

Motivational Intervention: Dropout Prevention

We live in a time of great economic and life challenges. The daily life challenges that we are exposed to also impact our children. Children are exposed to violence in the media, at school, and unfortunately in our own neighborhoods. Children are presented with pressures by local gangs, earlier exposure to drugs and alcohol, as well as other at-risk behaviors. These at-risk behaviors, if left unchecked contribute to dropping out of school. “When more than one million students a year drop out of high school, it’s more than a problem, it’s a catastrophe” (Colin Powell). The awareness of this reality affords each of us a choice. We can either; a) turn a blind eye and do nothing, or b) address the risk factors by teaching healthy decision-making skills, and utilizing prevention interventions to empower our children.

The national high school graduation rates vary depending upon the year, the state, gender and ethnicity. Across the country, of the high school students that dropout, the vast majority of them (35%) dropout during their Freshman year (Swanson, Editorial Research Center, 2006). Females graduate at a higher rate than males yet when we look at the numbers, we can better understand when we should intervene and which groups need the most programs. In 2003-2004, the graduation rates were; boys (66%) and girls (74%). However; when we look closer, and separate out the ethnic groups we see a far scarier picture. Of the boys; Asian males graduated at 77%, Caucasian at 72%, Hispanic at 52%, African American at 46%, and American Indian at 45% (EPE Research Center, 2007). Yes, in some groups, the graduation rate is 1 out of 2. We know what factors to look for that identify at-risk children as early as their Junior High/Middle School years and even earlier.

Over the past several years, we have found that it is far more cost-effective to deal with an issue before it becomes a problem. The employment rate for a Hispanic female who dropped out of high school is 51%. The average annual earnings of an African American male without a high school diploma is \$13,500. If we help keep a child in school and graduate with a high school diploma, the benefits are equally impressive (e.g.; longer lives, healthier lives, more stable careers, less involvement with the criminal justice system, and a more productive member of society). If the students who dropped out of high school in 2007 (1.2 million) had graduated, the nation’s economy would have benefited from an additional \$329,000,000,000 in income over their lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

Dropout prevention can be addressed at many different points along the life continuum of children. Primary dropout prevention provides broad-based universal initiatives that would proactively address factors that will strengthen the character and decision-making, foster more self-assured youth, and develop more resilient leaders of tomorrow. Secondary dropout prevention would work with youth identified as effected or exposed to at-risk factors. Lastly, we would work with youth that have made choices which have left them in need of more intensive interventions.

This program is a new, state-of-the-art, 21st century, computer-based, interactive, truly dynamic, prevention curriculum called, “Motivational Intervention: Dropout Prevention”. Based on Best Practice Models from Harvard, Emory, Duke, and the Secret Service, (to name a few), this 16 CD-ROM program addresses; Anti-Gang, Anti-Retail Theft, Anti-Bullying, Decision-Making, Preventing Sexual Harassment and Dating Violence, Healthy Nutrition, Abstinence, ADHD, Preventing Gambling, SAT Prep, and Responsible Drinking. Each CD-ROM is a one hour, topic focused prevention program which could be used by a teacher or group leader with children in schools, at after school activity sites, in faith-based initiatives, or even by parents at home. The positive impact on children completing the program has been impressive with a) positive changes in behavior, b) thinking about consequences before acting, c) better academic performance, d) lower dropout rates, e) lower criminal activity, and f) greater retention rates of information.

For more information about Motivational Intervention: Stop and Think go to www.motint.org.