Quarterly Progress Report, FY 00-01  
(July 1, 2000 – September 30, 2000)

The Consortium for Advancement of Suspended Students and their Families (CASSF) hereafter referred to, as Project SPArKs (Students and Parents Advancing Knowledge) has made significant strides in meeting its objectives. Project SPArKs is a family-centered initiative which is based on the underlying assumption that community resources can be mobilize to assist suspended students and their families in need.

There have been some changes in staff during the month of August. One of the graduate assistants (Mr. Gang Liu) resigned and relocated to Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Levander Green was hired on August 16, 2000 as our new graduate assistant. An organizational chart has been designed to give an overview of the organizational structure, so that personnel will be aware of the chain of command and whom they respond. A brochures containing information about the Project Director designed Project SPArKs.

Currently there are twenty-three (23) participants in Project SPArKs. These youth are challenging but promising. The project continues to work with students at Chewning Middle School and Southern High School. The project constantly seeks ways to assist parents who are unemployed or underemployed to help promote their quality of family life.

Presently there are eight (8) participants in the comparison group. Getting participants for this group has been an on going challenge for the project. Honorarium of $25.00 is being offer to families, as an incentive for the parents to complete the family needs assessment for the comparison group.

Continuing organizational efforts have been made to identify participants for the project. On August 21, 2000, new consent forms were given to the contact person at Southern High School and Chewning Middle School to identify additional students for the experimental and comparison groups. And on Sept. 11, 2000, new contracts were mail to parents in efforts to identify additional students in order to fulfill the goal of the project. Time is of the essence and an imperative factor to identify all participants as soon as possible.

Objective 1: To assess factors which precipitate short-term and long-term out-of-school suspension.
Implementation: Focus Groups with both schools have been conducted. We are continuing to analyze and process data collected and information received from student assessments.

Objective 2: To conduct a family-based need assessment to identify resources and support needed by students and their families.

Implementation: Ms. Zenobia Hatcher-Wilson, Project Consultant, has conducted presently nineteen (19) family assessments. The families of the participants were interviewed in their homes to gather the data needed for the assessment. The data has been entered into the SPSS program to be analyzed and processed.

Objective 3: To increase the level of self-discipline, responsibility, conflict resolution skills and self-esteem among suspended students.

Implementation: Sept. 25, 2000—Letters accompany with a consent form were sent to parents to extend a six month free membership for their child at Lewis Martial Arts. The significance of this program is to teach them how to protect themselves, but most importantly, help them to manage their anger. Dr. Debra Parker, Project Consultant, has administered a second questionnaire to each participant at the end of the schools’ first nine-week period. The questionnaire will measure the level of self-discipline, responsibility, conflict resolution skills and self esteem among suspended students in this project. This information is being used to identify ways to best meet student needs.

Objective 4: To facilitate the delivery of NCCU student support services with existing formal and informal human/support services to assist suspended students and their families.

Implementation: During fall registration, eighty-five (85) students register to participate as volunteers with Project SPArKs. Thirty-five (35) of these students have follow through to participate with the project. August 1, 2000—Letters were sent to Project SPArKs’ volunteers to invite them to mentor training September 14, 2000, twenty-four (24) NCCU students were trained by the Project Director using Durham Companions’ mentoring model. Each student was given a training manual that provided information on their role and responsibility to the participants of the project. Each student signed a pledge form to confirm his or her commitment to the project. The training session included role-playing and open dialogue for understanding the goal and purpose for Project SPArKs. (See Attachments)
Objective 5:  To better understand student-teacher interactions and its role, if any, on school suspensions.

**Implementation:** September 13, 2000 a Teachers Focus Group was held in the Criminal Justice Building, facilitated by Dr. William Roberts, Consultant Psychologist. Fifteen (15) teachers from Chewning Middle School and Southern High School participated. The discussion provided insight on the types of issues, student behaviors, and student-teacher conflict that resulted in out-of-school suspension. The staff will review report to determine implications for the project’s action. Data will be shared with school officials to discuss both teacher and student focus groups.

Objective 6:  To convene a two-week on campus Summer Institute at North Carolina Central University.

**Implementation:** Martin Luther King Leadership Summer Institute occurred during June 12 – 23, 2000.

Objective 7:  To provide support services to assist families in improving their employment status.

**Implementation:** On September 26, 2000 two (2) NCCU students volunteered to serve as Employment Specialist. The student will be assigned to work with Mr. Willie Gibson, Human Service Coordinator III, Durham County Department of Social Services. These students will be trained to work closely with the families in efforts to improve their employment status.

Objective 8:  To assess the efficiency of the delivery of human services to project participants and their families.

**Implementation:** Nothing to report.

Objective 9:  To convene an end of project conference to discuss findings and experiences with the expectation of developing a report to include related policy implications.

**Implementation:** The tentative conference date will take place in the month of March 2001 at the Radisson Governors Inn, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.
Expenditures

As of September 30, 2000, $83,068.00 has been expended during the last three months, representing 43% of the project’s budget of $193,530.00.
Table of Content

I.  Progress Report

II.  Attachments
    a.  Organizational Chart
    b.  Brochure
    c.  Letter of Consent
    d.  Contract Agreement
    e.  Honorarium Authorization Form
    f.  Mentor Training Letter
    g.  Training Manual
    h.  Pledge Form
    i.  Project Status Report