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Quantitative Indicators

Kee in mind that what works is not a one-size-fits-all concept. It is more a matter of what works for what student or category of student. At the program level, for example, in some urban locations racism and ethnicity may be major factors, especially as they impinge on gang rivalries. Such factors may be less problematic in rural locations.

At the individual level, a failing student expelled in Grade 7 for violence requires an intervention different from a highly intelligent Grade 12 student expelled for drug trafficking, whose income is more than the teacher's.

Evaluation criteria also need to reflect the particular circumstances of the program. For example, job placement or co-operative education would not be a reasonable indicator of success for a program with young or seriously disruptive students. Similarly, a program with a large percentage of homeless youth would not include parental involvement.

The criteria for evaluation need to be clear to staff from the outset, including information on what records will be reviewed and the schedule for evaluation.

The evaluation plan needs to consider student factors (such as age, ability level, and behaviors of concern) as well as program factors (such as duration, instructional strategies, intervention methods and such auxiliary services as family support or psychological treatment). If these factors can be reliably linked with measurable outcomes, the process may yield valuable information about what works for which students.

Indicators of program effectiveness are many and complex. A few straightforward quantifiable indicators include:

- student attendance
- punctuality
- learning gains (may be measured by standardized instruments)
- credits earned or grades completed
- the number and severity of violent incidents
- the number and severity of disciplinary interventions
- the degree of parental involvement
- the number of students who return to regular school
- the number of students who gain full- or part-time employment
- drop out and recidivism rates during post-program follow-up.