

The Characteristics of Dropouts in Shelburne County

A thesis written in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Degree of Masters
of Arts in Education

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The Rationale for This Study

This study arises from a survey conducted by the Nova Scotia Department of Education during the month of May, 1984. The survey was based on observations and assessments made during the month in addition to other information and data made available by the schools and staff.

Section 9.6 of the survey dealt specifically with retention rates in the schools. The students who were not retained were the dropouts. The grade 7 to 12 retention rate was determined by comparing the number of grade 12 students enrolled with the number of grade 7 students enrolled five years previously. The survey revealed a rather low retention rate for the county in relation to that of the province. This study is an attempt to determine some of the characteristics which may lead students to drop out of school before completing the requirements for the high school diploma.

History of the Problem

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Dropping out of school has not always been viewed as a problem. Between the turn of the century and the Second World War, leaving school before graduation was the norm, and it did not generate significant negative consequences. At the turn of the century, for example, only 11 percent of all 14 to 17 years olds were enrolled in high school in the United States (Rumberger, 1981) and 10 percent of those who made it to high school graduated (Hunt & Clawson, 1975). Not only did most young people leave school without a high school diploma, but a high school education was not required by law, was not economically feasible for most, was not provided for in school budgets, and was not required for access to most jobs. Leaving school without a diploma did not limit options. Except for social reformers, who thought all social problems would be solved if all people were educated, more education was not seen as necessary, and leaving school without a diploma was not perceived to be the source of social or community problems.

Between 1900 and the Second World War, economic changes made it possible for more youths to spend more time in school. School participation, school budgets, the legal requirements for participation and the school's capacity for them all increased enrollments (Tyack, 1976). By 1950, about 68 percent of the seventeen year olds were enrolled in

school in United States. (Rumberger, 1981). While participation increased during this period and concern for universal participation increased, options for adult roles were not closed by failure to obtain a high school diploma.

The dropout issue gained increased significance as a social problem in the post-Second World War period, when technological changes affected employment options and training requirements (Schreiber, 1967). As a result, unskilled jobs became scarce so that the young person leaving school without a diploma no longer had easy access to employment. Furthermore, more technical jobs required more skilled workers which meant that education affected productivity. This change increased the importance of education as a basis for employment. Finally, high school employment and a competitive job situation made credentials such as diplomas more important as a basis for hiring decisions.

Slowly, during the second half of this century, the school and school competition have taken on a new significance in society, in large part due to changes in the economy. The end result of these changes is that the high school has taken a new role. The role is that the high school has been given the mandate to provide youths with the credentials and skills necessary for participation in occupational and other social roles. The high school diploma is

the symbol of completion of a major rite of passage into adulthood. Adults view the school as a necessary step in the conventional route to upward mobility. It is seen as the institution through which youth must pass in order to make the transition to a satisfying and productive adulthood (Wehlage, Stone & Kliebard, 1980).

This relatively new role of high school and significance of the diploma as a credential for access to adult roles means that the person's decision to leave school without a diploma is likely to lead to problems. These problems affect the individual and have social implications.

An irony of the situation is that in contrast with the first half of the century, when most young people did not stay in school because they could not afford to, now young people cannot afford to leave school. It is this change that has given the decision to leave school without a diploma its identity as a serious problem today, despite a vast increase in school retention since the turn of the century.

Society

In our culture, high school dropouts represent individuals who challenge the dominant belief that education leads to labor market success--employment and income guarantees. Many of these adolescents have been pushed out of school, some have opted out; all are regarded as failures. Education critics have described these victims as helpless, trouble makers, welfare recipients or delinquents.

Friedenberg (1967) defined the dropout as a victim of some alien middle class. Supporting this belief, Voss et al. (1966) further maintain that dropping out is a response to status deprivation experiences by lower class youths when competing with middle class adolescents under circumstances favouring the latter. Whereas the middle class emphasis is on order and discipline, the lower class emphasis is on avoidance of trouble or involvement with authorities, development of physical prowess, skill in duping others, the search for excitement, and a desire for independence from external controls. Thus, while socialization in the middle class families prepares youth to compete successfully in school, lower class children are not prepared to conform to the academic and informal requirements of the school. The lower class child, not prepared to be studious, obedient and docile, comes into conflict with the middle-class teacher.

His language, poor social adjustment and cult of immediacy impair his/her chance of success.

Greene (1966) looked at the problem in a slightly different context. Because all our youth cannot be absorbed in the labour force, industry needs some criterion whereby some youths can be inducted and others not. Because businessmen and industry cannot cope with the issue, they throw it back to the schools and try to make it a problem in that particular institution. The job related problems include the ability to locate a job, possibilities for advancement, immediate and long-term earnings, and job satisfaction. In each case, the dropout has fewer positive outcomes than the peer who completes school. Consequently, the dropouts tend to have more problems and fewer opportunities for healthy and productive lives than their peers. Finally, many dropouts experience a stigma and admit to a nagging sense of failure--failure to stay in school the way most kids do (Olsen et al., 1982).

There are a number of costs to society that are also frequently tabulated or noted as examples of why leaving school is a problem. Lost earnings, reduced productivity, lost government revenues, and increased public costs from welfare, crime and health problems are common social costs associated with youths who drop out. The dropout who has fewer options for meaningful economic participation also

tends to have a higher incidence of alienation, suffer certain negative psychological effects, is less politically involved, and is less likely to be upwardly mobile.

The limitations for a meaningful and productive life that seem to be associated with leaving school without a diploma means that this is an issue for those who care about the well-being of the individual as well as society. It means that the problem is often viewed as a social problem (Schreiber, 1967) and receives attention from child advocates, education reformers, economists, and those involved in juvenile justice, youth employment, social services, welfare, and economic development.

The Search for Predictors

Many tables and scales have been developed to avert dropping out. Cervantes (1965) identified twenty characteristics commonly found among youths who are potential or actual dropouts. In his table, he placed the characteristics under four broad headings: school, family, peers and psychological. Under "school" he listed characteristics such as: two years behind in reading or arithmetic at seventh grade level, failure of one or more school years, irregular attendance, no participation in extra-curricular activities, and a frequent change of schools. Under "family" the following characteristics are noted: more children than parents can control; education of parents at eighth grade level, and few family friends. Characteristics noted under "peers" were: friends not approved by parents, friends not school oriented, and friends much older or much younger. Finally as "psychological" characteristics were such things as weak self-image and resentful of all authority.

Lloyd (1974, 1976) conducted two studies in Sydney, Australia to determine at what period in school potential dropouts begin to experience difficulties. The first study revealed that many symptoms of a dropout occurred as early as grade six. In the second study, Lloyd found that dropout characteristics showed as early as grade three. These findings lead to a better understanding of the failure process.

It is disheartening as a teacher to conclude that the paths to educational success and failure have become so divergent during the first three school years.

The Search of Predictors--sex, race, age and time

Who drops out?

In the United States over a five year period from 1967 to 1971, it was found that 52 percent of the dropouts were males (Young, 1971). Canadian studies also revealed that males have the highest dropout rate. In New Brunswick, 59 percent of the dropouts were males (Drummie, 1966). Young and Reich (1975) found a 56 percent dropout rate among males in Toronto, Ontario. For the province of Ontario, Watson (1976) found there was a dropout rate of 57.6 percent among males.

In 1979, the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare added a second dimension of the dropout in addition to sex, that of race. The report looked at three different races and found the following results.

1. Of all the whites who attended school:
 - a) 13.9 percent were male dropouts
 - b) 12.8 percent were female dropouts
2. Of all the Blacks who attended school:
 - a) 19.4 percent were male dropouts
 - b) 20.0 percent were female dropouts

3. Of all the Hispanics who attended school:

- a) 31.5 percent were male dropouts
- b) 34.2 percent were female dropouts

In 1985, a report (Phi Delta Kappan, 1985) found that only 50 percent of Hispanics completed school in 1983, whereas 76 percent of the whites and 59 percent of the Blacks went on to graduate,

A Canadian study in New Brunswick (Drummie, 1965) found that 57 percent of the dropouts were English and 43 percent were French.

The mean dropout age was sixteen for students in a U.S. rural midwest town (Fuller & Friedrich, 1972). The province of Ontario reported that 72.4 percent of their dropouts for 1974-75 were 16 years of age or under (Watson, 1976). Dropouts between the ages of 17 and 18 accounted for 25.3 percent and only 2.3 percent of the dropouts were 19 years of age or older.

At what grade level does dropping out occur?

In an Ontario study of high school dropouts, 44.8 percent of the dropouts were in grade eleven, 36.8 percent of the dropouts were in grade twelve, and 18.4 percent of the dropouts were in grade twelve, and 18.4 percent of the dropouts were in grade thirteen (Watson, 1976). Young and Reich (1975) found that 18 percent of the grade nine students dropped out, 26 percent of the grade ten, eleven and twelve

students dropped out while grade thirteen had a 20 percent dropout rate in Toronto public schools. In New Brunswick Drummie (1965) reported a 60 percent dropout rate in grades 8, 9 and 10.

When do students drop out?

Young and Reich (1975) reported that students dropped out during the 1973-74 school year in the following manner:

| <u>Time</u> | <u>Dropout Rate</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| September-October | 31% |
| November-December | 12% |
| January-February | 15% |
| March-June | 16% |
| Summer | 26% |

In a New Brunswick dropout study (Drummie, 1965), it was found that students dropped out in the following manner by month:

| <u>Time</u> | <u>Dropout Rate</u> |
|-------------|---------------------|
| September | 24% |
| October | 10% |
| November | 14% |
| December | 7% |
| January | 8% |
| February | 7% |
| March | 7% |
| April | 13% |
| May | 8% |
| June | 2% |

It was assumed that for this study no dropping out took place over the summer.

Family Background

Research reveals that family background has a great deal to do with whether or not a youth will drop out of high school. A number of dropout studies (Varner, 1967; Orshansky, 1966; Hathaway, 1969; Tseng, 1972) support this view. The most important family background is that of socioeconomic level (Bachman, 1972). The socioeconomic level of the family includes such factors as the father's occupational status, the father and mother's educational level, and the general environment prevalent in the home. In 1981, the labour force in Shelburne County was made up of the following sectors (Statistics Canada, 1981):

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Fishing and fish processing | 44.5% |
| 2. Business and trade | 35.2% |
| 3. Construction | 4.3% |
| 4. Transportation and communication | 3.4% |
| 5. Others | 13.6% |

Since a major part of the labour force in Shelburne County is employed in the fishing industry, there is a high degree of seasonal employment. Of a total work force of 7100, there was a 16.2% unemployment rate among females and a 6.6% unemployment rate for males for 1980. Very closely related to the socioeconomic level is the prevailing attitudes and behaviour related to school.

It was found that the higher socioeconomic level of a family, the more likely a child would enter college and the less likely of dropping out of high school.

Another factor related to family background is the size of the family. Wilson (1966) found that the larger the family, the higher the chances of dropping out. Wilson also noted that the sibling in the middle was the more frequent to drop out.

Also, with respect to family size in Shelburne County, Statistics Canada (1981) found that 22.7% of the families have one child, 24.4% have two children, 10.6% have three children, 3.8% have four children, while 1.5% of the families have more than four children.

Broken homes are another family background factor that contributes to drop out. When the broken homes are a result of divorce or separation, dropping occurs roughly twice as often. Also, the better the relations with the parent, the less likely of there being dropouts. Getting along with parents increases self-esteem, self-concept of school ability with positive attitudes toward school and high feelings of personal efficacy.

Hoch (1965) found that the parents of dropouts solved their problems by withdrawing from school. Thus, having to work long hours at a variety of odd jobs, they had neither the time nor could they provide the model to encourage way-

ward youths to remain in school. Very often the pupil's parents were indifferent to their decision to leave school. This indifference was frequently expressed through their own doubts concerning the purpose and value of education, or their attitude toward getting ahead, which those parents did not relate to the potential advancement gained through education, but rather to the immediate financial return achieved by holding down a job.

The significant influence of family background suggests that the tendency to drop out begins early in a student's life (Rumberger, 1983). Rumberger also found that the more highly educated the parents are, the better role model they provide for influencing their children's aspirations for more schooling. The better educated parents also spend more time with their children, increasing their academic ability.

Cervantes (1965) went so far as to say that a dropout is the product of an inadequate family, whereas the graduate is the product of an adequate family. The nuclear family served as a sort of social filter which admitted to their children only healthy educational and achievement aspirations. This family also provided a guide to help the children select compatibles peers; peers who also have healthy attitudes toward school and education.

Failure

It has already been established that if a student is experiencing difficulty in reading, then any aspect of the curriculum in print will pose a problem. The problem is that the student who has difficulty reading will score low grades. Grades below 50 percent are considered failing. Low marks and having to repeat a grade are highly significant predictors of quitting school. Schreiber (1967) found that a poor student who failed either of the first two grades had only a 20 percent chance of graduating. He also found that failure in the eighth or ninth grade was critical in the student's decision to drop out. Supporting the significance of grade failure in dropping out, Kaplan and Luck (1977) reported the results of a Maryland study which determined that half of the school dropouts had been held back at least once. Curley (1971) found that dropouts are held back five times more often than graduates. This correlation between grade retention and dropping out illustrates the extensive damage of early failure to the poor or underachieving student.

In part, the dropout's poor academic performance is due to learning disabilities in the areas of math, spelling and reading as already cited. Another major problem is the inability to memorize and retain information (Brown & Peterson, 1969). Unless action is taken to minimize these

weaknesses, these children are almost bound to become failures, and, consequently, dropouts. Unfortunately, teachers, often compound the problem by having unrealistically high expectations for these disadvantaged pupils; when these youngsters are unable to meet their teachers' standards, their self images as failures only augment. To worsen matters, potential dropouts are typically unable to find much-needed companionship among their teachers. In a study (Carvantes, 1965) only 6 percent of the dropouts had any friends among the school faculty.

The impact of failure on the middle-class child may not be as dramatic as failure for the lower class child (Schreiber, 1967). With the middle-class child, there are more resources available to help the child cope with failure. For the lower class child, school failure may result in a less personal upset or disturbance but may be more final. Such failure may eventually result in alienating the child from school.

The parents may or may not be opposed to the specific act involved in the child's leaving school prematurely (Deutsch, 1967). They may have shared with the child their own personal affect regarding their experience with social institutions. Particularly the minority group lower class parent is likely to explain, rationalize, and attribute job and economic frustration, both correctly and incorrectly, to

the operation of impersonal societal institutions. This negative effect can rapidly and perhaps inadvertently be generalized to the whole school learning process.

More recently (Laderrière, 1984) found three factors that attributed to school failure. The first factor is an individual dimension which is related to personal history. The second factor is a sociological dimension being a social mechanism determining status, roles, and self representation. Finally, the third and final factor is the institutional or local dimension since the school, individual relations formed in it, and the concrete practices it encompasses, determine the extent of difficulties and failure.

In a study of dropouts in Ontario it was found that dropouts achieved the following grades in the 1974-75 academic year (Watson, 1976):

| <u>Grade</u> | <u>Percent of Students</u> |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| A | 1.7 |
| B | 9.0 |
| C | 28.5 |
| D | 33.0 |
| F | 27.8 |

Dropouts in the U.S. midwest rural town had grades in the C+ range (Fuller & Friedrich, 1972). However Penty (1960) noted that low and failing grades were noticed in the

first, second and eight or ninth grade level. Lichter (1962) noted that dropouts began falling behind between the fourth and eighth grades of school.

Extracurricular Activities

Considering the many trials and tribulations that potential dropouts encounter at school, it comes as no surprise that the majority of these individuals either enjoy only the extracurricular aspect of school or enjoy nothing about it at all.

Educators have traced the origin of extracurricular activity in the school to the ancient civilization of Greece. Even though these activities existed in the school, their importance in relation to the core curriculum was not fully realized until the turn of the twentieth century.

The foundation for school-promoted and supervised extracurricular activity had its roots in the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education issued by a special committee of the National Education Association in 1918. The principles had two major themes:

1. the promotion of individual talents developed by specialized training through differentiated curricula;
2. the development of a sense of national unity that gave students common ideas, common ideals, and common modes of thought, feeling and action that made for cooperational, social cohesion, and solidarity.

The response to these proposals was substantial. Between 1925 and 1940, some forty books were published on

extracurricular activities in the secondary schools (McKown, 1951). The rationale that John Dewey gave for extracurricular activities was that the school should be similar to a community. Certainly the philosophy of learning by doing was in keeping with the advocates of extracurricular activities.

Buser, Long and Tweedy (1975) attempted to answer the who, what, why, and why not's of students participation in extracurricular activities. Their major findings supported earlier research (Burgon, 1967; Goller, 1967; Jones, 1967) that reported the amount of student participation is not very high. Students who are already succeeding in the academic courses are those who participate in student activities, and students who participate do so mostly for personal reasons more than for reasons of civic and social responsibility. Hanks and Eckland (1967) found that not only does participation in various extracurricular activities serve as a socially integrative function, but it also encourages higher levels of academic performance. More specifically, Fuller & Friedrich (1972) reported that 69 percent of the dropouts did not participate in school related extra curricular activities in a U.S. midwest rural town.

James Bell (1967) conducted a study comparing dropouts and non-dropouts with respect to school related extra-

curricular activities. The study was carried out in a Kansas State high school. The results also supported other studies which showed that lack of participation in school activities is a significant characteristic of the dropout.

Findings (Baird, 1969; Kleinart, 1969; Buser, 1971) have confirmed that the larger the school, the more opportunity to belong to a large variety of student activities, but smaller schools have offered more opportunity for students to participate because of small student/activity ratios.

In a more recent study, where extracurricular activities were referred to as a quasicurriculum, Cohen (1981) cited three values of activities:

1. the combination of theory and practice is essential to comprehension and competent use of knowledge;
2. the application of skills to solve problems that arise in the larger world outside the classroom, along with the reality test implicit in public exposure;
3. provides an opportunity for the exhibitionism of youth to find creative channels.

She also found that involvement in the quasicurriculum motivated students to work harder at the formal curriculum because it was seen as a road to ego strength and gratification. Uninvolvement in the classroom was usually characterized by the absence of grading.

The above research findings have addressed school extra-curricular programs in the high schools. It is equally important to have these programs in the intermediate grades as well (Spady, 1971; Erickson, 1977). It was found that the extracurriculum, having a down-to-earth, here and now quality featuring activities often consequential to both student and adult communities, and demanding attributes not essential to classroom function, may provide a superior learning environment, particularly for attitudes and skills needed in college and later occupational endeavours.

It seems reasonable that teachers should make continued efforts to involve more students in the activity programs. A meaningful experience in an activity of their own choice may make the difference between being a dropout or a high school graduate.

Intelligence

Theorists define intelligence as what is measured by an intelligence test. An intelligence test consists of questions which test-makers believe will yield an adequate sample of the subject's ability to deal with types of problems the test-makers consider indicative of intelligence. The score on an intelligence test is merely a quantified guess about how successful a child is--as compared to other children--in handling certain kinds of problems at a particular time. If a child is re-tested, even with the same questions, he/she is quite likely to get a different score. If the second test consists of entirely different questions, he/she is almost certain to get a different score.

Psychologists studying causes for dropout inevitably turn to the intelligence quotient (I.Q.) as a logical clue and are sometimes surprised by what they see. An early study (Voss, Wendling & Elliott, 1966) of seven communities scattered throughout the United States revealed that an I.Q. score of 85 is the point below which successful completion of most high school subjects is regarded by educational authorities as generally difficult. Students with I.Q. scores between 85 and 89 are usually slow learners, 90 to 109 represent the normal range, and scores of 110 or above is the level of ability required for college work. The test most frequently used was the Otis Mental Ability Group test.

The most obvious difference between the dropout and graduate lies in the proportion whose I.Q.'s are under 85, and hence lack the requisite ability to complete high school. Many of the dropouts have higher I.Q.'s than some of the high school graduates, and some of the dropouts have the intellectual capability to do college work. Delaney (1950) observed that only 46 percent of the dropouts he surveyed had average or above average intellectual ability.

However, a study (Evraiff, 1957) conducted in the cities of California and New York concluded that dropouts do not differ significantly in intelligence from those who remain in school. In this particular study, a comparison of 72 dropouts who were in continuation school and 72 students from regular high schools in Stockton, New York, and Fresno, California, were matched on age, sex, grade, scholastic aptitude, and paternal occupation. The results revealed no significant difference with regard to I.Q. However, the group of regular students was not representative of the student population, since these students were matched with the continuation students, in part, in terms of scholastic aptitude.

Somewhat different results were obtained in a study conducted in Detroit (Layton, 1952), where dropouts were compared with the norms of standard tests of native learning ability. According to the test, norms for the total of

student population, 20 percent are rated above average intelligence, 60 percent normal, and 20 percent below average intelligence. In comparison, only 9 percent of the dropouts were rated above average intelligence, while 67 percent were rated average, and 24 percent were rated below average intelligence.

A Canadian urban study of dropouts in two Montreal schools (Zamanzadeh & Prince, 1978) found that 17 percent of the dropouts had an I.Q. score of less than 91: 61 percent had a score between 91 and 110, and 22 percent had an I.Q. score over 111.

These contradictory findings on dropout I.Q. scores in urban areas in North America may stem partially from the use of different definitions of school dropouts. In addition, some of the discrepancies between these investigations presumably result from the use of different, though often unspecified, intelligence tests which have different norms.

In a rural study of high school dropouts (Fuller & Friedrich, 1972) of a U.S. midwest rural town, public school cumulative records were examined. From these files, a total of 50 school dropouts were identified. A matched control group of normal students were selected from a population of 200 students who had gone on to graduate from high school. It was found that the mean I.Q. for these dropouts was 95, which was significantly lower than the graduates who had an

I.Q. score of 109. Although these rural dropouts did not perform as well as the matched normals in the study, their group mean was within the normal I.Q. range. Thus, the intelligence finding of these rural dropouts showed that they were not retarded. Below is a summary of their findings.

Perhaps the most important factor to remember when discussing I.Q. is that although some studies indicate that there are differences between graduates and dropouts on this factor, most educators would agree the differences are not great enough to be considered a major factor responsible for the dropout. To substantiate this argument, Allen (1956) added that although there may be a difference in I.Q. between the dropouts and the graduates, there are relatively few students who are so low in intelligence who cannot profit from attending school.

| | I.Q. | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------|--------|--------------|
| | 85 and under | 85-89 | 90-109 | 110 and over |
| High School Graduates | 10% | 11% | 63% | 16% |
| Dropouts | 31% | 15% | 48% | 6% |

Reading Achievement

A more telling factor than I.Q. is school achievement, especially in the area of reading. Bledsoe (1959) found that dropouts from the ninth and tenth grade had a mean reading comprehension score of 7.9, while the rest of the ninth graders had a mean score of 8.9. In effect, dropouts were reading at a level of at least one grade below the average. By using The Iowa Silent Reading Test (Penty, 1960), a relationship between reading ability and withdrawal from school was found. More than three times as many poor readers as good readers dropped out of school. Even though reading test scores showed that many of the students were reading far below grade level, corresponding mental maturity scores pointed to the fact that these students had a potential for growth in reading.

Students who were poor readers gave reasons for leaving school such as, "I was discouraged", "I didn't like school too well," "I wanted to get married," or "I had to go to work." However, there were other reading-related reasons for dropping out: "I had difficulty in reading," "I couldn't remember what I read," or "I had trouble in getting the idea from my reading."

The reasons given above point to the influence which reading difficulty had in causing young people to decide to leave school when the difficulty caused them to fail sub-

jects, to receive low grades, and to feel that they were inadequate and not able to learn through reading.

However, there were poor readers who went on to graduate. These students were more highly motivated than the dropouts, received encouragement from the family, had an interest in other subjects and sports, received encouragement from teachers and counsellors and had a desire to be with other people their own age. These students were getting real satisfaction from school; they enjoyed the school dances, athletics and other extra-class activities.

To verify the above findings, it was found (Nachman et al., 1963) that 75 percent of the dropouts scored below the median of their level on a reading test and 53 percent were in the lowest quarter.

Recent research in reading has been devoted to the early intervention of preventing reading problems. Because reading disability is clearly familial (DeFries & Decker, 1982), family history may be used to improve risk estimates. The results of this experiment revealed that there is a considerable increase in the risk for a child to develop reading disability if a parent reports a difficulty in learning to read. Somewhat surprisingly, the sex of the parent reporting reading difficulties did not appear to be a factor in the increase of risk of a child.

Early identification of individuals at risk for reading disabilities is an important initial step toward reducing the trauma which can result from academic failure to undetected reading difficulties. However, referral for assistance in reading comes too late (Clay, 1979). When remedial help in reading is delayed until the third grade, the child has had more time to practice ineffective behavior and will have more to unlearn.

Alert kindergarten teachers or parents often see that a child may be at risk of failing to learn to read in the first grade (Hawkins, 1985). In this study, two boys in kindergarten who were likely to experience problems in learning to read were enrolled in a university-related summer reading program. The two students came daily for an hour during the five-week program. Both boys successfully completed the program and entered first grade knowing that they could learn to read. The key was that the parents were concerned and the school provided the appropriate program.

An Australian study (Freebody & Rust, 1985) identified important predictors of various aspects of the reading achievement of children at the end of the first year of formal schooling. This is evidence to conclude that to help youngsters in reading at the early stages of schooling appro-

priate remediation must be offered to help overcome the program.

Absenteeism

Educators will argue that attendance leads to success in school, and absenteeism leads to failure. James Coleman (1982) examined the relationship of attendance and achievement. He found a high degree of consistency in the results. Similarly, a study of elementary and junior high school attendance and reading achievement (Easton & Englehard, 1982) was made, and it was found that student absence rates were significantly related to both teacher--assigned reading grades and standardized test scores after control variables including previous achievements were removed. Also, Karweit (1976) found average daily attendance to be positively related to achievement. In a parallel study to that of Easton and Englehard; Kean, Summers and Raivetz (1979) found that pupil attendance and reading achievement test-score gains correlated positively in Philadelphia public schools. Logically, reading provides the foundation for all academic subjects and is crucial to school success, as already pointed out. The pupil who starts off missing school in the kindergarten and first grade is likely to continue the pattern. Poor attendance in this sense leads to failure.

When students were asked why they didn't attend school (Tyack, 1974, 1976) repeated grades, truancy and being older than their classmates were the most popular reasons. School absence is directly related to school failure. Galloway

(1980) reasoned that student absenteeism was viewed as a psychological problem where the absent youths experience school and peer phobia. He also noted that family and peer support for attendance was weak.

In the United States, absenteeism in some schools may reach 5 percent as with the case of Ohio schools in 1982-83 (Kaesler, 1984). Whereas in Canada, the rate of absenteeism in Ontario schools approached 20 percent while a rate of 10 percent was common in Montreal schools (Whitehead & Marshall, 1980). As we know, today there is compulsory attendance legislation in both countries. Friedenberg (1967) has pointed out two shortcomings of compulsory attendance. These laws are neither contractual nor licensing. Any youth between the ages of 6 and 16 must attend school. However, under the present legislation, there are no guarantees for compensation. The school may or may not benefit the child. It doesn't have to in order to earn the right to retain the pupil. In this case, a large proportion of dropouts are doing the best for themselves under these circumstances. Compulsory attendance creates another problem (Hunt & Clawson, 1975) in that the intent is to keep lower class students in school, and this means having unwanted or reluctant learners that may be discipline problems. These students may in fact erode the opportunities of students who want to learn.

The basic ingredient of learning is the availability of the learner. Encouraging pupil presence is the first step in any model for learning. This must be followed by an effective school program based on a well-managed classroom learning environment where the time-on-task is high and serious discipline problems low.

Feeder Schools

No literature was found with respect to feeder schools
and dropouts.

Solutions to the Problem

In dealing with the dropout problems, Cervantes (1965) felt that the community, the governments, business, labor, the schools, volunteers, and the family all could play very important roles. In the schools he felt that changes could be made in the curriculum to make it more adaptable to potential dropouts. More and better counselling should be provided to identify as early as possible the potential dropout. The teacher is seen as a major aid in curtailing dropouts. Sympathetic understanding and friendly advice from a teacher can help a child remain in school. Also a key to the success of any program to curtail dropout is the help and cooperation of the family. The family must be responsible in making sure that the child attends school regularly, visit the school, and spend meaningful time with the child.

In an effort to halt the rising dropout rate, New York State is requiring high schools to maintain a certain retention rate or lose their right to grant a diploma (Maurer, 1982). In many instances, students drop out because there is little or no provision in the curriculum for non-college bound students (Dean, 1973).

The city of Toronto attempted to quell the dropout rate by initiating the Student Employment Experience Centre Project. The project was designed for 14 and 15 year olds who

had left school under the Early School Leaving policy of the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Method

The subjects were the 125 students who withdrew from the Shelburne County high schools between September 6, 1984 and June 11, 1985. These students will be referred to as dropouts. For this study, a dropout will be defined as a student who has not obtained a minimum of sixteen high school credits for the purpose of graduating. These students were enrolled at one of the three high schools in Shelburne County.

On a request to the Shelburne County District School Board, permission was granted to gain access to the cumulative record cards of the students under study. These documents were housed at the various high schools in the county. A number of variables was recorded on file cards to facilitate the data processing.

After studying the cumulative record cards a number of important variables were recorded that would be utilized in the dropout study of high schools in Shelburne County. Some of these variables included sex, age, grade in at time of dropping out, age at time of dropping out, feeder school attended before entering high school, and number of grades repeated. Additional information was obtained by interviewing guidance councillors, administrators, teachers, and members of the school board.

After the pertinent data was collected an attempt was made to formulate a list of dropout characteristics for the students who withdrew from school during the specified dates for which the study was conducted.

Results

THE SEARCH FOR CHARACTERISTICS--SEX, RACE, AGE, AND TIME

Sex

At the three high schools sampled in the County the following results were obtained with respect to the sex of the dropouts:

1. Barrington Municipal High School:

Males - 48.5%
Females - 51.5%

2. Lockeport Regional High School:

Males - 73.3%
Females - 26.7%

3. Shelburne Regional High School:

Males - 46.2%
Females - 53.8%

Enrolment for the Schools:

B.M.H.S. 778

L.R.H.S. 235

S.R.H.S. 493

Number of Dropouts from the Schools:

B.M.H.S. 97

L.R.H.S. 15

S.R.H.S. 13

Race

There was only one high school with a significant number of Blacks. Race was not a significant characteristic.

Age

In this study of dropouts the following results were found at the three high schools:

1. Barrington Municipal High School:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Less than sixteen years old | - 9.4% |
| Sixteen years old | - 46.4% |
| Seventeen years old | - 29.8% |
| Eighteen years old | - 7.1% |
| Nineteen years old | - 5.2% |
| Twenty year old | - 2.1% |

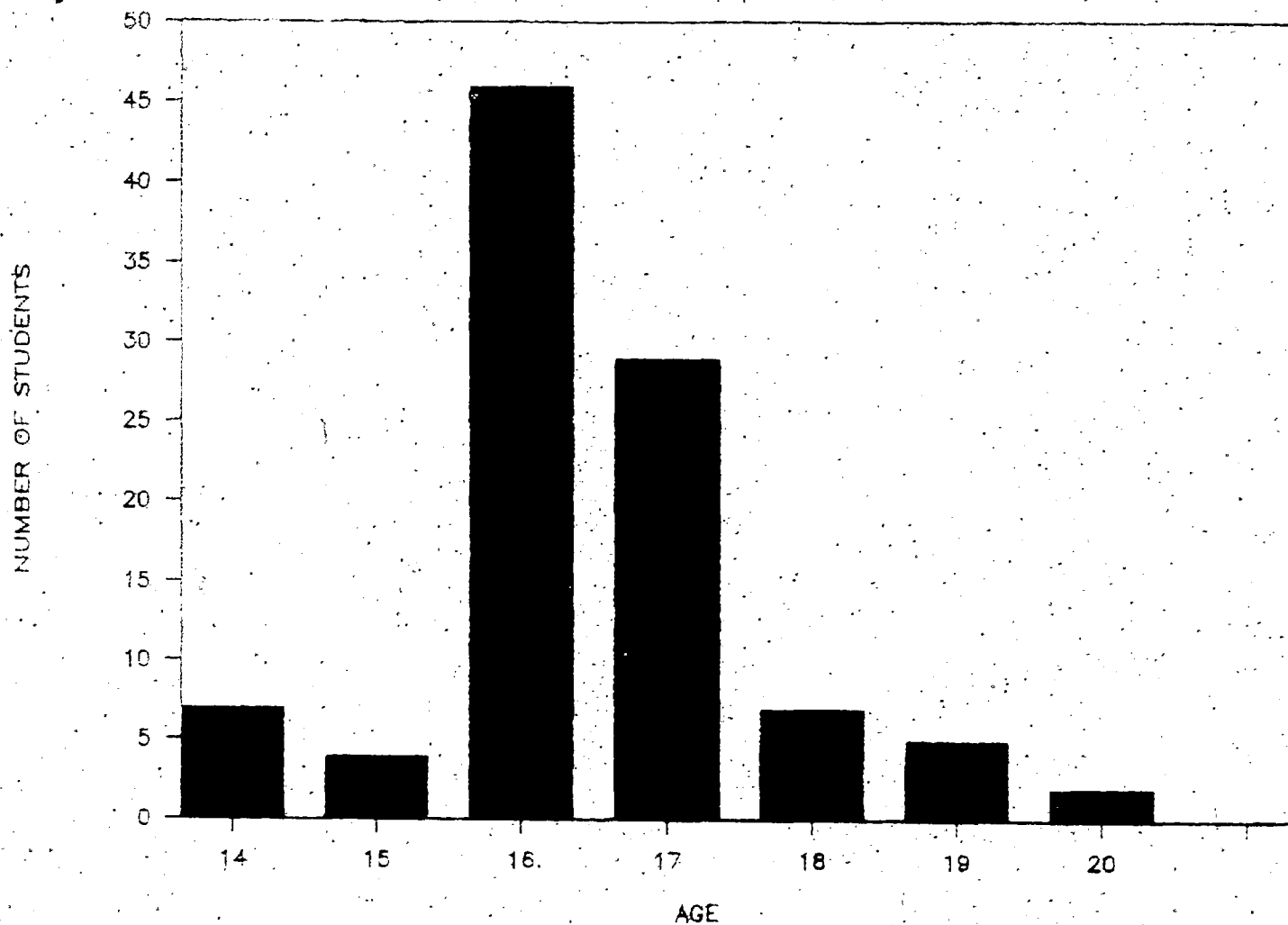
2. Lockeport Regional High School:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Less than sixteen years old | - 20.0% |
| Sixteen years old | - 40.0% |
| Seventeen years old | - 13.3% |
| Eighteen years old | - 13.3% |
| Nineteen years old | - 13.3% |

3. Shelburne Regional High School:

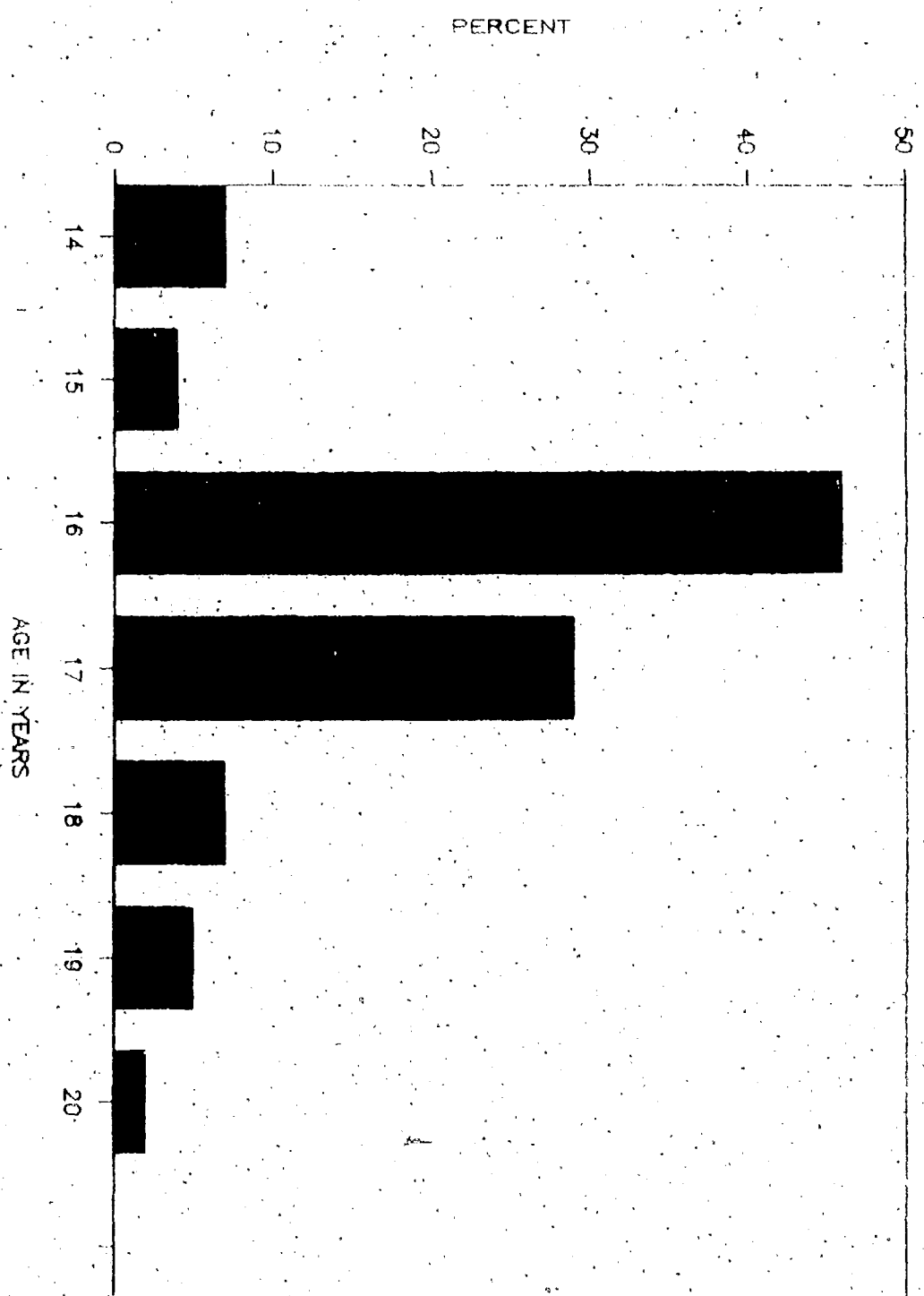
| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Less than sixteen years old | - 7.7% |
| Sixteen years old | - 23.8% |
| Seventeen years old | - 37.0% |
| Eighteen years old | - 7.7% |
| Nineteen years old | - 23.8% |

AGE AT TIME OF DROPPING OUT BMHS

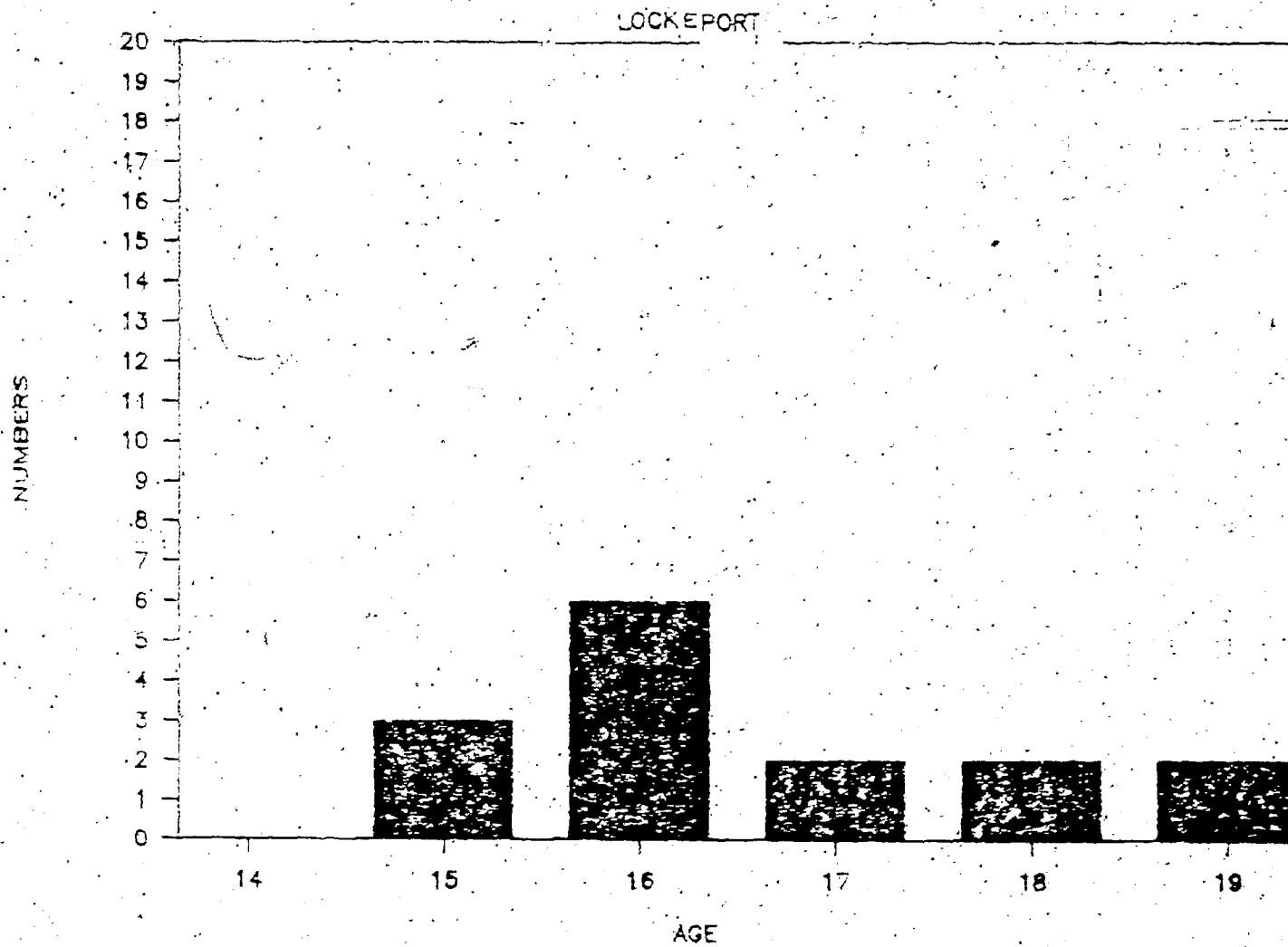


AGE OF STUDENTS AT TIME OF DROP-OUT BMHS

43

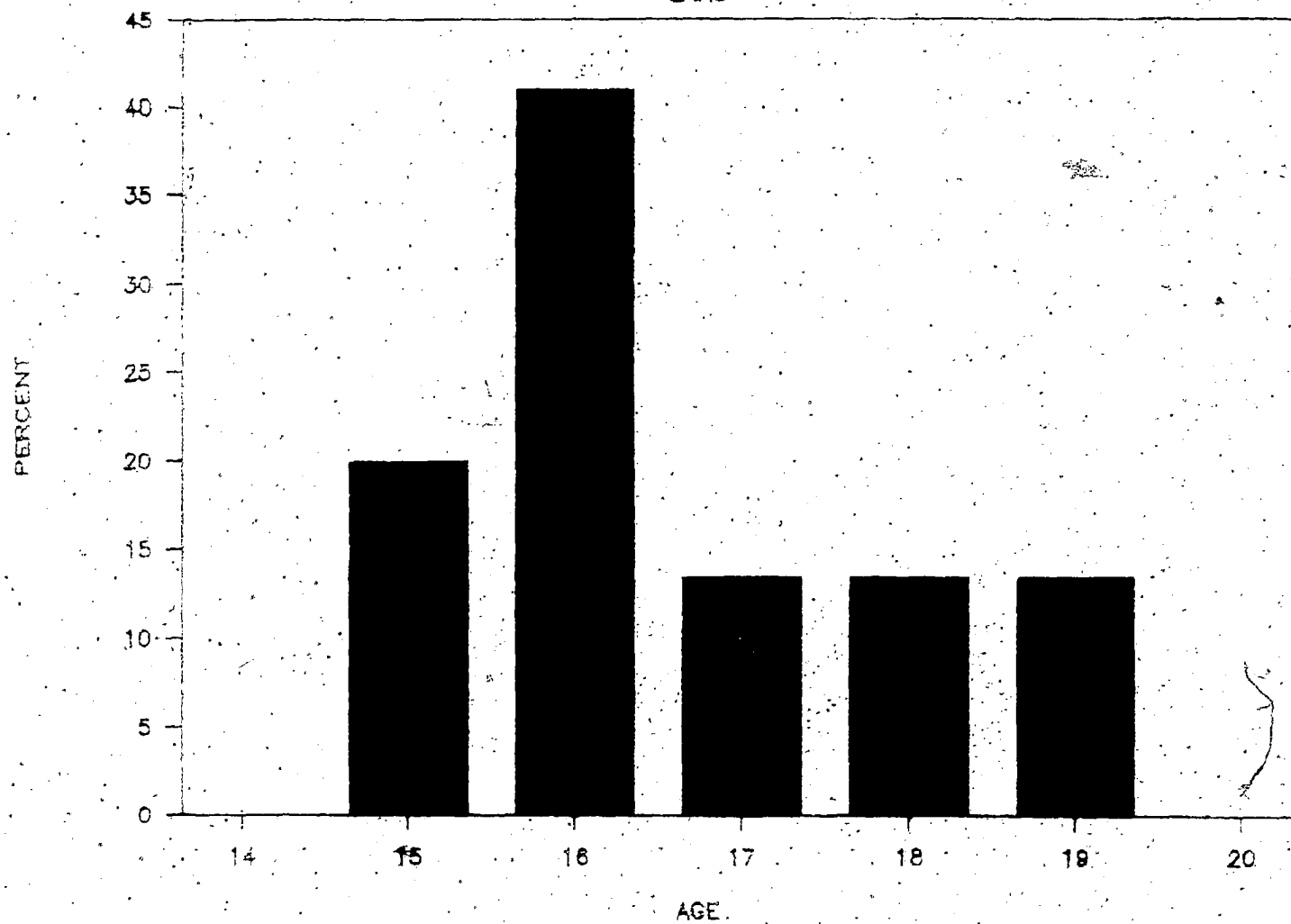


AGE OF STUDENTS TIME OF DROPOUT



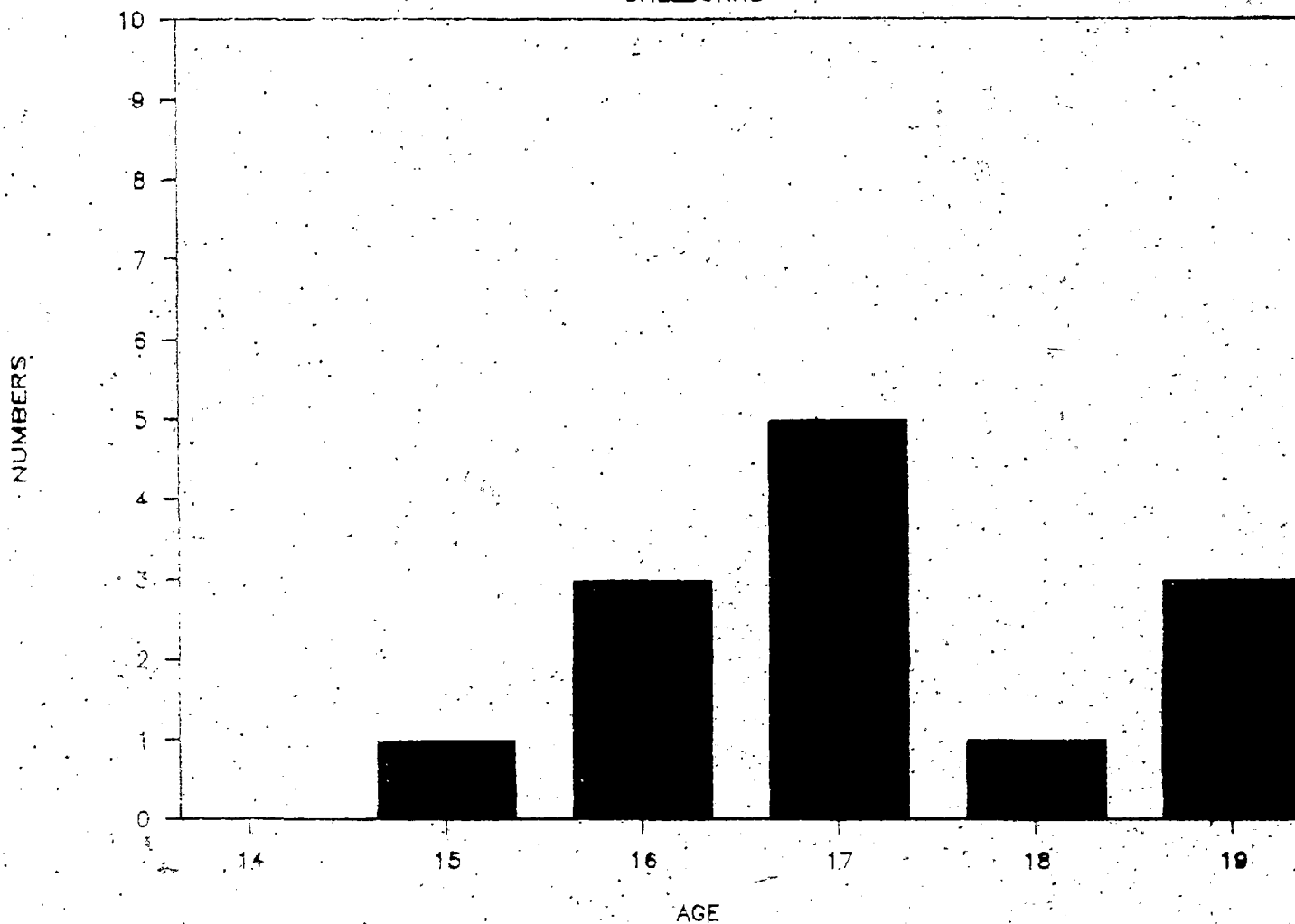
AGE AT TIME OF DROPPING OUT

LRHS



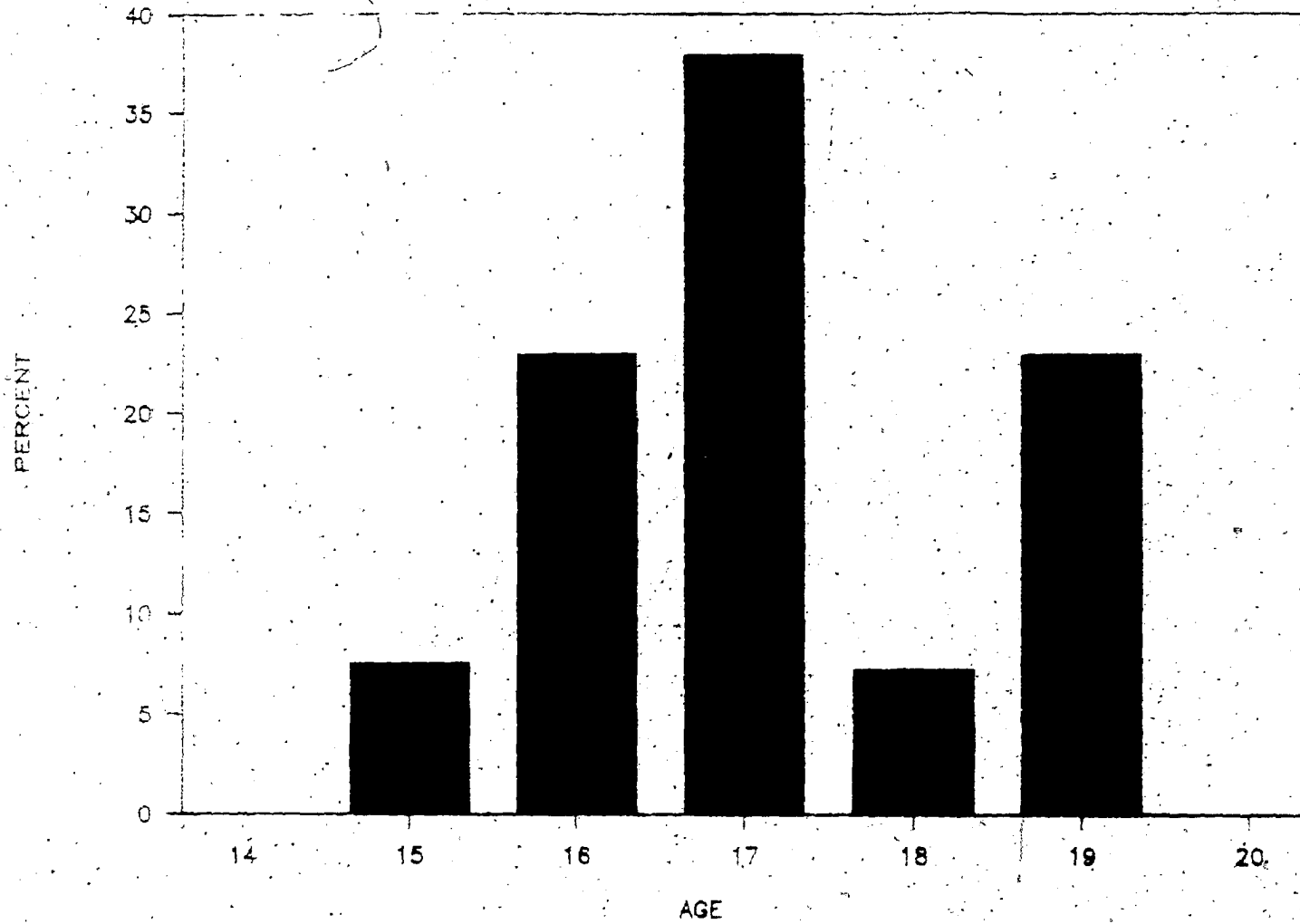
AGE OF STUDENTS AT TIME OF DROPOUT

SHELburne



AGE OF STUDENTS AT TIME OF DROPOUT

SHELburne



Time at Which Students Dropped Out

In the Shelburne County District School Board System there are four terms for the academic year. Drop-outs were identified as leaving during any of these four terms or if they did not return the following September they were put in the Summer category. Term 1 runs from September 6 to November 8, Term 2 runs from November 9 to January 15, Term 3 runs from January 16 to April 4, and Term 4 runs from April 5 to June 11 for the 1984-85 academic year.

The dropouts from the three high schools left school during the following Terms according to the tables below:

Barrington Municipal High School

| Term | Number of Students | Percent of Students |
|--------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 6 | 6.2% |
| 2 | 17 | 17.5% |
| 3 | 28 | 28.9% |
| 4 | 5 | 5.2% |
| Summer | 41 | 42.2% |

Lockeport Regional High School

| Term | Number of Students | Percent of Students |
|--------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 6.7% |
| 2 | 0 | 0% |
| 3 | 3 | 20.0% |
| 4 | 2 | 13.4% |
| Summer | 9 | 59.9% |

Shelburne Regional High School

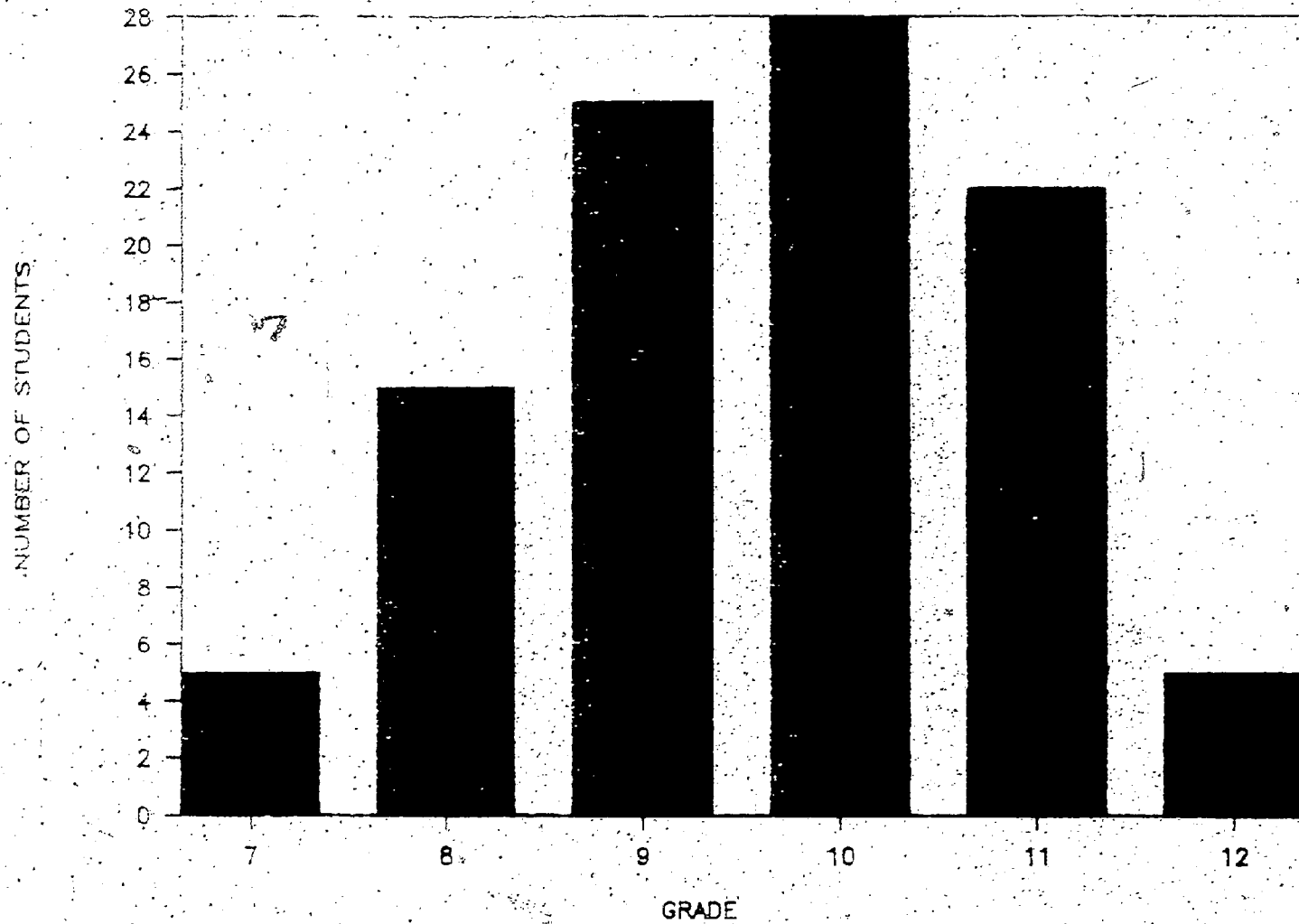
| Term | Number of Students | Percent of Students |
|--------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 7.7% |
| 2 | 3 | 23.1% |
| 3 | 2 | 15.4% |
| 4 | 1 | 7.7% |
| Summer | 6 | 46.1% |

Grade Level at Time of Dropping Out

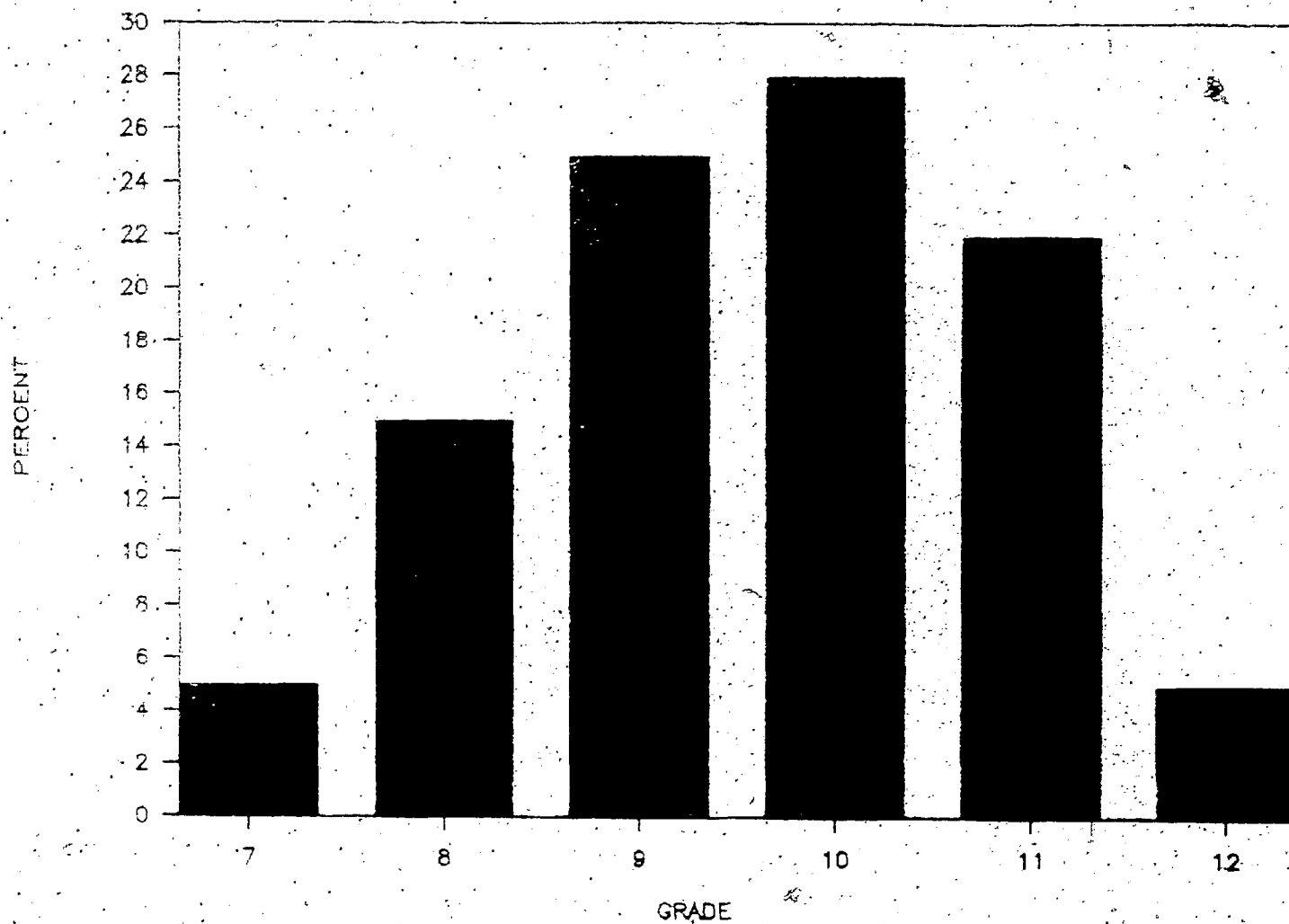
Students who dropped out during the 1984-85 academic year from the high schools in Shelburne County were in the following grades:

| Grade | <u>School</u> | | |
|-------|---------------|-------|-------|
| | BMHS | LRHS | SRHS |
| 7 | 5.2% | 26.7% | 15.5% |
| 8 | 14.4% | 40.0% | 15.5% |
| 9 | 25.8% | 13.3% | 23.0% |
| 10 | 26.8% | 0.0% | 23.0% |
| 11 | 22.6% | 6.7% | 23.0% |
| 12 | 5.2% | 13.3% | 23.0% |

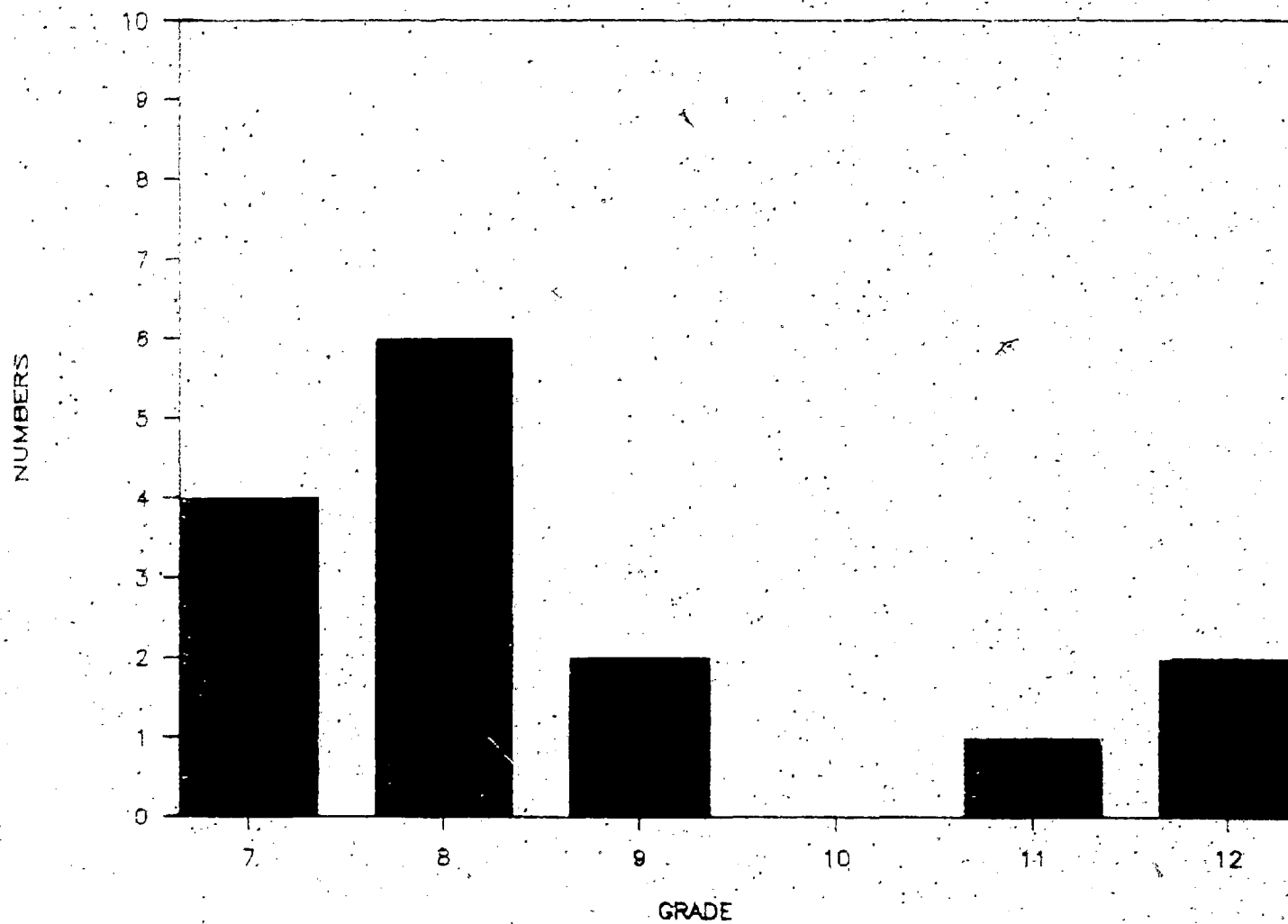
GRADE AT TIME OF DROPPING OUT BMHS



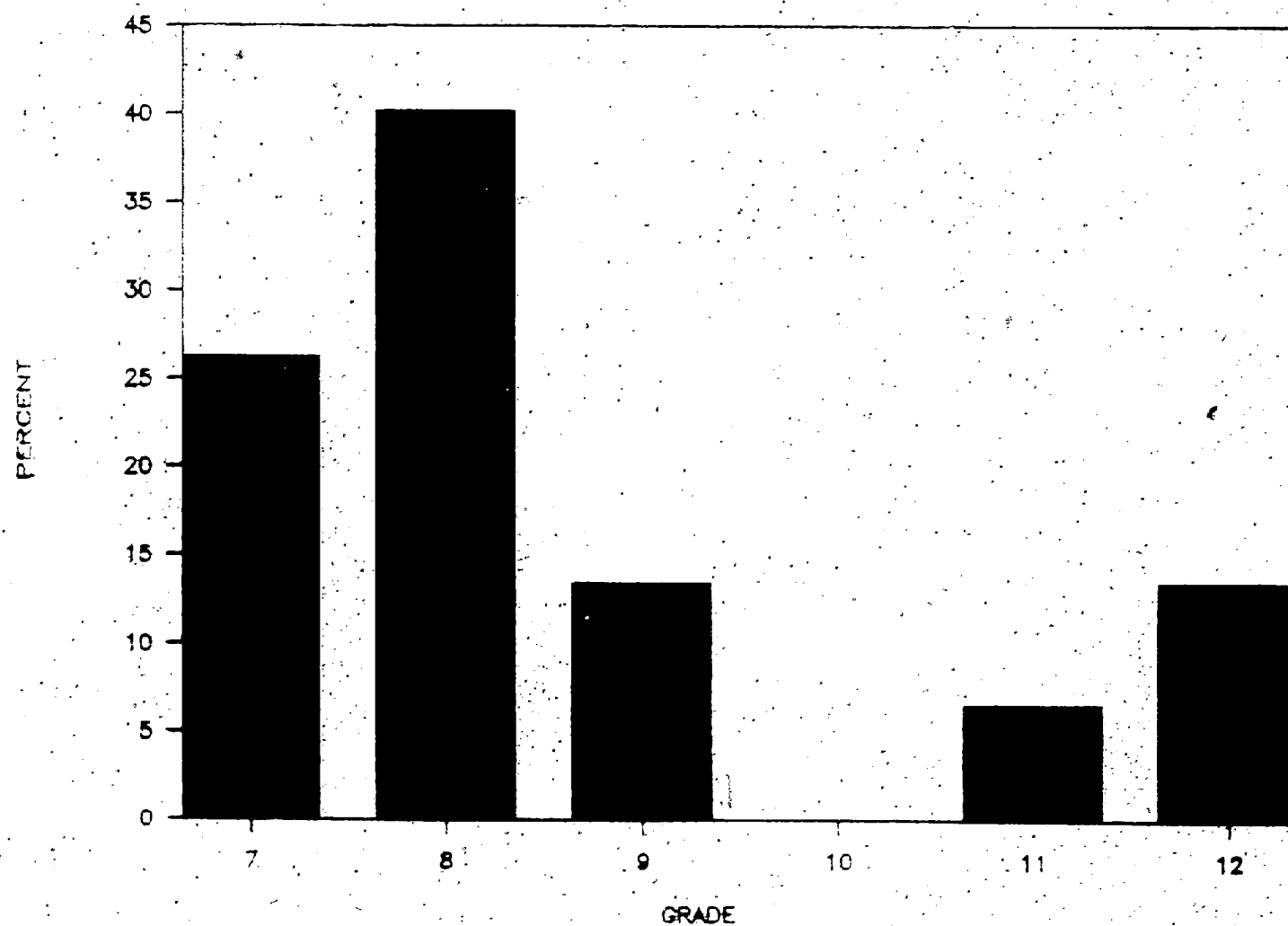
GRADE AT TIME OF DROPPING OUT BMHS



GRADE AT TIME OF DROPPING OUT LRHS

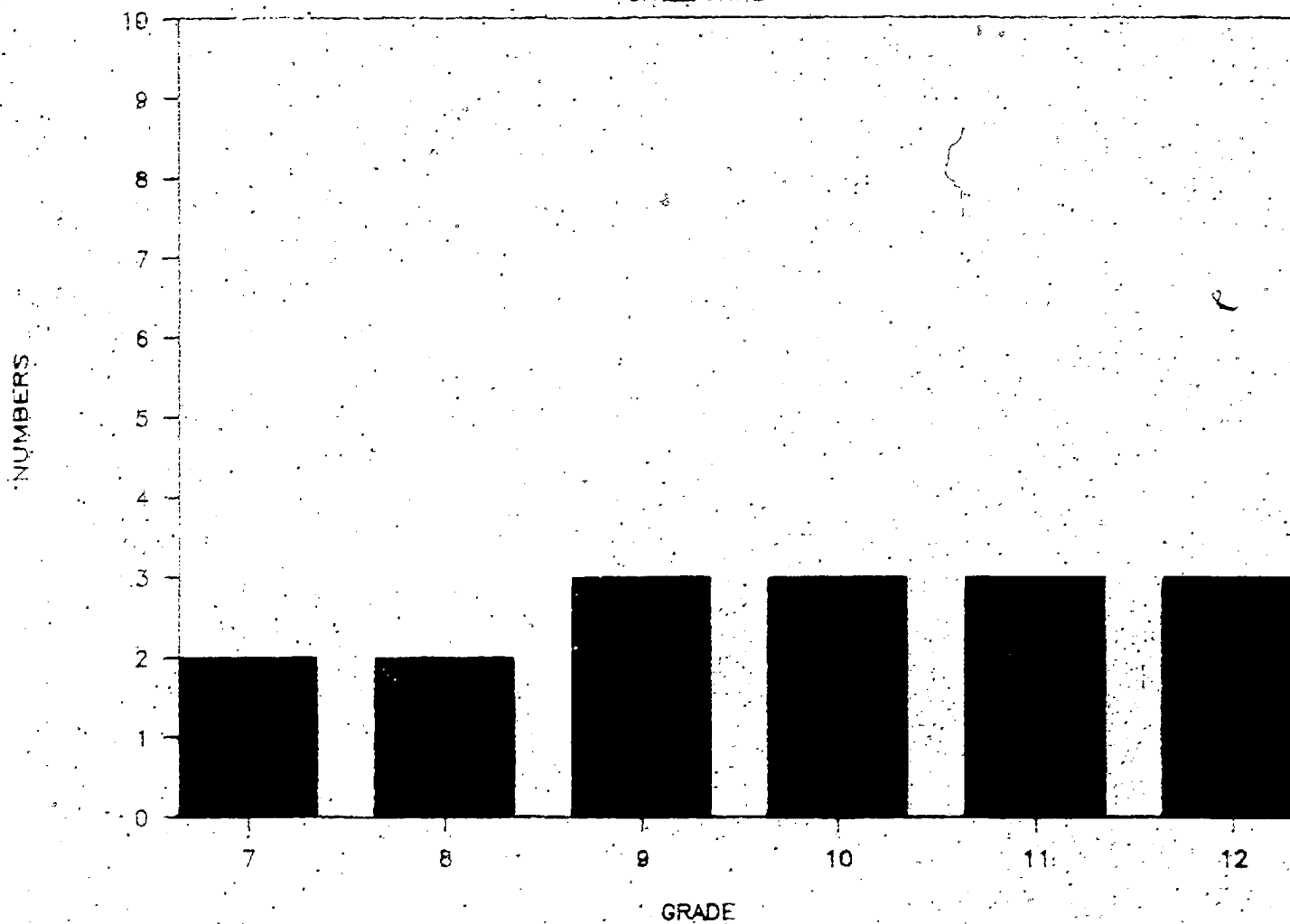


GRADE AT TIME OF DROPPING OUT LRHS



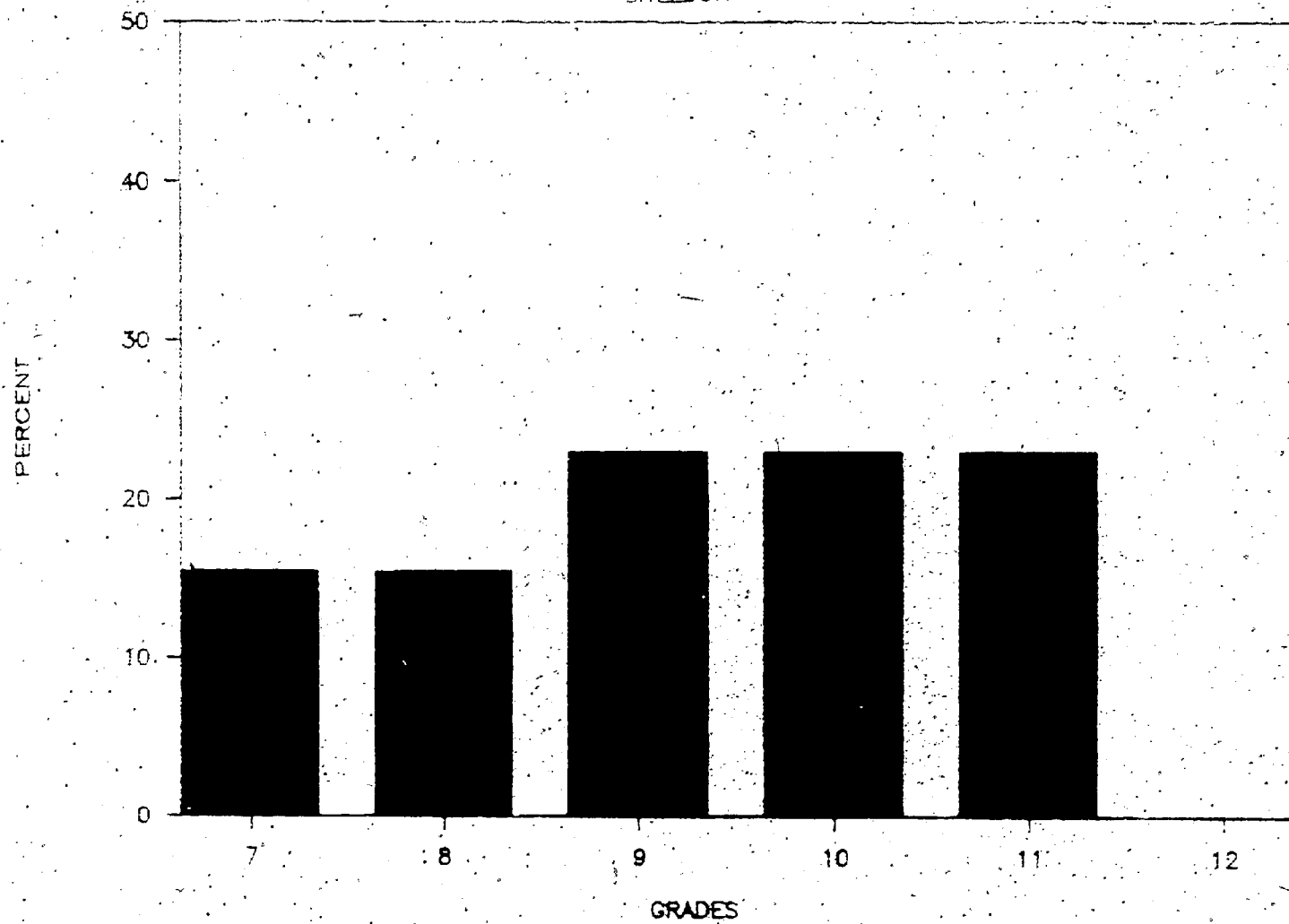
GRADE AT TIME OF DROPOUT

SHELBURNE



GRADE AT TIME OF DROPPING OUT

SHELburne



FAMILY BACKGROUND

With respect to family background the occupation of the dropout's father was put into a category similar to that used by Statistics Canada in 1981.

| Occupation | School | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | B.M.H.S. | L.R.H.S. | S.R.H.S. |
| Fishing and Fish Processing | 70.1% | 66.8% | 33.4% |
| Trade and Business | 2.3% | 16.6% | 8.3% |
| Construction | 13.8% | 8.3% | 11.3% |
| Transportation | 11.5% | 8.3% | 16.6% |
| Other | 2.3% | 8.3% | 8.3% |

Size of Family

The family size of the dropouts were as follows:

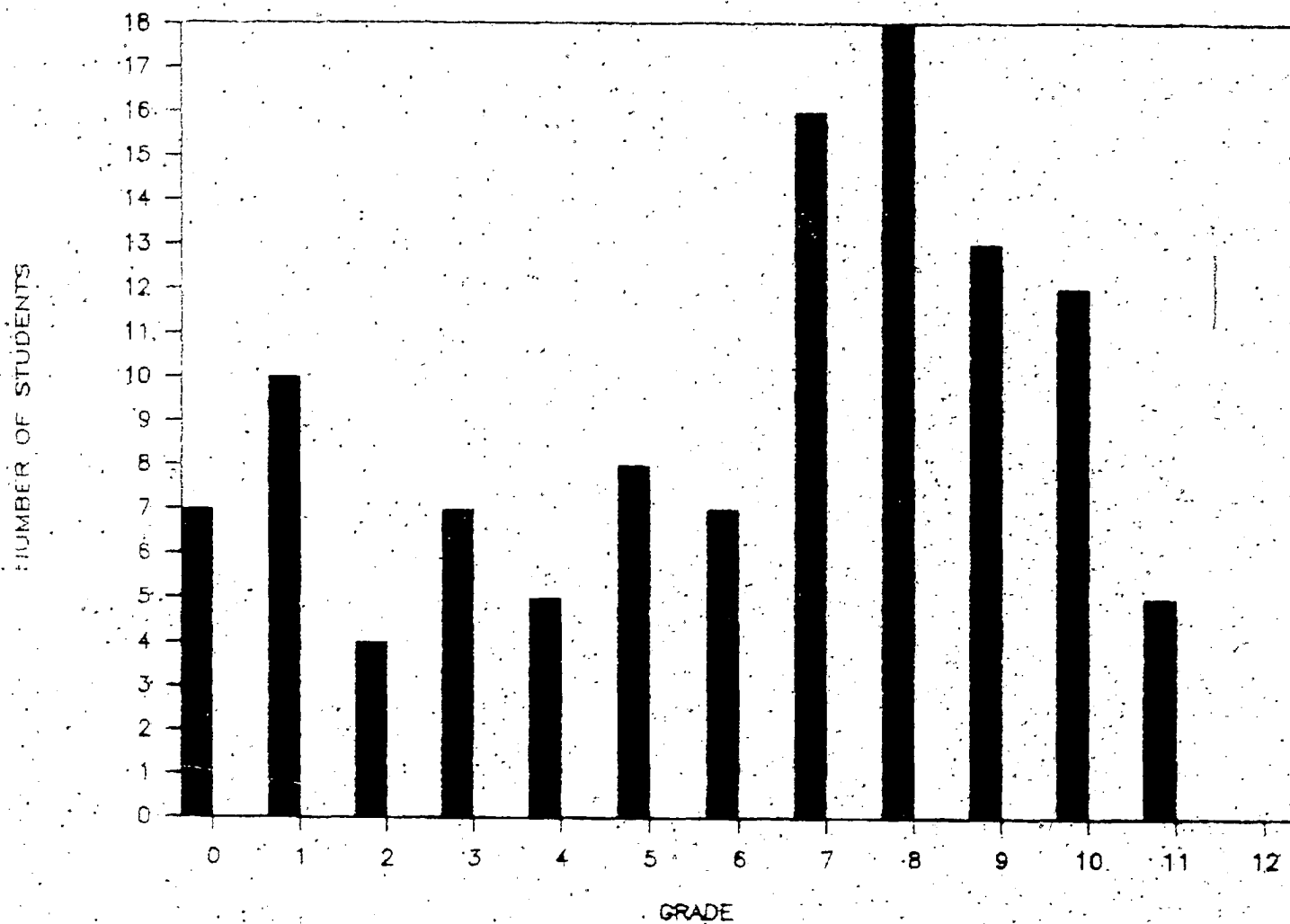
| School | Number of Children in Family | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | More than 4 |
| Barrington High | 0% | 41.6% | 22.1% | 11.6% | 24.7% |
| Lockeport High | 0% | 30.0% | 10.0% | 10.0% | 50.0% |
| Shelburne High | 15.4% | 7.7% | 7.7% | 0% | 77.6% |

FAILURE

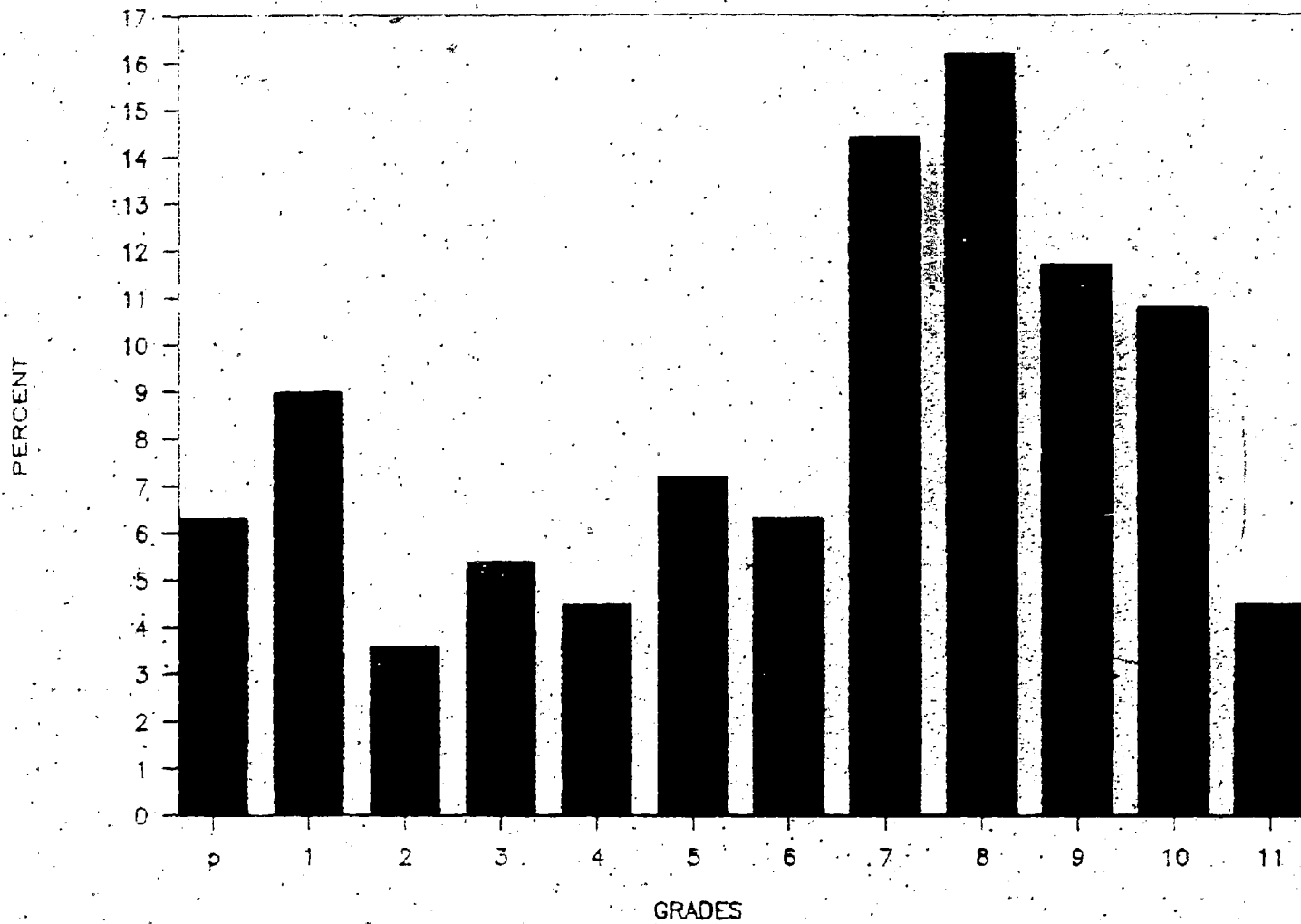
This particular study of dropouts attempted to find the grades failed during their stay at school. The results of this finding have been recorded in the table below.

| Grade Repeated | Barrington | School Lockeport | Shelburne |
|----------------|------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Primary | 6.3% | 0 | 14.2% |
| One | 9.0% | 0 | 0 |
| Two | 3.6% | 0 | 14.2% |
| Three | 5.4% | 9.7% | 14.2% |
| Four | 4.5% | 9.7% | 14.2% |
| Five | 7.2% | 9.7% | 9.5% |
| Six | 6.3% | 6.5% | 4.7% |
| Seven | 14.4% | 41.9% | 23.8% |
| Eight | 16.2% | 19.4% | 9.5% |
| Nine | 11.7% | 0 | 4.7% |
| Ten | 10.8% | 3.2% | 0 |
| Eleven | 4.5% | 0 | 0 |
| Twelve | 0 | 0 | 0 |

GRADES REPEATED FOR BMHS DROPOUTS

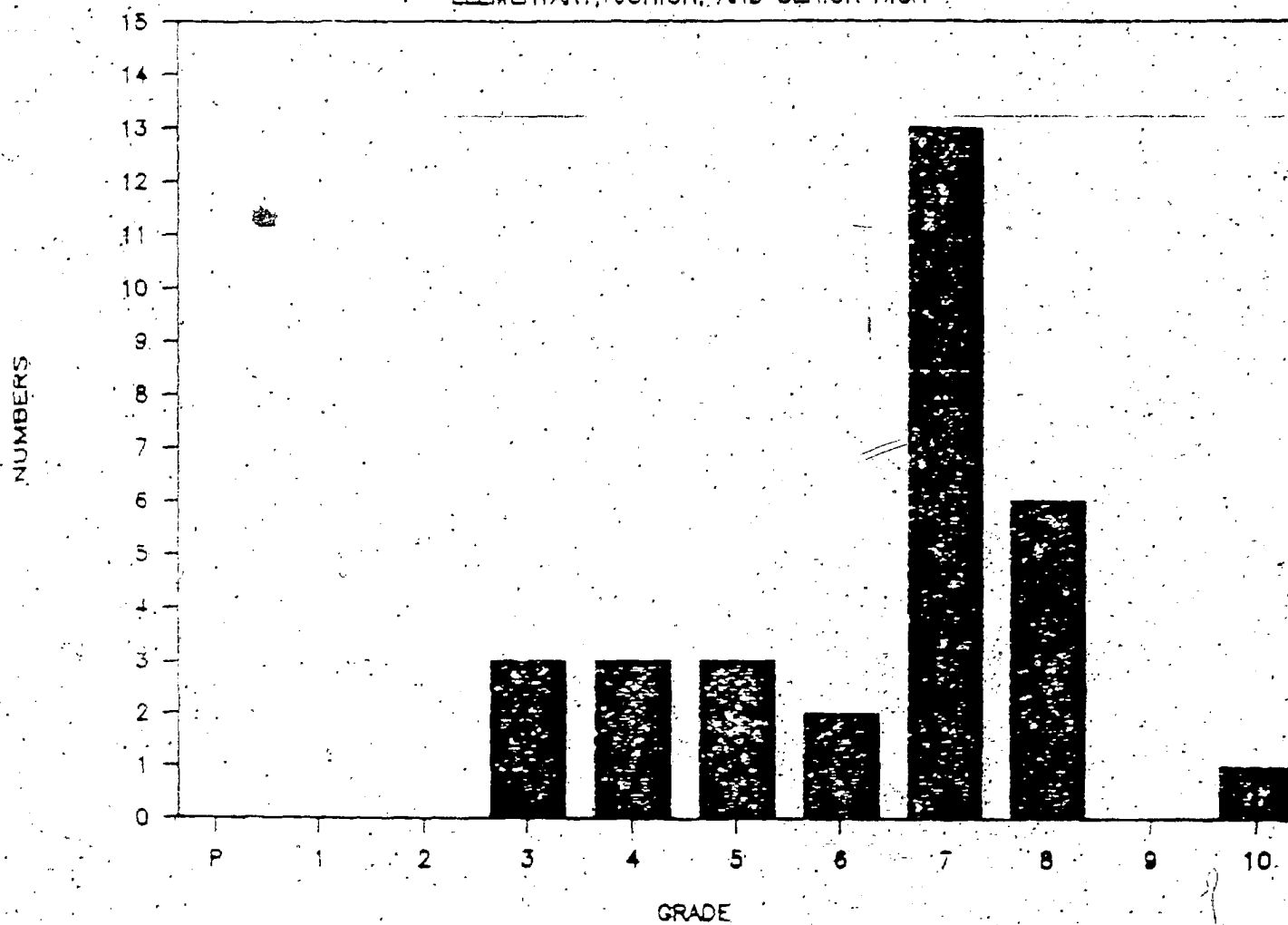


GRADES REPEATED BY BMHS DROPOUTS

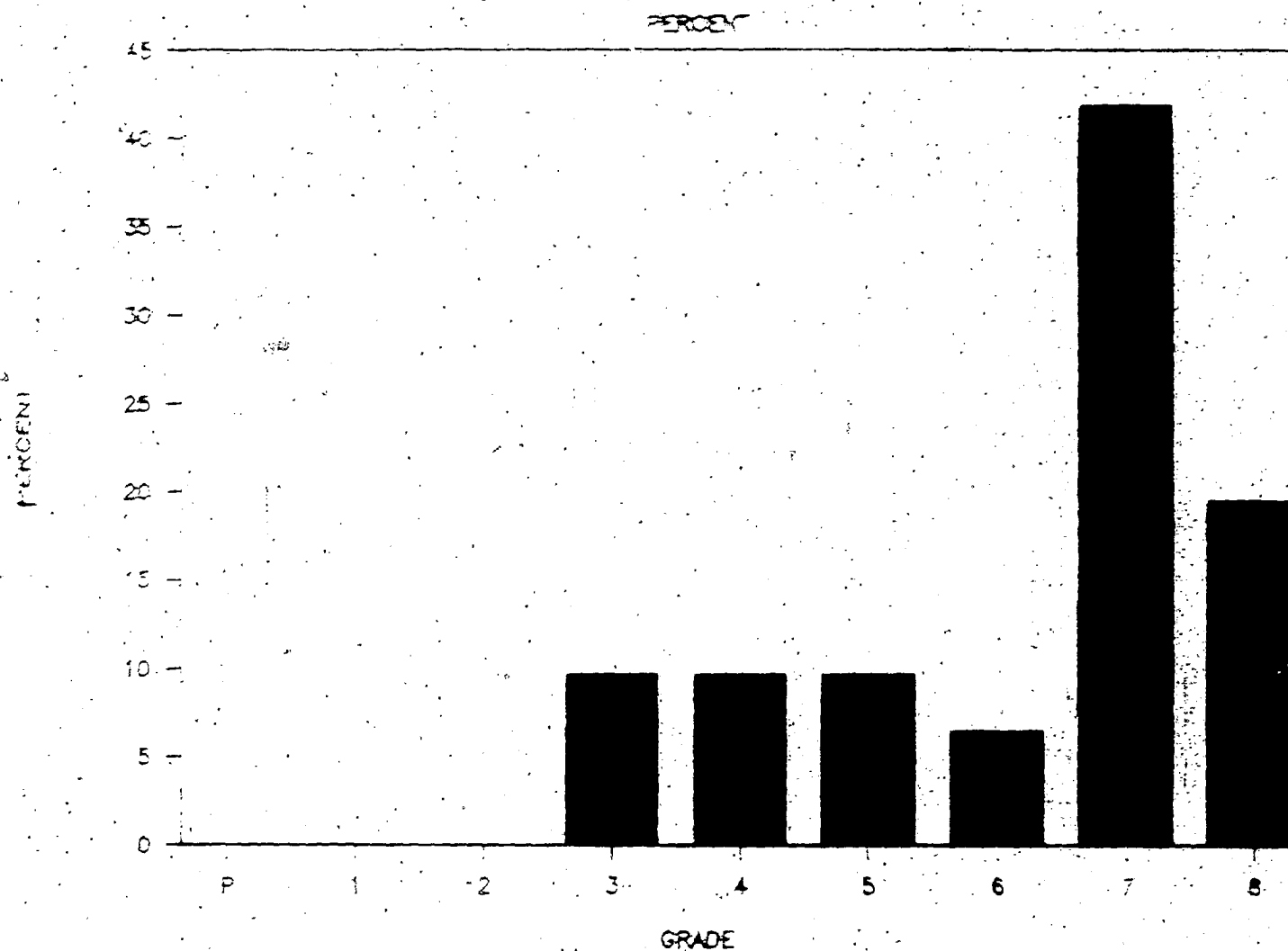


GRADES REPEATED AT LOCKEPORT

ELEMENTARY, JUNIOR, AND SENIOR HIGH



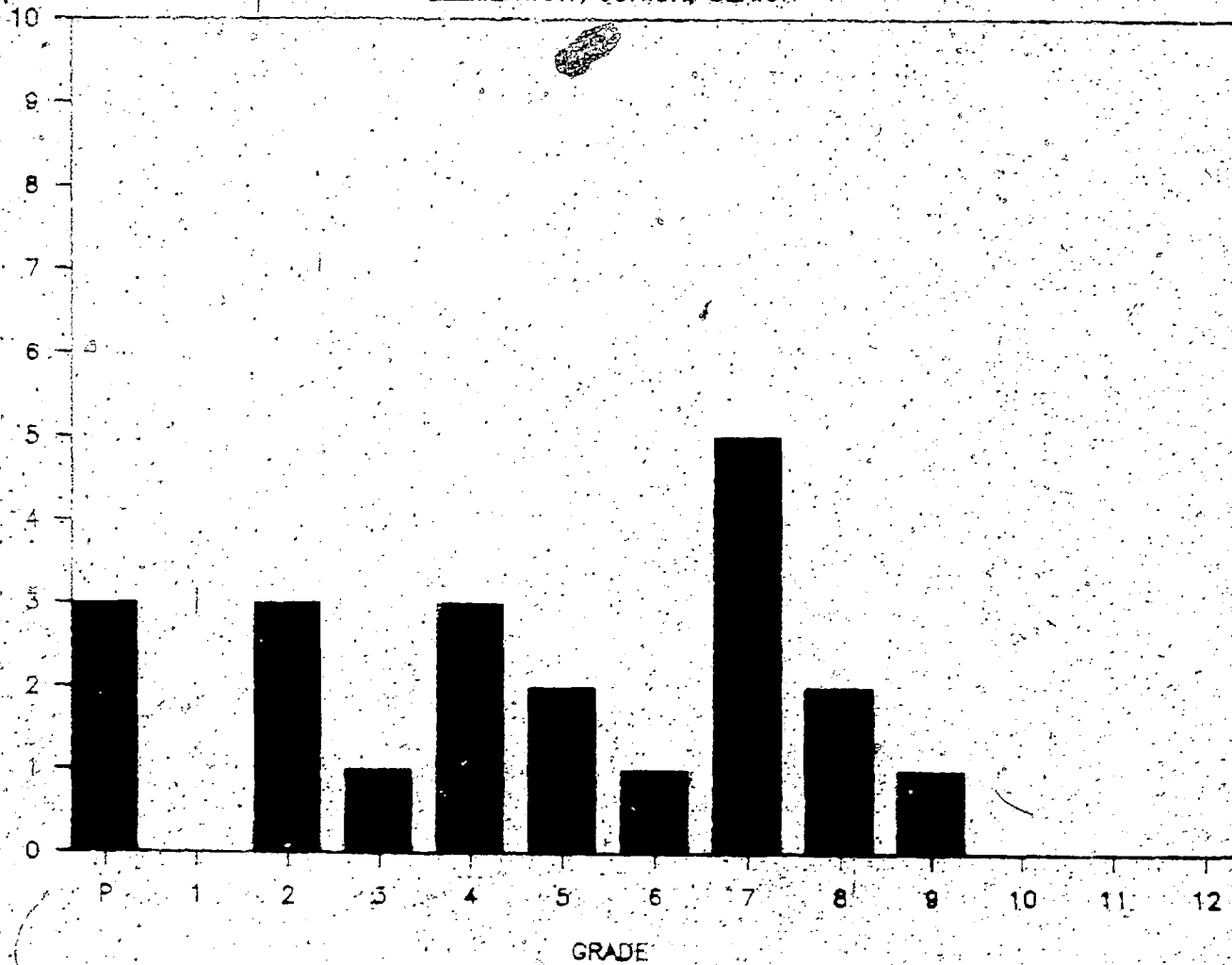
GRADES REPEATED LRHS



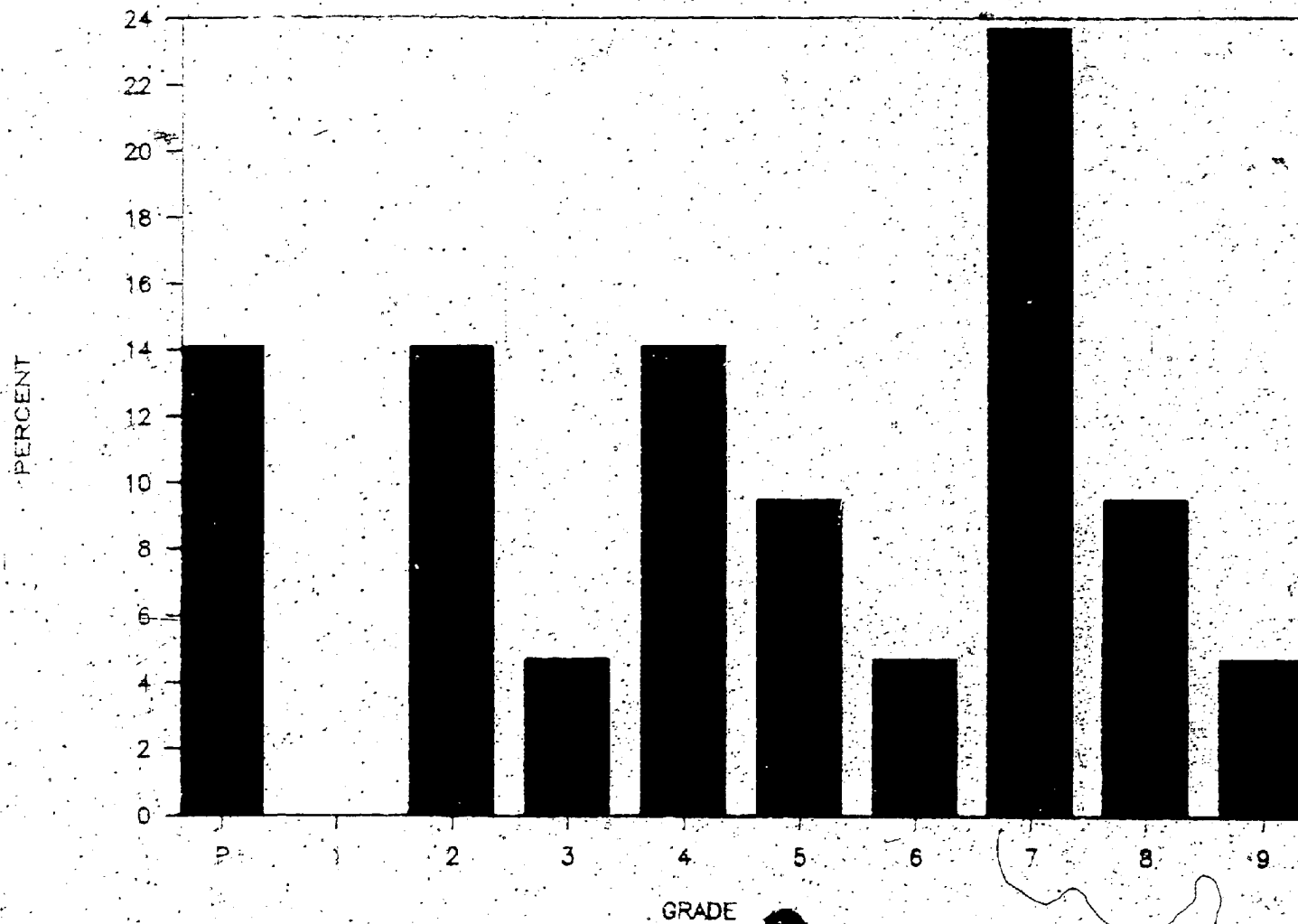
GRADES REPEATED SHELBURNE

ELEMENTARY, JUNIOR, SENIOR

NUMBER OF STUDENTS



GRADES REPEATED SRHS



EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The following results were obtained regarding the involvement of dropouts in extracurricular activities related to school:

| School | Involvement |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Barrington Municipal High | 60.2% |
| Lockeport Regional High | 33.3% |
| Shelburne Regional High | 15.4% |

INTELLIGENCE

The I.Q. scores for the dropouts and graduates were obtained from Metropolitan Achievement Tests administered to the students when they were in grade six.

The results for these scores are recorded according to the method and by Fuller & Friedrich (1972):

Barrington Municipal High School

| | I.Q. | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------|--------|--------------|
| | 85 and under | 85-89 | 90-109 | 100 and over |
| High School Graduates (26/69) | 0% | 3.8% | 61.5% | 34.7% |
| Dropouts (88/97) | 18.2% | 5.7% | 60.2% | 15.9% |

Lockeport Regional High School

| | I.Q. | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------|--------|--------------|
| | 85 and under | 85-89 | 90-109 | 100 and over |
| High School Graduates (21/30) | 4.8% | 0 | 42.9% | 52.3% |
| Dropouts (15/15) | 20% | 0 | 60% | 20% |

Shelburne Regional High School

| I.Q. | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------|--------|--------------|
| | 85 and under | 85-89 | 90-109 | 100 and over |
| High School Graduates (23/54) | 4.3% | .0% | 56.5% | 39.2% |
| Dropouts (88/97) | 33.3% | 25% | 33.3% | 8.4% |

READING ACHIEVEMENT

Reading scores were obtained from the results of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests administered in grade six for the dropouts identified in the study and a sample of graduates from the three schools. The scores were recorded in stanines; a score of five being the norm.

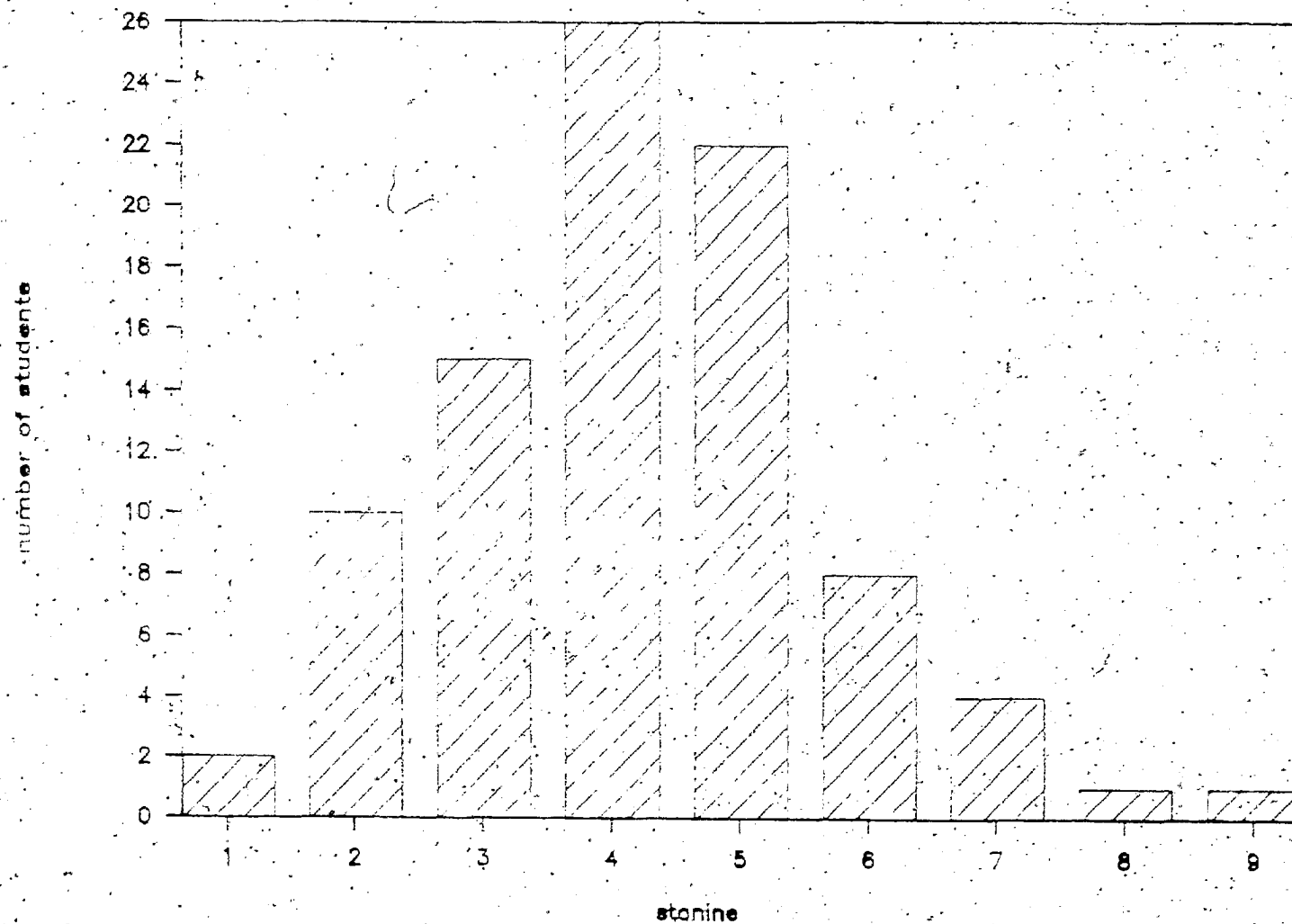
Dropout Reading Scores

| School | Under 5 | Over 5 |
|---------------------------|---------|--------|
| Barrington Municipal High | 59.5% | 15.8% |
| Lockeport Regional High | 46.6% | 26.7% |
| Shelburne Regional High | 58.8% | 24.6 |

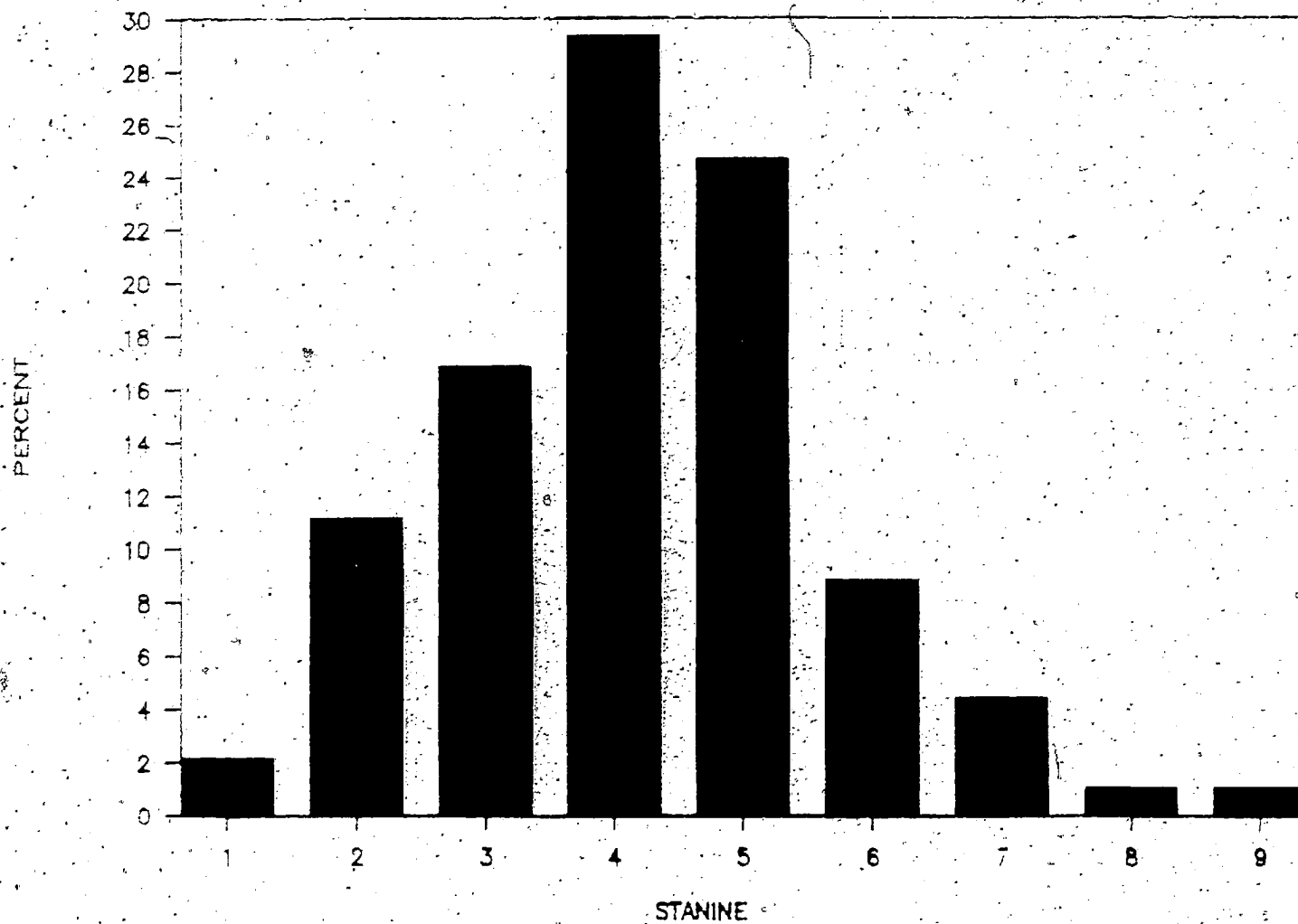
Graduate Reading Scores

| School | Under 5 | Over 5 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Barrington Municipal High (27/69) | 29.6% | 51.9% |
| Lockeport Regional High (21/30) | 14.3% | 57.1% |
| Shelburne Regional High (21/54) | 30.4% | 47.9% |

Grade Six READING SCORE BMHS DROPOUT

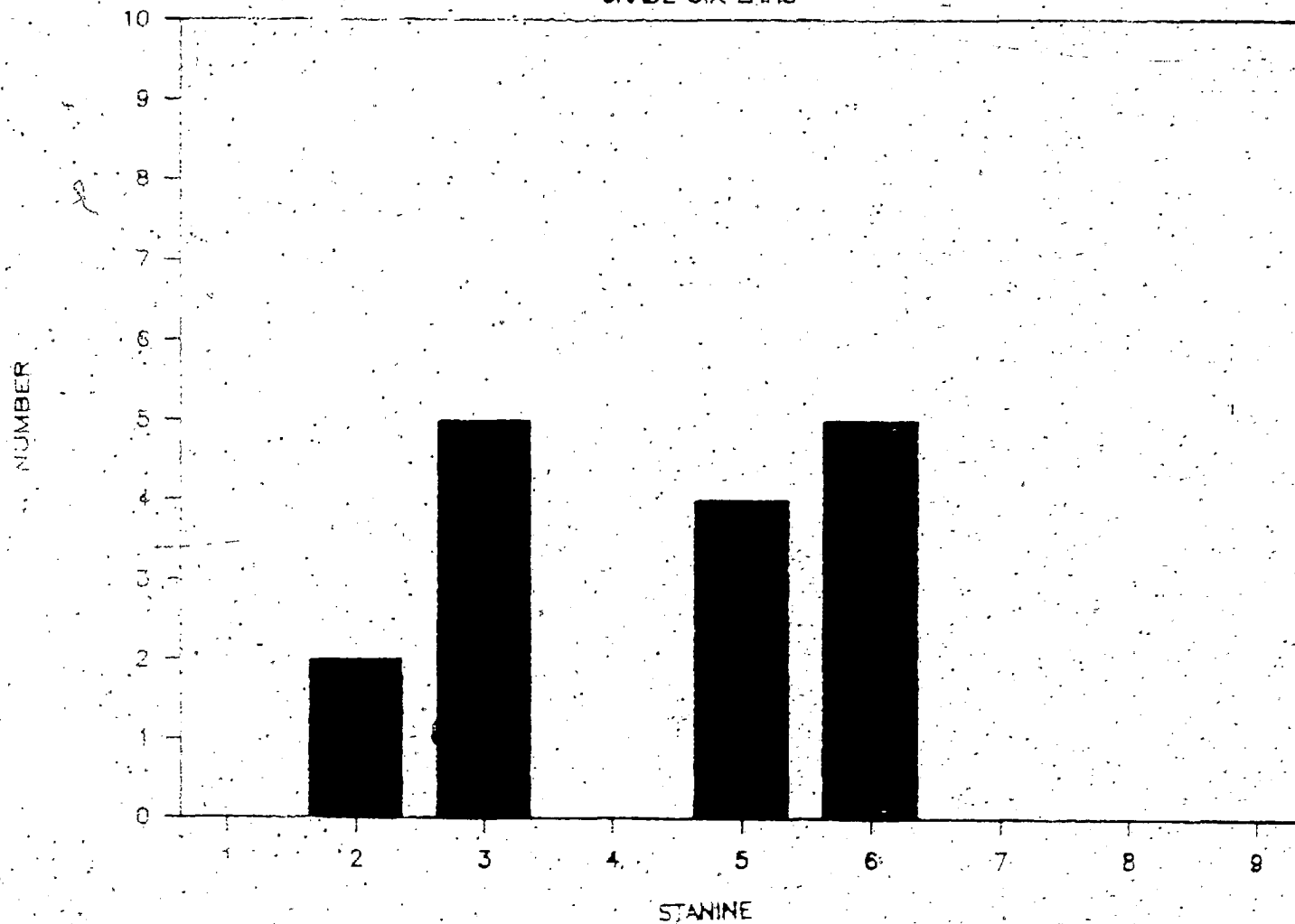


GRADE SIX READING SCORE BMHS DROPOUT



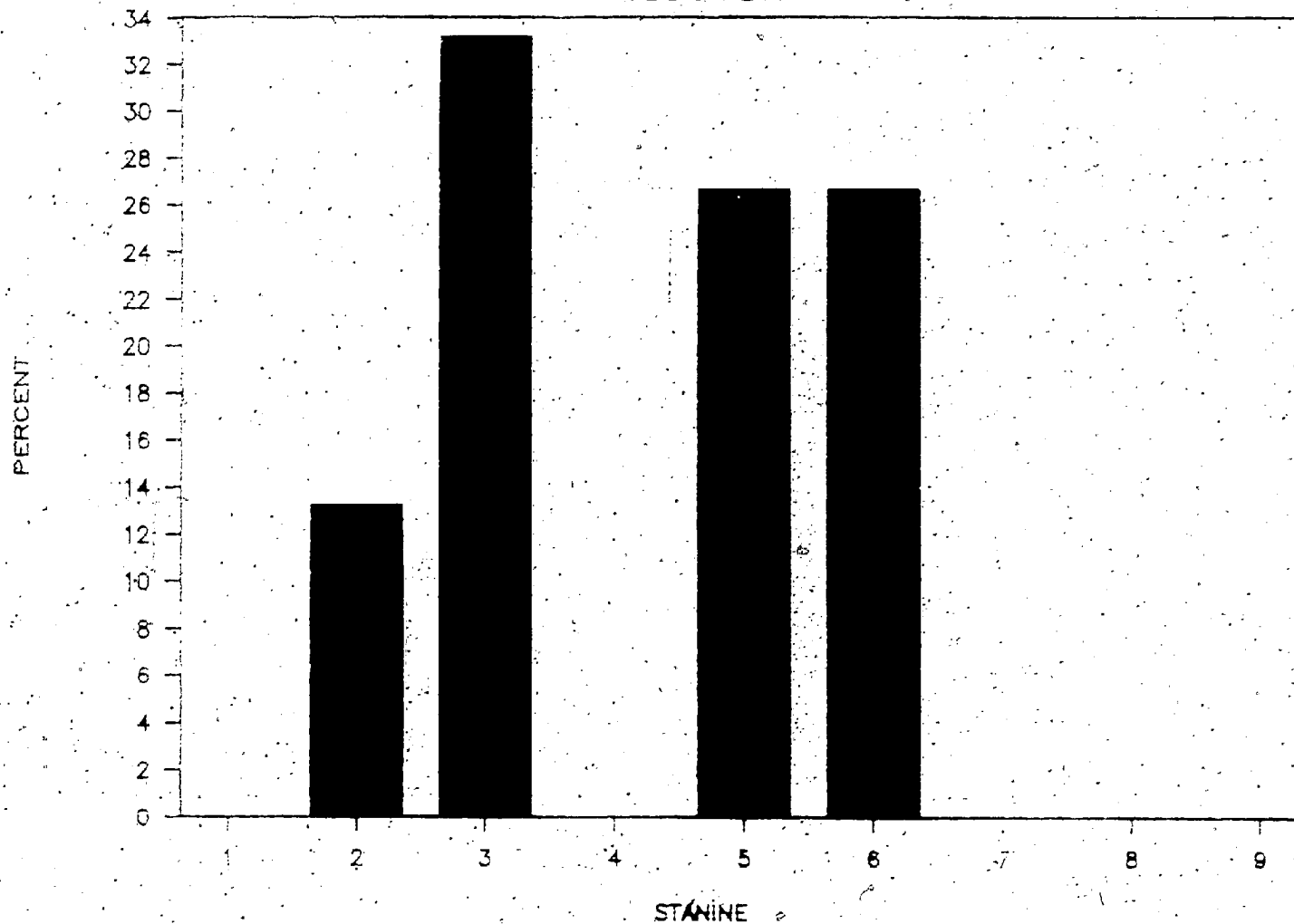
DROPOUT READING SCORES IN STANINE

GRADE SIX LRHS

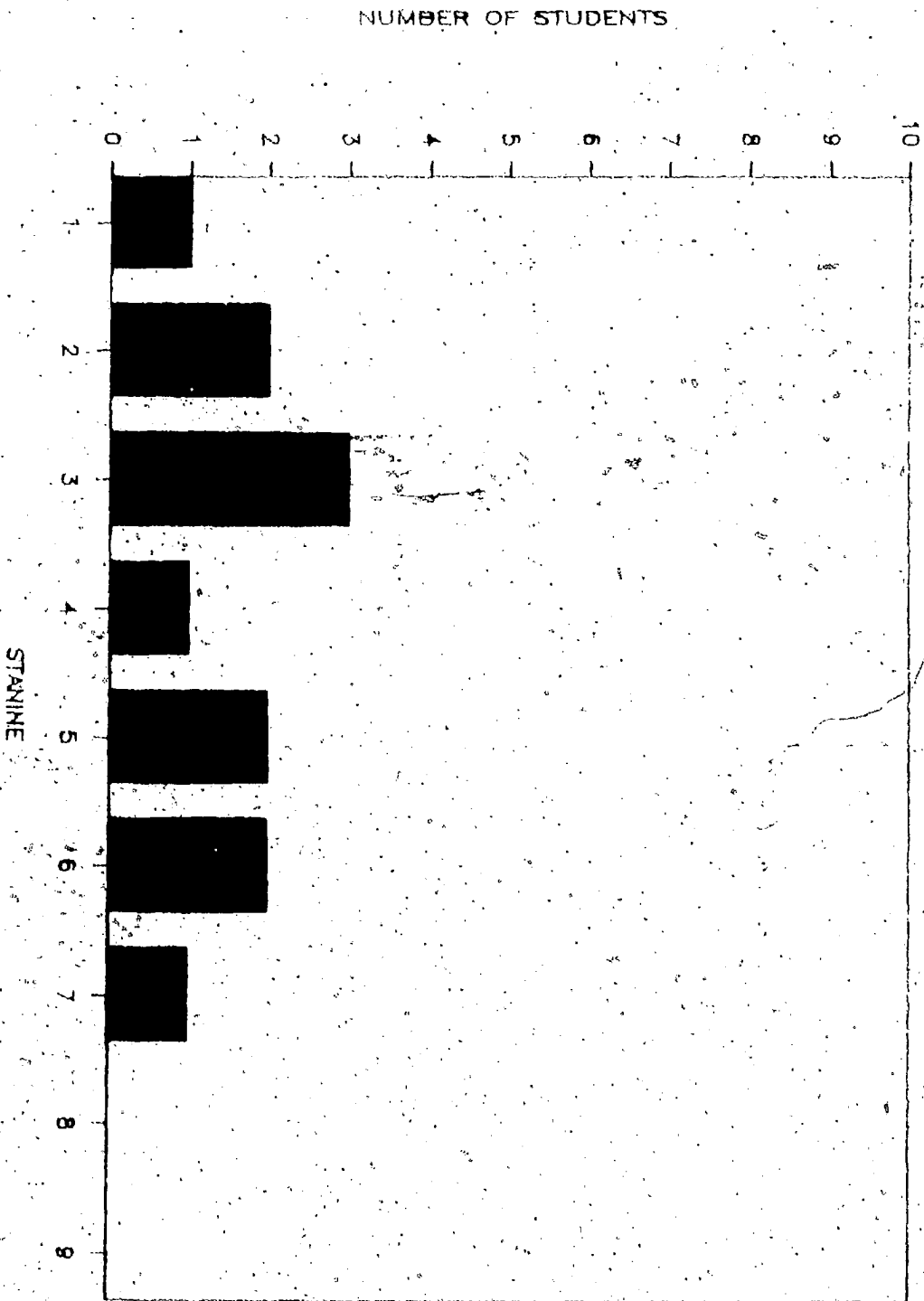


DROPOUT READING SCORES IN STANINE

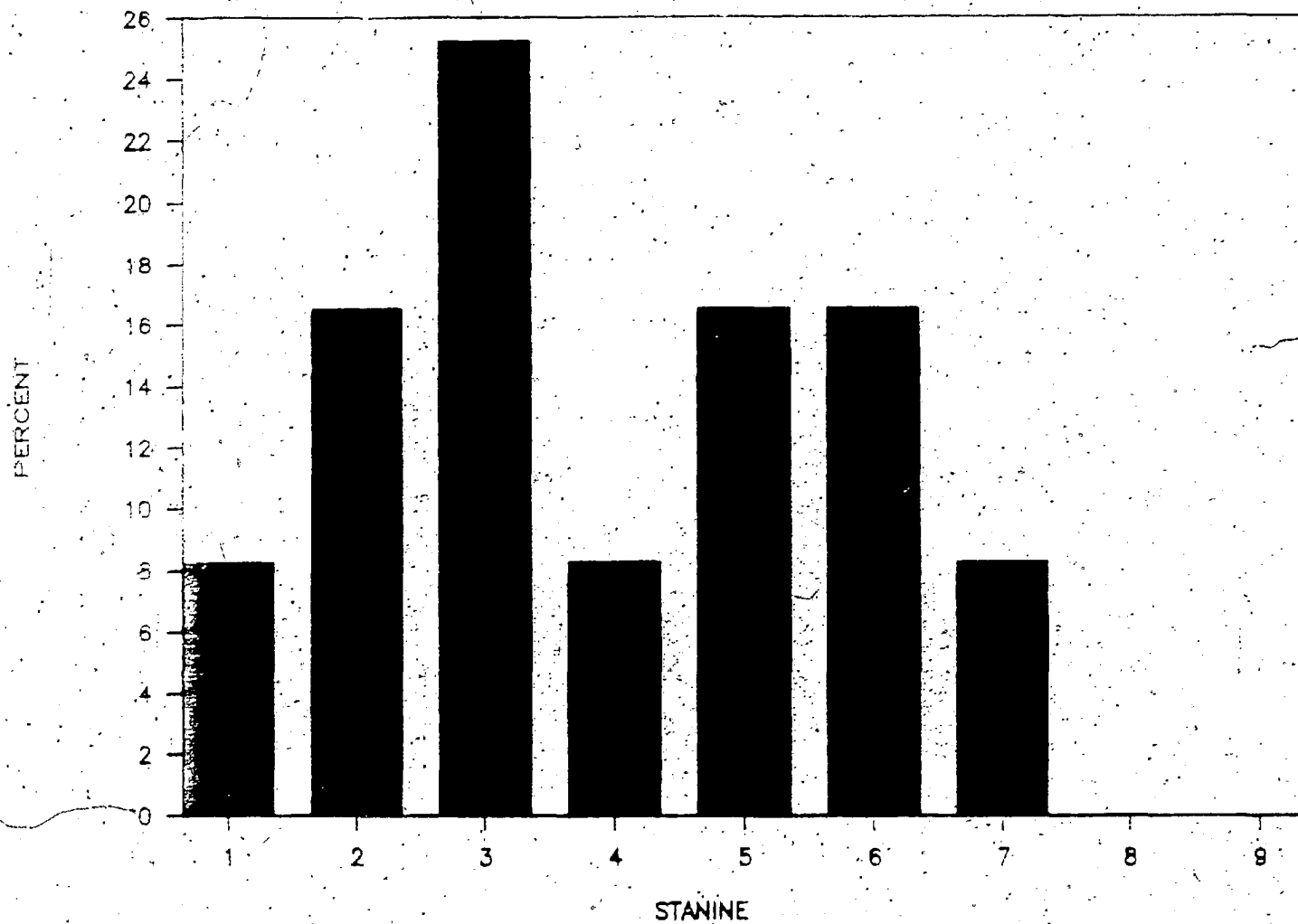
GRADE SIX LRHS



READING SCORE SHELBOURNE DROPOUTS

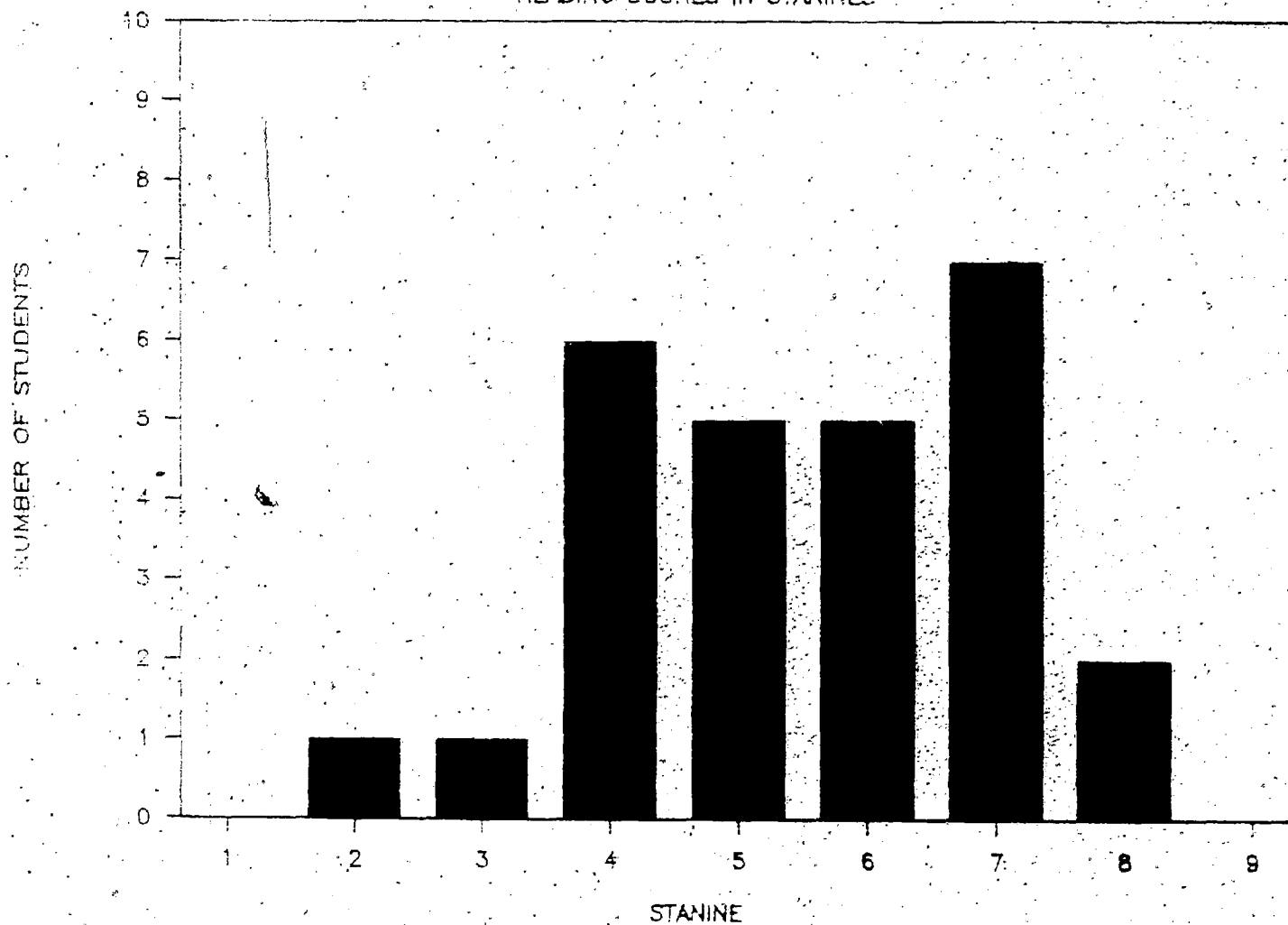


READING SCORE SHELburnE DROPOUTS



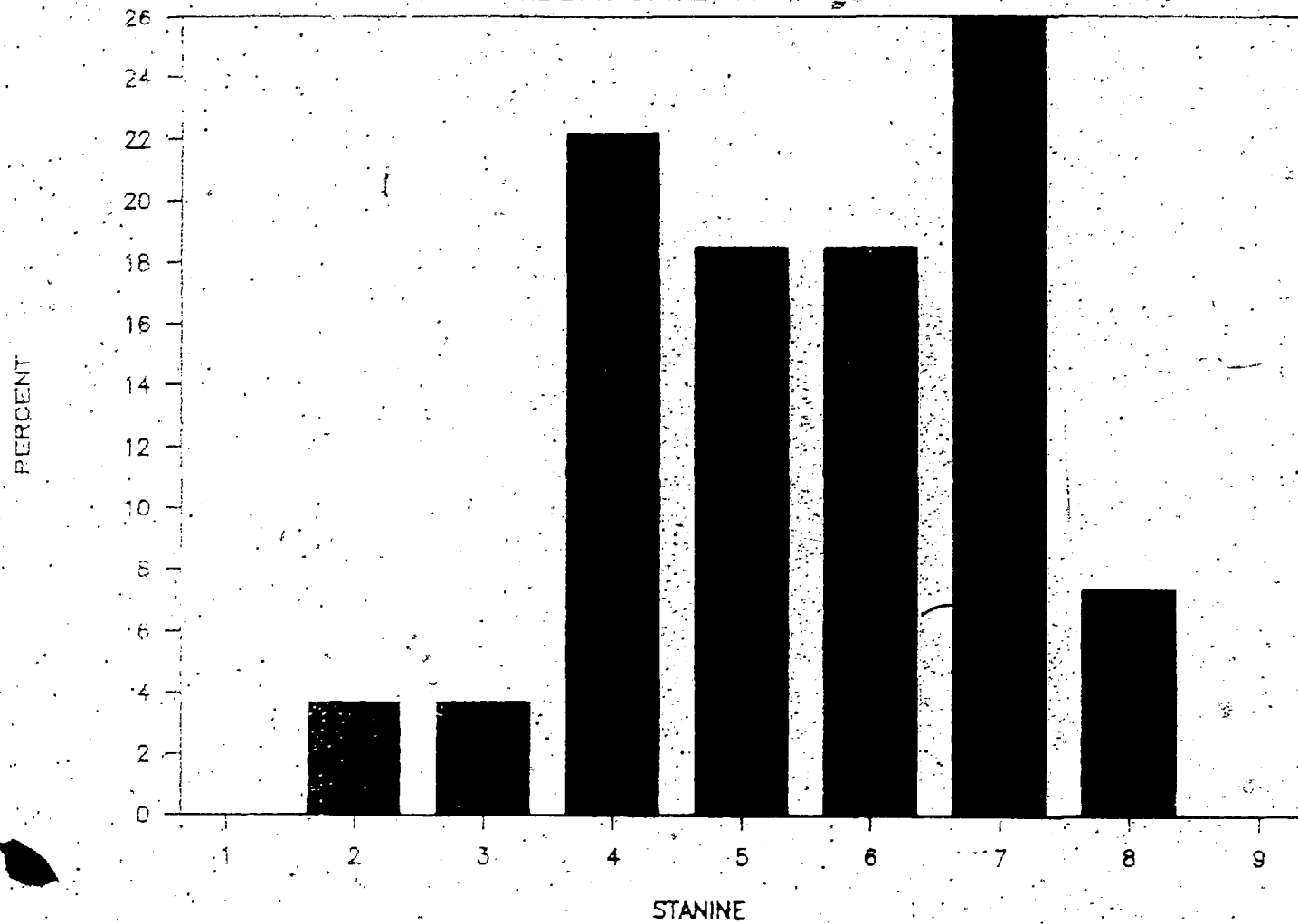
BARRINGTON GRADUATES

READING SCORES IN STANINES

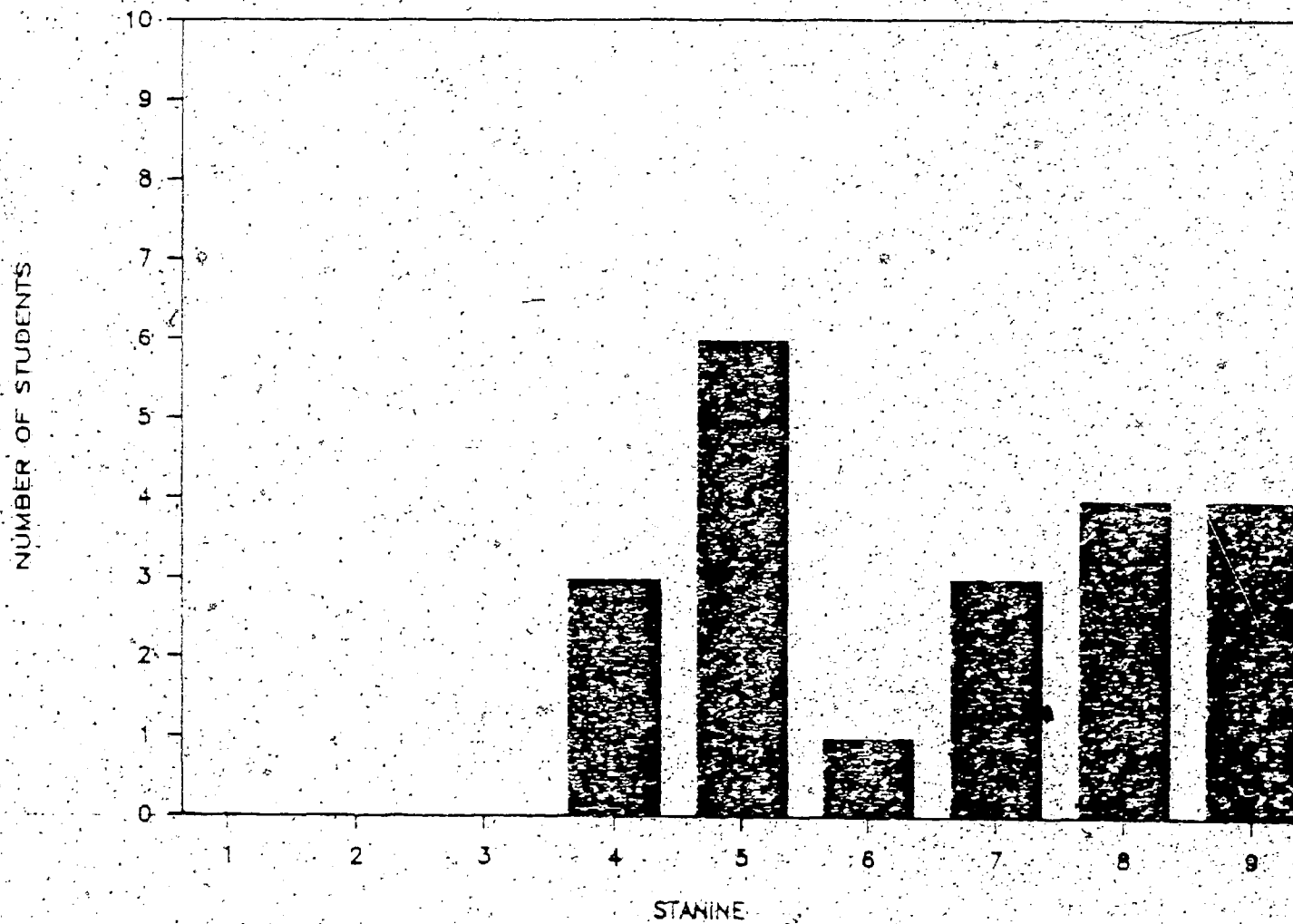


BARRINGTON GRADUATES

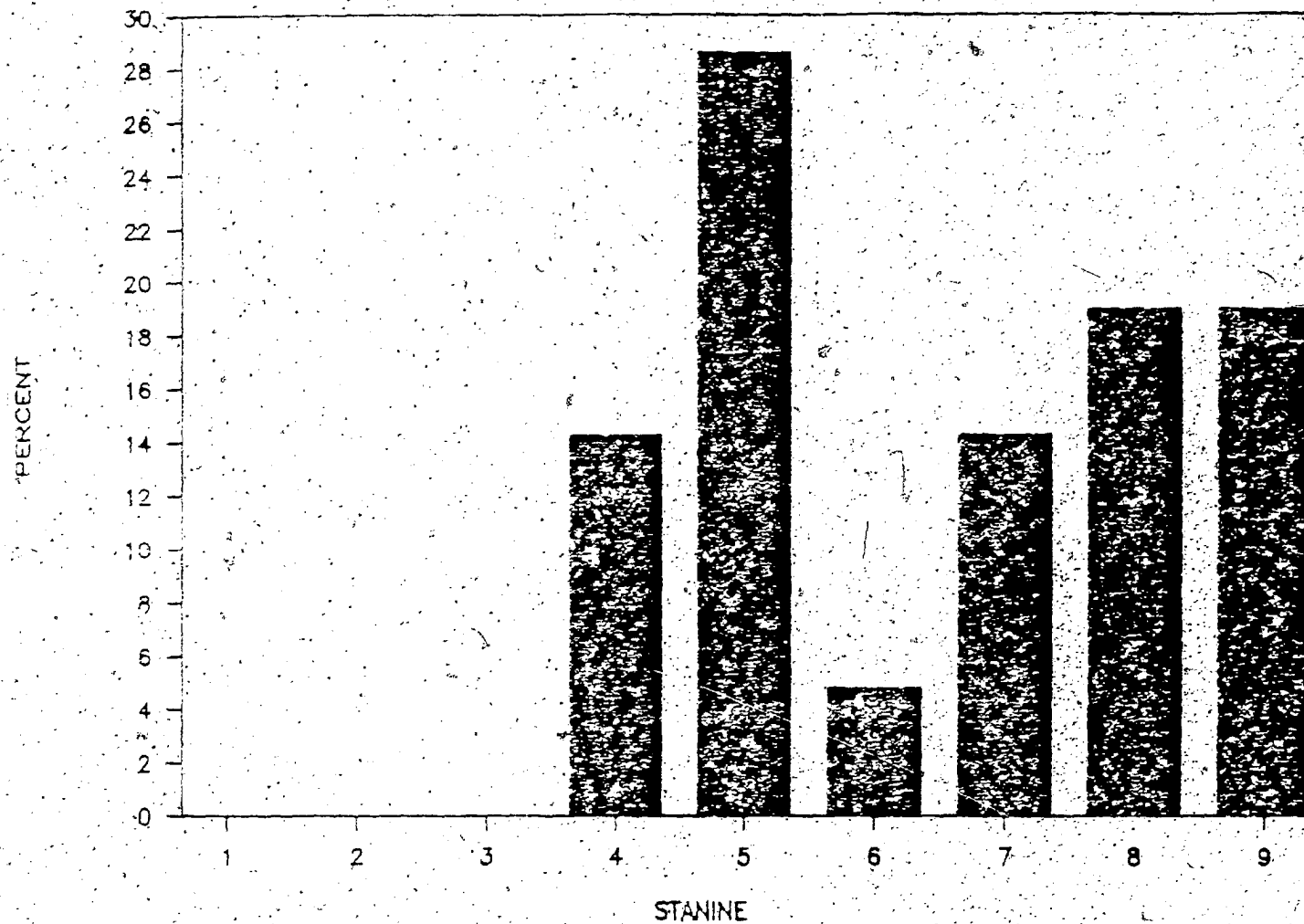
READING SCORES IN STANINES



READING SCORES OF LOCKEPORT GRADUATES

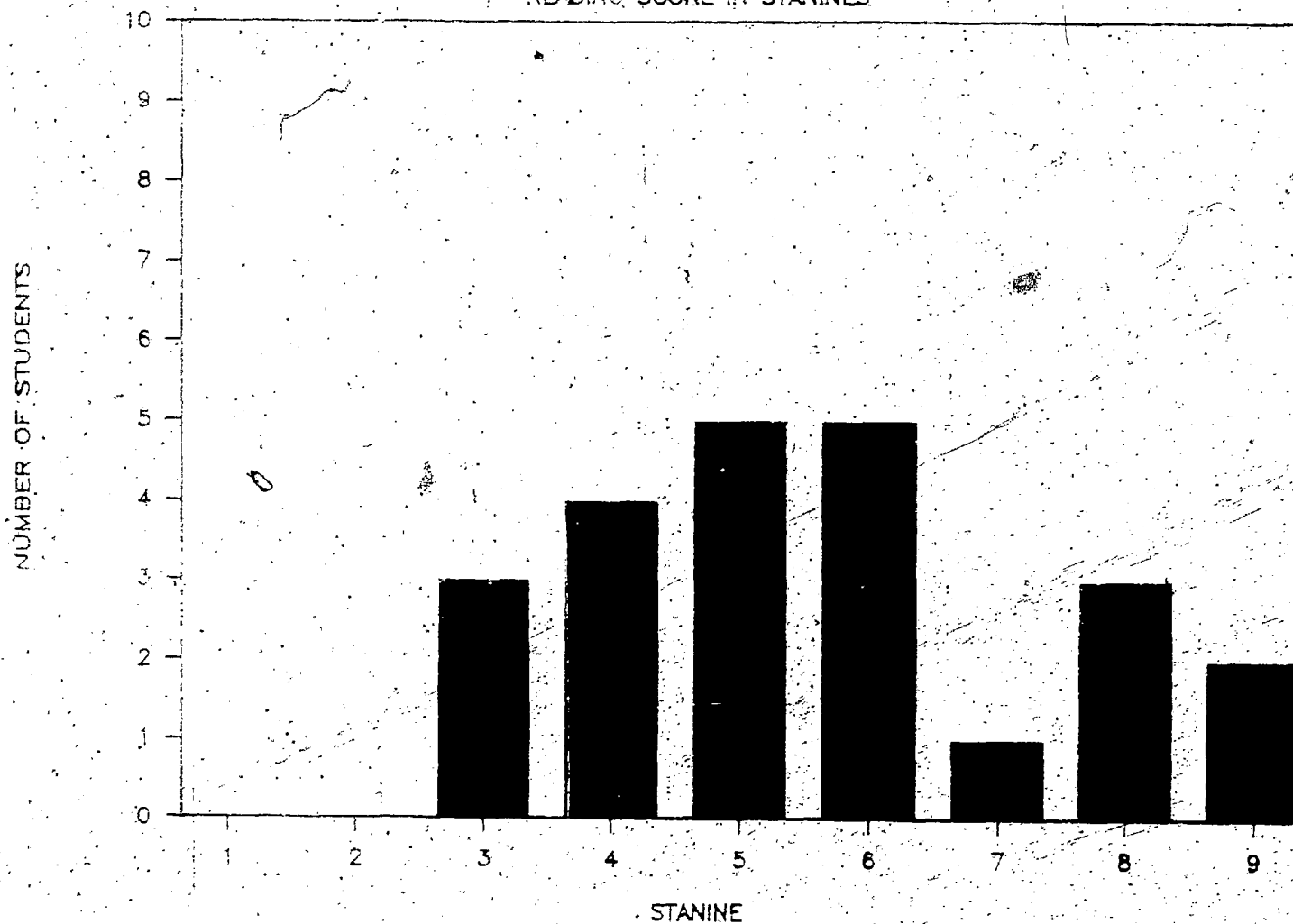


READING SCORES OF LOCKEPORT GRADUATES



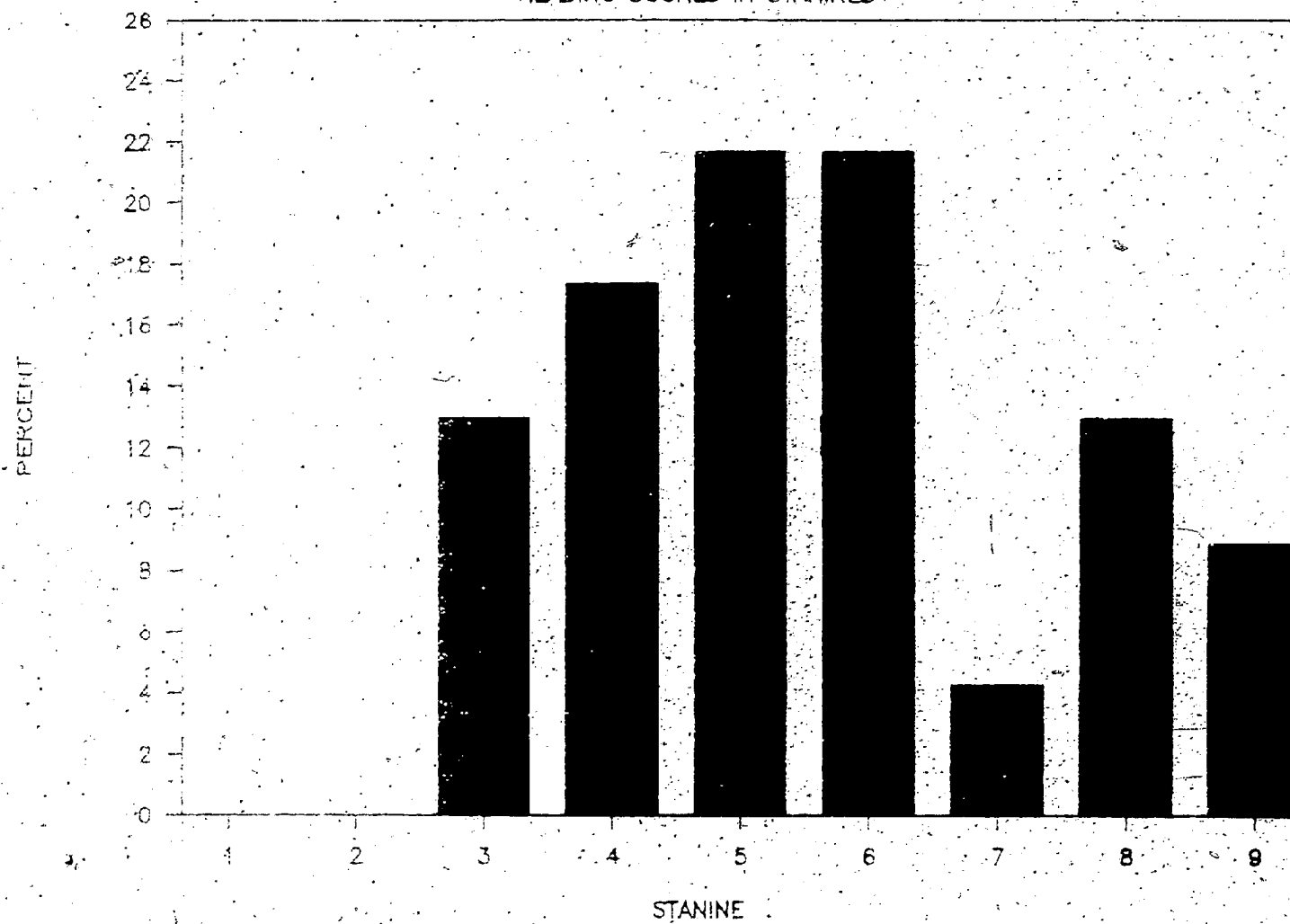
SHELBURNE GRADUATES

READING SCORE IN STANINES



SHELBURNE GRADUATES

READING SCORES IN STANINES



ABSENTEEISM

The rate of absenteeism for the dropouts from the schools under study were as follows:

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Barrington Municipal High School (BMHS) | 9.3 days/year |
| Lockeport Regional High School (LRHS) | 9.4 days/year |
| Shelburne Regional High School (SRHS) | 15.1 days/year |

The rate of absenteeism for the graduates from the schools under study were as follows:

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Barrington Municipal High School (BMHS) | 6.7 days/year (26/69)* |
| Lockeport Regional High School (LRHS) | 5.1 days/year (12/30) |
| Shelburne Regional High School (SRHS) | 6.9 days/year (23/54) |

The above statistics were obtained from recordings made on the cumulative record cards. The most consistent data was obtained from the elementary records.

* refers to the number of graduates surveyed (numerator) out of the total class of graduates (denominator).

FEEDER SCHOOLS

In this study it was found that the feeder schools that were geographically closest to the high school had the fewest dropouts.

The Barrington Passage Elementary School has the lowest percentage of dropouts of the Barrington Municipal Higher feeder schools:

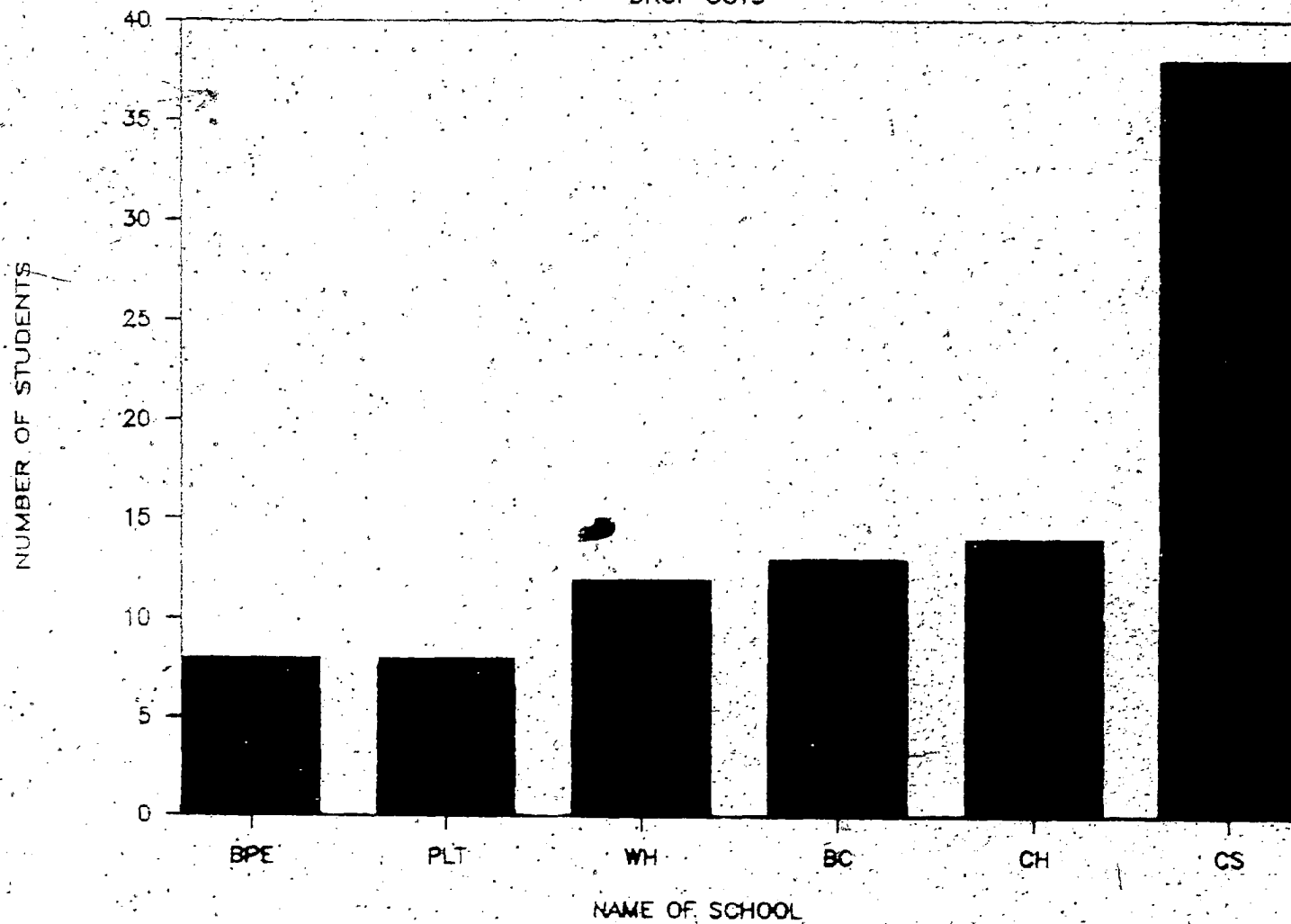
The Lockeport Elementary School had the lowest percentage of dropouts of the Lockeport Regional High Feeder schools,

The Shelburne Elementary School had the lowest percentage of dropouts of the Shelburne Regional High feeder schools.

Both the Lockeport Elementary and the Shelburne Elementary schools are on the same "campus" as their parent high school.

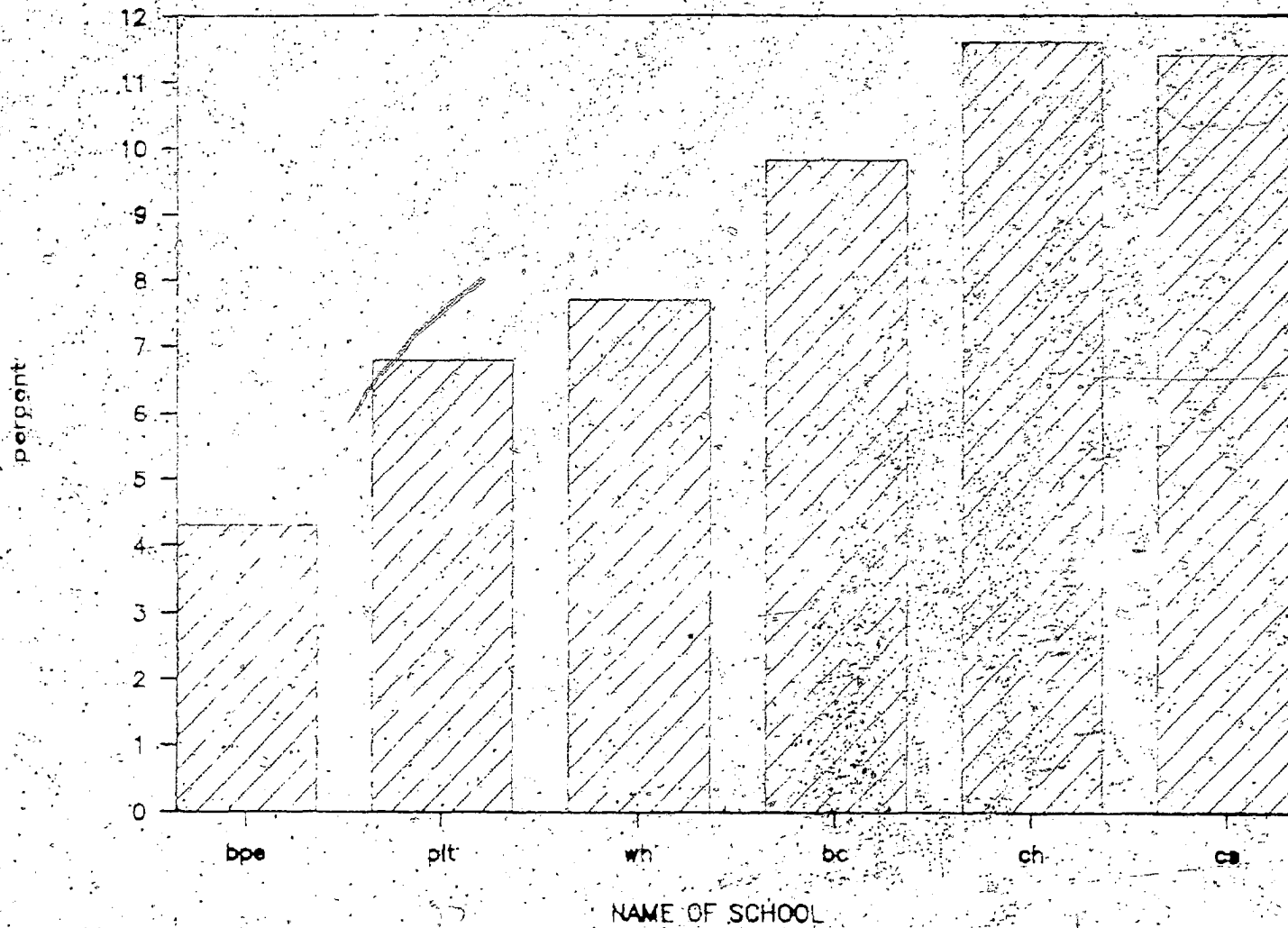
BMHS FEEDER SCHOOLS

DROP OUTS

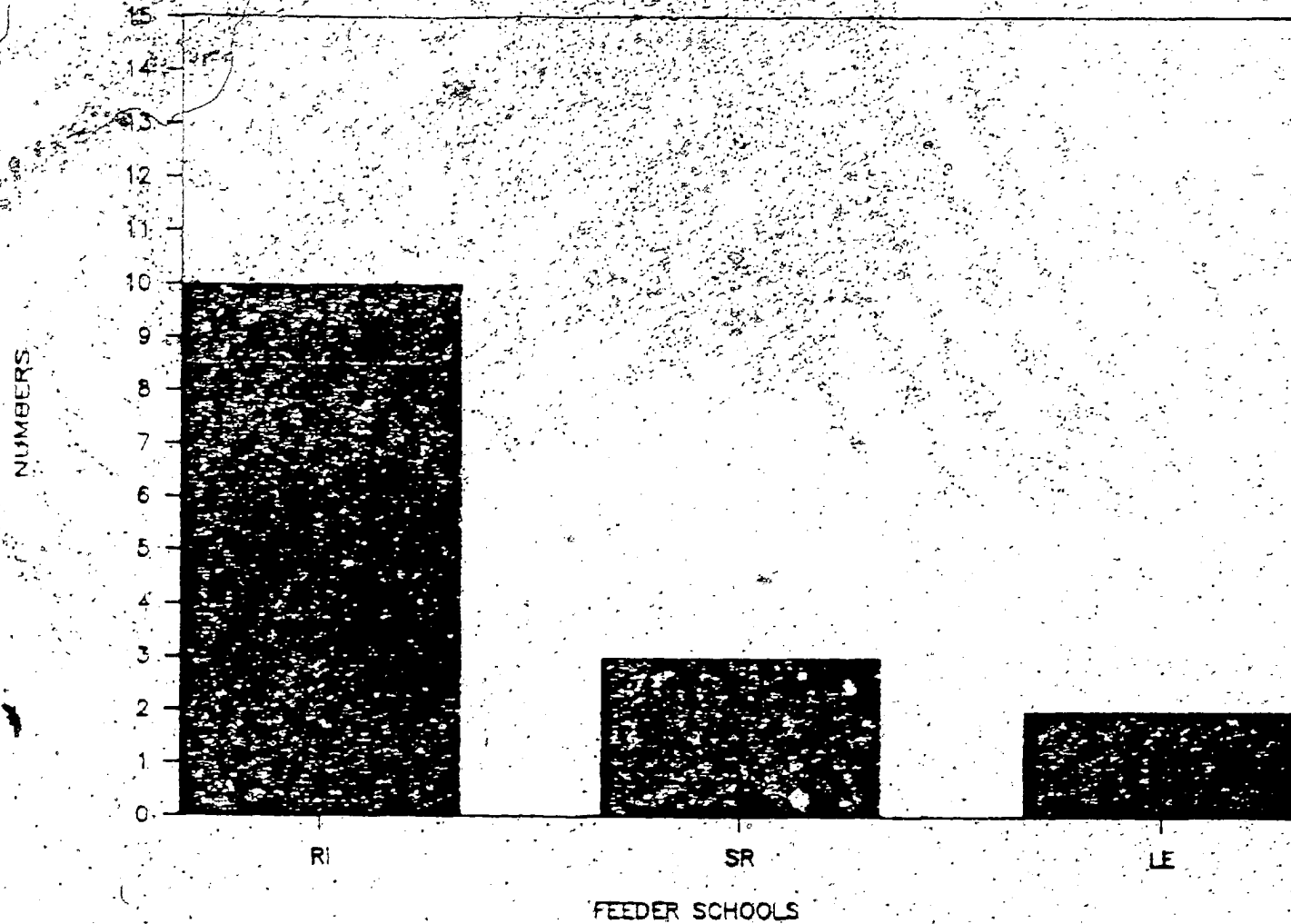


BMHS FEEDER SCHOOLS

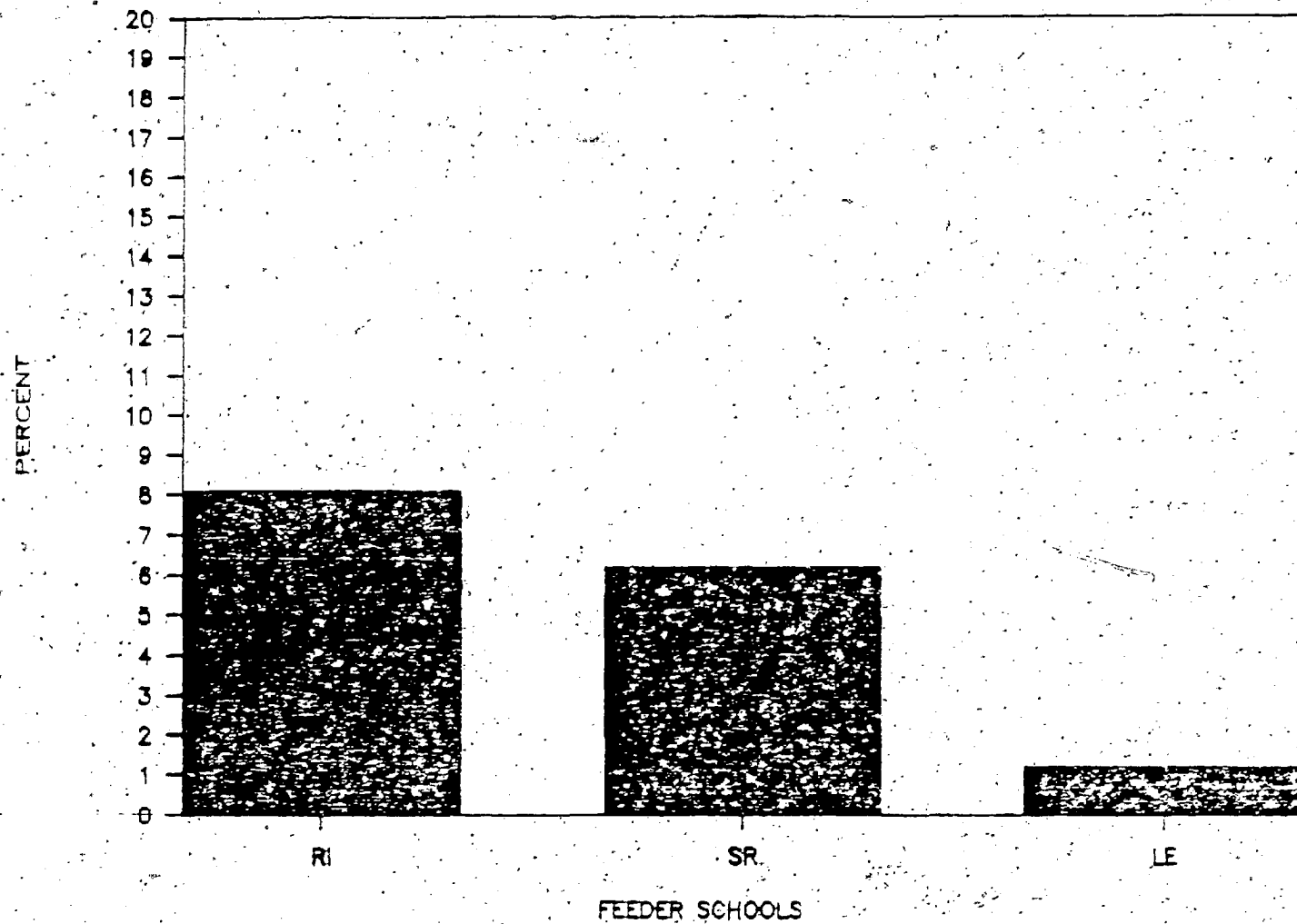
DROP OUTS



DROPOUTS FROM LOCKEPORT FEEDER SCHOOLS

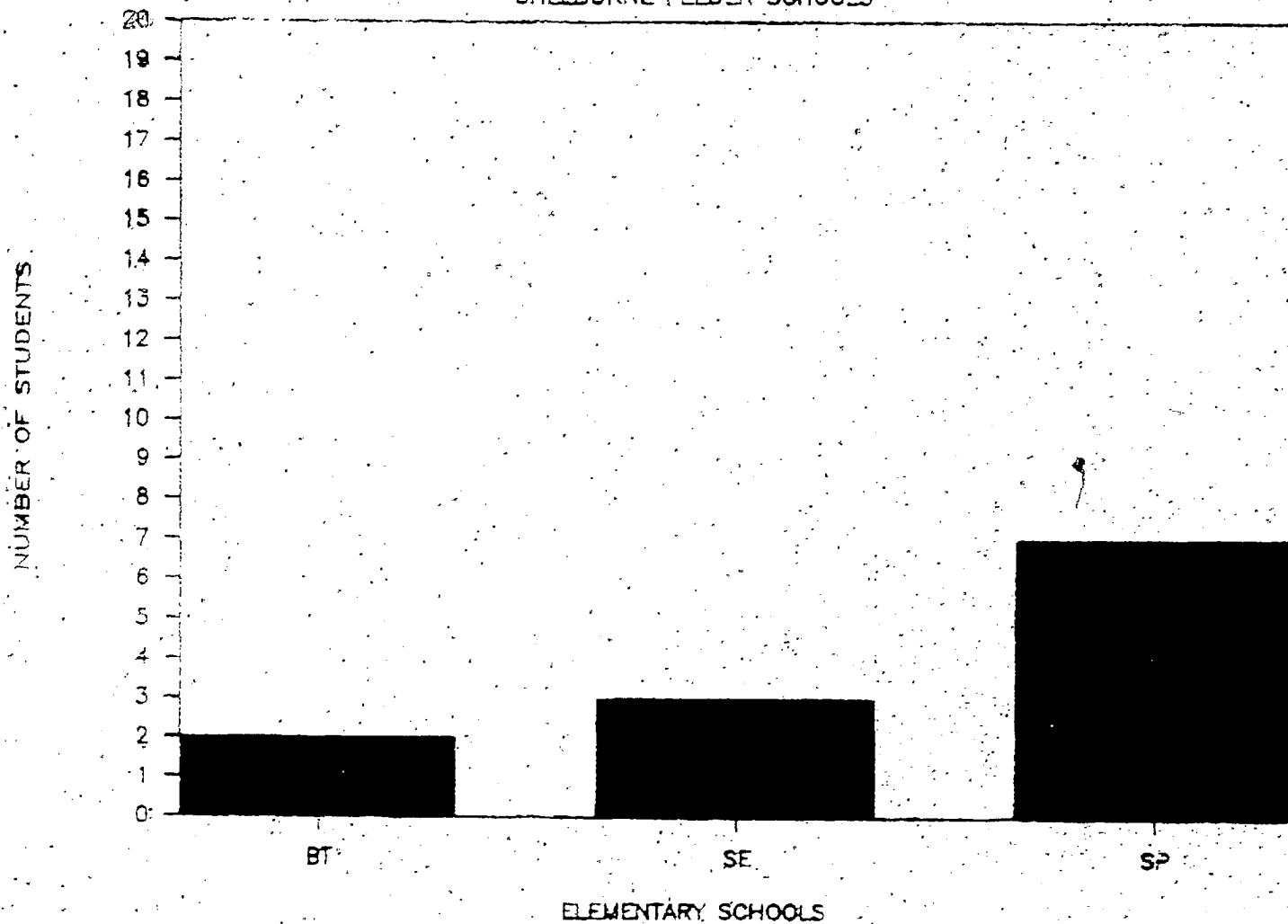


DROPOUTS FROM LOCKEPORT FEEDER SCHOOLS



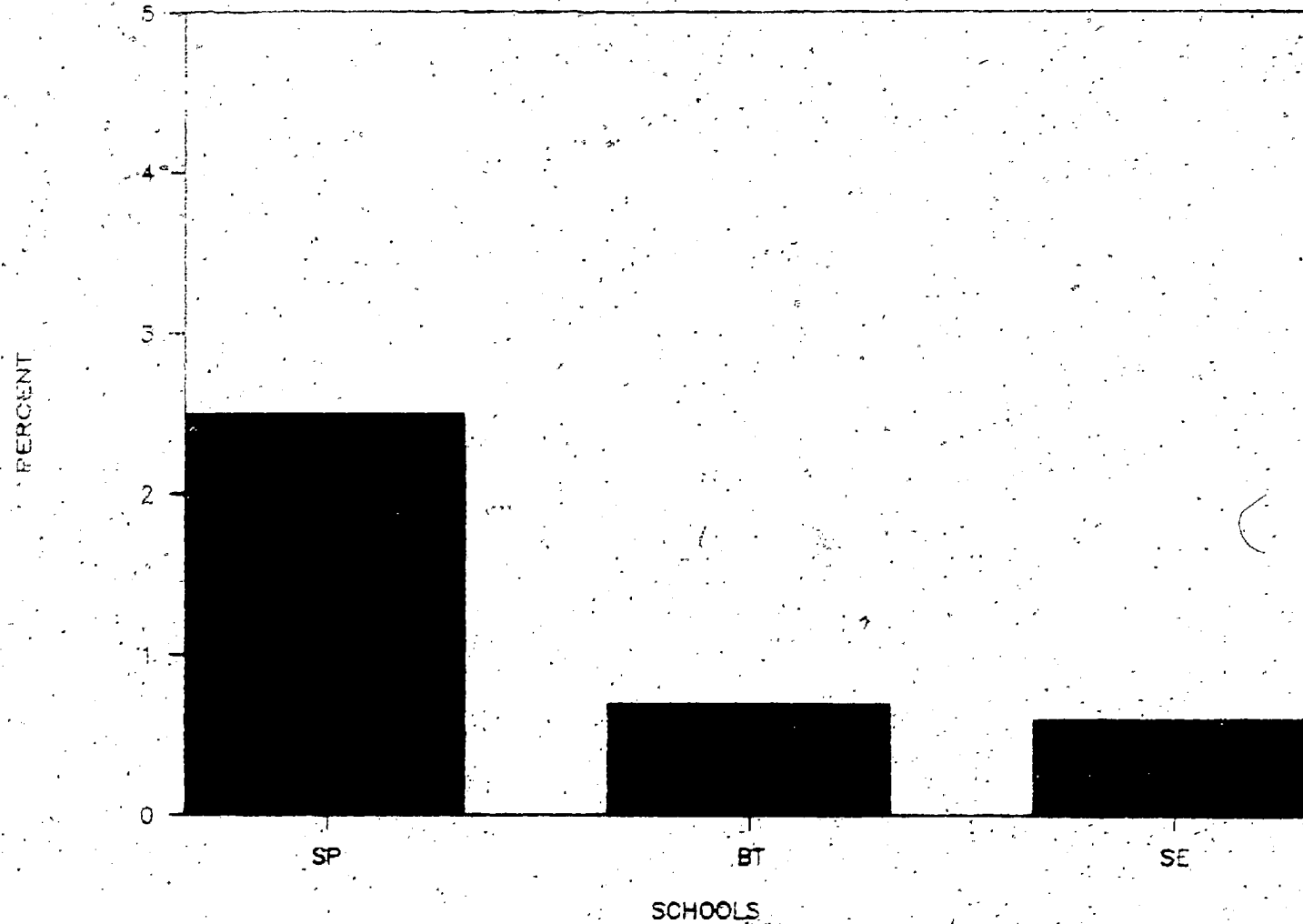
DROPOUTS

SHELBURNE FEEDER SCHOOLS



PERCENTAGE DROPOUTS

SHELburne FEEDER SCHOOLS



Discussion

There is no significant difference with respect to sex of the dropout.

Race was not a factor in this study.

It was found that almost 60 percent of the dropouts were between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. This also concurs with what has been found by other researchers.

Almost 20 percent of the students dropped out during Term 2. More significant was the fact that the greatest degree of dropping out took place during the summer vacation. Research also found the same result.

Another aspect of time was that of the grade level at the time of dropping out. Two schools reported that more than 50 percent of the dropping out occurred in the junior high grades whereas with the other school more than 50 percent of the dropping out took place in the senior high grades. What has been found by other researchers revealed that most of the dropping out took place in the junior high grades.

A significantly high percent of dropouts had fathers who were employed in the fishing industry whereas there was an under representation of dropouts with fathers in business.

With respect to family size, the dropouts came from relatively large families. Two schools had dropouts where 50 percent of the families had more than four members

besides the dropout themselves. This result is similar to that found by other researchers which implied that the larger the family the higher the chances of dropping out.

The largest failure rate occurred in grades seven and eight. There was a notable failure rate in the first grade of school. Similar to the findings of other researchers, failure occurred mostly between grades four to eight.

Dropping out occurred most frequently in the junior high grades, with grade eight having the highest dropout rate in the three schools.

Dropouts had a fairly high degree of involvement in school related extracurricular activities. This was contrary to research. One particular school had over a 60 percent involvement in extracurricular activities by their dropouts.

Intelligence was not an important characteristic in this study. Other research also substantiated this finding.

An appreciable number of dropouts had a reading score below a stanine of five. This characteristic may be worthwhile monitoring especially at and beyond grade three level as students become independent readers. What has been found by other researchers indicates the importance of this characteristic. Students who went on to graduate from high school had a higher reading score than the dropouts.

Dropouts were absent more than graduates. This finding coincided with the research about this characteristic.

A new characteristic of dropouts identified in the study was that of feeder schools. Feeder schools with the lowest number of dropouts were located closest to their high school. This characteristic may be worth investigating in future dropout studies.

With respect to solutions to the problem, the important thing is for the classroom teacher and other school personnel to realize the characteristic of dropouts and attempt to reduce the statistics.

These important dropout characteristics are family size, occupation of the father, reading score, and the geographical location of the feeder schools. A dropout is not only failure on the student's part, but indeed the school itself.

References

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