school improvement and is very limited in studies of process variables.

2.4.4 Toward a Theory of School Improvement

If one uses the effectiveness literature as a basis for reform, one arrives at a different approach to school improvement linking "content" and "process" to arrive at a notion of school culture. A school culture perspective rejects the notion of schools as being relatively static constructs of discrete variables. Instead, schools are thought to be dynamic social systems made up of interrelated factors (Brookover et al., 1979; Rutter et al., 1979).

The literature indicates that a student's chance for success in learning cognitive skills is heavily influenced by the climate of the school (Brookover et al., 1979; Rutter, 1981; Rutter et al. 1979). If the climate of a school can affect student achievement positively, the question then becomes how to develop a desired climate. The

school culture concept sees school improvement as likely to happen when the whole school is treated with special attention paid to people's attitudes and how people interact with each other and the environment (Rutter, 1981). The school culture model, therefore, assumes that changing a school requires changing people's behaviour and attitudes as well as school organization and norms. It assumes that consensus among the school staff is more powerful than overt control, without ignoring the need for leadership. Building staff agreement on specified norms and goals, then, becomes the focus of any school improvement strategy (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

2.4.5 Summary and Critique

The literature clearly indicates that an effective school is distinguished by its culture: a structure, process and climate of values and norms that emphasize successful teaching and learning.

A summary of the major characteristics of effective schools found in the literature follows:

(1) Clear attainable goals

(2) High academic expectations

(3) Order and discipline

(4) Positive climate and strong school spirit

(5) Clear strong leadership

(6) High staff morale

(7) School site management

(8) Sense of community

(9) Collaborative planning

(10) Class size conducive to a sense of personal relationships between teachers and students

(11) Emphasis on basic skills

(12) Frequent monitoring of pupil progress

(13) Feedback on academic performance.

The literature on effective schools is rich and diversified in listing ingredients of effectiveness. What seem to be missing, however, are suggestions for implementation, i.e., approaches on how to turn an academically inferior school into a more successful one. The key seems to be the establishment of an effective school culture. This, however, would demand an organic conception of schools and some faith in people's ability to work together toward common ends.

2.5 AN INFORMED PERSPECTIVE

In mathematical terms, let us now explore the intersection of the three sets described in this review of literature: the findings on high school dropouts,

alternative school programs and the research on effectiveness. Socio-economic disadvantage and negative school experiences, including academic failure, are the major causes and predictors of dropping out. Clearly, it is impossible to change a student's family background and economic problems. One can, however, manipulate the school environment variable and place dropouts into school programs that will help them regain their sense of power and control over their lives. By shifting the focus from their academic and socio-economic deficits, treating them as critics as opposed to losers and accepting their culture, heritage, language and morals, one can attempt to rebuild a damaged sense of self and help these students rediscover the connection between school and life.

Alternative schools, according to the literature, by virtue of size and intimacy, seem to combat that sense of alienation which dropouts experience in regular high schools. The literature strongly supports the idea that schools of choice produce a climate conducive to more interpersonal relationships, academic success, enhancement of self-esteem and a positive view of the future. The features of these schools correspond extremely well with the needs of the dropout.

The literature on effective schools discusses the establishment of an effective school culture. It lists structure and process variables that together produce a climate of values and norms that emphasize successful teaching and learning. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) criticize the narrowness of the effectiveness literature in dealing only with explicitly stated goals of public schools. They conceive of self-esteem and locus of control as outcomes of formal schooling. Implicit goals such as self-development, self-management, rational decision-making, and control of one's circumstances and opportunities through the acquisition of knowledge and skills are viewed as vital components of public schooling. Their view is further supported by Rumberger (1987) in the need to expand the definition of effectiveness to include these implicit goals.

2.6 TOWARD A MODEL OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING FOR HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

The most recent literature on high school dropouts presents a strong critique of the dropout research in focusing on factors associated with dropout behaviour and developing correlational models that simply identify the relationship between one factor and dropout behaviour (Rumberger, 1987). Rumberger stresses the need for a

comprehensive model of dropout behaviour that would deal with process and policy implications rather than just structure. Since half of all dropouts cite school-related factors as reasons for leaving school, Rumberger points to the importance of looking at the school itself to find solutions to this complex social and educational problem.

If one is then to relate the personal characteristics of dropouts to the organization, it becomes clear from the literature that these students need to be provided with educationally worthwhile experiences that promote broad personal and social development as well as academic skills and knowledge. If these students are sceptical about discipline and feel that teachers don't care, there is an obvious need for legitimate authority and a caring staff. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) go further to say that academic success and improved self-concept and locus of control for these students can perhaps best be accomplished in alternative settings rather than through institutional changes in regular high school. Their policy recommendations include: (1) enhanced sense of professional accountability among educators toward students; (2) a renewed effort to establish legitimate authority within institutions; and (3) redefinition of school work for students and teachers that will allow a greater number of

students to achieve success and satisfaction and to therefore continue their schooling.

The most recent literature outlines a program model for at-risk high school students (Wehlage, Rutter & Turnbaugh, 1987). The model identifies the elements of effective schooling for these adolescents. In general terms, an effective school, in their view, must negate the discouragement and alienation which students have acquired through their previous formal education and should avoid the overly repetitive remediation of low level basic skills. Rather, it must promote broad personal and social development through a positive social bond between teachers and students.

Characteristics of the effective program model are described in four areas: (1) Administration and organization; (2) Teacher culture; (3) Student culture; and (4) Curriculum (Wehlage, Rutter & Turnbaugh, 1987). Let us examine each of these.

In terms of administration and organization, the model program is described as small with 25-100 students and 2-6 staff. The smallness allows for face-to-face relationships on a continuing basis as a prerequisite for teachers being able to communicate the sense of caring that students perceive as absent in the regular high school. The model

gives teachers the authority to control admission to and dismissal from the program. Teachers feel accountable for the success of both students and the program as a whole. As far as teacher culture is concerned, it is essential that teachers believe that at-risk students deserve a renewed opportunity to learn. The model advocates an "extended role" for teachers as counsellors as well as collegiality of teachers.

The model is also set up to build a student culture with certain characteristics. The program is voluntary and students must apply for admission. They must commit themselves to a set of rules, work, expectations and standards of behaviour. Clear-cut rules about attendance, the quantity and quality of work required, and the consequences of breaking rules must be spelled out. The model also creates a "family" atmosphere in which sharing, communication and support are stressed. Individualization, clear objectives, prompt feedback, concrete evidence of progress, and an active role for students are some of the dominant features of the curriculum. The importance of basic skills, as well as a life skills program as part of the curriculum, is also stressed.

In summary, the model for at-risk high school students is designed to achieve a broad set of goals that will

promote the interests of both the individual and society. To accomplish these goals, the programs must be attractive to youth and teachers alike and promote a positive teacher and student culture. An innovative curriculum can provide students with experiences that stimulate cognitive, personal and social growth and lead to their success as adult citizens.

2.7 RESEARCH AGENDA

This research study explores students' perceptions of effectiveness of an alternative high school for former dropouts. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1.0 What are the characteristics of effective schools?

2.0 To what extent do Options II students perceive the effectiveness characteristics as found in the literature?

3.0 To what extent is Options II effective as measured by:

- 3.1 Achievement of school objectives
- 3.2 Success of its graduates

4.0 What factors made Options II effective for its graduates?

4.1 What is the relationship between the impact of Options II on its graduates and its factors of effectiveness?

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Options II, an alternative school for high school dropouts, has been in operation since 1983. Housed in a quadruplex, it serves a maximum student population of 100 secondary IV and V students. Its stated aim is to help young people aged 16 to 19 who have been unsuccessful in regular high schools to complete their secondary education.

As head teacher and one of the originators of Options II, the author had a strong personal interest in this study. Participation in the design and implementation of Options I and II and consulting in the development of the Outreach School System of the PSBGM provided the author with a wealth of hands-on experience with dropouts. At the same time, however, it raised many questions requiring empirical research.

It was clear that each of these alternative schools served a particular need in the public school system. Students who had been unable to succeed in regular high schools were not only becoming high school graduates but were enjoying the process. Hatfield's (1987) study of students' satisfaction in the Outreach School System points

out that these students are highly satisfied with their alternative high school experience.

By 1987, there were 89 students who had obtained Quebec High School Leaving Certificates from Options II. For these young people, the school was effective. Of the students who are accepted into the program, approximately 65% graduate. It is beyond the scope of this study to look at the 35% for whom the school is not effective. The students who leave often return to their street life, making it virtually impossible to find and interview them.

This study concerns itself with students currently enrolled at Options II and with the graduates of 1984-87. It examines the present students' perceptions of the school in order to establish the characteristics of effectiveness of Options II. As one measure of a school's effectiveness is the success of its graduates (Duke & Myro, 1978), the study looks at what the graduates are doing at present, what factors were most important in helping them graduate from Options II, as well as what impact Options II had on their lives.

This chapter describes in detail the research design, the development of instruments, the sampling techniques and the procedures followed to implement the study.

3.2 PROCEDURE

3.2.1 Permission to Test

The research proposal was presented to the Research Committee of the PSBGM. After being approved by the Research Committee, it was adopted and approved at a PSBGM Board meeting in April 1987.

A certificate of ethical acceptability for research involving human subjects was granted by the Ethical Review Committee of the Faculty of Education of McGill University.

3.2.2 Data Collection

3.2.2.1 Graduates of Options II

To maximize participation in this study, a reunion of graduates of Options II was organized for December 1987. Letters were sent to all traceable graduates asking them to participate in the study and urging them to come to the reunion (see Appendix I). Letters were sent across Canada, to the United States and Australia.

Forty-four graduates came to the reunion, representing 63% of those living in Montreal. Before entering the "party room", they were asked to fill out a questionnaire, which took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The staff of Options II both past and present were in attendance, along

with the Director of Student Services of the PSBGM and the co-ordinator of the Outreach School System. The Student Services Department of the PSBGM provided funding for the reunion.

The reunion was highly successful on many levels. It provided greater participation in the study, allowing for the collection of data to supplement the questionnaire through informal interviews, and it set a precedent for further reunions and follow-up studies, not to mention the fact that a good time was had by all.

Forty-four graduates attended the reunion, leaving 37 who had not yet participated in the study. In January 1988, an attempt was made to telephone those who had not come to the reunion. As a result, 37 questionnaires were sent out, along with a cover letter (Appendix II) and an addressed stamped envelope. Of the 37 questionnaires mailed, 13 were returned. Several respondents included letters in which they described their current activities and added comments to the questionnaire.

3.2.2.2 Students Currently Enrolled at Options II

The month of January 1988 was chosen as the time to collect data from students currently enrolled at Options II. The data collected was to be used to analyze students'

perceptions of effectiveness of the school. Only those who attended on a full-time basis and who had been at the school for a minimum of three months were asked to participate in the study, for it was felt that after three months in the school students' perceptions would be developed. Data collection was carried out in the school during school hours. The nature and purpose of the study was explained and discussed prior to the filling out of the questionnaire, thus assuring informed consent. Participants were discouraged from seeking interpretation of questions and were not permitted to discuss their responses with anyone. The questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

3.3 SAMPLE

3.3.1 Students Currently Enrolled at Options II

Forty-six students were asked to participate in the study, representing 100% of those who attended Options II on a full-time basis for at least three months. The 46 students represent one-half of all students who attend. Of the 46 sampled, 35 were attending Options II for the first year, and 11 were in their second year.

3.3.2 Graduates of Options II

Out of a target population of 89, representing all graduates from 1984-87, 81 were traced. From a traceable population of 81, there were 57 respondents. Forty-four attended the reunion and 13 sent back questionnaires by mail. The 57 respondents represent an overall response rate of 70%.

Table 3.1 describes the background characteristics of the sample. It is obvious that the farther back the year of graduation, the more the response rate diminishes. The more recent the year of graduation, the easier it is to trace the students and the more likely they are to respond. Looking at the sample by age shows that 75% of the respondents are between 19 and 21 years of age. Frequency distribution by gender indicates that the sample is evenly distributed.

3.4 INSTRUMENTS

3.4.1 Introduction

Two instruments were developed to answer the research questions in this study. A questionnaire entitled "Student Questionnaire" was administered to full-time students of Options II (see Appendix III). Another questionnaire,

Table 3.1

Background Characteristics of Graduates

Number of Respondents by Year of Graduation

Year of Graduation	N	Percent of Sample	Target Population
1984	7	12.3	19
1985	11	19.3	22
1986	19	33.3	24
1987	20	35.1	24
Total	57		89

Present Age of Graduates

Age	N	Percent of Sample
17-18	6	10.7
19-20	24	42.9
20-21	18	32.1
22 or over	8	14.3
Total	56	

Sex of Graduates

Sex	N	Percent of Sample
Male	29	51.8
Female	27	48.2
Total	56	

Notes: N = Number of respondents
Variations in totals explained by incomplete questionnaires

entitled "Graduates' Questionnaire", was administered to the graduates of Options II (see Appendix IV).

This section describes the development of the two instruments and examines the final instruments.

3.4.2 Student Questionnaire

The "Student Questionnaire" was developed to establish the perceptions of effectiveness of the students of Options II. The questionnaire was drawn from three elements: (1) the common factors of effectiveness as found in the literature; (2) a study on the organizational climate of Options II done by Rona (1985); and (3) informal interviews with graduates, present students and staff of Options II.

The final instrument consists of 20 items. The respondents were asked to check a box on a five-point Likert Scale that ranges from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Appendix V shows the relationship between the conceptual framework used and the items on the questionnaire.

A principal components factor analysis, followed by a varimax rotation, revealed that 11 items loaded onto six factors with Eigen values greater than 1. Inspection of the groupings suggested no clear rationale for the observed

factor loadings. It was therefore decided to analyze the data item by item.

3.4.3 Graduates' Questionnaire

The "Graduates' Questionnaire" was developed by the researcher to determine: (1) the characteristics of the graduates; (2) the graduates' labour market status; (3) what factors were most important in helping them graduate from Options II; and (4) what impact Options II has had on their lives. Due to the unique character of the school, no established questionnaires found could be readily adapted for this purpose.

The instrument is divided into four sections. The section called "Background Information" consists of seven questions. To establish differences in responses, respondents were asked to supply background information in three areas: year of graduation, age, and gender. They were further asked to give information regarding their labour market status.

The second section, entitled "Looking Back at Options II", explores the relative importance of 14 factors in helping students graduate from Options II. The 14 factors were based on: (1) the factors of effectiveness as stated in the effectiveness literature; (2) the alternative schools'

literature; and (3) numerous informal interviews with graduates exploring what helped them graduate. A principal components factor analysis, followed by a varimax rotation, revealed 10 factors among the 14 items. The factor analysis was therefore disregarded and each item was analyzed individually.

The third section, entitled "Impact of Your Education at Options II", explores what the graduates learned at Options II on an academic and a personal level. Items 1-17 in this section are directly related to the stated aims of the school. Items 18-20 are based on interviews with graduates. A principal components factor analysis, followed by a varimax rotation, gave a three-factor solution with 17 of 20 items assigned to three factors. A more detailed explanation of this factor analysis is found in Chapter 4.

The fourth section, entitled "Conclusion", consists of four open-ended questions that allow the graduates to comment on what they got out of the Options II program, whether the school had a direct impact on their lives and where they see themselves in five years. Results of this section were used to shed light on and supplement data from the other sections.

3.5 ANALYSIS

This study sought to obtain quantitative information. The questions in both instruments were coded and analyzed by computer, using the STAT PAC program. Frequency distributions were obtained for all variables, along with descriptive statistics for all ordinal variables.

T tests were computed for all paired comparisons but were reported only when found to be statistically significant. Analysis of variance was performed across intervening variables of age, year of graduation, as well as variables related to labour market status.

Factor analysis was performed on three sets of variables: (1) All variables in Instrument I, (2) The "Importance in Helping You Graduate" variables in Instrument II, and (3) The "Impact" variables in Instrument II. Only the Impact factor analysis was reported and used. Pearson product-moment correlations were used to measure the association between variables of impact of Options II and factors that helped the students graduate.

In cases where statistical analysis was inappropriate, a content analysis approach was used.

3.6 LIMITATIONS

3.6.1 The findings in this study are restricted to those students who graduated from Options II, i.e., those for whom the school is effective.

3.6.2 The non-respondents are probably those who are least successful in their post-graduate pursuits, thus posing threats to internal validity.

3.6.3 The results of this study are not externally valid; i.e., the results cannot be used in making generalizations about other alternative programs for high school dropouts.

3.6.4 The physical layout of the Graduates' Questionnaire caused some confusion. The page break between pages 3 and 4 may have influenced the response to question 21 in the Impact section. It is therefore possible that the data on this variable are not valid.

3.6.5 Item 22 (Graduates' Questionnaire) in the Impact section had to be disregarded, as the respondents did not understand the question.

3.6.6 As the researcher is the head teacher, i.e., leader of Options II, the two items related to leadership of Options II have to be interpreted cautiously. They are item number 6 on Student Questionnaire which states "The head teacher of Options II is a strong leader" and item number 3 in the section on factors helping students graduate on Graduates' Questionnaire related to the degree of importance of "strong leadership". Present students as well as graduates may have been influenced in a positive or negative direction on these items.

3.6.7 Source of data for factors of effectiveness and outcomes was identical, i.e., both based on graduates' perceptions. The correlation of items from a common source poses the danger of spurious correlation.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented and discussed. The chapter is organized according to the various research questions, and data are displayed in tables where appropriate. In cases where analyses yielded few significant results, no tables of results are presented.

4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Research question #1: What are the characteristics of effective schools?

This research question is answered in the review of literature in Chapter 2.

4.3 STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF OPTIONS II

Research question #2: To what extent do Options II students perceive the effectiveness characteristics as found in the literature?

Fourteen effectiveness characteristics were used as a basis for the development of 20 statements that describe Options II. To assess students' perceptions of the school,

students were asked to respond on a five-point scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 display the results from two slightly different perspectives. Table 4.1 shows the percentage of respondents choosing each response category and the sum of those respondents who agree or strongly agree with each of the 20 statements. Table 4.2 converts these same data into item means, standard deviations and then ranks them. By taking those items in which 80% of respondents agree or strongly agree as an arbitrary cut-off point, one can see in Table 4.1 what, according to the students, the major features of this alternative high school are.

Variables 1, 2 and 3 represent the goals of Options II. Agreement of 85%-87% indicates that these goals seem to be well understood by the students. Variables 4 and 5 refer to the rules. There seems to be almost unanimous agreement that the rules are strict and well enforced. It is interesting to note in Table 4.2 that the mean for rules being enforced (variable 5) is higher than for the rules being strict (variable 4). Students often express the view that the rules of Options II are not stricter than rules in other schools. What makes Options II different from their

Table 4.1

Student Perceptions of Options II - Percentage Breakdown

Variable Number	Characteristic	% Response 1	2	3	4	5	Sum of 4 + 5
1	Goal - Importance of graduating	-	-	13.0	39.1	47.8	87
2	Goal - Every student capable of graduating	2.2	6.5	4.3	30.4	56.5	87
3	Goal - To turn students on to learning	2.2	8.7	4.3	32.6	52.2	85
4	Rules - strict	-	2.2	-	45.7	52.2	98
5	Rules - enforced	-	2.2	-	26.1	71.7	98
6	Strong leadership	4.3	2.2	28.3	37.0	28.3	65
7	High academic expectations	2.2	-	2.2	43.5	52.2	96
8	Emphasis on writing skills	-	10.9	32.6	52.2	4.3	57
9	Emphasis on listening skills	-	8.7	8.7	50.0	32.6	83
10	Emphasis on French skills	10.9	8.7	34.8	39.1	6.5	46
11	Emphasis on mathematical skills	-	4.3	4.3	73.9	17.4	91
12	Feedback on progress and performance	2.2	8.7	8.7	43.5	37.0	81
13	School climate - Students enjoy being at school	10.9	4.3	39.1	32.6	13.0	46
14	School climate - Students/ teachers work toward a common purpose	2.2	8.7	17.4	43.5	28.3	72
15	School spirit	6.5	17.4	37.0	28.3	10.9	39
16	Family-like atmosphere	6.5	15.2	19.6	34.8	23.9	59
17	Personal relationships with teachers	6.5	4.3	32.6	39.1	17.4	57
18	Collaborative planning	2.2	-	21.7	50.0	26.1	76
19	Staff morale	-	-	28.3	41.3	30.4	72
20	Teachers available for extra help	-	-	4.3	39.1	56.5	96

Notes: 1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = No opinion
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree

Table 4.2

Student Perceptions of Options II - Descriptive Statistics

Variable No.	Characteristic	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Rank
1	Goal - Importance of graduating	4.36	0.70	5
2	Goal - Every student capable of graduating	4.31	0.98	6
3	Goal - To turn students on to learning	4.31	0.92	6
4	Rules - strict	4.49	0.62	3
5	Rules - enforced	4.69	0.60	1
6	Strong leadership	3.82	1.00	11
7	High academic expectations	4.44	0.74	4
8	Emphasis on writing skills	3.49	0.75	14
9	Emphasis on listening skills	4.04	0.87	7
10	Emphasis on French skills	3.20	1.06	16
11	Emphasis on mathematics skills	4.04	0.62	7
12	Feedback on progress and performance	4.02	1.00	8
13	School climate - Students enjoy being at school	3.31	1.10	15
14	School climate - Students/teachers work toward a common purpose	3.87	0.99	10
15	School spirit	3.20	1.06	16
16	Family-like atmosphere	3.53	1.19	13
17	Personal relationships with teachers	3.56	1.04	12
18	Collaborative planning	3.98	0.82	9
19	Staff morale	4.04	0.77	7
20	Teachers available for extra help	4.53	0.58	2

Notes: $\bar{X}$ = Mean
SD = Standard Deviation
Number of respondents = 46
Items calculated for means based on the following:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = No Opinion
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

previous high school is that the rules are strictly enforced.

Variable 7 indicates that the students see Options II as having high academic expectations. Of the basic skills listed in variables 8 to 11, students feel that mathematics and listening skills are given more emphasis than writing skills and French. These findings are consistent with the philosophy of the school. Intake interviews indicate that many dropouts experience serious problems with mathematics. In some cases this stems from real difficulty with mathematics, in others from frequent absenteeism and lack of consistent effort. Mathematics seems to be a serious concern for students. In interviews, students have often revealed that not being able to do mathematics has made them feel inadequate. As mathematics is a prerequisite for most CEGEP programs, they see that an inability to do mathematics can seriously limit their educational and occupational prospects. The fact that three of the six full-time teachers of Options II are science graduates with a strong mathematical orientation may be a contributing factor to mathematics being stressed in the school.

Eighty-three percent of students say that teachers insist that students listen in class (variable 9), which they find difficult to do. As most of these students were

either turned off in their previous high schools or used to being trouble-makers in the class, they never learned how to listen. The staff not only consistently stress the importance of listening in class but impose severe sanctions on those who do not listen. In informal discussions, many students have admitted that listening in class is a new experience for them.

Variable 12 indicates that students feel they receive frequent feedback on progress and performance. Variable 20 shows that students agree almost unanimously that teachers are available for extra help. This last item was developed from statements of students in a study of organizational climate of Options II (Rona, 1985). One aspect of Options II that is continuously stressed by the teachers is that they are willing to work hard to help students succeed but not harder than the students themselves. The perceptions of the students, therefore, are consistent with this. They feel that teachers do their jobs by giving them frequent feedback and being available for extra help.

Table 4.2 sheds further light on students' perceptions of Options II. It displays means, standard deviations and overall rankings in importance for each characteristic of effectiveness of the school. The results show a certain consistency with Table 4.1. The outstanding features of the

school, i.e., ranked one to four, are that rules are strict and well enforced, academic expectations are high, and that teachers are available for extra help. These results correspond extremely well with the findings of the High School and Beyond Study (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1983) which showed that dropouts' alienation from and rejection of school stemmed from their feeling that teachers lacked interest in their students and the school lacked effective discipline. Options II students report that their school has an effective disciplinary system and that teachers seem to show they care by being available for extra help.

Several variables seem to be less clearly identified as characteristics of Options II. It must be pointed out that none of the means are below 3.20. As 3.0 represented "no opinion" and 4.0 "agree" on the "Student Questionnaire", one can say that the students did not in general disagree with any of the 20 statements. Variable 6 deals with the leadership of the school, i.e., the head teacher. Twenty-eight percent of respondents had "no opinion" while 65% indicated that the head teacher was a strong leader. Only 6.5% disagreed. As stated in the limitations to this study (section 3.6.6), students may have been influenced in their response to this question, as the researcher is also

the head teacher of the school. Thus it seems that 28% abstained from giving an opinion.

Variables 13 to 17 deal with school climate, school spirit and sense of community in the school. The highest mean of these variables is variable 14, consistent with variables 1 to 3. Students are aware of the presence of the goals in the school and, to a certain extent, feel that teachers work together with students to attain these goals. It is hypothesized that if students were asked to respond to items 12 to 17 on graduation day, their view would be far more positive than the view they would have had in January. There are several reasons for this. First of all the respondents to the questionnaire were not all destined to be successful at Options II. Several were on "final contracts", very close to being dismissed. These circumstances would indicate that their view of the school's climate may be rather negative. Secondly, although most students seem to share the view that the school has certain effectiveness characteristics, e.g., strictly enforced rules or high academic expectations, they don't necessarily enjoy the process of being subjected to strict discipline and hard work. It is only when they achieve their goal, i.e. actually graduate, that their view becomes more positive.

Variables 18 and 19 deal with staff morale and collaborative planning of teachers. Over 70% of the students saw these as characteristics of the school while approximately 25% had no opinion. Several students expressed later that they could comment on their own experiences but not on the experiences of the staff.

4.3.1 Differences in Perceptions between Sub-groups

Inspection of the data and discussions with students indicated that there was a good chance that there would be differences in the perceptions of students attending Options II for the first year and students who were returning for their second year. Therefore, a t-test was used to check for differences between perceptions on each variable. However, no statistically significant differences were found.

The division of the 46 respondents created 35 in one cell (first-year students) and 11 in the other (second-year students). These unavoidable cell size differences may have contributed to the non-significant t-test results. Therefore, one cannot say that the perceptions of these two groups are different nor that they are not different. This could be the subject of further study.

4.3.2 Summary: Students' Perceptions of Effectiveness

The perceptions of Options II students present a salient model of effectiveness of an alternative high school for returning dropouts. According to students, the most important features of the school are:

(1) Clear goals

(2) Strictly enforced rules

(3) High academic expectations

(4) Emphasis on basic skills, e.g. mathematics

(5) Frequent feedback on progress and performance

(6) Teachers available to give students extra help

These findings correspond extremely well with the characteristics of the program model proposed by Wehlage Rutter and Turnbaugh (1987) for at-risk youth. Their model stresses the importance of clearly defined rules and firmly established legitimate authority. They emphasize the importance of teachers communicating a sense of caring to these students and the conviction that they deserve a chance. Conveying high academic expectations, giving prompt feedback as evidence of progress, and stressing basic skills are seen as ways that teachers can show they care. Yudin et al. (1973) describe a dropout's career as one marked by academic difficulties. It seems clear, therefore, that these students need extra help when they return to school.

Furthermore, they need to feel that teachers are both willing and able to help them.

4.4 EFFECTIVENESS OF OPTIONS II

Research question #3.0: To what extent is Options II effective as measured by:

(3.1) Achievement of school objectives

(3.2) Success of its graduates.

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are two stated aims of Options II:

(1) To help young people who were previously unsuccessful in regular high school to graduate. This is referred to as the "Official Curriculum".

(2) To prepare young people to integrate into society beyond high school through:

(a) Gains in personal growth and development;

(b) Improved work and study habits;

(c) Improved basic skills.

This is referred to as the "Hidden Curriculum".

Research question #3 addresses the extent to which these objectives are met.

4.4.1 Achievement of School Objectives

4.4.1.1 The Official Curriculum

Research question #3.1. Do students graduate from Options II?

An average of 65% of students who enter Options II graduate, while 35% drop out (Options II (1984-1987) Year End Reports). Blouin and Martino (1986) report that the average high school dropout rate across the province of Quebec is 33%. It would then seem that the dropout rate at Options II is not higher than in regular high schools across Quebec. If one makes the assumption that Options II is not a regular high school in that its clientele are either dropouts or at risk of dropping out, one can then conclude that most of those who actually graduate from Options II would not have graduated in the regular school system. Therefore, a 65% success rate with this clientele indicates that the school is adequately meeting the goal of producing high school graduates.

4.4.1.2 The Hidden Curriculum

Research question #3.2: To what extent does Options II meet its objectives in preparing its students to integrate into society through gains in personal growth

and development, improved work and study habits and improved basic skills?

Twenty items were developed related to the goals of Options II. On the "Graduates' Questionnaire", graduates were asked to rate what they learned at Options II on an academic and a personal level. They were asked to respond on a five-point scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

Table 4.3 summarizes the results of what the graduates say they learned. Appendix VI shows the breakdown of responses in percentages. Examination of the means indicates that the most important impact of Options II on its graduates is conveying the belief that they are capable of succeeding. Ranked second is improved mathematical skills and third the ability to follow through and finish what they started. It is interesting to note that each of these items of learning relates to one of the three areas of the hidden curriculum. Let us now examine in greater detail the items related to each area.

Variables 1 to 8 examine the extent to which graduates feel they improved their work and study habits. Over 80% of the respondents agree that they learned to complete assignments on time, to prepare for exams, to be punctual, to complete what they started and to establish priorities.

Table 4.3

Impact of Options II - Graduates' Perceived Learning

Variable No.	Learning Factors	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Rank
1	Complete assignments on time	4.18	0.71	4
2	Prepare for exams	4.14	0.72	6
3	Take notes	3.77	0.93	13
4	How to study	4.05	0.81	7
5	Organize time	3.84	0.98	11
6	Be punctual	4.16	0.92	5
7	Follow through on tasks	4.21	0.86	3
8	Establish priorities	4.05	0.58	7
9	Problem-solving skills	3.82	0.83	12
10	Verbal expression	3.51	1.05	15
11	Written expression	3.74	0.99	14
12	Improve French	3.93	1.12	10
13	Improve mathematics	4.28	0.88	2
14	Self-confidence	4.04	0.87	8
15	Self-respect	4.02	1.01	9
16	Belief in capability to succeed	4.33	0.91	1
17	Getting along with people	3.77	1.10	13
18	Dependency on others to make decisions	2.54	1.24	17
19	Dependency on strict rules	2.67	1.35	16
20	Dependency on constant feedback	2.95	1.30	15

Notes: $\bar{X}$ = Mean
SD = Standard Deviation
Number of respondents = 57
Items calculated for means on the following scale:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = No Opinion
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

It seems, from discussions with graduates, that this is an entirely new orientation for most of them. Their previous school history was marked by their rarely completing assignments, often being late or absent and an inability to set goals.

Variables 9 to 13 examine learning in the area of basic skills. Eighty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they improved in mathematics, while 76% feel they improved in French. Areas related to oral and written communication and problem-solving seem to show less significant gains. Students currently enrolled at Options II feel that mathematics is strongly stressed in the school, and graduates ranked mathematics number two overall in terms of learning acquired. As previously stated, many students in intake interviews have stated that they greatly lack confidence in mathematics and that mathematics was always a stumbling block for them. It therefore seems that improving mathematics skills and gaining self-confidence go hand in hand.

Variables 14 to 17 deal with personal growth and development goals and examine the extent to which graduates feel they gained self-confidence, self-respect, a belief in their ability to succeed, and an improved ability to get along with others. Over 80% of graduates feel they gained

self-confidence and, above all, they learned that they were capable of succeeding. Seventy-five percent say they learned to respect themselves. The literature on high school dropouts stresses that these adolescents, for the most part, have lost the belief in their ability to succeed and therefore feel inadequate in school (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Arnone and Strout (1978) point out that alternative schools, by design, generally lead to improvements in self-esteem. The graduates of Options II indicate that the school helped them regain their belief in themselves and in their ability to succeed.

Variables 18 to 20 explore the extent to which Options II creates dependency on extra help, strict rules and constant feedback. Being in a small structured environment helps these students succeed. A possible negative effect of that sheltered family-like atmosphere is an inability to function without it. However, responses indicated that although some dependency did develop, it was not insurmountable. What students missed most after leaving Options II was the feedback and reinforcement. However, it is believed that many students who graduate from regular high school must also miss that reinforcement in their post-high school educational experiences.

In order to find out what patterns of learning outcomes emerged, these twenty variables of graduates' learning were factor analyzed to determine the presence of an underlying factor structure. A principal components factor analysis, followed by a varimax rotation, revealed three interpretable factors. The rotated factor loadings of each item on the three factors is shown in Appendix VII. Items loading on more than one factor were assigned to one or another factor or were eliminated. As a result, three variables (9, 12 and 13) were eliminated. The clusters, items and rotated loadings for the 17 items used on three scales are summarized in Table 4.4.

These three new scales - personal growth and development, work and study habits, and dependency - will be used to correlate the impact of Options II with its factors of effectiveness (Research question £4.1).

4.4.1.3 Differences in Achievement of School Objectives among Sub-groups

Visual inspection of the data indicated that the means for graduates of 1985 were consistently lower than for the other three years on the "impact" variables. In light of this, analyses of variance (F-tests) were performed on three variables: year of graduation, age and labour market status.

Table 4.4

Items and Rotated Factor Loadings of the Impact of Options II Items

Factor Label	Variable Number	Item	Factor Loading
1. Personal Growth and Development	10	Verbal expression	.64
	11	Written expression	.55
	14	Self-confidence	.58
	15	Self-respect	.85
	16	Belief in capability to succeed	.73
	17	Getting along with people	.70
2. Work and Study Habits	1	Completing assignments on time	.66
	2	Preparing for exams	.44
	3	Taking notes	.40
	4	How to study	.57
	5	Organizing time	.61
	6	Being punctual	.79
	7	Following through on tasks	.68
	8	Establishing priorities	.49
3. Dependency	18	Dependency on others to make decisions	.69
	19	Dependency on strict rules	.76
	20	Dependency on constant feedback	.75

A t-test was used to check for differences by gender on all twenty "impact" variables. Neither the t-tests nor the F-tests showed any significant differences.

4.4.1.4 Single Most Important Impact of Options II

In an open-ended question on the "Graduates' Questionnaire", graduates were asked to state the SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT thing they got out of the Options II program. The results were content analyzed and are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 demonstrates that the two most important things graduates received from Options II are a High School Leaving Certificate and self-confidence, coupled with self-respect. The High School Leaving Certificate is what they had come for and that's the most important thing they received. This further confirms the findings of Hatfield (1987). His study showed that the primary motivation for students entering the Outreach School System is to graduate and further their studies at CEGEP. Along with finally being able to graduate comes a renewed belief in their ability to succeed. These results substantiate the literature in that many dropouts place a high value on their education and leave school not because they don't want an education but perhaps because they cannot accept the hidden

Table 4.5

Single Most Important Impact of Options II

Outcome Item	Number of Respondents	% of Sample
A High School Diploma	21	37
Self-confidence/Self-respect	18	32
Self-discipline	6	11
Learning to trust teachers	4	7
To set high goals	3	5
A great education	3	5
A family	2	4
The ability to think	1	2
To be motivated, aggressive and more intelligent	2	2
Extra help	1	2
Love	1	2

Notes: Number of Respondents = 57

curriculum of the regular high school (Fine & Rosenberg, 1983).

4.4.1.5 Summary: Achievement of School Objectives

The 65% success rate of Options II indicates that the school, to a large extent, meets its objective of producing high school graduates. Graduates of Options II in general indicate that they made substantial gains in personal growth and development, work/study habits, as well as basic skills. On eight of the 17 variables listed, at least 80% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

The five most significant outcomes of learning in order of importance are:

(1) A belief in their capability to succeed
(2) Improved mathematical skills
(3) The ability to follow through on tasks
(4) The ability to complete assignments on time
(5) The ability to be punctual.

4.4.2 Success of Its Graduates

Research question #3.3: To what extent are Options II graduates successful?

4.4.2.1 Graduates' Labour Market Status

Three questions on the "Graduates' Questionnaire" dealt with the graduates' labour market status. Table 4.6 summarizes the results of the respondents' academic, work and other involvements. Examination of the results indicates that 58% of the respondents are studying on a full or part-time basis, 74% have a full or part-time work involvement, 9% have family responsibilities and 7% indicate that they are looking for work. If one assumes that one cannot study full time and work full time, then one can conclude that 83% of the respondents have a full-time commitment to studies or work. With only 7% seeking employment, it seems that 93% are involved in studies, work or family responsibilities.

The results summarized in Table 4.6 must be interpreted very cautiously. As stated in the limitations in Chapter 3, the non-respondents in the study are probably those who are least successful in their post-graduate pursuits. As 36% of the target population are not part of the sample, it is not possible to make definitive statements regarding the actual success rate of the graduates. However, it must be pointed out that the 83% of the sample involved in full-time work or studies represents 52% of the target population, indicating that at least 52% of the graduates are studying or working

Table 4.6

Graduates' Labour Market Status

Academic Involvement	Number of Respondents	% of Sample
Studying full time	24	42.1
Studying part time	9	15.8
Not studying	24	42.1
	57	100
Work Involvement		
Working full time	22	40.7
Working part time	20	30.7
Not working	12	22.2
	54	93.6
Other Involvement		
No response	48	84.2
Looking for work	4	7.0
Family responsibilities	5	8.8
	57	100

Note: Variation in totals explained by incomplete questionnaires

full time. The 93% of the sample who have successfully integrated themselves into society through work, studies or family responsibilities represent 60% of the target population. It can only be hypothesized that the actual figures lie somewhere in between.

The significance of these findings lies in the fact that most of these students were neither studying nor working when they entered Options II and were dropouts from society. Intake interviews, interviews with graduates, and the literature all confirm that these students have a very limited view of themselves and their future. It seems that by finding out that they were "capable of succeeding", they move on to be much more successful members of society.

4.4.2.2 Graduates' View of the Future

While society measures success in terms of labour market status, the graduates' view of the future represents a different measure of success. In an open-ended question on the "Graduates! Questionnaire", respondents were asked to describe briefly where they see themselves in five years. The purpose was to ascertain to what extent graduates had developed a more optimistic view of the future. Of the 57 respondents, 48 answered the question. The results were then content analyzed.

Of the 48 respondents, 20 indicated that they saw themselves at university in five years. Some were specific and named their field of study. These fields included law, business, astrophysics, psychology, physics, engineering and special education. Eleven respondents said they had specific career objectives, while seven indicated that they wanted a "good job" or a "career" in general. The following careers were specified: management, fashion design, interior design, sound production, administration, working with the handicapped, running a business, and lastly "in the movies".

Some respondents were less specific. Three talked about "being successful" and being a "better person". One described himself as "being on top of the world racing a motorcycle". A few had very specific objectives such as "living in the country, working for the airlines while putting a down-payment on the house". One female respondent was very clear about her view of the future. She wrote: "In five years, I see myself with a degree in Creative Arts from CEGEP, travelling through Arizona and New Mexico collecting American Indian Art for a future shop I plan to open on Sherbrooke Street across from the Museum".

In summary, the graduates indicate that they have goals for their future. Thirty-five percent see themselves getting a university education. Sixty-eight percent have a

specific objective involving work or studies. The fact that they are not afraid to aim high could be wishful thinking and not atypical for this particular clientele. Only a longitudinal study could draw definitive conclusions. If being successful in life, however, is to a large extent related to having goals and seeing oneself as being successful, then the graduates' view of the future is promising indeed.

4.4.2.3 Summary: Success of the Graduates

Two measures were used to study the success of Options II graduates: (1) their labour market status and (2) their view of the future. If, according to the literature, high school dropouts suffer from low self-esteem, alienation from society and a negative view of their future (Beck & Muia, 1980), it is evident that Options II graduates, by gaining self-esteem and finding out that they're capable of succeeding, have developed a much more positive view of their future. It seems that success breeds success and having finally achieved what they viewed as the impossible, i.e., a High School Leaving Certificate, allows these graduates to further their studies, find employment and have serious plans for the future. It is clear that most of them do not return to the streets.

4.5 GRADUATES' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS OF EFFECTIVENESS

Research question #4: What factors make Options II effective for its graduates?

On the "Graduates' Questionnaire," graduates were asked to rate the relative importance of 14 factors in helping them graduate from Options II. They were asked to respond on a four-point scale ranging from 4 (very important) to 1 (not important).

Table 4.7 summarizes the results of the importance of each factor. Appendix VIII gives the breakdown of results in percentages. Although factors were ranked in order of importance, examination of the means indicates that the factors all seem to be judged important on a scale where 3 represents important and 4 very important. The breakdown of percentages further substantiates that almost all these factors are important in helping students graduate.

By examining Appendix VIII and taking an arbitrary cut-off of 85% of respondents who perceive a factor to be important or very important, one can conclude that 11 of the 14 factors listed are important and three are not as important. It seems that strong leadership, encouragement from fellow students and the advocate (teacher counsellor assigned to each student) are perceived to be less important

Table 4.7

Factors Helping Students Graduate

Variable Number	Factor	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Rank
1	Clear attainable goals	3.41	0.63	4
2	Strictly enforced rules	3.24	0.67	9
3	Strong leadership	2.91	0.78	12
4	High academic expectations	3.35	0.78	5
5	Emphasis on basic skills	3.30	0.84	7
6	Feedback on progress and performance	3.41	0.71	4
7	Encouragement from teachers	3.65	0.55	1
8	Encouragement from students	2.98	0.92	11
9	Personal relationship with teachers	3.26	0.71	8
10	Coming to Options II by choice	3.61	0.60	2
11	Advocate (teacher counsellor)	3.27	0.81	10
12	Teachers giving extra help	3.50	0.77	3
13	Class size	3.41	0.79	4
14	Family-like atmosphere	3.33	0.73	6

Notes $\bar{X}$ = Mean (57 cases)
SD = Standard Deviation (57 cases)
Items calculated for means based on the following scale:
1 = Not important
2 = No opinion
3 = Important
4 = Very important

than the other 11. As stated in the limitations, since the "leader" of the school is also the researcher, respondents may have been influenced in their responses to that item. It seems clear that encouragement from fellow students is far less important than encouragement from teachers. Examination of the data also indicates that the advocate was rated either very important or not important by most respondents. This seems to reflect that they responded according to how much they liked their advocate.

4.5.1 Most Important Characteristics of Effectiveness

Following the 14 items where respondents had to determine the relative importance of each factor in helping them graduate, respondents were asked to pinpoint the three characteristics that were MOST IMPORTANT in helping them graduate from Options II. The responses were tabulated and the results were then divided into Most Important, Middle Important and Least Important. Table 4.8 summarizes the results of the relative importance of each factor.

The results clearly indicate that the two most important characteristics of Options II that make it effective for its graduates are strictly enforced rules and encouragement from teachers. Duke and Perry (1978) point out that alternative schools have fewer rules than regular

Table 4.8

Relative Importance of Factors in Helping Students Graduate

Variable Number	Factor	Number of[a] Respondents	Rating
2	Strictly enforced rules	25	Most Important
7	Encouragement from teachers	25	Most Important
12	Extra help	16	Middle Important
13	Class size	15	Middle Important
6	Feedback on progress and performance	14	Middle Important
4	High academic expectations	13	Middle Important
1	Clear attainable goals	12	Middle Important
9	Personal relationships with teachers	11	Middle Important
14	Family-like atmosphere	10	Middle Important
10	Coming to Options II by choice	7	Least Important
11	Advocate (teacher counsellor)	7	Least Important
8	Encouragement from students	6	Least Important
3	Strong leadership	5	Least Important
5	Emphasis on basic skills	5	Least Important

Notes: [a]Number of respondents rating each factor as one of the three most important (57 cases)
Rating based on natural grouping of responses

schools and less need for them. This study contradicts their hypothesis but substantiates instead the findings of the High School and Beyond Study (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1983). That study showed that dropouts' alienation from and rejection of school stems from a lack of fair and effective disciplinary systems in schools and the feeling that teachers do not care about their students. Anderson et al. (1980) also point to the key role played by teachers in keeping dropouts in school. According to them, these students need supportive, professional behaviour from teachers. It seems that "caring teachers" are common elements of alternative schools (Raywid, 1984). Options II students, therefore, having found legitimate authority and an encouraging staff, are able to succeed. Of all the factors of effectiveness, then, it seems that a tight system of authority coupled with a caring staff are the key ones.

However, rules and encouragement are not the only ingredients of success. Seven characteristics are rated as being of middle importance: extra help, class size, feedback on progress, performance, high academic expectations, clear attainable goals, personal relationships with teachers and family-like atmosphere. The literature shows that many dropouts experience academic failure (McDill

et al., 1985). Having been either out of school or infrequently at school, many returning dropouts need small classes and extra help to succeed. In fact, many graduates of Options II have stated that the high academic expectations and the consistent feedback they received are evidence of the teachers' belief in their ability to succeed, further establishing for them the feeling that their teachers care. The staff have observed that students are often desperate for instant feedback, looking to get results five minutes after the end of an examination. These students, who rarely attended school or did no work at school if they did attend, expect more and more of themselves at Options II and often compete for marks. The high academic expectations of the staff become translated into high academic expectations for the students themselves.

Clear attainable goals are also part of student success. Through strictly enforced rules, students are compelled to work and achieve the academic proficiency to attain these goals. Personal relationships with teachers and a family-like atmosphere are also considered important, as many of these students have poor family relationships or no families at all (Zamenzadeh & Prince, 1978). For many, the teachers at Options II represent their most "significant others".

Rated as least important in helping students graduate were the following five factors: coming to Options II by choice, the advocate, encouragement from fellow students, strong leadership, and emphasis on basic skills. Although in Table 4.7 the element of choosing to go to school ranked second in importance, when asked to choose the most important elements, Table 4.8 shows that it is ranked as one of the least important. The literature on alternative schools stresses the importance of choice in giving students a greater investment in what they choose (Erickson, 1982; Nault, 1975-76; Raywid, 1984). Intake interviews reveal that making the decision to apply to Options II on their own is seen by many as the first step toward success. Once the choice is made, however, it is no longer a vital part of succeeding. The advocate is part of the process of enforcing rules and developing work habits but not necessarily an obvious factor of success.

Encouragement from fellow students seems far less important than encouragement from teachers. Many of these students have expressed that they want to break away from peer group influence and therefore place a lesser value on what other students think. Leadership and emphasis on basic skills seem to be a part of the school but not of major importance. In summary, it seems that the five factors

deemed least important represent part of the process of being at Options II rather than the structure of the school itself.

4.5.2 Correlation between the Impact of Options II and Its Factors of Effectiveness

Research question #4.1: What is the relationship between the impact of Options II on its graduates and the factors that made it effective for them?

The three impact of Options II factors were correlated with the 14 factors of effectiveness. Table 4.9 displays these correlations. The purpose of the correlation was to see which characteristics of the school were linked to the three impacts (outcomes), i.e., personal growth and development, work/study habits and dependency. As stated in the limitations in Chapter 3 (section 3.6.7), the results must be interpreted cautiously due to the danger of a spurious correlation.

"Personal Growth and Development" shows a significant correlation with nine of the 14 characteristics of effectiveness: clear attainable goals, strong leadership, high academic expectations, emphasis on basic skills, encouragement from teachers and students, coming to Options II by choice, and the family-like atmosphere. Interestingly

Table 4.9

Simple Correlation between Impact of Options II Factors and Its Characteristics of Effectiveness

	Characteristics of Effectiveness of Options II	Impact Factors of Options II		
		Personal Growth and Development	Work and Study Habits	Dependency
1	Clear attainable goals	0.27*	0.29*	0.01
2	Strictly enforced rules	0.11	0.24	0.02
3	Strong leadership	0.45**	0.38**	0.31*
4	High academic expectations	0.37**	0.31*	0.05
5	Emphasis on basic skills	0.33**	0.32*	0.05
6	Feedback on progress and performance	0.02	0.04	0.01
7	Encouragement from teachers	0.29*	0.14	0.04
8	Encouragement from students	0.55**	0.41**	0.22
9	Personal relationships with teachers	0.25	0.20	0.14
10	Coming to Options II by choice	0.38**	0.49**	0.01
11	Advocate (teacher counsellor)	0.26	0.34**	0.00
12	Teachers giving extra help	0.06	0.27*	0.10
13	Class size	0.08	-0.01	-0.04
14	Family-like atmosphere	0.46**	0.59**	0.18

Notes: * Significant at $p \leq 0.05$
** Significant at $p \leq 0.01$

enough, although strong leadership, encouragement from students, emphasis on basic skills and coming to Options II by choice were not considered to be key elements in helping students graduate from Options II, they do seem to promote and have an impact on personal growth and development. Table 4.9 also shows that factors that were important in helping students graduate, e.g., strictly enforced rules are not perceived to have an impact beyond graduation.

"Work and Study Habits" are significantly correlated with nine of the 14 characteristics of effectiveness: clear attainable goals, strong leadership, high academic expectations, emphasis on basic skills, encouragement from students, coming to Options II by choice, the advocate, teachers giving extra help, and the family-like atmosphere. Once again, one can see that the five factors considered least important in helping students graduate (see Table 4.8) show a significant relationship with the development of work and study habits. The advocate, who is responsible for imposing discipline and setting goals, is positively correlated with the development of work and study habits. Several researchers believe that successful programs must address dropouts' psychological need for someone to care about them individually through the provision of counselling (Bullis, 1986; Olsen & Edwards, 1982; Treadway, 1985).

Leadership, emphasis on basic skills, encouragement from fellow students and coming to the school by choice are all correlated positively with the development of work and study habits.

There is only one significant correlation between the factors of effectiveness and the development of dependency at Options II. It seems that one of the side effects of strong leadership is that people may become dependent on it. Maillet (1988) describes the relationship between power and dependency as one based on disequilibrium. He explains that A can influence B only inasmuch as that influence meets the needs of B by diminishing B's zone of uncertainty. He therefore hypothesizes that leaders and subordinates have a two-way relationship. By extension, then, it could be said that strong leadership at Options II develops dependency or that the dependency needs of this particular clientele forces the leader to be strong.

4.5.3 Summary: Factors of Effectiveness

Eighty-five percent of the graduates state that of the 14 factors of effectiveness considered, 11 were considered important or very important in helping the graduates. What seems to be implied, therefore, is that Options II possesses most of the characteristics associated with effective

schools. These factors of effectiveness were then divided into most important, middle important and least important. The two most important factors of effectiveness of Options II in meeting the objective of producing high school graduates are strictly enforced rules and encouragement from teachers.

The correlation between the impact of Options II and its factors of effectiveness revealed some illuminating results. It seems that the factors deemed least important in helping students graduate, i.e., meeting the requirements of the official curriculum, become important in meeting the requirements of the hidden curriculum. Factors such as strong leadership and encouragement from fellow students, which were deemed not very important in actually helping students graduate, are significantly correlated with personal growth and development and the improvement of work and study habits.

In summary, all the 14 factors of effectiveness seem to form an integral part of the Options II program. Some factors are responsible for achieving the aims of the official curriculum, while others have an impact on achieving the goals of the hidden curriculum and therefore have an impact on the students beyond graduation.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the major conclusions of the study, addresses its implications and offers suggestions for further study.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Although Rutter et al. (1979) describe a school as a dynamic social system with a distinguishable culture, the literature on effective schools lists the common ingredients of effectiveness that create a climate of values and norms that emphasize successful teaching and learning. According to the literature, the common characteristics of effective schools are:

(1) Clear attainable goals

(2) High academic expectations

(3) Order and discipline

(4) Positive climate and strong school spirit

(5) Clear strong leadership

(6) High staff morale

(7) School site management

(8) Sense of community

(9) Collaborative planning

(10) Class size conducive to a sense of personal relationships between teachers and students

(11) Emphasis on basic skills

(12) Frequent monitoring of pupil progress

(13) Feedback on academic performance.

This study began by examining the extent to which Options II students perceive the effectiveness characteristics found in the literature. Over 80% of students currently enrolled at Options II perceive the presence of the following characteristics of effectiveness in ranked order:

(1) Strictly enforced rules

(2) Teachers available to give students extra help

(3) High academic expectations

(4) Clear goals

(5) Emphasis on basic skills

(6) Frequent feedback on progress and performance.

According to Raywid (1984), alternative schools stress the importance of school climate and de-emphasize rules and regulations. Students' perceptions of Options II seem to contradict these aspects of the alternative schools' literature. The students gave much less importance to the presence of climate variables and saw rules as being the key feature of this alternative school.

This study then went on to determine the extent to which Options II is effective, using two measures: (1) achievement of school objectives and (2) success of its graduates. The aims of the official and hidden curriculum of Options II were used as a basis for measuring the extent to which school objectives are met. These aims include: high school graduation, gains in personal growth and development, improvement in work and study habits as well as in basic skills. A success rate of 65% indicates that the school is meeting its objectives of producing high school graduates. In terms of personal growth and development, 86% of graduates state that they learned they were capable of succeeding and, as a result, gained self-confidence and self-respect. The most significant gains in work and study habits are:

1. The ability to follow through on tasks
2. The ability to complete assignments on time
3. The ability to be punctual.

Graduates say that they improved their basic skills in general but that the most outstanding gain is in mathematics.

Two indicators were used to measure the success of Options II graduates: their labour market status and their personal view of the future. The study showed that 93% of

the sample are working, studying or have family responsibilities. Seven percent are looking for work. Fifty-eight percent are studying on a full or part-time basis, while 71% are working on a full or part-time basis. When asked about their view of the future, 68% of the respondents had a specific objective involving work or studies. Thirty-five percent plan to attend university.

The study also sought to identify the factors that make Options II effective for its graduates. Although most of the factors of effectiveness seem to be important in helping students graduate, the two most important factors are strictly enforced rules and encouragement from teachers. It seems that a renewed belief in teachers caring and in legitimate authority are the keys to success.

Having identified the factors that make Options II effective for its graduates, the study examined the relationship between the impact of Options II on its graduates and its factors of effectiveness. The correlation of the three "outcome factors" of the hidden curriculum of Options II, i.e., personal/social development, work/study habits and dependency, with the characteristics of effectiveness, yielded several significant results. By ranking these factors in order of importance based on the degree of correlation and ranking the factors associated

with the official curriculum (a high school diploma) as well, a model of effective schooling for high school dropouts emerges. Figure 5.1 shows the relationship between outcomes and characteristics of effectiveness.

It seems clear, then, that in order to graduate, returning dropouts need a strict but caring structure where limits are clear, classes are small, extra help is available and where teachers are willing to give frequent feedback on progress and performance. In summary, the staff and the structure of the school itself are the key factors of success.

Personal and social development, on the other hand, is associated with a different set of variables. Encouragement from other students who are in the same situation, the family-like atmosphere, leadership, the element of choice and high academic expectations are the major contributors to gains in self-confidence and self-esteem. These factors seem to indicate that an alternative school structure is necessary for these students.

Improved work and study habits are once again linked to the elements of the alternative school structure. The element of choosing to go to school produces an investment on the part of the chooser. The family atmosphere and encouragement from fellow students make it easier to work.

Figure 5.1

Characteristics of School Effectiveness Associated with Outcomes of an Alternative High School

	OUTCOMES OF OPTIONS II			
	High School Diploma	Personal/Social Development	Work/Study Habits	(Dependency)
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO OUTCOMES	1[a] Encouragement from teachers	1 Encouragement from students	1 Family-like atmosphere	1 Strong leadership
	1[a] Strictly enforced rules	2 Family-like atmosphere	2 Coming to Options II by choice	
	3 Extra help from teachers	3 Strong leadership	3 Encouragement from students	
	4 Class size	4 Coming to Options II by choice	4 Strong leadership	
	5 Feedback on progress and performance	5 High academic expectations	5 Advocate	

Notes: Factors ranked in order of importance
1[a] Both factors ranked in first place

The leadership and the advocate provide the structure and the means to succeed.

The side effect, however, of a small alternative high school where staff is readily available to encourage, guide and give feedback is that students become dependent on it to a certain extent. Dependency is associated with strong leadership. Perhaps strong leaders, by assuming control, thwart the natural development of self-discipline; or, on the other hand, this clientele may demand that leaders be strong.

Based on an understanding of the current literature and the data obtained in this study, the major conclusion can be summarized as follows:

(1) Students currently enrolled, as well as the graduates of Options II, perceive the school to be effective;

(2) The majority of students accepted at Options II obtain a High School Leaving Certificate;

(3) Options II achieves most of its stated objectives in developing work/study habits and encouraging personal/social development;

(4) The majority of graduates go on to become contributing members of society;

(5) The majority of graduates have a positive view of the future and are working toward specific career objectives;

(6) The two most important features of the school that help students graduate are strictly enforced rules and encouragement from teachers;

(7) The most important impact of Options II on its graduates is a renewed belief in their capability to succeed.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS

This study, by exploring students' and graduates' perceptions of effectiveness, adds a new dimension to the literature. The results support the findings of the High School and Beyond Study (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1983) in reaffirming that what dropouts really need are legitimate authority and a caring staff. As Options II is almost identical to the program model for at-risk students proposed by Wehlage et al. (1987), it further reinforces their model. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) hypothesized that academic success and improved self-concept can best be accomplished in an alternative setting. This study to some extent substantiates their hypothesis.

This study supports the hypothesis of Fine and Rosenberg (1983) that many dropouts are capable of academic success if placed in schools designed to meet their needs. According to Rutter et al. (1979), schools must be dynamic institutions that change according to the clientele they serve. However, it is clear that certain characteristics of effectiveness are common to all schools regardless of the clientele they serve. This study contributes to the literature by separating the dimensions of effectiveness and relating them to four outcome categories, thus proposing a slightly different model of effective schooling for high school dropouts.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study aimed to define the characteristics of effectiveness of one alternative school for high school dropouts from the perspective of its graduates and of students currently enrolled. It was hoped that it would add a new dimension, i.e., dropouts' perceptions of effectiveness, to the literature. Like most research, this study raised many related and unanswered questions. It would be worthwhile to find out how the perceptions of effectiveness of Options II students compare to perceptions of students in other Outreach schools or, for that matter,

in regular high schools. An in-depth evaluation of the schools of the Outreach School System could shed further light on the effectiveness of each school as well as define the clientele for whom it is effective.

The development of a program model of effective schooling for high school dropouts now allows future researchers to take the model and test it in both alternative and regular high school settings. This study also established the technology to begin a real "tracer study" of the graduates of Options II and find out to what extent they realize their goals. It would be of great interest to do systematic longitudinal studies on dropouts including those who do and those who do not return to school.

In conclusion, this study within its limitations established one program model of effective schooling for high school dropouts. It was not intended to be an all-encompassing treatise on educational programming for the high school dropout but rather it was an effort to understand better the reasons why one particular group of high school dropouts are able to succeed in a particular alternative educational setting.

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APPENDIX I

Letter to Graduates, December 1987

COMMISSION DES ÉCOLES PROTESTANTES
DU GRAND MONTRÉAL

THE PROTESTANT SCHOOL BOARD
OF GREATER MONTREAL

December 4, 1987

Dear Graduate,

You have been chosen to participate in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to constructively criticize your education at Options II. As a successful graduate your feedback is invaluable You are in a position to tell us whether the education you received has lived up to your expectations and helped you adapt to changing times

Allow me to explain. I'm presently working on a Master s Degree at McGill University For my thesis, I'm conducting a follow-up study of Options II graduates from 1984-1987 This study means a great deal, not only to me, but to the entire staff of Options II We want to know how you are, what you're doing and what effect, if any, we've had on your life

The study gave me a wonderful excuse to have a party - a reunion of all graduates of Options II from 1984-1987 It is something we've wanted to do for a long time Although ideally I would have liked to have the reunion at Options II, your Alma Mater, space simply does not permit it The reunion, therefore, will be held downtown at

The Post-Graduate Students' Society
McGill University
David Thompson House
3650 McTavish Street
(between Dr Penfield and Pine)

Thursday, December 17, 1987
at
7:00 P.M.

In order to plan for the refreshments, please phone us at Options II (484-3577) by Friday, December 11, 1987 and let us know if you can make it.

At the reunion, I will take only 15 minutes of your time to fill out a questionnaire For the rest , I think it will be a wonderful opportunity to see your old classmates and catch up on news. I hope I've helped you with your education - now can you help me with mine?

Please come! All the staff will be there and we're really looking forward to seeing you all.

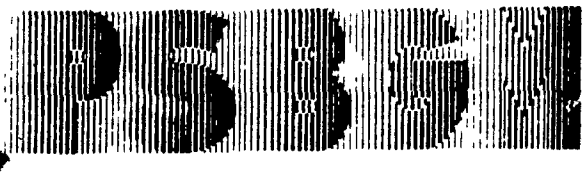
See you on **Thursday, December 17th at 7:00 P.M** After all, would you want an unacceptable absence?!

Fond regards to all,

Susan Rona

APPENDIX II

Letter to Graduates, January 1988



COMMISSION DES ÉCOLES PROTESTANTES
DU GRAND MONTRÉAL

THE PROTESTANT SCHOOL BOARD
OF GREATER MONTREAL

January 4, 1988

Dear

We missed you at the reunion - so sorry you couldn't be there. It was really a great success and I promised everyone that we would do it again.

Since you couldn't make it, please take fifteen minutes to fill out the enclosed questionnaire that I am using for my research. It will benefit all future students of Options II by helping us improve the program. The study will only be meaningful if a large number of graduates completes the questionnaire. Every one of you counts!

Your response will be anonymous and kept in the strictest confidence, so you do not need to sign your name anywhere. I am enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience Please mail the questionnaire by **January 12, 1988.**

Here's wishing you all the very best for 1988!

Hope to see you soon.

Fond regards,

Susan Rona

APPENDIX III

Student Questionnaire

OPTIONS II HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Administration
and Policy Studies
McGill University
December 1987

A LOOK AT OPTIONS II

I would like to know how YOU see Options II

For each of the following statements, check the box that indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree. For example, if you strongly agree, check under the "strongly agree" column If you agree, check the box under that column and so on

		AGREEMENT WITH THE STATEMENT				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Options II stresses the importance of becoming a high school graduate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Options II stresses that every student is capable of graduating	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	Options II tries to turn students on to learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	Rules at Options II are strict	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Rules at Options II are enforced	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	The head teacher of Options II is a strong leader.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	Options II teachers expect all students to do their very best	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	Options II teachers emphasize writing skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	Options II teachers insist that students listen in class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	Options II teachers emphasize the importance of learning French.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		AGREEMENT WITH THE STATEMENT				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11	Options II teachers emphasize the learning of math skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Options II teachers give students frequent feedback on progress and performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Students enjoy being at Options II	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Students and teachers at Options II work toward a common purpose	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	School spirit is strong at Options II	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	Options II has a family-like atmosphere	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	Many students at Options II develop personal relationships with their teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	Options II teachers work together as a team	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	Options II teachers enjoy working at the school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	Options II teachers are available to give students extra help	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for your time and co-operation

APPENDIX IV

Graduates' Questionnaire

OPTIONS II HIGH SCHOOL

GRADUATES' QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Administration
and Policy Studies
McGill University
December 1987

As a graduate of Options II High School, please complete the following questionnaire. Your answers will be used to revise and improve the program, so please be frank and honest. All of your responses will be held in strictest confidence. I appreciate your help in providing this important information (Please answer ALL questions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1 Year of Graduation from Options II

- ☐ 1984
- ☐ 1985
- ☐ 1986
- ☐ 1987

2 Present Age

- ☐ 17-18
- ☐ 19-20
- ☐ 20-21
- ☐ 22 or over

3 Sex

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

4 Are you PRESENTLY attending an educational institution on a full or part-time basis?

☐ Yes, full-time ☐ Yes, part-time ☐ No

If YES, please complete

Name of Institution _____

Name of Program _____

Expected Year of Graduation _____

5 Are you PRESENTLY working on a full or part-time basis?

☐ Yes, full-time ☐ Yes, part-time ☐ No

If YES, Job Title _____

6 If you are NOT working and NOT studying, please complete

☐ Looking for work ☐ Family responsibilities ☐ Other - Please specify

_____

7 Have you obtained an educational certificate or diploma since you graduated from Options II?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If YES, please specify

Type of diploma

- ☐ CEGEP
- ☐ Trade/Vocational
- ☐ Other

Name of Program. _____

Year obtained: _____

LOOKING BACK AT OPTIONS II

To what extent were the following factors IMPORTANT in helping YOU to GRADUATE from Options II?

Check the box that best indicates the extent to which each factor was important in helping YOU graduate

		DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE IN HELPING YOU GRADUATE			
		Very Important	Important	No Opinion	Not Important
	IN HELPING ME GRADUATE				
1	Clear attainable goals were	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Strictly enforced rules were	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Strong leadership was	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	High academic expectations were	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Emphasis on basic skills e g writing, listening, math skills, etc was	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Frequent feedback on progress and performance was	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Encouragement from teachers was	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Encouragement from fellow students was	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	Personal relationships with teachers were	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Coming to Options II by choice was	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	My advocate was	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Teachers giving extra help was	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Class size was	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Family-like atmosphere was	☐	☐	☐	☐

15 Pick the THREE characteristics from the above list of 14 that were MOST IMPORTANT in helping YOU to GRADUATE Write the numbers

a) Number _____ b) Number _____ c) Number _____

16 Were there other things that were IMPORTANT in helping YOU graduate that are not on the list? Please comment

_____

_____

_____

_____

IMPACT OF YOUR EDUCATION AT OPTIONS II

I would like to know what YOU LEARNED at Options II on both an academic and personal level

For each of the following statements, check the box that indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree For example, if you strongly agree, check the box under the "strongly agree" column If you agree, check the box under that column and so on

	AGREEMENT WITH THE STATEMENT				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I learned to complete assignments on time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learned how to prepare for exams	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learned how to take notes in class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learned how to study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learned how to organize my time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learned to be punctual	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learned to finish what I started	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	AGREEMENT WITH THE STATEMENT				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8 I learned to establish my priorities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I learned problem-solving skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 I learned to express myself verbally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11 I learned to express myself in writing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12 I improved my French	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13 I improved my Math	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14 I gained self-confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15 I learned to respect myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16 I learned that I was capable of succeeding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17 I learned how to get along with people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18 Options II made me dependent on others to help me make decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19 Options II made me dependent on strict rules, making it hard for me to succeed after I left	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20 Options II made me dependent on constant feedback and reinforcement in order to succeed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

21. Pick the FIVE ITEMS from the above list of 20 that have proven to be MOST USEFUL to YOU since you left Options II Please enter the numbers.

a) Number ___ b) Number ___ c) Number ___ d) Number ___ e) Number ___

22. Please comment on any areas where you feel personally deficient and where your education at Options II has been of little or no help.

CONCLUSION

1 What was the SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT thing you got out of the Options II program?

2 Has Options II had a direct impact on your life?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Explain briefly

3 Where do you SEE YOURSELF in FIVE YEARS?

4 Other comments?

Thank you for your time and co-operation

APPENDIX V

Conceptual Framework - Instrument I

APPENDIX V

Conceptual Framework - Instrument I

Question Item Number		Common Factors of Effectiveness from the Literature
1,2,3	1.	Clear attainable goals
7	2.	High academic expectations
4,5	3.	Order and discipline
13,14,15	4.	Positive climate and strong school spirit
6	5.	Clear strong leadership
19	6.	High staff morale
-	7.	School site management
16	8.	Sense of community
18	9.	Collaborative planning
17	10.	Class size conducive to sense of personal relationships between teachers and students
8,9,10,11	12.	Emphasis on basic skills
12	13.	Frequent monitoring of pupil progress
12	14.	Feedback on academic performance

Note: Item 20 was developed on the basis of the findings of a study on the organizational climate of Options·II by the researcher (Rona, 1985).

APPENDIX VI

Impact of Options II - Percentage Breakdown

APPENDIX VI

Impact of Options II - Percentage Breakdown

Variable Number	Learning Factors	% Response 1	2	3	4	5	Sum of 4 + 5
1	Complete assignments on time	-	3.5	7.0	57.9	31.6	90
2	Prepare for exams	-	3.5	8.8	56.1	29.8	86
3	Take notes	1.8	88	19.3	49.1	19.3	68
4	How to study	-	3.5	19.3	45.6	31.6	77
5	Organize time	1.8	88	19.3	43.9	26.3	70
6	Be punctual	1.8	3.5	14.0	38.6	42.1	81
7	Follow through on tasks	-	5.3	12.3	38.6	43.9	83
8	Establish priorities	-	-	14.0	66.7	19.3	86
9	Problem-solving skills	-	5.3	28.1	45.6	21.1	67
10	Verbal expression	7.0	7.0	28.1	43.9	14.0	58
11	Written expression	1.8	14.0	12.3	52.6	19.3	72
12	Improve French	5.3	7.0	12.3	40.4	35.1	76
13	Improve mathematics	1.8	3.5	7.0	40.4	47.4	88
14	Self-confidence	1.8	5.3	8.8	56.1	28.1	84
15	Self-respect	3.5	3.5	17.5	38.6	36.8	75
16	Belief in capability to succeed	1.8	3.5	8.8	31.6	54.4	86
17	Getting along with people	5.3	7.0	21.1	36.8	28.1	65
18	Dependency on others to make decisions	26.3	22.8	28.1	15.8	7.0	23
19	Dependency on strict rules	26.3	24.6	14.0	26.3	8.8	35
20	Dependency on constant feedback	19.3	19.3	17.5	35.1	8.8	44

Notes: 1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = No opinion
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree

APPENDIX VII

Impact of Options II
Varimax Simple Structure Factor Loadings

APPENDIX VII

Impact of Options II - Varimax Simple Structure Factor Loadings

Variables	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III
1	0.658856	0.080955	0.107676
2	0.438401	-0.256478	0.112810
3	0.402356	-0.167069	0.028729
4	0.570368	-0.055475	0.233237
5	0.611294	-0.086250	0.309440
6	0.790150	0.080318	0.002688
7	0.680450	0.050567	0.316057
8	0.492353	0.022199	0.297306
9	0.372756	-0.368934	0.314198
10	0.361326	0.048833	0.637193
11	0.323634	0.038425	0.551760
12	0.173341	-0.326221	0.139948
13	-0.111212	-0.229124	0.374561
14	0.129929	0.174374	0.578448
15	0.243196	0.082651	0.850085
16	0.190049	0.078590	0.728763
17	0.271549	0.273266	0.703137
18	0.116559	0.687636	0.703137
19	-0.094862	0.764333	0.146237
20	-0.003874	0.750313	0.231739

Notes: Factor I = Study and work habits
Factor II = Dependency
Factor III = Personal growth and development

APPENDIX VIII

Factors Helping Students Graduate - Percentage Breakdown

APPENDIX VIII

Factors Helping Students Graduate - Percentage Breakdown

Variable Number	Factor	% Response 1	2	3	4	Sum of 3 + 4
1	Clear attainable goals	-	7.0	47.4	45.4	93
2	Strictly enforced rules	1.8	7.0	56.1	35.1	91
3	Strong leadership	5.3	24.6	47.4	22.8	70
4	High academic expectations	3.5	7.0	38.6	50.9	90
5	Emphasis on basic skills	5.3	7.0	42.1	45.6	88
6	Feedback on progress and performance	1.8	7.0	36.8	52.6	90
7	Encouragement from teachers	-	3.5	28.1	68.4	97
8	Encouragement from students	8.8	14.0	47.4	29.8	77
9	Personal relationship with teachers	-	14.0	45.6	40.4	86
10	Coming to Options II by choice	-	5.3	26.3	66.7	93
11	Advocate (teacher counsellor)	5.3	14.0	42.1	36.8	79
12	Teachers giving extra help	3.5	5.3	28.1	63.2	92
13	Class size	5.3	1.8	36.8	56.1	93
14	Family-like atmosphere	-	14.0	38.6	47.4	86

Notes: 1 = Not important
2 = No opinion
3 = Important
4 = Very important