At-risk students in middle school: Engagement before Disengagement

Dr. Carolyn Gentle-Genitty
Indiana University School of Social Work
cgengtleg@iupui.edu

Copyright -Gentle-Genitty, 2009, South Carolina National at Risk Forum
Overview

• Education as a priority
• Stakes in society
• Discipline and punishment
• Understanding bonding
• Social Bonding
  • Attachment
  • Commitment
  • Involvement
  • Belief
Marks (2000) defines disengagement as …
- a mental process where students no longer have an interest and investment in the work of learning.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris’s (2004)
3 types of engagement
• 1) behavioral (doing school work, not skipping school);
• 2) cognitive (motivation, effort, desire to master tasks); and
• 3) emotional (interest, attitudes towards school, teachers, and appreciation for school success).
Truancy

- Definition not widely adopted by all
- 10 or more absences in Indy
  - Suspended
  - Expelled

- Tracked by combination of attendance records (registers used by homeroom teachers) and school-recorded absences (records kept by the school on overall attendance – sometimes called attendance books)
## Action taken when absent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Most Often</th>
<th>Somewhat Often</th>
<th>Least Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>Parent Notification = 62%</td>
<td>Nothing = 19%</td>
<td>Student Discipline (warning, detention, conference call, talk) = 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Parent Notification with warning = 84%</td>
<td>Student Discipline (make-up time and work, in-school suspension) = 12%</td>
<td>Nothing = 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>Parent Notification (with description of court action and formal policies) = 65%</td>
<td>Student Discipline (warning, detention, conference, talk) = 34%</td>
<td>None reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Outside Assistance (from police, prosecutor, attendance officers, court etc.) = 47%</td>
<td>Parent Notification (court action, formal policies, mandatory conferences etc.) = 30%</td>
<td>Student Discipline (expelled, out of school suspension, loss of credit etc.) = 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Polk and Schafer (1972)

- if it is “the way institutions relate to young people, and … [their contributions to the] process that creates youthful deviance, then it is these institutions that must be corrected, not the young who are its casualties” (p.7).
Theoretical Framework

- Social Demographic Variables
- Social Bonding Opportunities
- Perception of Social Bonding
- Chronic Truancy
Social Control Theory
Hirschi (1969)

- Major theory in understanding delinquent behaviors.
- Examine connections to people in the creation of a relationship and important factors in delinquency
- Considered **first theories to examine school social bond** as a primary predictor of delinquency

**4 Elements of Social Bond**

1. Attachment
2. Commitment
3. Involvement
4. Belief

- **Higher presence** of four elements, the higher the level of social bonding
Hirschi’s Elements of Social Bond

Attachment: Affection and sensitivity to others

Commitment: Investment in conventional society or stake in conformity

Involvement: Being busy, restricted opportunities for delinquency

Belief: Degree to which person thinks they should obey the law
Questions & Discussion