

Running Head: DESCRIBING AND INCREASING

DESCRIBING AND INCREASING THE RESILIENCY OF
MIDDLE GRADE STUDENTS IN A SMALL CHARTER SCHOOL

A thesis presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of
Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Specialist in School Psychology.

By

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ABSTRACT

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Resiliency is a term used to describe personal or environmental characteristics that foster a process of successful adjustment and transformation regardless of the risk and hardship (Benard, 1995). Certain youth have been shown to be deficient in resiliency based on the way particular factors impact their lives and their ability to successfully cope with these factors (Long et al, 2006). Factors that can be instrumental in causing youth to be deficient in resiliency are a lack of involvement in extracurricular activities, disengagement from school, and harsh parenting styles (Greene & Conrad, 2001; Demmert, 1994; Strand & Peacock, 2002; Borden, Perkins, Stone, & Villarruel, 2005; Arrington & Wilson, 2000; Lafromboise, 1988). However, all youth can possess life attributes that help them to become more resilient. Such attributes as high self-esteem, adult involvement, feeling connected with school, involvement in community, strong sense of identity, and religious faith are known as protective factors (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997; Garrett, 1995; Strand & Peacock, 2002; Garmezy, 1991; Blum & Rinehart, 1997; Ralabate & Klotz, 2007; Werner, 1989). When the protective factors outweigh the risk factors youth are able to demonstrate resiliency. Furthermore, when youth are exposed to certain external elements, such crime, substance abuse, and suicide (Greene

2001; Williams 2001), they tend to have more negative outcomes related to overall resiliency.

A case study was conducted to assess the risk and protective factors present in the lives of four middle grade charter school students. Observations, interviews, archival records, and a formal resiliency scale were used and triangulated. This information was then analyzed and coded to aid in discovering themes for factors related to resiliency. A plan to increase each student's protective factors and decrease his or her risk factors was developed and presented to the charter school.

INTRODUCTION

Resiliency is a term used to describe a set of personal or environmental characteristics that foster a process of successful adjustment and transformation regardless of the risk and hardship (Benard, 1995). Research has shown that throughout youths' lives there are various events and circumstances that can cause them to become more or less resilient (Long, Downs, Gillette, Slight, & Konen, 2006). Certain American youth are at-risk for lacking resiliency based on the way particular factors impact their lives and their ability to successfully cope with these factors. Factors that most youth face are lack of involvement in extracurricular activities, disengagement from school, placement in special education, and harsh parenting styles can place a young person at a greater risk for lacking resiliency (Greene & Conrad, 2001; Demmert, 1994; Strand & Peacock, 2002; Borden, Perkins, Stone, & Villarruel, 2005; Arrington & Wilson, 2000; Lafromboise, 1988). However, all youth can possess life attributes that help them to become more resilient. Such attributes as high self-esteem, adult involvement, feeling connected with school, an involved community, cultural identity, and religion are known as protective factors (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997; Garrett, 1995; Strand & Peacock, 2002; Garmezy, 1991; Blum & Rinehart, 1997; Ralabate & Klotz, 2007; Werner, 1989). It is when the protective factors outweigh the risk factors that youth are able to demonstrate resiliency. However, when particular environmental factors such as crime, substance abuse, and suicide are present, youth tend to have more negative outcomes related to resiliency (Greene 2001; Williams 2001).

Many youth demonstrate low resiliency (Peacock, 2002). Research has been conducted to assess what causes youth to remain at risk (Long & Nelson, 1999). However, it is difficult to assess resiliency in a population as diverse as youth in America. The focus of this study is on four American youth in grades seven and eight. The study centers on determining both environmental and individual factors in these youths' lives that inhibit resiliency and those that promote resiliency.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many risk and protective factors affect an adolescent's resiliency. The risk factors include lack of involvement in extracurricular activities, parenting style, and placement in special education (Borden, Perkins, Stone, & Villarruel, 2005; Yellow Horse and Brave Heart, 2004; Wiener and Tardif, 2004). In this review of the literature risk factors are addressed in order of their likelihood to reduce an adolescent's resiliency. Protective factors are addressed in order of their likelihood to increase an adolescent's resiliency. They include community, school connectedness, adult/parent involvement, and self-esteem. These factors are addressed because they can be affected at the school level. For instance, a risk factor such as a student not being involved in extracurricular activities can be decreased at school by encouraging the student to become actively involved. Risk and protective factors that can be affected by implementing a school-based program was necessary.

Resiliency

Each experience, even the negatives ones, allow for experiences and growth that can help in solving problems in the future (LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck, 2006). One's ability to not only "survive adversity, but thrive despite the negative influence exposure to risk poses" (Unger, 2006, p. 56) allows for personal triumph over the hardships of life.

Resiliency is defined as "a set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaptation and transformation despite risk and adversity" (Benard, 1995, ¶ 1). Greene (2001) explains that resiliency research began when people attempted to understand how

youth, when faced with adversity, dealt with situations. She states that “researchers examined *risk* factors- conditions that increase the likelihood that a child will develop a problem- and *protective* factors- conditions that buffer, interrupt, or prevent problems from occurring” (p. 4). When youth are able to quickly and successfully recover from difficult circumstances they are resilient (Strand & Peacock, 2002). Some youth are able to quickly recover from risk and adversities in their lives; while others are not because recovery is based solely on the way the environment and the individual interact (Winfield, 1994). Youth must have strong, positive internal characteristics and external factors that help to protect and shield them from the vulnerabilities and risks in their environment. According to Benard, there must be some type of a balance between the risk and protective factors youth faces in order for them to be successful and overcome adversity.

Youth are able to be resilient by possessing particular attributes that allow them to not fall prey to academic failures, substance abuse, or crime despite the fact that they face stress and hardship (Peacock, 2002). Resiliency is often thought to be the response of an individual to a situation. However, it is not considered to be a function solely of a characteristic that the individual possesses or lacks (Richman & Fraser, 2001). Instead, resiliency typically is assumed to appear in the interaction between the characteristics of an individual and the resources that are available in the surrounding environment. “The term vulnerable refers to the idea that some at-risk people are more likely to develop an undesirable outcome” (Greene & Conrad, 2001, p. 33). Those who are vulnerable are more likely to be negatively affected by the risk factors in their lives.

Risk Factors

Greene and Conrad (2001) describe risk factors as certain internal or environmental characteristics that “predispose or increases the likelihood that children from common backgrounds will develop an emotional or behavioral difficulty compared to children from the general population” (p. 32). Researchers attempt to recognize whether youth deemed at-risk will develop problematic, negative behaviors or mental illnesses, because of particular circumstances in their lives. Many teachers do not understand the background of their students and, in turn, misinterpret their development and behavior as being abnormal (Spencer, 2001). The misinterpretation causes some youth to be considered at-risk and face more risk factors than others. A bad community, low self-esteem, lack of involvement in school, parenting styles, substance abuse, and crime can cause youth to lack resiliency (Greene & Conrad, 2001).

Lack of Involvement in Extracurricular Activities. Arrington and Wilson (2000) state that youth can become vulnerable simply based on their living environments. Residing in communities that lack resources, especially social, and do not support institutions for their youth, is likely to have a negative impact. However, for resourceful communities, extracurricular activities like sports and clubs can boost youths’ resilience (Borden, Perkins, Stone, & Villarruel, 2005). Braddock, Royster, Winfield, and Hawkins (1991) explain that participating in any type of extracurricular activity helps to lessen the impact of other risk factors, “reduce the likelihood of negative chain reactions associated with adversity, establish and maintain self-esteem and self-efficacy, [and] create new opportunities for success” (p. 115) in youth. This can cause a direct link to academic resilience.

Brown and Evans (2002) believe that many of the qualities that help to make

youth good athletes are also very beneficial in school. They help youth learn persistence and determination as well as feel a sense of connection towards a group for a common goal. Brown and Evans conducted a study of 1,755 European American and minority students in order to measure the difference in extracurricular activity participation. They found that students who participated in extracurricular activities had a more positive attitude towards school, excelled academically, and were better able to cope with negative life events.

Brown and Evans (2002) conducted a correlational study between participation in extracurricular activities and a feeling of connection to school. By participating in extracurricular activities, youth can also increase their connection to school. When youth were not able, or chose not to participate in extracurricular activities, their scores tended to be much lower on school connectedness. The connection a student feels towards school is a direct predictor of academic success and behavior, inside as well as outside of school. Many youth are not able to participate in extracurricular activities because they lack the opportunity. External forces, such as parental opinion of family obligation, and internal motivation, like personal attributes, force youth, especially those living in economically distressed communities, to not participate in any type of extracurricular activities (Borden, Perkins, Stone, & Villarruel, 2005).

Brown and Evans (2002) state that youth often feel many of the extracurricular programs offered by schools and communities are based on values that differ from their own. Examples of such activities include clubs related to specific religious or cultural organizations. This causes a feeling of isolation and unwillingness to participate. There is a need for extracurricular programs to become sensitive to enable all youth to feel

supported and encouraged to participate (Borden, Perkins, Stone, & Villarruel, 2005). For many youth, programs simply are not available (Braddock, Royster, Winfield, & Hawkins, 1991). The lack of program availability contributes to many youth developing neither a sense of safety and belonging, nor increased self-esteem, nor learning positive behaviors which are the three greatest benefits of participating in extracurricular activities (Borden, Perkins, Stone, & Villarruel, 2005). Many extracurricular programs also provide homework help, aid in building personal responsibility, promote life skills, enhance problem-solving capabilities, and teach youth how to work well with others. These skills are crucial in helping youth make a smooth transition into adulthood. When youth are unable to attain these skills, which could have been learned through extracurricular activity participation, they have an increased likelihood of depression, suicide, and involvement in risk-taking activities (Campbell, 2000).

Parenting Style. According to Skye (2002), harsh parenting style has forced some youth to have a higher likelihood of substance abuse, risk-taking behaviors, and suicide rate than their peers that do not have parents with a harsh parenting style. This is largely due to the fact that “the family is generally considered an important system that has a heavy impact on the development of children and adolescents” (Boveja, 1998, p. 1). Yellow Horse and Brave Heart (2004) avow that the harsh parenting style can overshadow many of the protective factors that youth may possess in their lives. According to Leoschut and Burton (2009), youth who do not receive any type of physical punishment for their wrongdoings are twice as likely not to commit a crime than those who do. Exposure to violence causes youth to be far more susceptible to being involved in robbery and assault. Also, the lack of “parental emotional availability and support,

parental competence, and parental involvement with a child's schooling" (p. 60) serve as overshadowing risk factors for youth. Also, because harsh parenting style causes many youth to feel an emotional distance from their parents, Long et al. (2006) believe, this causes parents to become negative role models for their children. When youth do not have a positive role model in their lives, it reduces their resiliency and ability to cope with problems and resist peer pressures. This type of harsh parenting strategy leads to lower academic performance (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). This also affects the amount of support from parents, supervision, the value placed on education, and expectations regarding academic performance, which many youth do not receive from their parents. Often, this results in an increase in the likelihood that a student will drop out of school.

Special Education. The Data and Accountability Center (2008) reports that, in 2007, there were a total of 2, 321, 033 students in special education in the state of North Carolina. Placement in special education is detrimental to students' resiliency because, as Christenson and Thurlow (2004) state, a student in special education runs a greater risk of dropping out of school. Special education, at times, can lead to grade retention and a removal from a student's regular education peers, and has the potential to lead to "emotional distress, substance use, involvement in violence, and earlier onset of sexual intercourse" (Resnick et al., 1997, p. 831) if this placement causes a lack of resiliency. Voltz (1995) declares that special education students have lower expectations placed on them than regular education students, thus they only meet minimal requirements. Because of this, some teachers simply assume that students cannot understand the material presented in class, and do not attempt to vary their learning strategies to

accommodate for them. This lowers their academic achievement and overall self-esteem and can contribute to higher rates of dropouts among special education students.

Research conducted by Wiener and Tardif (2004) found that youth in special education had consistently “fewer corroborated/reciprocal friends, lower quality of friendship, lower social acceptance, lower academic self-concept, poorer social skills, and higher levels of loneliness, depression, and problem behaviors” (p. 27). When a student does not feel accepted by their peers, they are more likely to become disengaged from school, lack self-esteem and self-efficacy, and lack necessary coping skills for handling difficult and challenging situations in his or her environment.

Protective Factors

According to HeavyRunner and Morris (1997), protective factors in youths’ lives overshadow the negative outcomes and risk factors and, instead, foster resiliency. Strand and Peacock (2002) identify vehicles for protective factors as family, community, religion, school, and the individual. When youth feel close to people, connected with organizations, and happy about themselves, they are better able to succeed. Resnick et al. (1997) claim that those parts of youths’ lives that make them feel accomplished, well liked, and strong, are most likely to be their protective factors for resiliency. Also, spirituality, prayer, and religion are necessary in order to protect youth from the risk factors that could hinder their resiliency.

Community. Community helps to aid in the successful development of youth by encouraging such traits as competence, self-worth, identity, and a sense of purpose (LaFromboise, Hoyt et al., 2006). The protective factors in the community provide youth with opportunities for participation, care and encouragement, and supply realistic

opportunities and expectations for the future. The community strives to have a social network between family, school, and outside services, where youth can prosper. This, according to Long et al. (2006), helps these youth to attain a positive support system and helps them form a sense of identity in order to promote resiliency.

According to McElroy (2002) in order for a community to be considered competent in supporting its members it must be involved in “the development and utilization of resources by community members and one that has increased sophistication in coping with problems and issues” (p. 253). A competent community must support its families and schools, have high expectations and clear norms for them, and encourage the active participation and collaboration of its families and schools in the life and work of the community (Benard, 1995). The resources available in a community need to be those that are necessary for the development of health members. This can include programs such as healthcare, housing, education, job training, and gainful employment opportunities. When children’s needs are not met, it becomes a great developmental risk factor and frequently manifests itself by behavior problems. Children need to have a community in order to be provided with opportunities to become active, healthy members of society. Social networks can be built within communities when various community agencies are connected with families in need to provide the resources necessary for their members to succeed.

According to Hedin (1987), most youth believe their only active role in the community is to go to school, learn, and become adults. This, in turn, causes them to view themselves as solely consumers, not contributors. However, when they are actively involved in community organizations, they are given a sense of empowerment and

knowledge that they can become important contributors to their world. According to Kurth-Schai (1988), when youth participate in tasks within the community where they feel useful either socially or economically they have higher self-esteem, moral development, political activism, and the ability to create and maintain complex social relationships. If they do not they can have “psychological dependence on external sources for personal validation, and the expression of self-destructive, and antisocial behaviors including drug abuse, depression, promiscuity, premature parenthood, suicide, and delinquency” (pp. 131-132).

These types of communities also allow youth a safer environment in which to explore their world. When communities are safer, youth are less likely to experience violent acts. For example, according to Leoschut and Burton (2009) youth that did not have access to weapons in their community were 2.7 times more likely to “refrain from becoming involved in criminal activity than those for whom it was easy to obtain a firearm” (p. 3) in their communities.

School Connectedness. School provides another form of support that can help youth succeed. When youth feel attached to school they are better able to use this setting to their advantage, as a protective factor (Napoli et al., 2003). “Students who feel welcomed by their schools are better able to function in [the world] and will live healthier lives” (p. 28). Winfield (1994) deems schools as a place to promote activities that foster resiliency, such as sports and clubs. This helps to protect students from some of the risk factors in their lives. It helps to create a sense of belonging and pride among youth. In order for students to participate in these activities they must typically meet certain academic requirements (Braddock et al., 1991). Braddock et al. conducted a study of

1,140 male students in 802 public schools across America to measure how participation in sports correlated with school completion. They found that these types of school-based activities help students to learn hard work, fair play, adherence to rules, persistence, and self-discipline. They determined that strategies such as these are very important for youth to learn in order to be successful. Schools that serve as a protective factor for youth tend to have highly educated teachers, good student attendance, positive relations with parents, high graduation rates, and more students who are college bound (Blum & Rinehart, 1997; Resnick et al., 1997).

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009), youth who feel connected to school have a “belief that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals” (p. 3). This feeling of being connected is not only related to the adults in the school but also to their peers. When youth feel connected to school their chances of engaging in prosocial, healthy behaviors is increased. They also become more likely to succeed academically. A national longitudinal study that was conducted to explore protective factors on adolescent health determined that school was the strongest factor for both males and females in lowering drug and alcohol use, violence, risk of accidental injury, and early sexual promiscuity (Resnick, Bearman & Blum & Rinehart, 1997). It was also found that school connectedness was the second most prominent factor against eating disorders, suicide attempts, suicidal ideations, and emotional distress.

“What seems to matter most for adolescent health is that schools foster an atmosphere in which students feel fairly treated, close to others, and a part of the school”

(Blum & Rinehart, 1997, p. 24). School places students at a lower risk of drug use and a higher rate of academic achievement when they feel safe, connected, and engaged.

Adult Involvement/Parents. Adults that are active in the life of a student, such as a teacher, can provide support and comfort that youth need to feel loved and become more resilient (Benard, 1995). LaFromboise, Hoyt, et al. (2006) believe that family members can also serve as an immense protective factor for youth. According to Werner (1989) “in spite of poverty, family discord, or parental mental illness...[having] the opportunity to establish a close bond with at least one [adult] from whom they received positive attention” (p. 109) serves as a protective factor for resiliency. This is contingent up the type of family structure and parental support parents provide for their children in order to enhance self-esteem and help them to learn. Ralabate and Klotz (2007) found that youth who have involved parents or adults that show an interest in their schooling have a higher level of academic achievement.

Blum and Rinehart (1997) state that youth are protected from health-risk and life failure when they have an involved adult in their lives because they feel they have someone to confide in and help them to feel appreciated. Resnick et al. (1997) found that low suicide rates, school dropouts, and fewer risk-taking behaviors are associated with adult involvement. Also, adult involvement is linked to higher rates of high school graduation in youth, especially for those with adults that stress high expectations. Having a caring adult present protects youth from using alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana and feeling emotional distress. This is mainly due to the level of supervision that the adult provides (Blum & Rinehart). When youth are supervised, they are far less likely to be involved in criminal activity.

Self-Esteem. Students who have high self-esteem tend to do better academically and are able to protect themselves from situations in life that could be potentially detrimental to their resiliency (Carr, Borkowski, & Maxwell, 1991). For youth, achievement and self-esteem are slightly unstable and have a high correlation (Maruyama, Rubin, & Kingsbury, 1981). This lack of stability can be due to many internal factors such as motivation and effort. However, often youth do not form a connection between diligence and academic achievement. Thus, when youth perform poorly in school they are more likely to internalize this negative achievement as a negative personal attribute. However, ability can affect self-esteem. Youths' grades are likely to influence their self-esteem. Therefore, when youth feel they are doing their best and achieving up to their potential, this is typically reflected by higher grades. This type of achievement causes an increase in self-esteem. When youth use a form of self-evaluation, they are able to validate their personal success with the fact that they possess some external characteristic. They assume that because they are part of this group, they have no control over their success. However, youth may attribute part of their failure to the fact that they are of a particular group. They understand that this is not the only trait that describes them. Because of this, they can make changes to other aspects of their lives, such as the way they approach and handle situations, which could lead to success in mainstream American society.

Religion. Stark and Hirischi (1969) determined that the sanctions of many religious systems play a crucial role in guaranteeing and preserving conformity to the norms of society. When youth feel connected with a particular group or community, it serves as a protect factor to increase their resiliency. Yinger (1957) asserts that religion

is able to accomplish this by possessing a belief system that legitimizes the values of a society as well as an individual. Also, rituals of a religion allow for an outward commitment to these values to be expressed by its members and, based on a system of eternal rewards and punishments, these values are maintained by external behaviors of the individual. Furthermore, Stark and Hirschi found that attendance at church has an outward effect on attitude development and, more specifically, on observance with the laws set up within the broader society.

Stark (1987) determined that religious youth tend to gravitate towards other youth with similar religious views. By having a friend group with other religious youth, religious concerns, values, and acknowledgments are increased and determined a valid and necessary part of day-to-day interactions. Individual commitment to a religion is increased and energized by the group. Therefore, religious youth are less likely to engage in delinquent and nonreligious acts than others. According to the United States Department of Justice (2009), religiosity serves as a protective factor for adolescents. For example, females showed less physical violence if they identified with a religion, indicating a lower level of crime amongst this population.

The results of a meta-analysis performed by Baier and Wright (2001) showed that religious beliefs and religious behaviors tend to moderately lower the chances that youth will engage in any type of criminal behaviors. Bridges and Moore (2002) found that youth who are part of an active religious group are more likely to have a large network of adults that care for and nurture them as well as an active, healthy peer group. This network allows for a source of physical, social, and emotional support for youth outside of their immediate family. Religious youth tend to have more and greater opportunities

to engage in positive behaviors. They also have a support that allows for greater facilitation in resistance of negative influences. For decades, religious groups have provided physical and emotional support for the members of the group in need. These groups exert social control over their participants' behavior based on the principles involved in the religion. This fact asserts that religious groups and religious communities are adequately equipped to supply youth with the encouragement and support they need to consistently engage in positive and moral behaviors. This is particularly important when youth may not have a social support system within their residential community.

In general, religion helps youth understand their place in life, dream about their desired future, and set personal goals. "For...youth, personal importance placed on religion and prayer is associated with decreased frequency of cigarette smoking and drinking...and with less frequent marijuana use in older teens [as well as]...delayed sexual activity" (Blum & Rinehart, 1997, p. 28). By avoiding these unhealthy activities, youth live healthier lives, participate in school, and exhibit greater resiliency.

Cultural Identity. Ogbu (1981) believes that identifying closely with a culture helps youth to succeed academically. Cultural identity is directly linked to self-esteem (Taylor et al., 1994). When youth have high self-esteem, they often feel comfortable with who they are, and have a close association with their culture. This influences the way they perceive their own ability to achieve at school. Cultural identity affects resiliency by allowing youth to be more self-confident and comfortable asking questions and seeking new knowledge (Ogbu, 1981).

Cultural identity can also help to reduce the negative effects that discrimination, racism, and stereotypes have on their lives by increasing self-esteem and self-confidence

(Martinez & Dukes, 1997). This occurs by “providing a broader frame of reference for the self that includes additional sources of identity; therefore, the effects of negative stereotypes and denigration on well-being are lessened” (p. 514). Identifying with culture serves as a protective factor by increasing the way youth perceive themselves and increasing a sense of security and personal adjustment (Pichette, Garrett, Kosciulek, & Rosenthal, 1999).

LaFromboise, Hoyt et al. (2006) found that “participation in traditional activities, identification with...culture, and traditional spiritual involvement.” (p. 198) are positively associated with school success. Following this type of tradition serves as a protective factor for youth (Goddard & Shields, 1997). A specific culture has unique competencies based on its historical experiences, which change over time in order to help people become more successful (Ogbu, 1981).

Youth who identify closely with a culture are less likely to drop out of school; thus, culture is a protective factor for academic achievement and success (Strand & Peacock, 2002; Demmert, 1994). These students exhibit characteristics of tenacity, high self-concept, and a sense of direction solely based on a cultural identification. They also report feeling more competent. Demmert shows that youth, who feel secure with their own culture and the place of their culture within society, are better able to excel in life than youth who are uncomfortable with their heritage. HeavyRunner and Morris, (1997) believe that anyone who works with youth have the ability to foster resiliency simply by showing respect for their values, behaviors, and beliefs. By doing this, the individual can help youth connect with that culture.

Academic and Behavioral Impact of Low Resiliency

Students who have high risk factors and low protective factors have a higher likelihood of having low resiliency which impacts their academic and behavioral functioning in the school setting. Students that possess low resiliency, especially during the transition between middle and high school years, tend to have fewer friends, more disorganization with their schoolwork, less motivation, and lower academic achievement (Lagenkamp, 2010). Lowenthal (1999) asserts that children exposed to psychologically damaging external risks and stressors are more likely to exhibit poor and violent behavior, low self-esteem, and suffer from disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Academic Impact. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1997) state that when a student has low resiliency, the impact on academic achievement is due to a combination of continuous interactions between environmental characteristics and the individual. A student's academic failure often has little to do with ability, and more to do with the overall risk factors that are impacting his or her problem-solving ability and overall competence (Gordon & Song, 1994). When a student enters school with compounding risk factors, often he or she will possess little motivation to succeed because of his or her preoccupation with other problems occurring in life. McMillan and Reed (1994) state that often a student with low resiliency will not complete his or her homework, will not use class time wisely, and do not receive support or encouragement from his or her family. Many issues are likely to interfere with a student's school experience. Gilbert (2000) identifies several factors cause academic failure among students that lack resiliency. These factors consist of such things as an inappropriate curriculum, misunderstanding of learning styles, decreased motivation, a lack of parental

involvement, as well as poor self-identity and self-esteem. With the risk of academic failure comes the risk of a student dropping out of school. Allensworth and Easton (2005) determine that an important predictor for dropping out of school is when a student receives more than one failing grade in an academic subject. When this is combined with a student being held back, there is an 85 percent chance a student will drop out.

School Disengagement. Another impact of low resiliency is school disengagement. The learning environment in the American schools can be damaging to some students because the classroom achievement and expectations reflect mainstream American values and behaviors (Taylor, Casten, Flickinger, Roberst, & Fulmore, 1994). Most of the teachers in the schools are part of mainstream American culture, which could stifle any student that may have values or cultural expectations that do not align with that of the majority (Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999). This is typically done when teachers attempt to instill their values and beliefs on students instead of allowing them to express their own identity. They are not encouraged to express themselves behaviorally or in the way they dress if it does not align with mainstream American culture. Students who enter school with low resiliency and are then presented with a teacher who has expectations that do not align with their own are more likely to be disengaged from school.

Formal education in America can often place values on students from an early age that are in direct conflict with those taught to them by their families. Garrett and Garrett believe that the disconnection between values and regulations at home versus those presented at school causes many students, who are acting appropriately according to their families, to be labeled as slow or obstinate in mainstream American classrooms. Also,

any student that does not come from a family that encourages them to be assertive or competitive may find it difficult to excel in the fast paced American schools (Garrett, 1995).

Christenson and Thurlow (2004) assert that low achievement and miscommunication with teachers causes more disengagement. For instance, some cultures view a lack of eye contact as a sign of respect. A teacher could misinterpret this as disrespect. This contradiction could lead a teacher reprimanding the student, causing them to feel isolated, alienated, and disengaged from school. Students with low resiliency may lack self-esteem. This contradiction could exacerbate their already negative attitude. Long et al. (2006) stress the fact that a lack of school engagement is greatly influenced by students' resiliency. Some youth feel they cannot succeed, which influences their perception of their own academic competencies. A student may lose their motivation to succeed. Christenson and Thurlow explain that areas such as "processing academic information, thinking about how to learn, and self-monitoring progress toward task completion...and identification with school, a sense of belonging and connection, and positive relationships with peers and teachers" (p. 2) are in extreme danger when a student feels disconnected or disengaged at school.

Crime

According to Greene (2001), when youth grow up around violence, or in violent neighborhoods, they feel a loss of control and remain in a constant state of fear. This causes them to have difficulty learning, accessing resources, and concentrating. In addition, youth who experience violence are more likely than those who do not to "suffer memory impairments, display aggressive play, act tough, show uncaring behaviors, and

constrict their activity” (Greene, 2001, pp. 5-6). It is much more difficult for these youth to exhibit resiliency because they do not feel as if they have any type of control over their own lives. In addition, when youth do not feel attached to their caregivers and do not abide by the rules and expectations set forth by those caregivers, their chances of committing a crime drastically increase. When youth reside in a home environment where violence is typically used to solve disputes, they are more likely to become involved in criminal behavior. This is compared with youth who do not experience violence in the home and who are 6.8 times less likely to engage in any illegal activity. Benard and Marshall (2001) also state that access to guns in the home places youth at risk for school and community violence.

A report by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) states that in 2006 the arrest rate for violent crimes among males aged 10 to 24 years was 521.3 per 100,000. The rate for arrests among females was 110.4 per 100,000. The highest rate for violent crime arrests was among the male population, aged 15-19 years. For this population, the rate was 729.9 per 100,000. Homicide rates from 1991 to 2005 among youth aged 10 to 24 years were consistently higher than all other age groups combined. In 2005, homicide accounted for 5,686 deaths among youth aged 10 to 24 making homicide the second leading cause of death for this age group in the United States.

Suicide/Substance Abuse. Some youth who lack resiliency chose to take control of their lives in extremely unhealthy ways. One of the ways youth attempt to gain this control is through suicide. Williams (2001) defines “suicide (violence toward self) [as] one of the leading causes of death among adolescents” (p. 204). LaFromboise (1988) discusses how factors such as poverty, family unemployment, inadequate nutrition, dangerous

communities and poor health care, can increase the rate of suicide and substance abuse for youth. In addition, factors such as easy access to guns in the home as well as domestic violence are associated with suicide among youth (Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, Harris, Jones, et al., 1997). For youth, even if they do not personally attempt suicide, having a family member attempt or commit suicide serves as a risk factor for substance abuse, suicide attempt, violence, and emotional distress.

Another dangerous way that youth attempt to take control of their lives and ease stress is by the use of drugs and alcohol. According to Nam (1994), many youth feel a high sense of powerlessness. This increases their chances of using drugs and alcohol. When this is combined with a lack of meaning in life and high existential anxiety, their risk of drug and alcohol abuse is much higher. Leoschut and Burton (2009) found that when youth engage in drugs or alcohol their chances of committing a criminal offense increases. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2008) just over 45% of American youth reported having used alcohol in the past month. Also, 4% reported to having had at least one alcoholic drink on school property. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2008), 28% of youth reported to start drinking by the age of 12. For youth between the ages of 12 and 20, 19% reported binge drinking. In turn, these youth face a higher risk of memory problems, abuse of other drugs, physical or sexual assault, and homicide or suicide. Many of these youth have access to drugs and alcohol in their homes, which increases the likelihood of a problem with substance abuse later in life (Resnick et al., 1997). Carpenter, Lyons, and Miller (1985) explain that for school-aged youth, the risk of suicide and the abuse of drugs, alcohol, and other substances, are immense barriers to academic success.

Charter Schools

A report submitted by the United States Department of Education (2004) explained that charter schools are public educational organizations that must operate under a charter. The terms of their charter must be met or the school faces closure. However, charter schools also are required to meet the federal accountability requirements set forth by the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act. In 1991, Minnesota passed the first state-wide law for charter schools. According to the Center for Educational Reform (2009), charter school laws have currently been passed by 40 of the 50 states as well as the District of Columbia. There are approximately 5,000 charter schools serving more than 1.5 million students nationwide (Center for Educational Reform, 2009). For the 2009-2010 academic year, 39 states and the District of Columbia opened a total of 419 new charter schools (Center for Educational Reform, 2009).

In 1995, the federal government began supporting the charter school movement by authorizing the Public Charter Schools Program (United States Department of Education, 2004). This program allowed funding for state grants, research, and conferences focused on understanding, supporting, and improving charter schools around the nation. The purpose of this educational reform was to provide a greater degree of autonomy and flexibility to schools. For instance, according to the most recent survey conducted from 1999-2000, only 79% of charter school teachers held teaching certifications. This is contrasted with 92% that held teaching certifications in conventional public schools. However, according to a survey conducted state-by-state by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010) in 2008 twenty-one of the fifty states required charter school teachers to hold a valid teaching certificate. Additionally,

thirteen of those states that did not require teacher certification for all staff required it for at least 50% of staff. Specifically in North Carolina, Elementary Charter Schools are required to have seventy-five percent of teachers certified and secondary charter schools fifty percent of teachers certified.

In 2002, approximately 66% of students in charter school were minorities (United States Department of Education, 2004). Studies have shown that charter schools often do not meet performance standards at the same rate as conventional schools (United States Department of Education, 2004). However, charter schools tended to target students with educational disadvantages. Schools with a population of least fifty percent disadvantaged students were shown to make improvements over time. This was measured by “school-level standard[s] or benchmark[s] that public schools in a state were expected to meet in 2001-02” (p. 55). However, even when controlling for these population variables, typical standards were met less frequently. “Most of the differences occurred when charter schools and traditional public schools had above-average proportions of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches and above average proportions of minority students” (p. 56). Regardless of these standards, it was impossible to determine the overall impact of charter school standards on student achievement largely due to the fact that it was impossible to control for “prior achievement of students” (p. 16). “These findings do not indicate that charter schools were less effective than traditional public schools but suggest that many charter schools will have difficulty meeting the standards established by states under [No Child Left Behind]” (p. 57).

Charter school programs are intended not only to increase student learning but also to promote educational innovation, diversification of educational programs and

learning environments, and expanded opportunities for teachers to become more involved in program design and school governance (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006). According to the United States Department of Education (2004), though the flexibility exists within charter schools to use a variety of teaching strategies, between 2001 and 2002, 91% of charter schools used “classroom based instruction as their primary instructional delivery method” (p. 42). However, compared to conventional schools, charter schools implemented educational reforms such as “block scheduling (58 percent versus 43 percent); interdisciplinary teaching (59 percent versus 48 percent); and looping, an approach in which teachers remain with students for two or more years, (48 percent versus 26 percent)” (United States Department of Education, 2004, p. 42).

In fact, a direct correlation exists between states holding strong charters with schools and the success of each charter school (Center for Educational Reform, 2009). These charters include having a school run by education service providers and providing the schools with the flexibility to make immediate changes to if the data does not support student success (Center for Educational Reform, 2005). Sixty-five percent of states with strong laws show marked improvements in achievement. This is largely due to the basic underlying assumptions of charter schools. Wohlstetter, Wenning, and Briggs (1995) noted that the assumption that school performance will be improved by accountability for outcomes. Another assumption is allowing for higher levels of school autonomy gives a school a better capability of meeting individual student needs and increases student performance.

Abdulkadiroglu, Angrist, Cohodes, Dynarski, Fullerton, Kane, and Pathak (2009) compared the affects of charter schools on student achievement to that of students in

conventional public schools. In regards to students at middle school level, each year of attendance at a charter school, it was estimated that student achievement would increase from the 50th to the 69th percentile. However, a report produced by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University (2009) found that in the state of North Carolina there was not a significant difference between student achievement in reading or math at charter schools versus conventional public schools.

Increasing Resiliency for Students

Werner (1989) believes that when the stress of life overshadows the protective factors in the lives of youth, even those who have the potential for resiliency will most likely encounter problems. “It may be possible to shift the balance from vulnerability to resilience through intervention, either by decreasing exposure to risk factors or stressful events or by increasing the number of protective factors and sources of support that are available” (p. 111). However, according to Yellow Horse and Brave Heart (2004) there is an immense difference between evidence-based practices that are effective in helping groups of students. The most effective approaches are direct, sensitive, accommodating, target problem areas, and striving to be sensitive to all types of students regardless of ethnicity, gender, or culture (Yellow Horse & Brave Heart, 2004).

Morrison, Robertson, and Harding (1998), found that placing students in groups based on common characteristics made it easier to determine the largest need for the group. This has allowed many resiliency programs to develop throughout the years. Harvey (2007) outlines a resiliency program in a school setting where each student had an adult that they felt they could trust and confide in. Her program structured the school so that homeroom classes did not change for students each year. Instead, they were

allowed to stay with the same teacher for multiple years, forming a closer bond and increasing adult involvement in the lives of each student. As a way to foster positive peer relationships, the school focused on learning as opposed to competition. This was supported by cooperative learning projects that allowed all students equal, active participation in order to produce the final product. Positive and increased home-school communication also was established. This communication did not require for caregivers to be present at the school more frequently. Instead, it required regular, positive communication between the caregivers and the school. In turn, students were able to understand the importance of education by seeing the adults in their lives agree and support them in their academic success. Students were taught the importance of positive attitudes through staff members of the school. They were not made to feel as though negative emotions were wrong, rather that they are “normal but do not preclude appropriate behavior” (p. 3). Clear expectations and standards were set and explained to each student. Students were involved in determining school rules, which proved to give them more appreciation and cooperation in facilitating their implementation.

Statement of the Problem

Resiliency is a concept that is used to describe the characteristics that individuals possess that help them to adjust to difficult situations (Benard, 1995). Different populations are prone to different environmental, social, and personal factors.

There are many factors that research has shown are likely to affect the resiliency of youth in America. For instance, a high crime rate serves as a risk factor for youth because it affects their sense of competence and security (Greene, 2001). Crime infringes the sense of safety most youth feel, causes many of their basic needs to be unmet, and can

cause youth to struggle for survival. Greene explains that when youth grow up around violence, or in violent neighborhoods, they feel a loss of control and remain in a constant state of fear. Youth that choose not to participate in extracurricular activities have an increased risk of lacking resiliency. A lack of participation causes them to have lower self-esteem, feel a decreased sense of camaraderie, and learn more negative behaviors (Borden, Perkins, Stone, & Villarruel, 2005). School curricula and teaching styles may be inappropriate for some students, making it much more difficult for them to excel (Gilbert, 2000). When a student receives inappropriate academic instruction he or she may have lower resiliency because of a lack of achievement and motivation to succeed within the classroom. Skye (2002) explains that harsh parenting styles can leave youth feeling emotionally detached and lacking positive role models, thus decreasing resiliency. Placement in special education is associated with “emotional distress, substance use, involvement in violence, and earlier onset of sexual intercourse” (Resnick et al., 1997, p. 831). This placement can cause youth to lack resiliency by lowering their self-esteem and increasing the likelihood of engaging in negative, risk-taking behaviors.

There are many protective factors that research has shown can help youth overcome these risk factors and become resilient. Competent communities have the ability to provide youth with a great deal of emotional support and a sense of purpose (LaFromboise, Hoyt et al., 2006). School attachment has been shown to help youth excel and increase their involvement in prosocial, healthy behaviors (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Religion helps youth feel comfortable about their place in life and desire a beneficial future (Stark, 1987). Adult involvement provides for support and encouragement (Blum & Rinehart, 1997). Self-esteem, which is linked to

self-worth and success, can help youth feel comfortable and confident about who they are (Ogbu, 1981). Such protective factors aid in counteracting the effects of the risk factors in the life of a youth and thereby increasing their overall resiliency.

When risk factors outnumber protective factors, youth often have a difficult time dealing with personal and environmental challenges. This often leads to negative outcomes such as drug abuse, suicide, and crime. Youth often feel a sense of powerlessness, which places them at a much greater risk for drug and alcohol abuse (Petoskey, Van Stelle, & De Jong, 1988). Youth who engage in drug or alcohol use have lower academic success (LaFromboise, 1988).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to describe the resiliency of youth in the fifth through eighth grades who attend a charter school. In order to describe the risk factors and the protective factors present in the lives of these students that affect their resiliency, the focus of this study is on the questions below.

1. Which of the risk factors identified in the literature are present in the lives of these youth?
2. Which of the protective factors identified in the literature are present in the lives of these youth?
3. How could a school program be designed that would increase the protective factors and decrease the risk factors present in the lives of these youth?

The main goals of this study are to: (1) Determine these factors and; (2) Design a school program that would increase the protective factors and decrease the risk factors.

METHOD

This is a descriptive case study. According to Sandelowski (2000), a descriptive study's purpose is to provide a comprehensive summary of events in the lives of the participants. A descriptive case study often pursues "how" and "why" questions (Yin, 2003) and provides for an analysis of specific situations (Wilson, 1979). This study described the risk and protective factors for resiliency of middle school youth, who attended a charter school, from a case study perspective by looking at "covering the depth and scope" (Yin, 2003, p. 1) of how these factors in student participants' lives. I used a resiliency assessment, conducted observations and interviews, and reviewed archival data about each student participant.

Participants

Among the participants in this study were three male and one female middle school students, seventh and eighth grade, who were receiving their education at a small, public charter school. The eighth grade students were one male and one female. They were both fifteen-years-old and White. Both of the seventh grade students were males. One was thirteen, while the other was fourteen. The thirteen-year-old student was of a mixed race between White and Native American. The fourteen-year-old student was White. This group of students was a purposive sample. The group of students was selected based on personal characteristics that they possessed that caused them to be considered "at risk" by school personnel. Because this group of students was considered to be at risk, they had a greater chance of dropping out of school (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). Due to the likelihood of dropout, they were selected for the study in

order to decrease the likelihood of dropping out and because they were enrolled at the school in which the study was set. The director of the charter school stated that the “at risk” factors the school considered for suggesting the students’ for the study were based on past special education placement, grades, discipline referrals, and perceived attitude towards school and their future.

Data Sources. Students’ teachers, other school personnel, and parents who were willing to participate in this study were data sources. They contributed information about the student participants in order to give a clearer picture about the risk and protective factors in their lives. I gathered information from a resiliency assessment, interviews, observations, as well as from cumulative files for each student participant.

Setting

The study was conducted at the charter school, which is part of a public school district. The charter school was located in a small, rural community in the Southeast United States. There were approximately 130 students enrolled and twenty teachers serving grades kindergarten through eighth. The mission of the school is as follows:

“The students of [name removed] Charter School are engaged in an experientially rich, hands-on course of study developed to maximize each child's potential to become a responsible citizen of the local and global communities”.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s (2000), there were 1,411 residents in this community. Of these, 1,283 were White and 28 were Black. Approximately 46 families were living below the poverty level. And, within this population, 180 individuals possessed a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Procedure

I used the process of triangulation, which involved collecting multiple sources of data (Richards, 2005). Archival records, observations, interviews, and a standardized rating scale were used for this process.

Coding. Before the study began, students and adults were assured that all of the information gathered would remain anonymous. Parental consent forms and student assent forms were distributed and collected before data were collected. I gathered information from archival records, observations, interviews, and a resiliency assessment in order to identify major themes. These sources helped to determine risk and protective factors present in the lives of student participants. I then gathered the information obtained and compared each piece of information to the other in order to identify major themes that arose. Orcher (2005) explains that looking at multiple sources of data for a given participant allowed me to identify themes or ideas that are present.

Archival Records. The first step of the study occurred in August. I examined each student's cumulative school and special education records to obtain background information about each student's academic performance, history of juvenile misconduct, IQ, academic skills, family information, extracurricular participation at school, and other aspects of his or her life. This information also was used to help develop questions for the interviews that followed.

Resiliency Scale. I administered a resiliency assessment scale to the student participants at the beginning of the study in September, after reviewing the cumulative records and observing for two weeks. The information gathered in this scale was used to inform interview questions and obtain a measure of each participant's resiliency. The scale also was used to identify each student's perspective about his or her protective

factors and risk factors. The *Resiliency Scale for Children and Adolescents* (RSCA), (see Appendix G) measures strengths of vulnerabilities as they relate to resiliency for children aged 9 to 18 (Prince-Embury, 2005). This scale was orally administered to each student. According to the manual, administration of the scale should include giving the student the protocol and a pencil on a flat surface. The student reads the scale silently. However, given as three of the four student participants in the study had past reading concerns, the scale was orally administered to each student in order to ensure a thorough understanding of each question and to gain an accurate understanding of each student participant's resiliency.

The RSCA contains three scales: Sense of Mastery, Sense of Relatedness, and Emotional Reactivity. The Sense of Mastery scale is comprised of three subscales: Optimism, Self-Efficacy, and Adaptability. The Sense of Relatedness Scale is comprised of the following subscales: Sense of Trust, Perceived Access to Support, Comfort with Other, and Tolerance of Differences. Lastly, the Emotional Reactivity Scales is comprised of the Sensitivity, Recovery, and Impairment subscales.

The Sense of Mastery Scale explored "the opportunity for [the participants] to interact with and enjoy cause and effect relationships in the environment" (Prince-Embury, 2005, p. 9). Under the Sense of Relatedness Scale domain, questions were derived based on "feeling securely connected to individuals in a social context" (Prince-Embury, 2005, p. 11). The last scale on the RSCA was the Emotional Reactivity Scale. "Emotional reactivity may be viewed as pre-existing vulnerability, arousal, or threshold of tolerance to stimulation prior to the occurrence of adverse events or circumstances" (Prince-Embury, 2005, p. 12).

Information from the scale completed by each participant informed interview questions. Specifically, questions that were worded positively that centered around items the student endorsed as “never” or “rarely” were asked in the first interview in order to gain further information about why they feel those areas are not represented in their lives. Additionally, questions that were worded negatively were asked in interviews with students who endorsed these items as “often” or “almost always”. High scores indicate that a student feels he or she has many personal or environmental protective factors within that domain. Low scores indicate that he or she does not feel he or she has many protective factors. Scores for the RSCA are presented in *T* scores, with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. High scores are scores greater than or equal to 60. Above average scores range from 56 to 59. Average scores range from 46 to 55. Below average scores range from 41 to 45 while low scores are greater than or equal to 40.

Observation. Observing the classroom structure and the school environment allowed me to obtain knowledge of the daily school life of student participants and provided them with an opportunity to become comfortable with my presence. I started in September and observed the behaviors of the student participants towards one another, the teacher, and school in general until January. I used a direct observation method and did not attempt to become a participant. The goal was to remain unobtrusive and unbiased (Trochim, 2006). This allowed for a more impartial view and better form of data collection. The targets of the observations were behaviors that reveal protective factors and risk factors that would help inform my interview questions. For example, behaviors such as actively participating in class, positive peer interactions, participation in extracurricular activities or discussions centering on this participation, and viewing the

student participants' interactions with the teacher.

My observation times varied in order to gain a better understanding of the behaviors of each student during various times of day. I began observing for a few hours at the start of the school day in the morning and I did this for three weeks during the beginning of the fall semester. In addition, I observed in the afternoons, from the time the lunch period ended until the end of the school day; approximately three hours. This was done for three weeks, two to three days a week, also during the beginning of the fall semester.

Interviews. Kvale's (1996) model for interviewing is based "on the conversations of daily life...[in] a professional conversation" (p. 5). Kvale labels this style of questioning a "semi structured life world interview" (p. 5). The purpose of this type of interview was to gain a description of the life of the interviewee by keeping a focus on a central topic in order to describe a phenomenon. I began interviews during September and made an audio recording of each interview and then transcribed it. I also used a log after each interview to record information that appeared to be important, peculiar or pertinent to the situation (Richards, 2005). In following interviews with each participant, I addressed this information again. I interviewed each student participant three times and each adult participant twice. I interviewed the student participants three times so that there would be adequate time to address all of the information needed to obtain precise data regarding their resiliency. Later interviews took less time, in order to avoid straining the attention of the student participants. Also, with multiple interviews, the student participants became familiar and comfortable talking with me and sharing information. The last interviews occurred in January after school reconvened from winter break.

Two interviews with adult participants, beginning in September and ending in January, allowed for follow up of any information that was discovered or addressed in the first interview that was pertinent to the lives of the student participants. Most of these interviews were conducted approximately six to seven weeks into the school year, after the observations. Richards (2005) states that “when you have the data needed to answer your research question[s] and all subsequent pertinent questions arising from the data” (p. 20) you stop. Some of the questions that I asked in my interviews were:

1. Tell me about a time you felt peer pressure. How did you handle it?
2. Describe what you are going to do after you leave school today.
3. Tell me about a time when school was very difficult. What made it difficult?
4. Tell me about a part of school you especially like.
5. Tell me about a time when school went especially well for you. What was that like?

Other questions I asked were unique to each student participant based on his or her responses to these first five questions. The same was true for the questions posed to the teachers. I asked follow-up questions based on teacher and student responses to the first five questions. The initial questions that I asked the teacher participants were:

1. What do you feel is this student’s biggest struggle at school?
2. How does this student relate to their peers?
3. What is this student’s behavior like inside and outside of class?
4. What is this student’s home life like?
5. How does this student view their academic achievement?

During the second interview, I posed questions to each student to follow-up on some of the responses during the first interview session. Questions I posed to all student participants during the second interview were as follows:

1. Describe an especially good day that you had at school. What was it like?
2. Describe an especially bad day at school. What was that like?
3. How would you describe your relationships with your peers?
4. Describe what it means to be a friend.
5. What activities do you do with your friends?
6. What do you do when you have a problem at school?
7. Describe your family.
8. What extracurricular activities are you involved with?
9. What are your academic goals? What are your plans after high school?
10. What is your favorite part of school? Why?
11. What is your least favorite part of school? Why?
12. What part of school do you find especially difficult? Why?
13. How do you handle problems?
14. How do you handle success?

There was not enough time during the second interview to address all of these questions with all participants; therefore, I used the third interview to complete these questions and follow-up on responses from previous questions.

Materials

The RSCA measures resiliency using approximately 60 items with a combination scale of three combined forms: sense of mastery scale, sense of relatedness scale, and

sense of reactivity scale. According to Prince-Embury (2005), the sense of mastery scale measures adaptability, hopefulness, and optimism. The sense of relatedness scale measures support, encouragement, and comfort. The sense of reactivity scale measures reactivity and the ability to recover from circumstances. These three scales were used together to form one resiliency assessment that took approximately 15 minutes to administer. This scale was normed using 200 children that ranged from age 15 to age 18. It has a Chronbach's alpha coefficient range of .93 to .95. This suggests good internal consistency. It also possesses good reliability, with a standard error of measurement ranging from .90 to 2.45 on all subscales. Test-retest reliability was conducted on 65 adolescents. This score ranged from .70 to .92 suggesting good to excellent test-retest reliability on all subscales.

The RSCA is based on a four-point Likert-like scale. Garland (1991) encourages the use of four-point Likert scales because it does not allow for participants to place their response directly in the middle. Instead, they must choose a direction, either high or low. This permitted participants to chose a more appropriate emotion level as opposed to guessing or averaging what they felt with only a couple of answer choices (Cox, 1980). Also, because the student participants in this study were young, it was important to limit the number of questions on the scale so as to not overwhelm them. Many of the items on this scale elicited self-reports about competence, determination, and self-worth.

I used a small digital audio recorder to record each student participant's responses to interview questions, as well as interviews with teachers and the director of the charter school. Participants were informed of the digital audio recorder prior to each interview session.

Analysis. After I completed two interviews with the student participants and one round of teacher interviews, I began analysis by coding. “Coding is a process for both categorizing qualitative data and for describing the implications and details of these categories” (Trochim, 2006, ¶ 8). When I began data collection, I used open coding. “In this stage, segments [of information]...are examined for distinct, separate segments (such as ideas or experiences of the participants) and are ‘coded’ by identifying them and giving each type a name” (p. 70). Then, I used what Orcher refers to as “axial coding” (p. 70). In this stage of coding I “move[d] to more selective coding where...[I] systematically code[d] with respect to a core concept” (¶ 8). I did this by combining similar themes or relationships between categories I identified during open coding (Orcher, 2005) and create abbreviations that are relevant to resiliency. The last step in Orcher’s approach was to develop a “core category” (p. 70). This is where a main category is developed under which smaller subcategories fall. “They also...describe the *process* that leads to the relationships identified in the previous stage of the analysis” (p. 70). I used these to classify groups of ideas and describe how they fit together, and I identified risk and protective factors that fall under the main category of youth resiliency.

When reviewing the archival data such as student permanent records, I identified parts relevant to risk or protective factors that past research have shown to be linked to this population on each student participant such as past achievement, standardized test scores, background information, and extracurricular involvement. In addition, I connected the information that each student presented on the RSCA that aligns with the information found in the archival data. This information allowed me to be aware of themes, behaviors, or factors for which to be on the lookout during my observation time.

Lastly, I used all of this information to inform my interview questions. For instance, it was important to have the student participants explain or elaborate on ideas or behaviors found during the observation in order to help further identify risk or protective factors that could be used to help formulate a model for an intervention. I took all of the gathered, coded information to see what risk and protective factors the students at the charter school possessed, or did not possess, that caused them be considered at risk by school personnel. These risk or protective factors were used to formulate a model for intervention with the students placed in the charter school.

RESULTS

The project began with a meeting with the director of the charter school in August of 2008. Information was shared with the director including providing an operational definition of resiliency and the factors present or absent that cause a student to possess or lack resiliency. The director shared information regarding several students. This information included background information about the lives of students of concern. The four students that appeared to have the lowest number of protective factors present in their lives were chosen for the study. This interview provided brief background information about the students selected as well as insight into what the school had previously attempted to do to increase the protective factors in each students' life. Also addressed in this interview was information about each of the teachers who interacted with the students selected. Their experiences with each student selected were shared. From there, times were established to meet with each teacher individually to discuss, in detail, his or her interactions and history with each student. A schedule of the charter school's daily activities was distributed.

Goals of the Stakeholders

Each individual, including teachers, school administration, and I, hoped to positively impact the life of each student selected for the study and acted as stakeholders. The overall goal was to assist in developing an appropriate educational plan to increase the protective factors present in the lives of each student and decrease the risk factors as an attempt to increase overall student resiliency. It was important that this plan be ambitious yet feasible. Because the students in the eighth grade would not be at the charter school the following school year, it also was crucial that the plan was able to

move with the students to their subsequent school locations. Resources within the community were to be available and utilized. These plans were to be able to be implemented within the general education environment, if necessary.

Goals for Selected Students

The goal for the student participants was to acquire an ecological view of their overall functioning, in order to assess their resiliency. An ecological view is required in order to assess many aspects of each student participant's environment and understand how these various factors interact with each other and affect his or her approach to the world. A review of each student's cumulative record was conducted in order to gain insight into the background and academic history of each student. An interview with the director of the charter school aided in supplementing background information and determining her perspective as a key stakeholder. In addition, each student provided information and insight into the way he or she viewed his or her world and overall approach to accomplishing and succeeding in his or her environment. This was accomplished through a series of interviews and a standardized rating scale. The standardized rating scale was developed in order to quantify personal characteristics of youth based on the "assumption that resiliency reflects the degree to which an individual's personal resources match or exceed their reactivity to internal or external stress" (Prince-Embry, 2005, p. 1). Also, information from teachers who have worked with and known each student was gathered. This was accomplished through at least one interview. Observations, individualized for each of the students, were conducted to gain further information on their daily functioning at school and their approach to their peers.

Development of a Framework

The plan to raise students' resiliency by increasing the protective factors and decrease the risk factors in their lives was based on a review of each students' cumulative record. This occurred during August of 2008. Observations, formal rating scales, and interviews with students, teachers, and the director of the charter school were conducted from September to January. Each source of information was analyzed and compared in order to determine the overall factors, both risk and protective, present in the lives of each student participant. For each individual student, each piece of data that was gathered attempted to look at the same personal and environmental factors present in his or her life. During January and February of 2009, the data were compared in order to determine overall themes of protective factors and risk factors. The data from the rating scales, student interviews, observations, review of school records, and interview with school personnel were triangulated to create a comprehensive ecological overview of each student's level of functioning. These data were compared with the research of risk and protective factors that greatly influence overall resiliency. A rough draft of a plan for each student was developed during March of 2009 based on the resources available to the school and community. Research was conducted to determine appropriate interventions that would meet the needs of each individual student, based on the themes presented in the data. The research was then aligned with resources available in the community in order to determine a realistic, feasible plan to increase each student's protective factors. In April of 2009 this rough draft was presented to the director of the charter school. The feasibility of each suggestion was discussed and a final plan was determined. The plan was handed over to the school director as the primary implementer. A follow-up was

conducted during the fall of 2009 in order to assure that the plan was being implemented to the fullest extent possible.

Review of Cumulative Records

Sarah and Bill were 8th grade students attending the charter school. They were placed in the same class. John and Matt, also in the same class, were 7th graders. In order to protect their privacy and maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were created for each student participant and teacher that was interviewed.

A review of Sarah's cumulative record indicated that she had attended the charter school since 2nd grade. Prior to that, she attended a traditional public school. While Sarah was in the primary grades, her mother passed away. Soon after this death, her grades dropped significantly. In recent years her grades have improved. She displayed an academic profile in the average to above average range, with the majority of her grades consistently falling between 80 and 90. With the exception of the time shortly after the death of her mother, Sarah's overall school attendance has been good. Her school absences did not exceed five during any year. Sarah actively participated in soccer throughout her academic career. In the past, she helped teach younger children how to play soccer at summer camps and community youth programs. Sarah's file contained only one major disciplinary infraction. During the 2007-2008 school year, she exhibited a difficult time with two other female students. This difficulty started when two different social cliques began having difficulty getting along with one another. It escalated to a verbal disagreement that required school officials to become involved. Sarah was suspended for two days, as were the other participants in the argument. According to the records, small disagreements continued between the students until the

end of the year. The students with whom Sarah had difficulties did not attend the charter school for the 2008-2009 academic year. She received no further disciplinary referrals. In an interview with Sarah, it was important to ask questions related to her interpersonal relationships, especially with her peers, family structure, participation in extracurricular activities, and academic goals.

A review of school records for Bill indicated that he had attended the charter school since first grade. He attended kindergarten at a traditional public school in another state. An extensive number of tardies and absences occurred throughout his academic career. During the early part of the fall semester for the 2008-2009 academic year Bill had a total of four absences and three tardies. However, anecdotal notes in his file indicated that he completed the majority of work missed while out. Bill has a medical diagnosis of Attention Deficit Disorder, with medical notes pertaining mainly to his inattention. While in the primary grades of elementary school, Bill met eligibility to receive the support of a 504 plan. A 504 plan refers to the Section 504 of the American with Disabilities Education Act. This act requires that no one with a disability be excluded from participating in any federally funded program, including educational programs. The disability required for eligibility in this plan must be a documented medical, educational, or psychological disability. Bill's plan included accommodations such as extended time on assignments, verbal prompts and reminders to aid in redirection, and having the teachers initial his homework agenda each day to ensure he had homework copied completely and correctly. In the third grade, Bill was retained because his teachers did not feel he had met the standards necessary to be promoted to the fourth grade. He was retained again in the fifth grade. After fifth grade, records showed

that he was placed into seventh grade as opposed to going directly into sixth grade. Bill's past report cards indicated grades ranging from failing to average. Typically, Bill received B's in his related arts classes including physical education, art, and music. Anecdotal notes on his report cards indicated that his teachers reported. Bill needed to study harder, take advantage of before and after school tutoring sessions, and pay closer attention. In the seventh grade, he did not pass English language arts and math; nevertheless, he was placed in the eighth grade. There is no record that Bill has participated in extracurricular activities. He did not have any discipline referrals, with the exception of a warning during his seventh grade year for "noncompliance". The referral stated that he was asked to complete class work multiple times but never initiated the assigned class work. Because this was his first infraction, no disciplinary action was taken. Notes in his file contained no follow-up information addressing why Bill chose not to complete his work. In the interview with Bill, it was important to ask questions related to his excessive absences, failing grades, past retentions and placements, family structure and routine, potential drug use, application and usefulness of his 504 Plan, and noncompliance.

John's school records showed that he had attended the charter school since fourth grade. Prior to that time, he attended a traditional public school in a different county. He was initially seen through an early intervention program for preschoolers and received speech services as preschool child with a speech/language impairment. He was shown to have made progress in the speech program, indicating that he no longer required speech/language services, after kindergarten because he met all of the articulation goals listed on his Individualized Education Plan. Throughout John's schooling, his grades fell

solidly within the average range, with his lowest grade being a D in fourth grade science. In the second grade, while attending the school in a different school district, he was evaluated for special education services. The referral concern specified a difficulty in basic reading and reading comprehension skills, thus suspecting a learning disability. However, results of the evaluation indicated that he did not meet the criteria to be served as a student with a learning disability. He did meet eligibility criteria as a student with an Other Health Impairment. An Other Health Impairment allows students with a documented medical or educational disability that has shown to adversely affect their academic achievement to receive special education services. This criterion was based on low academic performance as well as his medical diagnosis of Attention Deficit Disorder. Although, information indicating that John was currently on medication to address his attentional difficulties was provided, no documentation of the impairment was in his file. As with Bill, John had a 504 Plan at the charter school. The 504 plan for John contained the same accommodations as the one for Bill. The 504 plan had been marked as reviewed annually but accommodations were never amended or altered. The only extracurricular activity listed for John was participation in the environmental club during fifth grade. Several discipline referrals were found in John's file. These referrals spanned fourth grade to the current seventh grade year. Over half of the referrals pertained to John's negative social interactions. A pattern of behavior was found within the referrals, showing John picking on or agitating his peers and receiving discipline infractions for this. Other infractions included only noncompliant behaviors, mainly because of a lack of obedience to teacher directives. In an interview with John, it was

important to gain more understanding about the use and suitability of his 504 Plan, family structure, interpersonal relationships, and extracurricular activities.

Matt's record showed that he attended the charter school since kindergarten. His records indicate neither his absences nor tardies were excessive, indicating he had no more than five in a given year. During the primary grades, Matt struggled academically. In the first grade he received an evaluation for special education services with a referral concern of delays in all academic areas. Results of the evaluation showed that Matt did meet eligibility criteria as a student with a learning disability in basic reading and reading comprehension. In the first grade he received small group remedial support in reading. It was noted that he made a great deal of gains in the area of decoding. His fluency was marked as low but his overall comprehension was stated to be "around grade level" by the end of his second grade year. He continued to receive support through the exceptional children's department at the charter school until he reached middle school. At that time, he was found to no longer require speech/language services due to significant progress, so he was deemed to be eligible to receive the support of a 504 plan as a student with a learning disability. This support allowed him oral, rather than written, administration of various assessments and modified reading assignments. His records indicated no participation in any extracurricular activity. The only disciplinary infraction Matt had was a negative verbal interaction with John that required school personnel to become involved before the incident escalated into a physical interaction. He received one day of in-school suspension because he initiated the disagreement. When Matt received the support of special education, his grades were well above average, mainly A's and B's. However, once removed from special education, his grades showed a trend

of mainly C's with a few B's in related arts areas. An examination of a social and developmental history that was in Matt's file indicated that he was born following a normal pregnancy. He met developmental milestones at an age-appropriate time. However, it did indicate that he resided only with his mother. His mother worked from home, running a daycare. No other significant information was derived from his background information. Follow-up questions to be addressed in the interview with Matt included his lack of participation in extracurricular activities, the level of support he is receiving through his 504 plan, family structure, the impact of his mother's home business of his home life, and his interpersonal skills and social interactions.

Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents

During September of 2008, each of the four student participants was given a standardized rating scale called the *Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents* (RSCA). Within each of the three scales are subscales. I explained to the students that this scale would aid in helping concerned others better understand how they think and feel. In addition, I read aloud the directions for each domain. This scale was written on a third grade reading level. A review of cumulative records as well as an interview with the school's director indicated that three of the four participants exhibited academic weaknesses over the course of their educational career. One of the students carries a diagnosis of a specific learning disability and two hold Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder diagnoses. Instead of allowing each student to fill out the scale independently, I sat down with each student and read aloud each question. Students were given the opportunity to ask questions about the definition of words or for clarification of questions. I administered the scale was in a quiet room, with minimal distractions.

During the administration with two of the four students, the school bell rang for classes to be changed. Otherwise, there was no outside noise. The bell did not appear to affect the students' understanding or concentration. Each student marked the answer of his or her choice with a pencil on a flat surface. They were instructed to only mark one answer, but could change their answer. For changed answers, the original answer was erased completely.

The responses on the standardized rating scale of the four student participants in the study varied greatly. There were no subscales on which every participant scored particularly high or low in regards to their resiliency in the areas of mastery, relatedness, and/or emotional reactivity.

		Sarah		
Sense of Mastery		5		
Sense of Relatedness		5		
Emotional Reactivity		4		

Three of the four participants, Sarah, Bill, and Matt, endorsed items that would indicate low optimism. Optimism, according to the RSCA manual, is defined as “positive attitude(s) about the world/life in general and about an individual’s life specifically, currently, and in the future” (Prince-Embury, 2005, p. 9). Also, three of the four participants endorsed items related to low self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as

“one’s approach to obstacles or problems...and the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence, and resiliency that will be demonstrated” (p. 10). Bill, John, and Matt endorsed items indicating they felt little competence or low capability to solve a problem or accomplish a goal. Lastly, Bill and John marked items suggesting potentially low adaptability, or being “personally receptive to feedback, able to learn from his or her own mistakes, and capable of asking others for assistance” (p. 10).

Three of the four student participants, Sarah, Bill, and Matt, endorsed items suggesting a low comfort level with others. Comfort with Others, on the RSCA, reflects “one’s experiences in the presence of others resulting from past experience with others, as well as physiological makeup” (p. 11). The next subscale that these three students typically did not feel was applicable to their lives was Tolerance of Differences.

Tolerance of Differences is “the ability to have one’s own thoughts and express them even though they may differ from the thoughts of others” (p. 12). Bill, John, and Matt endorsed items indicating low perceived access to support. On the RSCA, this suggests that they did not feel as though they had access to support, based on perception rather than actual availability. Lastly, Bill was the only student that reported a low score on the Sense of Trust subscale. For this scale, a sense of trust is “manifested in many ways, including cognitions and expectations about trustworthiness of others” (p. 11).

The only subscale that all four students endorsed as low was Recovery. “Recovery was operationalized as the frequency with which different periods of time were required to recover from strong emotion” (p. 13). This scale gives information regarding “how soon and how well an individual returns to normal functioning after a strong emotional reaction” (p. 13). Bill, John, and Matt endorsed items suggesting a depleted level of

impairment. All impairment items begin with the phrase “When I get upset” (p. 14). By using this type of wording for the initial part of the phrase, it allows for insight into the “intrusion of emotion” and the phrases end with a “variety of kinds of impairments...and a range of frequencies for each, the intention was to...measure the degree of emotion-related impairment in functioning subjectively experienced” by each student (p. 14). John and Matt marked items negatively related to sensitivity. This measured “any strong emotion that disrupts the equilibrium of the youth” (p. 13). A vague term was used in each item for this subscale as a way to allow each student to “associate the emotion that is most readily associated with intense arousal for him or her” (p. 13).

Observations

During the fall of 2008 I observed each student participant over a period of five weeks. These observations included various times of day in order to gain a greater understanding of their day-to-day functioning and experiences. I observed each student was observed ten times, with each observation lasting approximately one hour. Sarah and Bill were in the same eighth-grade classes. There were a total of fifteen other students in this class. John and Matt were in the same seventh-grade classes, with a total of nineteen other students. With Sarah, I observed many patterns of behavior. For instance, when Sarah was given an assignment in school, she initiated the task immediately. The majority of classes had very relaxed atmospheres. Students were not expected to raise their hand to ask individual questions. Sarah typically only asked clarification questions. However, she stayed quiet during the majority of her observed class periods. She answered questions when other students directly asked her. But, she did not spontaneously instigate conversation with any classmates. Overall, her

interactions with her peers were limited. She did not appear to have any close friends in the class. Instead, she worked diligently from one assignment to the next. Each observed period, Sarah appeared on task. She handed in assignments and seemed to complete all assignments in the allotted time period. Sarah's dress and hygiene appeared good and age-appropriate. Her clothing was typical for a middle school student and aligned with modern American culture.

When observing Bill, I also discovered patterns in his behavior. Bill sat slumped down in his chair for the vast majority of observed class time. Frequently during a class period, approximately seven to ten times in a fifty-minute period, Bill tapped his neighbor on the arm and made a quiet comment. Half of these comments turned into full conversations, during which the two students whispered back and forth to one another for at least three to five minutes. At these times, the teacher addressed the talking and it quickly subsided. Bill followed simple classroom directives, such as passing papers out, ceasing inappropriate behaviors, and grading other classmates' papers when asked in an appropriate amount of time. However, he was often observed as being unprepared for class. Many days, Bill did not have the necessary materials for school, such as paper and a writing utensil. When this situation arose, the teacher or a fellow classmate provided the necessary materials. Bill completed the work when directed, but required frequent redirection to start a task. He did not actively engage in any classroom discussion during the observed time periods. However, when directly asked a question, he attempted a response. Four out of five times, he responded incorrectly. Bill responded positively to his classmates, but did not exhibit a great deal of confidence in his interactions. Multiple times during the observation, other students made negative comments towards Bill.

These comments included playful teasing as well as reprimands about work production and grades. When Bill received work back from the teacher, regardless of the grade, his reaction did not change. He put the paper inside his desk without any verbal comment or nonverbal reaction. His academic struggles caused him to be disengaged from school. His academic self-esteem was low and he possessed little motivation to excel in the classroom, and he received little encouragement at home to do well in school. Bill always wore blue jeans and a tee shirt, appearing casual and typical for a modern American teenager. However, often it appeared that his hair had not been brushed and his clothes were wrinkled.

Observations of the seventh grade students yielded many patterns of behavior. Similar to Bill, both seventh grade students typically wore blue jeans and tee shirts, with a clean overall appearance. John exhibited a great deal of attention-seeking behavior. This behavior was characterized by making spontaneous verbal comments in the middle of class, getting up out of his chair and interacting negatively with other students, and blatant noncompliance to teacher directives. Regardless of which class John was in, he randomly made verbal comments while the teacher attempted to present a lesson. These comments were audible to everyone in the room. Frequently, they did not have anything to do with the lesson being taught. If the comments pertained to the lesson, they were extraneous. The majority of the comments made by John elicited responses from his peers that included laughter and follow-up conversations by other students. When John got out of his seat during class, he presented as though he had a purpose. For instance, he walked over to the pencil sharpener many times during the observed period. While on his way to sharpen his pencil, he tapped or lightly kicked another student. At times, he

quietly made negative, playful comments to other students as he walked by. These comments were not loud enough to be heard by the teacher. They did, however, cause other students to react. The students turned to face him and either attempted to hit or kick him back or comment.

John exhibited a great deal of distractibility. He required frequent redirection to tasks, even while seated. He appeared disorganized and required wait time while searching for assignments that needed to be turned in. John frequently talked to his neighbors, even when they were diligently working. This behavior became so severe over the course of observations that in many classes John's desk was moved away from other students. Nevertheless, this did not appear to help his off-task behaviors. When seated alone, John played with items within close proximity, such as pencils and erasers. Though John did not receive any positive interactions with other students, he appeared satisfied by the negative reactions. His facial expression did not indicate any appearance of discomfort, nor did he appear hesitant to approach his peers regardless of their previous statements or reactions to him.

Matt frequently had a stuffed animal he carried on his shoulder. The toy was not present during every period of observation, but was with him the majority of these periods. Matt appeared to pay attention during class. He asked questions pertaining to the lesson at appropriate times in order to gain a greater understanding of the material. Overall, his interaction style with his peers tended to be very immature. He allowed his toy to speak for him, giving it a make believe voice, as if he were a ventriloquist, or he ignored his peers completely. His classmates, in turn, tended to have very limited interactions with him. During group activities, Matt participated minimally. He

contributed appropriate responses, but only when encouraged by the teacher to increase participation. He verbally interacted with the teacher more frequently than his peers. Also, Matt frequently hummed during class. The volume level of the humming was very low and did not appear to be a distraction to others in the class. However, it was audible. Matt completed assignments as soon as they were distributed. He appeared disorganized but was always able to locate papers in a timely manner.

Interviews with Students

Particular items and themes that were endorsed on the *Resiliency Scale for Children and Adolescents* (RSCA) required follow-up during the individual interview with each student. The questions I selected for the students were based on research conducted on risk and protective factors. This research indicated that each question supported or weakened protective factors that could be present in the lives of each student.

I conducted interviews with each student in a private room in the school's front office during late October and early November of 2008. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes. Drawing on both the observations and the students' responses to the RSCA, I posed questions to each student based on the information that needed to be gathered to provide a clear picture of their risk and protective factors. For the adult participants, the school director, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Brady, and Mr. Thomas, questions were asked based on either inconsistency in student information or as a follow-up to gain clarification and a greater insight into each student participant's life. I interviewed each student separately, and the sequence in which they were interviewed was determined by their availability based on class scheduling. I interviewed Sarah first, followed by Bill, John and Matt.

I posed the following questions:

1. Describe an especially good day that you had at school. What was it like?
2. Describe an especially bad day at school. What was that like?
3. How would you describe your relationships with your peers?
4. Describe what it means to be a friend.
5. What activities do you do with your friends?
6. Describe what happens after you get home from school? What do you do in the evenings?
7. What do you do when you have a problem at school?
8. Describe your family.
9. What extracurricular activities are you involved with?
10. What are your academic goals? What are your plans after high school?
11. What is your favorite part of school? Why?
12. What is your least favorite part of school? Why?
13. What part of school do you find especially difficult? Why?
14. How do you handle problems?
15. How do you handle success?

Sarah. During the first interview with each student, I utilized information from the review of records, the RSCA, and the classroom observations. I conducted two follow-up interviews with each student in order to gain more information about data collected during the initial interviews as well as subsequent observational periods and teacher interviews.

When asked about an especially good day at school, Sarah described a time when she won an academic award. Her recollection of this day included internal feelings of being proud of her achievement as well as external support and praise from her teacher and classmates. Sarah's father and grandmother were present when she received the award and took her out to eat as a reward for her accolade. She was able to leave school early that day and stated that she "felt really smart". When asked about a particularly bad day at school, Sarah described the incident surrounding her single disciplinary infraction. She said that it involved other girls from a different class and a disagreement that grew much larger than intended. Though she mentioned having difficulties with these girls in the past, the infraction was unexpected. It was not physical, but Sarah believed it easily could have escalated to that. She described it as a "bad day" because she believed it lowered her teachers' opinions about her, disappointed her family, and caused her to feel very angry. She was angry because the disagreement involved a friend's assumption that Sarah was attempting to steal her boyfriend, even though Sarah stated that was untrue. It disappointed Sarah to act aggressively towards her friend based solely on a misconception that she had a crush on a boy who she did not know very well. Generally, Sarah described her interpersonal relationships as "okay". She stated that she was able to be a very loyal friend, but when another person betrayed her trust she refused to forgive him or her. At the time of the interview, Sarah stated that she did not have any close friends at the school. She had a few close friends who attended a different school but did not want to become close with anyone at school because it "leads to problems". This was based on her past experience and indiscretion with the girls based on her perceived crush on another student during the previous school year. She believed that her relationships in

the past interfered with her academic success. Instead of focusing on friendships, she claimed she currently was focusing on academics. She remarked that she did not need the “drama of friendships” at school and no longer had problems with her peers socially because of this. When asked to describe a friend, Sarah said, “a friend is someone who you hang around with all the time and has your back.” She deemed a friend as someone having similar interests and one that placed a friend’s happiness before his or her own. With the friends Sarah has, she described the activities they participated in together as playing soccer, going to the movies, and “just hanging out watching television”. She mentioned activities illustrating active participation with mainstream American society, such as going to coffee houses, bookstores, shopping malls and sporting events with friends and family. When she did encounter a problem at school with her peers, she attempted to ignore the issue. If this was not possible, she sought guidance from her grandmother.

Sarah explained that her mother died when she was in the primary grades. Since that time, her father’s mother had lived with her. She did not have any siblings or other close family in the area. Her father worked during the day but was always home at night. When she got home from school, typically Sarah completed her homework immediately. She coached a soccer team for young girls and worked with them in the evenings. After soccer, Sarah ate dinner with her family, watched television, and went to sleep. She always attempted to be in bed before ten o’clock. During the season, Sarah played soccer with a local group. School clubs were not of interest to her, but she hoped to play soccer for college one day. Her academic goals were to attend a four-year liberal arts university.

She stated that she preferred to stay in the state to receive a lower tuition cost and be near her family.

Sarah's favorite part of school was the opportunity to learn and experience new things and ideas. She stated that she enjoyed interacting and participating in field trips and open class discussions. The charter school environment, as opposed to the traditional educational model, allowed her the chance to learn in a relaxed atmosphere. She believed that her teachers took a greater interest in her personal and academic success at the charter school. Also, the structure allowed for a great deal more hands-on types of activities. For example, the class was learning about the middle age so they were putting on a Renaissance Festival for the school as a way to "actively learn". She thought that there was more freedom at the charter school. It allowed for students to take personal responsibility for their actions. This, she described, was good and bad. The teachers acted like mentors and were available if a student ever needed to confide in someone. School appeared less challenging and more like an opportunity for growth. School was difficult when they were being academically challenged on a new concept, such as on a test. But, for the most part, the school was an environment of consistency with clear expectations.

Consequently, Sarah's social interactions with her peers tended to present the most difficulties for Sarah. She described being overly sensitive to her peers and the comments they made. Though Sarah reported many of the comments her peers made towards her were intended to be friendly, they "annoyed her". She stated that she was frequently upset by her peers, which she typically characterized as feeling "annoyed." She believed her peers were immature and did not take school seriously. They placed

more emphasis on the social networks than the academic component. When Sarah got upset with her peers, she stated that she typically just did not speak. She failed to make eye contact and withdrew from others. Sarah described how she replayed the events over and over in her mind, causing her greater stress. When Sarah allowed her peers to upset her, whether intentionally or not, she felt a sense of failure. Sarah did not want other people to cause her to lose control of her feelings. When she was upset, she felt out of control because she had trouble calming herself down. Her cheeks became hot and her hands were shaky when she was upset with her peers. Sarah stated that the smallest things could upset her with her peers. If they “ask a dumb question or borrow something without asking” it would cause her to become very distressed. Likewise, when Sarah was presented with extreme success, she did not share it with her peers. She internalized the success and allowed herself to feel personal pride. But, she was more content if her peers were unaware of the success.

Bill. Rapport was not easily established with Bill. During the first interview, Bill divulged very little information about himself and his life. However, after rapport was established, it was maintained throughout. The majority of Bill’s statements that centered on school were negative. He did not believe that school was important and had little motivation to succeed academically. His plans after high school were to “just get a job somewhere, anywhere”. He described his best day at school as days that he was allowed to go home early or days when he did not have to do any work. Most of these included days with substitute teachers that allowed for a much more casual environment. Bill’s favorite part of school was lunch because it allowed him time to socialize with his friends. Bill stated that he had friends at school. But, because he had been retained and

promoted multiple times, his friendships were difficult to maintain from one year to the next. Instead, many of Bill's friends went to different schools. Bill primarily spent time with his older brother and his brother's friends. Similar to Sarah, Bill mentioned participating in many activities that aligned him with modern American culture. He stated that he "loved going to and watching football games" as well as going to the mall and movie theater. After school, Bill's father was always working. He typically went home and watched television or went "out with [his brother] until pretty late at night". Normally, Bill did not go to bed until after eleven o'clock on school nights. When asked about his excessive absences, Bill stated that he found school to be "boring" and was able to make up all the necessary work whether he attended or not. When further questioned about his grades in relation to the absences, Bill simply stated that he did not care about his grades. He received no positive or negative reinforcement for grades at home and that he was not "smart enough to do any better".

Bill's family included a father and older brother. His mother left the family when he was a toddler. He had no contact with her after that time. His father worked a job in the evenings and was frequently not home when Bill arrived from school. Bill stated that he rarely did his homework. At times, there were opportunities to work on homework while at school. If he did not complete his assignments at this time, he most likely did not complete them. As a whole, Bill reported that school was a fair environment. But, he reported that teachers "got on [his] case a lot". He characterized this as excessive questioning about work completion and work ethic. The worst part of school was days when he had to take a test. Bill stated that he never did well on tests and they always made him feel worse about himself. He never studied for a test but when the teacher

returned them to the students and his classmates compared good grades, he stated that he was very embarrassed that he was “so dumb”. In regards to past retentions, Bill stated that he was kept back because he could never understand the material. He heard it, but “nothing ever stuck”. And, eventually he was promoted because “they wanted to move [him] through school so that [he] would not still be there when [he] was thirty”. When questioned about his 504 plan, Bill stated, “It doesn’t really matter what they do, I don’t know how to do the work”. He elaborated to say that topics covered in class were very challenging for him. As soon as he was beginning to comprehend the material, the class moved on to the next topic.

Bill stated that he makes a lot of mistakes. However, he does not let them affect him any more. Most of the mistakes Bill referred to were academic. He did not report any mistakes he made socially. Also, Bill denied any drug use. When Bill had a problem, he worked it out for himself. He did not mention going to anyone else to help him reach a solution. If something upset Bill, he never talked about it. Instead, he tried to “forget about it”. Sometimes, he got upset about doing poorly in school and hit a punching bag in the basement of his house. He described being upset as feeling “hot inside”. “It is like hearing the words that upset you over and over and over in your head and not being able to tell them to shut up”. When someone hurt Bill’s feelings he stated that he never showed them that he was upset. He believed that expressing emotions was a feminine quality that men were not supposed to exhibit.

Bill depended on his brother, who was the only person in his life he reported understood him and wanted what was best for him. When asked what his brother thought was best for him Bill stated, “to be cool and have a lot of friends”. Bill described a friend

as someone to spend time with who had similar interests. They were a person that “never insulted you or made you feel bad about yourself”. Bill believed that teachers did not mean to make him feel bad about himself. He thought that the teachers at the charter school truly cared about him and wanted to see him do well. He appreciated the atmosphere at the charter school. At a traditional public school, he stated that teachers “probably don’t have the time to give any kids one-on-one assistance”. But, at the charter school he was attending, teachers sat down with him when time allowed and attempted to remediate his skills in reading and math. Also, Bill liked the hands-on activities the charter school provided. He stated that it was “the only way [he] has understood a lot of stuff they were teaching”. And, in regards to his noncompliance at school, Bill said that he attempted to do what was asked of him but often did not know exactly what he was supposed to do. He did not want to be disrespectful to the teachers, but they did not understand him. When asked to elaborate further, he said that the teachers were very smart and they did not know what it was like to not be intelligent. Also, he stated that his friends were the most important things in his life and his focus on his social networks took seniority over his focus on academics.

John. John’s interview provided insight into his overall well-being. He stated that he enjoyed the charter school. He had attended the charter school for three years. Compared to the traditional public school model, John appreciated the laidback atmosphere. He stated that the school was not “as strict as the other school and allowed students to be themselves”. To John, this meant allowing them to eat snacks during class and not always requiring students to raise their hands before asking a question. He believed that it was very easy to find a teacher to bond with because the teachers were

actively involved in their lives. Unlike the teacher at his previous school, John's teachers at the charter school asked about his social and home life and offered advice and guidance to him. For the first time in his school career, John had a favorite teacher. This teacher, he believed, took a personal interest in his success. The teacher offered to come in early or stay after school to help him with schoolwork. Another characteristic that John attributed to his favorite teacher was that of fairness. He stated that not all teachers were fair. Often school was not fair. "Only certain kids get called on" and were able to participate. But, John's favorite teacher allowed equal participation from all students.

When asked to elaborate on why school was not fair John said "some kids' parents can pay for them to get tutors and do fancy projects" so he believed they would automatically receive a higher grade. Specifically, one of the worst days John had at school involved this type of perceived discrimination. John recalled a day a project was due. He noted that he worked very hard on this project and thought that it was a good example of his work production. Another student brought in a project on the same topic. However, the other student's project was on nicer poster board and more decorative, therefore that student received greater recognition and a higher grade.

Despite this perceived injustice, John still believed that school was a positive environment. He stated that when he received good grades, it made him feel good. His favorite aspect of school was receiving positive feedback from teachers and adults. It made him feel competent. All around, John reported that school was very challenging. He had difficulty completing the assignments with perfect success. However, he was able to complete them adequately. To John, this meant getting an average grade. "I'm okay with average grades. I'm an average kid." When John had trouble comprehending

the lessons at school, he stated that he was very comfortable asking the teacher questions. Often, teachers helped students during recess if they required extra assistance. When asked about the appropriateness of his 504 Plan, John stated that the extra time was extremely helpful. He wished, though, that he had been allowed more one-on-one assistance so that he could have understood better all of the information presented to him. John wanted to attend a junior college or community college and get a degree in the culinary arts. He stated that he enjoyed cooking and it was “something that everyone loves and you can express yourself”.

John lived at home with his mother, stepfather, and half sister. His parents were never married and his biological father lived on a Native American Indian reservation. However, they had very limited contact. John had not visited his father in over a year. John stated that his father had a history of alcoholism. His mother married two years ago and he got along with his stepfather. He stated that he did not interact with his stepfather very much. His half sister recently turned a year old. When John returned home from school, his mother was home taking care of his sister. He played videogames until dinnertime. After dinner, his mother helped him with his homework and made him go to bed around ten o'clock. John mentioned participating in many activities that were typical for an American middle school student, such as “going out to eat, going to the movies, playing basketball, and going to the arcade”. But, he often participated in these activities only with his mother.

John was very close to his mother. She was the person John stated that he went to if he had a problem. She always helped him to find a better solution. Because of John's Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, he had trouble staying still. John stated that his

mother was very useful with this. She was very patient with him and taught him how to do things in “slow motion”, which helped him to be still. When John made a mistake, he believed it was best to admit the mistake and try to find someone to assist him in correcting the mistake. John stated that he made a lot of mistakes with his friends. He listed all the boys in his class as friends but said he thinks he “bugs or annoys them sometimes”. He described many of the physical and verbal behaviors that were observed in class. For instance, John stated that when he wanted to get attention from a peer, he tapped them or kicked their shoe with his foot. The peer did not always react positively towards John, but reacted nonetheless. “It’s better to get a reaction than have everyone ignore you”. John described a friend as someone who did “the same things as you and is in your class”. A good friend was someone who never made fun of his or her friends. John admitted that he did get picked on occasionally. Other students often commented towards him such things as “you’re annoying” and “leave me alone”. It upset John when peers said negative things to him. However, instead of showing disappointment, John stated that he continued whatever action elicited the negative response. “I don’t know what else to do”.

John was not involved in extracurricular activities. When asked about clubs and sports John stated that he was “never good at sports”. However, he did express interest in playing sports. He stated that he was intimidated to try out for sports because he stated that he was not athletic and coordinated. It would be helpful if he had an uncoordinated friend who tried out with him. “It’s better to do things with other people than by yourself”.

Matt. During two of the three interviews Matt brought the stuffed animal. The stuffed animal was a gift given to him by his father before he passed away. Matt was two-years-old at the time of his father's death. He stated that he did not always carry the toy with him, but occasionally would and had since the time of his father's death. Matt explained that sometimes his peers made negative comments towards him about carrying the stuffed animal. But, he did not care because it was important to him. When asked how he felt about his father Matt stated that he was no longer sad about the death but wished he had a father. Matt's mother never remarried after the death of her husband. Matt was an only child, living at home with just his mother. As with John, many of the activities he mentioned enjoying were done with his mother. He stated that he "went to the movies, rollerblading, played video games and board games, and hanging out at the mall".

After school, Matt helped his mother with the daycare she ran out of their house. He stated that it was fun to interact with the children, all of whom younger than him. After the parents picked their children up from the daycare, Matt ate dinner and watched television until bedtime. He stated that he did not go to bed until around midnight and was often tired at school in the mornings. However, Matt did not feel going to bed earlier was an appropriate option because his favorite television programs were on late at night.

Matt did not report any friends who are his age. He typically spent time with his mother on the weekends. They had a close relationship. Anytime Matt had a problem, he knew that he could talk with his mother. Also, he was very close with one of the teachers at the charter school. He reported that he could easily address any problems that occurred at school with that teacher. As opposed to attempting to solve a problem

independently, Matt stated that when problems arose, he went to an adult first. When he made a mistake, he looked to adults to help fix it. He reported that he would go to them and ask for time to sit down and talk. In addition, he stated that he would explain the problem and ask them what to do. Matt reported that adults tended to give better advice than people his age.

Matt believed that his life was fair, except that he did not have a father. It caused him to become upset when he thought of all the other students who had fathers. Outside of this, Matt stated that he did not handle disappointment well. Instead, he tended to hold a grudge against people that made him upset. If telling an adult about a negative situation did not automatically fix a problem, Matt confronted the problem with the person directly. However, instead of explaining to the other person why a problem existed, Matt yelled at him or her. When Matt got upset, he tended to yell. He stated that he could feel when he was getting angry because his stomach started hurting. Though he had never entered into any physical fights with his peers, Matt often got in verbal disagreements. He stated that his peers did not understand him. They were concerned about relationships and social networks and he was not.

Matt described a friend as someone to interact with. He stated that friends were loyal and liked to be around you. A good friend was someone that was always around and wanted to play video games or watch television. Matt did not participate in any extracurricular activities because he wanted to help his mother with the daycare as well as play video games. He completed his homework but typically tried to do it very quickly so that he had more time for other activities. Matt did not believe that he needed his 504 plan and could function satisfactorily in the general education classroom without extra

support. Matt described his best day at school as a day when the class went on a field trip. He enjoyed that day because everyone in the class was assigned a “buddy” and they had to stay with their “buddy” all day. Matt liked the student the teacher assigned to be his buddy and they hung out all day on the field trip. The worst day at school, Matt stated was “every other day”. He perceived these days as bad because he did not have any friends. “If the teachers were not at school I wouldn’t have anyone to talk to”. He believed the other students “think [he is] weird”. He denied that any student ever made fun of him and said that, “the teachers do not really allow kids to pick on other kids here”. Matt believed that school was a fair environment and he liked to learn new things. He found the teachers to be very interesting. This was different than traditional public schools because the teachers make a strong effort to engage the students. They provide lessons that are interactive and encourage student participation. Matt was unsure of his future plans. He stated that he might want to go to college to become a “video game developer”.

Interviews with Teachers

I interviewed four teachers, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Brady, and Mr. Thomas, who had a perceived (by the teachers) close relationship with each student initially in November of 2008. In December 2008 I interviewed two of these teachers a second time, Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith, who were active in the lives of both the 7th and 8th grade students, as a way to follow-up on some information obtained during the individual student interviews. I selected Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith for the follow-up because all of the student participants had mentioned them during interviews as being involved in his or her life both academically and personally. The initial interview

occurred before interviewing the student participants. These interviews lasted approximately forty-five minutes. However, the second interview occurred after the student participants were interviewed as a way of gaining clarification and further information about factors and situations discussed with the student participants. These interviews lasted approximately one hour.

Overall, the teachers reported that Sarah was a well-behaved student. Mr. Thomas stated that she had “made a lot of progress this year academically and her grades have really gone up”. Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith both alluded to her participation in the community soccer league with the younger girls as very beneficial to “her as a whole” (Jones). They had not only seen an increase in her soccer skills but also in her self-esteem. However, all four teachers believed that self-esteem was the biggest hindrance in her life. Mrs. Smith stated that “Sarah lacks social confidence, and it seems to also affect her academically at times”. Mrs. Brady believed that “if Sarah had a more confidence about her academic performance, we would see a much higher level of achievement in the classroom. She is capable of more than she shows us”. Her social confidence, Mr. Thomas stated was “greatly impacted after last year’s problems” with the other girls. The fact those girls did not attend the charter school for that current school year did not appear to make a difference. And Mrs. Jones reported that Sarah’s “biggest weakness is her social interactions, or interpersonal relationships, with the other students”. She was able to, according to Mrs. Smith, “relate well to the teachers and was never behavior problem in the classroom”. Mrs. Brady stated that Sarah missed her mother. “But, I think she is very close to her grandmother now, and that helps”. According to all teachers, Sarah’s father and grandmother provided a great deal of encouragement and

support to her. “Sarah’s dad tries to be involved as he can but it is probably very hard for him because he works in the evenings,” reported Mr. Thomas. Mrs. Jones stated that Sarah’s father was “her biggest cheerleader, really encouraging her to go to college after high school”.

In a follow-up interview during the early part of January of 2009, the teachers who were closest to Sarah, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones, reported that many of her social problems stemmed from the fact that she simply did not know how to appropriately handle negative situations with her peers. In the charter school environment, Mrs. Smith stated that “we do not encounter a lot of social problems between our students”. “More often than not, when Sarah is faced with a problem or difficult situation, it does not end well because she handles it poorly” (Jones). Both teachers believed that Sarah’s past confrontations with her peers caused her to withdraw socially. Mrs. Smith explained it by stating that, it “scared [Sarah] off towards her peers and now she just wants nothing to do with any of them at school”. Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones thought that Sarah would do better socially in high school after she was presented with an entirely new peer group. Also, the teachers felt that Sarah should be more involved in the academic world. “Sarah would really benefit from joining a club or something that would allow her to be around her peers, and socialize in a safe, structured way” (Smith).

During the initial interview with all four teachers during November of 2008, they reported that Bill did not care about school. Mr. Thomas stated that “he does not seem to care at all about his grades and it does not help that he has no structure at home”. Mrs. Smith added that “he does not get rewarded at home for good grades, he does not seem to get punished either” which is very detrimental to him. All teachers mentioned that they

believed his retentions and the fact that he was later placed in a grade rather than promoted also were harmful to him academically. “He tries to do the work in my class, and in all of his classes, but I think most of the time it is just too hard for him to complete,” stated Mr. Thomas. Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones reported that instead of asking for help or admitting that he could not complete the work independently, Bill simply stopped trying. All four teachers believed that his peers were much more influential to him than anything academic. Though he did not socialize with many of the students at the charter school outside of the classroom, “the peers he seemed to pick were a really bad example to him” (Smith). Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Brady, and Mrs. Jones stated that Bill appeared “stoned” coming to class many days. Despite this assumption, there is no record of Bill’s drug use. “He always seemed to be really unorganized and he [could not] ever was gather his thoughts” (Brady). They believed that he needed academic and social support but did not know what to do for him. Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Brady discussed many classroom interventions that attempted with Bill, including sitting down one-on-one with him. Mrs. Jones reported that Bill “does not accept a lot of the support that we try to offer him”. Instead, he attempted to complete assignments as quickly as possible regardless of the accuracy.

In a follow-up interview with the school director in late November of 2008 regarding rationale behind Bill’s placement in seventh grade she reported that Bill had become extremely unmotivated at that point. He was two years older than his classroom peers and she believed it was greatly affecting his self-esteem. “Instead of letting him continue down a spiral slope towards academic and personal failure, I decided to place

him in the seventh grade. At least then he could be with peers that were around his age". She reported that the past retentions had not benefited him.

He still did not seem to comprehend the material even when he it was presented to him a second time after repeating. He had fallen so far behind at that point that the only thing to do was to put him in a class where he could fit in socially.

In a follow-up interview with Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones in early January of 2009 regarding his absences and tardies, it was discovered that when Bill was tardy it was severe. He typically arrived around 10:30 or 11:00 a.m., two to three hours after school had started. "Because he always arrived so late," Mrs. Smith stated, "he was missing so much core instruction. It was really negatively influencing his grades". Mrs. Jones stated that when Bill came in tardy "he frequently looked like he was stoned". When asked to elaborate further on this, the teacher stated that "his eyes were very red and glazy". Mrs. Smith mentioned that he normally appeared out of touch with what was going on in class and sat in the back "zoned out". When he was called on by Mrs. Smith, as a way to encourage participation, "his typical response was 'I don't know'". Both Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones reported talking with Bill's father about this issue. According to Mrs. Jones, Bill's "dad seems to work at night so Bill is left at home with his older brother". "When I've asked [Bill's father] about any suspected drug use, he always told me that he did not think either of his children would ever use drugs" (Smith). He believed the primary reason for Bill's behavior was due to a lack of motivation.

During an interview with the four teachers about John, they reported that they thought that John's biggest social issue was that he annoyed other students. Mrs. Brady stated that John was "really immature when it comes to his relationships and interactions

with his peers. He does not seem to know what it takes to form friendships”. Mrs. Smith reported that John’s poor social interaction style was “his biggest weakness at school”. At times, his behavior negatively impacted his academic performance. This was the case because, according to Mrs. Jones, John often required “being punished for his acting out and misbehavior”. It was reported by all teachers that, on many occasions, John attempted to interact with classmates instead of doing his class work. However, when questioned about the appropriateness of his 504 plan, all teachers believed it was necessary and allowed for all of his academic needs to be met. Mrs. Smith reported that, similar to Sarah, “being a part of a club or some type of similar group would really help” John. It would allow him the opportunity to socialize in a structured setting. Mrs. Jones added:

The instability at home [with John], causes him to seek a lot of attention from others at school. Because his mother was remarried and he has toddler-aged sister, he probably does not get a lot of individual attention at home so he overcompensates at school. But, this overcompensation results in misbehaviors.

Mr. Thomas believed that because John did not receive a lot of attention at home, “he makes up for it by all the negative attention he gets at school”. Mrs. Brady continued by stating that “[John] does not seem to be able to discriminate between negative attention and positive attention from his peers”. However, he was very persistent. John’s persistence was a characteristic noted by all four teachers. It was described as both good and bad for him. “He can persist with activities in the classroom, even if he finds them very difficult” according to Mrs. Smith. However, Mrs. Brady stated that he persists “to

get his peers' attention which just results in very annoyed peers". According to all the teachers, this made his classmates dislike him more.

In a follow-up interview in January of 2009 about John, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones and the director of the school remarked that John was a "very sweet" student. All teachers reported that they thought John believed his mother had formed a new family and he did not fit in at home. "Participation in some type of a sport or activity" would be very helpful for John, according to the school director. "It would give him a way to get all of his energy out and learn some structure and discipline that he does not seem to be learning from home".

In an interview regarding Matt, the four teachers stated that he was "very immature" for his age. Mrs. Brady stated that he did not appear to "care if he has friends at school. He would much rather sit around and talk with me or one of the other teachers than a fellow classmate". "It is a constant struggle for John to be attentive in class and focus on the work," according to Mr. Thomas. Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith both thought that, in the past, John had not received much positive feedback from other teachers. During the primary years of elementary school, "Matt had a behavior plan to help him to focus. The plan also addressed some immaturity issues," according to Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Brady stated that "he has been able to focus this year, but each day seems like a constant struggle for him". It was reported by Mr. Thomas that Matt tended to be very manipulative towards the adults in his life. Mr. Thomas elaborated that John was "extremely good at turning things around so he avoided getting into trouble". He was a very "verbal student", according to Mrs. Jones. "He reframes situations so that it makes him appear innocent".

In a follow-up interview about Matt, Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith stated that he was very intelligent. “He produces quality, grade-level work when he wants to,” stated Mrs. Jones. But, Mrs. Jones reported that his “motivation really seems to be dropping”. Mrs. Smith stated Matt was “socially withdrawn from the rest of the kids”. He tended to be closer to adults because “adults [do not] judge him the same way that his peers do. Matt would prefer to stay completely under the radar if he could”. But, Mrs. Smith believed Matt had a great deal of charisma if “you can just pull it out of him”. He was very creative and had a unique sense of humor that he was able to incorporate in all areas of his life. Despite his father’s death, Mrs. Jones believed that Matt did not “seem to dwell on this past tragedy”. “Matt carries the stuffed animal around with him just to get attention from adults,” according to Mrs. Smith. The school director stated that John’s mother was “very active in his school-life but does not really help him with his homework because she does not have a great deal of schooling herself”. Mrs. Smith felt, though, that Matt did not require a great deal of one-on-one assistance because he would be “more than capable if he would just sit down and do the work.”

Using information provided in the RSCA, student participants’ archival records, observations, and interviews, I created the following chart to provide a summary description of the overall resiliency of each student participant. Any student who had at protective factors outnumbering risk factors could be considered resilient:

	Lack of Participation in	Negative Parenting Style	Special Education Placement	Community	School Connectedness	Adult Involvement	Self Esteem
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	Extracurricular Activities						
Sarah				✓	✓	✓	
Bill	✓	✓	✓				
John	✓		✓			✓	
Matt	✓		✓			✓	

DISCUSSION

Resiliency is defined as “a set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaptation and transformation despite risk and adversity” (Benard, 1995, ¶ 1). Greene (2001) explains that both risk factors and protective factors influence how youth deal with adversity. Risk factors cause the chances of youth developing difficulties to increase. Protective factors often hinder or stop difficulty from occurring. This occurs because a student has acquired the tools or supports necessary to overcome challenges. Based on this information, I conducted a case study in order to assess the risk factors and protective factors of four middle-school students at a small charter school. Furthermore, I developed a school program targeted to increase the youths’ overall resiliency.

In order to effectively measure resiliency, an ecological view is required. This is necessary because many personal and environmental factors affect a person’s overall resiliency; hence resiliency cannot be effectively measured without gaining a comprehensive view. Moreover, many factors contribute to a person’s resiliency. At

times, it is difficult for a person to articulate which components of his or her life are supportive and which components hinder overall resiliency. Because of this, data must be collected through a variety of sources to ensure that all areas of the person's life are considered and analyzed. Often people in similar environmental and cultural situations will exhibit similar characteristics. However, since no two people are identical, it is important to analyze the individual aspects of a person in order to thoroughly determine what is necessary to help him or her succeed.

Risk Factors

Risk factors are any internal or environmental characteristics that cause children to or increase the chances that children will have difficulties, whether in behavior or emotion, when compared to other children (Greene & Conrad, 2001). Certain circumstances can cause youth to develop these difficulties, which negatively impact their lives. Such factors as living in a community with few opportunities, possessing low self-esteem, parenting style, substance abuse, and engagement in criminal behavior are risk factors that can cause youth to lack resiliency. Many of the risk factors presented in published research were found to be present in the lives of the student participants in this study.

Of all students in the study, Sarah appeared to have the least number of risk factors and the most protective factors. For example, she reported that she was involved in a community soccer league. This was further supported by teacher reports and by information in Sarah's cumulative record. Based on research from Borden, Perkins, Stone and Villarruel (2005), because Sarah's extracurricular activity was separate from the school environment, which would suggest she was unable to gain many of the

benefits that cause extracurricular activity participation to act as a protective factor, such as homework help, enhancing problem-solving capabilities, and promoting life skills. Though this type of activity was reported as beneficial for her self-esteem, this involvement was separate from the school setting and her school peers, causing her, perhaps, to become further isolated and detached.

In addition, Sarah, the teachers, and data collected during observations in the classroom suggested that she had negative peer relationships. This was also noted in her cumulative records, which documented a single disciplinary infraction. Overall, these poor relationships caused her to be disengaged from school. She did not openly engage in social situations, as noted during observations. She lacked social self-esteem, a necessary protective factor, which, according to some of her teachers, hindered her academic performance as well as her social interactions. Though she had plans for the future, she was not confident in herself or her abilities.

Bill appeared to have the most risk factors of all student participants. According to reports in Bill's cumulative records as well as interviews with Bill, the charter school director, and classroom teachers, Bill was retained twice. Subsequently, he was advanced to the eighth grade despite his failure to meet the necessary academic requirements. Bill's academic struggles and lower overall resiliency resulted in disengagement from school. Additionally, Bill was not involved in any extracurricular activities at school or in the community. Also, according to teacher reports, Bill was suspected of drug use. Though Bill and his father disputed these reports, the teachers believed that Bill was engaging in marijuana use outside of school. Bill received the lowest score on the

Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA), indicating a low level of protective factors.

John's cumulative record indicated he was in special education. Initially, he was identified as a student with a speech/language impairment. Later John was identified as having an Other Health Impairment based on his medical diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Special education identification and placement have been shown to be risk factors for all students (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004, Resnick et al., 1997). John's cumulative record indicated his only involvement in extracurricular activities occurred briefly in the 5th grade when he participated in the environmental club at the charter school. He did not persist with this activity following his fifth grade year. It was reported that John's father was an alcoholic, thus exhibiting a history of substance abuse. He also was uninvolved in John's life and school, as reported in both cumulative records and during interviews with John. According to John, this lack of involvement by his biological father caused John to feel as though his family was incomplete.

Matt's cumulative records showed that he also was in special education due to reading difficulties. He received support through a 504 Plan following a dismissal from the program after he entered middle school. Interviews with Matt and with classroom teachers indicated that Matt did not feel his mother was emotionally available to support him, given her home business and the fact that his father was deceased. There were no records or reports of Matt's involvement in extracurricular activities. Also, according to interviews with Matt and classroom teachers, Matt was disengaged from school. He sought attention from adults as opposed to his same-age peers. In an interview he reported having no friends and a low comfort level with others.

Protective Factors

A protective factor serves as any environmental or internal aspect that can overshadow the negative outcomes and risk factors and increase or foster resiliency (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997). As with the risk factors, many protective factors noted in published research were found to be present in the lives of the student participants.

For all four student participants, the charter school acted as a protective factor. Given the small class sizes, all students felt they received an adequate and appropriate amount of one-on-one attention and instruction. This small class size is characteristic of a charter school setting. In addition, the power for the charter school to exercise more control over its curriculum appeared to cause the charter school to be a protective factor. All students mentioned enjoying the hands-on types of activities and projects that most public school students are unable to engage in due to a state-selected curriculum. Because of the small class size, the teachers at the charter school were able to get to know the students well. This allowed for the teachers to be some of the only positive role models present in the life of Bill, and the only positive male role model present in the lives of John and Matt. Throughout observational periods, the teachers varied instructional styles and even allowed students to exercise some choice with respect to the learning activities they completed.

Sarah was actively involved in the community in the soccer program. Not only was she a member of a community soccer league, she helped coach younger girls teams, mentoring those outside her home and school environment. This allowed her to be actively involved in the lives of those within her community and feel as though she was part of a team. Also acting as a protective factor for Sarah was adult involvement in her

life. Sarah valued her father, and, because of his involvement in her life, she wanted to stay close to home for college. Sarah also reported, both on the RSCA and in interviews, that her grandmother was an active adult in her life who both advised Sarah and supported her. Both of these adults allowed Sarah to feel loved and valued. She went to them for help with problems and looked to them for guidance. It also was reported that teachers encouraged Sarah academically. Though she did not look to them for social support, she looked to them for academic support. She found school to be a place where she was able to succeed and accomplish her goals. In addition, she was involved in many activities that were culturally normal for someone of Sarah's age, race, and gender, including going to the mall and attending sporting events. The entertainment she sought with her social circle matched that of societal norms for mainstream America. Sarah appeared to know what was typical for an adolescent in society and the things she could accomplish. She spoke of fashion and the importance of peer opinions to her. Her goals and aspirations, such as graduating from high school and going to college, matched that of her age-peers in contemporary America. She was aware that she had the both the ability and the right to accomplish these goals and believed they are components of the traditional sequence of life events following middle school.

Analysis of Bill's data, from the RSCA, observations, and interviews, indicate that Bill possessed the fewest protective factors of the four student participants.

Activities that Bill enjoyed included football, going to the mall and movie theater. As with Sarah, this allowed him exposure to the mainstream culture and current trends. Because he enjoyed this type of exposure, he felt that he was able to be a part of the culture and identify closely with mainstream American society. Though his lackluster

attitude towards school did little to help his academic success, he reported thoughts and activities in which he participated that aligned with many social norms of American society. The football teams that Bill mentioned enjoying were college teams, thus illustrating an American tradition that continues to be part of modern culture. Bill did not report any active adult involvement in his life. However, he did report a strong relationship with his brother. Teacher reports indicated that his brother may have caused some drug use in Bill's life. However, in interviews Bill reported that he trusted and admired his brother. In his view, his brother was the core member of his family and his source of support. This sibling relationship could prove to be a strong protective factor in Bill's life as long as it was a healthy relationship.

School connectedness, adult involvement, and cultural identity, are protective factors that have shown to help foster resiliency and lessen the effects of risk factors (Strand & Peacock, 2002). These protective factors appear to be present and active components of John's life. It was reported that John enjoyed interacting with the teachers at school. His connection with school tended to be limited to the academic domain. While his peer interactions were difficult, he reported enjoying being around peers. Thus, he formed a connection to school because it allowed him to socialize as well as feel supported academically. In addition, the teachers provided adult involvement. His mother was reported as having involvement in John's day-to-day life, and she was able to provide support with his homework when needed. In addition, his teachers proved to be large influences on him. They made themselves available for consultation, both on academic and social difficulties. John, like Bill, reported interacting and engaging in many activities both in and outside of school that are age-appropriate and align with

societal norms. These activities allow him to participate in mainstream American culture. Other adolescents that are John's age also take part in similar activities. This allowed John more exposure to his peers. He enjoyed television and sports and recognized that he had the opportunity to continue to pursue his long-term career goals after graduation from high school.

Data collected on Matt indicate that he possessed the same three protective factors—school connectedness, adult involvement and cultural identity—as John. Matt made average grades, as shown by his cumulative record, and reported that he enjoyed school. Teachers reported that Matt interacted well with them, and would interact with his peers, if necessary. In addition, Matt reported being very close to his mother. He also reported looking to teachers and his mother for guidance and assistance with problems. Clearly, Matt had adults that were actively involved in his life. Although his social interactions were limited, he watched television and was familiar with many popular culture items that caused him to identify with the mainstream American culture. Matt noted that he enjoyed going to the movie theater, rollerblading, playing video games, and going to the mall. Like Sarah, he enjoyed these activities because he felt comfortable in these environments. This comfort level allowed him to gain exposure to the culture as well as his peers and community. Albeit Matt felt excluded socially, his issues did not appear to be due to a lack of identification with those in the mainstream society, rather socially inappropriate behaviors. Because of his awkward peer interactions, many of the activities Matt indicated enjoying were done with his mother. However, many adolescents Matt's age also partake in these types of activities. He is able to gain

exposure to his peers and to the types of things his peers enjoy even though he is participating with his mother.

School Program to Increase Resiliency

Based on the findings from the case study, feasible school-based plans were developed for each student participant to help increase the protective factors and decrease the risk factors present in their lives. (Refer to appendices D, E, and F.) I met with the director of the charter school in April of 2009 in order to introduce the plans for John and Matt. Along with the plans I provided information based on current research that aligned with the plans that were developed. For instance, for John and Matt, information about social skills group, extracurricular activities, and relaxation techniques (Sim, Whiteside, Dittner, & Mellon, 2006; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Margolisa, 1990) were presented along with the plans to provide a greater depth of knowledge for the charter school staff. When developing each plan it was necessary to utilize the resources available in the community and to take into consideration that the two older students, Sarah and Bill, would no longer be attending the charter school the following school year. For Sarah and Bill, it was necessary to explore options available at their public high school. For these students, I delivered the plan to the principal of the high school Sarah and Bill were planning to attend. Similar to the process at the charter school, I met with the principal in order to introduce the plans for Sarah and Bill and to present current research. For instance, including Sarah in a peer mediation program, allowing her to become a mentor, and placing her in smaller-sized classes (Smith, Daunic, Miller, & Robinson, 2002; Sipe, 2002), was discussed. For Bill, providing him with a mentor, discussing remedial classes and career opportunities, school tutoring, and reviewing his 504 plan were

discussed (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Tierney & Grossman, 1995; Sliker & Palmer, 1993; Stein, Fonagy, Ferguson, & Wisman, 2000). With the research to support the school-based plans, the principal was able to gain a more thorough understanding of the benefits of each program. With both the director of the charter school and the high school principal, I walked through the plans with them and answered any questions or concerns posed until they gained a thorough understanding.

The plans were created using a bulleted format. This format was used in order to make them easy to read. A brief description of each bulleted point was provided beneath in order to provide clarity and understanding of the point. For each student, the plans were kept to no more than three to five bullets in order not to overwhelm the director or principal, in hopes of ensuring implementation. Each plan provided a clear description of the benefits and rationale in a concise manner.

According to Smith, Daunic, Miller, and Robinson (2002) peer mediation programs are beneficial in teaching students ways to settle conflicts independently. Many programs teach negotiation strategies and allow students to increase conflict resolution. Moreover, students involved in these programs are more likely to incorporate these strategies daily to solve their own disputes (Smith, Daunic, Miller, & Robinson, 2002).

A structured peer mediation program was entering its second year at the high school Sarah was to attend. This program provided students with the opportunity to influence and guide the behavior of their peers in school, with less emphasis placed on administrative discipline. Though no data had been collected regarding the effectiveness of this program at Sarah's prospective high school, the program was implemented in

order to lower the number of suspensions. Sarah was encouraged to become an active participant in this program in hopes of learning valuable techniques to apply to her own life for social conflict.

Sarah also was encouraged to participate in was a mentoring program. Research on the effectiveness of mentoring programs is mixed in regards to overall success (Sipe, 2002). However, according to Sipe (2002), with correct structure and training, mentoring programs can be beneficial not only to those being mentored, but also to the mentors. With Sarah's experience coaching younger children in soccer, it was believed that encouraging her to mentor a younger student at the charter school would be a useful plan. Sipe (2002) describes such benefits as increased self-esteem and self-awareness that a mentor can receive by mentoring. The director of the charter school expressed a desire to implement a mentoring program for younger students by pairing them with older students. She stated that if Sarah were willing she would be allowed to help initiate this program. Other students from the high school, with parent permission and teacher references, would be allowed to participate in the mentoring program after school.

While Sarah's risk factors suggested that she would be likely to benefit from being a mentor, Bill's risk factors, in contrast, suggested that he would be more likely to benefit from being mentored. Hawkins and Weis (1985) showed that some adolescents have the tendency to develop delinquent behaviors, such as skipping school and drug use, due to the fact that they do not have appropriate role models. A mentor can help identify and model socially appropriate behavior to an adolescent in order to help decrease many of these delinquent behaviors. However, according to Tierney and Grossman (1995), programs that allow for direct, one-on-one mentor-mentee contact at least three times a

month are most likely to be effective. These encounters between an adolescent and his or her mentor need to be at least four hours long. Furthermore, the mentor must be available through phone contact during the week. If such standards are met, the chances that a mentoring program will be effective are high. Because many of Bill's risk factors involved delinquent behaviors, aligning him with an older individual who could serve as a positive role model and encourage him both socially and academically likely would benefit Bill. Though no community program was established in the area that could provide this type of mentoring, one of the teachers from the charter school offered to provide this type of intense mentoring to Bill. Because of their previously established relationship, one Bill described as positive, this appeared to be a plan with the potential to benefit Bill. This could provide Bill with someone to ask for assistance, help increase his self-esteem, and have more control over his own emotions and reactions (Sliker & Palmer, 1993).

In regards to academic progress, Bill's prospective high school offers after-school tutoring programs at no cost. Bill was encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. In a meeting with the guidance counselor at the prospective high school Bill was encouraged to think about his plans for after high school. If Bill possessed a long-term career goal and was provided with a support system to help accomplish that goal, his chances of dropping out of high school would decrease (Stein, Fonagy, Ferguson, & Wisman, 2000). Bill also was encouraged to form a relationship with the counselor so that he would feel comfortable seeking out support whenever he felt he needed. Because this guidance counselor also managed scheduling classes for students, Bill was encouraged to talk with her over the summer about enrolling in remedial and career

planning classes. At Bill's prospective high school level classes also were offered that teach practical job skills. Bill was encouraged to explore these options and consider which classes he would enjoy.

A 504 Plan meeting was scheduled at the high school during the week school begins. This meeting allowed for a teacher from the charter school to attend and provide insight as to necessary accommodations for Bill at the high school. Bill's father was invited to the meeting in order to gain a better understanding of what would be needed for his son to achieve academically. Bill's prospective teachers for the fall semester also would attend this meeting, which would ensure that Bill was receiving all necessary accommodations. If it were found that more assistance were needed than could be provided with a 504 Plan, the school would be aware of this early enough in the semester to handle it accordingly.

Because many of the risk and protective factors in the lives of Matt and John were the same and they would remain at the charter school for another year, their programs were similar. The guidance counselor at the charter school was encouraged to implement a social skills training group that included John, Matt, and three age peers. Taught appropriately, social skills training programs have been shown to encourage pro-social behaviors, increase self-esteem, self-control, and psychopathology, and decrease aggressive and withdrawn behaviors (Sim, Whiteside, Dittner, & Mellon, 2006). The director of the charter school funded the purchase of literature and programming guides for this training program.

A study conducted by Fredricks and Eccles (2005) found that students who participated in extracurricular activities had better academic, psychological, and

behavioral outcomes than those who did not. Because of this, the director of the charter school agreed to sit down with John and Matt separately and review all of the extracurricular activities offered by the school and strongly encourage each student to participate in an activity. This would provide them with a structured setting in order to socialize with other peers that share a common interest. Additionally, the director of the charter school distributed literature about community organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America and the YMCA to each student to share with his parents.

Lastly, teaching John and Matt relaxation strategies in regards to social and academic situations could strongly benefit them. A study by Margolis (1990) showed that relaxation training reduced impulsivity, anxiety, hyperactivity, emotional lability, and distractibility in adolescents. Strategies such as controlled breathing were shown to be very effective. Furthermore, such training increased positive self-concept, classroom behavior, and academic success. John and Matt were scheduled to have the same homeroom teacher for the following year. This teacher volunteered to incorporate the learning of relaxation strategies into her class. She suggested this teaching start at the beginning of the year and carry on every morning. The purpose of this training was to provide means by which students could calm down and focus before learning started. In addition, the students would be taught to incorporate these techniques throughout the day into all aspects of school.

Limitations

One limitation of the current study is the lack of a longitudinal perspective on the effectiveness of planned program for each student participant. In addition, long-term outcomes of the students who received the interventions have not been examined.

Another limitation is the small number of participants in the study. Application of this model of promoting resiliency to other students may yield different results and require different interventions. Further, the specific cultural and racial context of this study limits its application to many other settings. That is, the needs addressed by these interventions may not effectively target the needs of students in other school settings, such as traditional urban public schools. Because of the small class size at the charter school that was the site of this study allowed students to more easily form closer relationships to the teachers and staff. This most likely contributed to their school success and the protective factors in their lives. This differs from traditional, urban public schools because they typically serve more students and have a larger staff.

Future Research

There are numerous possibilities for future research in this area. In the past, the charter school attempted to intervene in the lives of those students they deemed “at risk”. However, according to the charter school director, the interventions used were not research based. One area that could be researched would be to compare those students who received interventions that were not research based to students that received research-based interventions. Another research direction could be examining the types of behaviors the students exhibited prior to and after the intervention. In addition, the resiliency of all students at the charter school could be measured to determine if any trends or patterns of risk and/or protective factors exist to this unique subset of the population.

Implications for Charter Schools

The student participants in this study live in a small, rural community and do not attend a traditional public school. Therefore, a program that utilizes the skills and talents of the members of the community could be developed that could better suit the needs of the school at large.

The charter school is located in a small community and residents of the community possess many unique assets. For instance, if a student were interested in a given profession, he or she could shadow a community member that engaged in that profession. Or, if a student possessed a particular background, such as Bill's that was stated to be "at risk", if another member of the community came from a similar background, they could help mentor Bill and teach him lessons that he or she had learned to help him or her overcome similar challenges. A community is able to pool resources for children, such as community extracurricular activities and scholarships for education.

To increase the overall resiliency of students at the charter school, training on resiliency, risk, and protective factors could be conducted. Evidence-based research from journals and through governmental websites online is available for free and can be easily accessed on various subjects related to resiliency. Also, the community could utilize the resources of colleges and universities in the area. The staff and administration could recruit members of these institutions to train members of the staff and faculty. This would help members of the staff and faculty of the charter school to be aware of both current and potential problems students face and what could be done to help them address these problems. Also recommended are regularly scheduled staff meetings to discuss each student, his or her needs, and how the school can best meet these needs.

Though teachers were found to be accurate reporters of a student's behavior and work production at school, many of the comments made by the teachers at the charter school suggested that they did not have proper insight into the resiliency of the students. For instance, with Matt, the teachers simply believed that he had recovered emotionally from the death of his father and carried around the stuffed animal for attention-seeking purposes. However, the teachers never reported talking with Matt about this tragedy or utilizing the school counselor. It appeared that teachers often made assumptions based on physical appearance and quality of work. For instance, with Bill, teachers reported that he was unmotivated and did not care because of his attitude and work production. However, it is very likely that Bill was unable to produce grade-level work. It is important to make teachers aware of the fact that basing an assessment of a student's resiliency solely on surface-level information often is inaccurate and unfair. One approach to increasing teachers' awareness of the value of evidence-based assessment of the factors that comprise resiliency would be to establish a procedure in which the homeroom teacher becomes the mentor each student in his or her homeroom class. The mentor could meet individually with his or her students weekly, biweekly, or even monthly in order to gain insight into the resiliency of each student.

Practicing School Psychology with an Ecological View

Regarding to the practice of school psychology, the results of this study suggest it is very important to use caution before making judgments. Judgments should be based on a broad range of evidence from various sources regarding a student. Often, students possess many different risk factors and protective that could lie beneath the surface. Even though a student may have challenges and obstacles in his or her life, with time,

patience, and care, a student can learn to allow another person into his or her own life. When one understands a student from an ecological view, one is better able to meet a student's needs on many different levels: physical, social, academic, and emotional.

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Appendix A

Student Assent Form

Dear Students:

As a graduate student in the School Psychology Department at Western Carolina University, I am conducting a study that involves gathering information from students through interviews, observations, and a questionnaire. The purposes of this project is to describe how well you handle or cope with difficult situations in life and build a model to help you to become happier and more successful students. I would like your help in completing this study.

Students are a very helpful in identifying issues and concerns that have to do with learning, behavior, and life at school. You can provide useful suggestions for improving the school and the way you learn. I would like to observe you in the classroom and ask you some questions about school in an interview. I also would like for you to complete a questionnaire in order to learn more about your life and how you handle different situations. These interviews, observations, and this questionnaire will be kept confidential.

I will follow these procedures when working with you:

- I will not use your name or any personal identifying information in any written or oral reports of the interviews, observations, or questionnaire.
- Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the project at any time.
- You may choose not to participate and there will be no consequence for you if you make this choice.
- Audiotapes will be destroyed at the end of this study.

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As a graduate student in the School Psychology Department at Western Carolina University, I am conducting a study that involves, in part, gathering information from students and parents through interviews, observations, and a questionnaire. The purposes of this project is to describe the resiliency of a small number of selected students and develop a model to increase their resiliency, thus making them more successful at school. I would like your help and your child's help in completing this study.

Parents and students are valuable resources for identifying issues and concerns regarding learning, behavior, and life at school, and they can provide useful suggestions for improving the educational environment. I would like to interview you and your child separately and record these interviews on audiotape. I will only need one short interview with you, and I may interview your child more than once. I also will perform a series of classroom observations at school. In addition, your child will complete a questionnaire about their life at is relates to their ability to handle difficult situations.

I will adhere to the following procedures when working with you and your child:

- I will use neither you or your child's name nor any personal identifying information in any written or oral reports of the interviews or questionnaire.
- Your's and your child's participation is voluntary and either of you may withdraw from the project at any time.
- You and your child may choose not to participate and there will be no consequence for either of you if you make this choice.
- Audiotapes will be destroyed at the end of this study.

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Dear Teacher:

As a graduate student in the School Psychology Department at Western Carolina University, I am conducting a study that involves, in part, gathering information from teachers through interviews. The purposes of this project are to describe the resiliency of a small number of selected students and develop a model to increase their resiliency, thus making them more successful at school. I would like your participation in completing this study.

Teachers are valuable resources for identifying issues and concerns regarding learning, behavior, and life at school, and they can provide useful suggestions for improving the educational environment. I would like to interview teachers who are willing to participate in the study and record their interviews on audiotape. I will only need one or two short interviews with you, and they may be done in a group format. These interviews will be kept confidential. I would also like to perform a series of classroom observations in order to gain a deeper insight into the behavior of these selected students at school.

I will adhere to the following procedures when working with you and your child:

- I will use neither your name nor any personal identifying information in any written or oral reports of the interviews or questionnaire.
- Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the project at any time.

Appendix D

Sarah

- Peer Mediation Program
 - Sarah should participate in a leadership role on a peer mediation program. This would teach her proper conflict-resolution and problem-solving strategies to use by peers in a structured environment. This program would also allow her to become more active in school and participate in an extracurricular activity on the school's campus. The skills she learns by being a peer mediator would hopefully transfer into her own life, teaching her successful ways to handle peer conflict.
- Mentoring Program
 - Sarah should be encouraged to become a mentor. It was reported that coaching the community soccer team was very helpful for her. By acting as a mentor, she could help a student academically and socially. She could provide leadership and increase her own self-esteem. By talking through problem-solving strategies, particularly for social issues, she may be able to broaden her thinking on way to increase her own problem-solving skills.
- Small Class Size

- Because of the positive experience at the charter school, Sarah would benefit from being placed in as small of a class as is possible. She greatly benefited from the small environment academically while at the charter school. It allowed her to know her teachers and seek academic guidance when necessary.

Appendix E

Bill

- Mentoring Program
 - Bill should be encouraged to participate in a community mentoring program. By being a mentee, he would be exposed to a positive role model that could encourage Bill and guide him in making good decisions. This mentor would be available to help Bill during difficult times, and support him. Because Bill received no support for grades at home, the mentor could offer rewards for Bill for good grades, and help him study to achieve these goals. Also, by having structured activity time, it would allow for less suspicion in regards to Bill's potential drug use.
- School Tutoring
 - Bill should be encouraged to participate in the high school's free after-school tutoring program. A teacher from each subject area of each grade stays after school to offer homework and study assistance to students. This would allow him an opportunity to get to know his teachers and to get academic assistance in a more individualized setting, similar to what he received at the charter school.
- Remedial Classes/Career Planning over Summer

- Bill should be encouraged to participate in remedial classes over the summer, especially in core subject areas such as reading and math. This would allow him to gain more knowledge and help him move closer to grade level in these areas. Remediation over the summer, as well as participating in classes, would allow him a structured activity as well. Career planning classes would be important. Bill did not have any aspirations for his future. By participating in free career planning classes at the high school, he could learn about different career options. This could help encourage him to do better academically and decrease the chances of him dropping out.
- 504 Review Meeting
 - A 504 Review meeting should be held at the high school shortly after school begins. Bill and his father should be invited to attend, as well as any available teacher from the charter school. It is important to ensure that Bill has appropriate accommodations and that his needs do not extend beyond that of a 504.

Appendix F

John & Matt

- Social Skills Training
 - Many of the issues, both social and academic, for both students appeared to be related to poor social skills. John and Matt should be encouraged to participate in the school counselor's social skills training program. This would help them with conflict resolution and appropriate ways to approach, interact, and converse with peers. Also, by being in a group, it would allow John and Matt to know they were not the only students having this type of difficulty.
- Extracurricular Activity
 - John and Matt should be encouraged to participate in a school extracurricular activity. Clubs and sports teams are both available at the school. Their parents should receive information about these programs and participate in encouraging each student to join. If necessary, a rewards program can be established to encourage their participation, such as a prize for each session attended given from the school or teacher's "treasure chest".
- Relaxation Strategies

- John and Matt have both experienced difficulty with calming down and focusing. Because they will have the same homeroom teacher, these breathing and mindfulness strategies can be incorporated into the class. This will teach them appropriate strategies to use when they find themselves losing control and losing focus.