

Student Personality Profiles and Success
in a Virtual High School for At-Risk Students

Authors: Dr. Marcella L. Kysilka
 Professor
 Educational Studies
 College of Education
 University of Central Florida
 Orlando, FL 32816-1250
 kysilka@mail.ucf.edu

 Mr. Mark Geary
 Doctoral Student
 FlaRE Center
 College of Education
 University of Central Florida
 Orlando, FL 32816-1250
 mgeary@mail.ucf.edu

Student Personality Profiles and Success
at a Virtual High School for At-Risk Students

Background: Urban education is a major issue in education in the United States. Most of our city schools are under attack for their poor retention rates, graduation rates and high failure rates. As a result, many of our urban areas have attempted a variety of programs to improve education for urban youth. Cincinnati Virtual High School is a modified on-line high school designed to accommodate the dropout or at-risk drop out student from the Cincinnati Public Schools. This is an alternative education program. The high school grew out of a summer program designed to get students positively involved with computer technology. CyberCamp was a highly successful program and was implemented as a pilot project in one of Cincinnati's public inner-city high school. After a two-year successful pilot project, the Cincinnati Public Schools established Cincinnati Virtual High School following the guidelines established through the piloted project.

Research Project: Cincinnati Virtual High School opened August 2001 with an initial enrollment of 150 students. Before the winter holidays, the school had over 500 students. Essential to understanding how this school functions, it was decided to establish a research agenda for the school. The researchers worked with the principal of the school to establish research priorities. The first priorities were to determine the personality profiles of the students attending the school and to follow their progress through the school program. The school curriculum is the standard curriculum of the Cincinnati Public Schools; however, the students have the opportunity to take the classes at their own speed. They may register for only one class or they may take two or three classes. Students can complete the classes as quickly as they desire. All classes are delivered via the web. However, since this is an inner city school, there is a physical facility equipped with computers, with teachers available for consultation. The physical facility is open Monday-Thursday 8-8 and Fridays 8-4. Students are free to come and go as they please.

This particular research focused on:

1. What are the personality profiles of the students attending Cincinnati Virtual High School? Personality profiles are measured by the Long-Dziuban Reactive Behavior Inventory.

2. What are the personality profiles of the students who are successfully completing the courses at Cincinnati Virtual High School? Success is determined by the students passing the district's common examination for each course.
3. What are the personality profiles of the students who have received their high school diploma by attending Cincinnati Virtual High School?
4. What is the relationship between the personality profiles of the students and their success at Cincinnati Virtual High School?

Previous research (Dziuban, 1996; Chin-on, 2000) using the Long-Dziuban Reactive Behavior Inventory has indicated that in elementary schools, students are nearly equally distributed across the 4 identified profiles of the Long-Dziuban Reactive Behavior Inventory: Aggressive-Dependent; Aggressive-Independent; Passive-Dependent; Passive-Independent. Additional research at the high school level (Cioffi, 1996; Junkins, 2000), has indicated that Aggressive-Dependent students are the ones most likely to be placed in the higher academic courses, such as AP classes, advanced or gifted classes, while the other personality types are placed in regular or remedial classes. Research (Dziuban, 1996; Junkins, 2000) has shown that Aggressive-Independents and Passive-Independents have more behavioral problems in traditional schools. Obviously, there is a relationship between personality types and "success" in school. Consequently, the question must be asked about the personality profiles of school dropouts.

This study of dropouts and students at -risk of dropping out of Cincinnati Public High Schools will shed some light on that question. Also the research will help us to understand "what might work" for these students. If the data collected indicates that the more individualized, modified on-line instruction for students at Cincinnati Virtual High School helps them to achieve success, and if that success is correlated with their personality types, than perhaps we can find solutions within the traditional public schools to keep students from dropping out of the system.

Data Collection: Students are filling out the personality profiles upon registering at the school. The school maintains open registration; consequently students are registering at the school on a weekly bases. Students take course examinations upon completing the courses. The principal of the school is making that data available. The principal is also providing the data for those students who have and are completing graduation requirements. Since students progress at their own speed, data is constantly available. Data collection covers the period from August 2001-December 2002. Preliminary data collected on 100 students indicates that - two thirds of the students attending Cincinnati Virtual High School are Aggressive students; half of whom are Aggressive Independents. Half of the students attending Cincinnati Virtual High School are Independent students. Further analyses are in progress.