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by

Mindy J. Muñoz

December, 2012

WHAT PRINCIPALS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PREDICTING
NINTH GRADE PROMOTION FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in Professional Leadership

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Jonathan, who gives me unfailing support, patience, and understanding. Without your abiding love, encouragement and sacrifice, this challenging educational journey would have been impossible.

To my precious twins, Makenzie Belle and Jonathan Joseph, whose strength has taught me that although there are some days when it is easier to breathe than others, we always remain committed and focused—one breath at a time. Your smiles give me the courage to persevere, no matter how difficult the circumstances.

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To my sister and brother, Melissa and Trey, whose encouragement carries me through, day-by-day.

To Grand-Bob, who is always “there” for me with a kind word, a helping hand and his invaluable support.

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Abstract

There is a significant disparity in accounting for the dropout reduction rates and their overall rate of growth among the population for Hispanic high school students. The purpose of the study was to examine the factors that impact the advancement or promotion of Hispanic ninth graders into 10th grade. In the district studied, this promotion is based on the number of credits earned. For the purpose of this study, successful 9th grade promotion was defined as whether or not the student advanced from 9th to 10th grade with their entering 9th grade cohort of students.

This study examined Hispanic students from intermediate schools in grades six through eight that were drawn from a large, suburban school district in the Southwest region of the United States. The study sample included nine intermediate schools. Independent variables included the results of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (Lexile level - reading/language arts and Quantile level - mathematics), the attendance rates, and the Limited English Proficiency status of a student. A review of related literature provided background information regarding the issues surrounding changes in population demographics and high school freshmen dropouts. Achievement scores in eighth grade, their daily attendance in eighth grade, and their LEP status were the measured variables. This quantitative research utilized archival data to analyze the relationship between the independent variables (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills results, attendance rates, and the Limited English Proficiency status for a student) and student success as measured by advancement from 9th to 10th grade. Data analysis considered each

independent variable to determine if there was an influence on academic success.

Implications and recommendations for future studies were discussed by the researcher.

Keywords: Hispanic, 9th grade bulge, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Lexile and Quantile level, attendance rates, Limited English Proficiency

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in elementary school, the academic grades earned by a student may provide insight into future performance and provide a realistic, longitudinal record for diagnosing potential learning and achievement roadblocks. In addition, such indicators may provide information about the success in future grade levels for students. First-time ninth graders typically enter high school during the fall or spring semester, and the typical public high school graduation plan is designed for completion in four years. Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator of how schools are performing. Yet, recently these statistics have undergone rigorous scrutiny. The close examination of these numbers reveals the extent of the current graduation crisis in American high schools. According to Jerold (2006), research revealed that poor academic performance and educational disengagement are reliable predictors of whether students leave high school with or without a formalized diploma.

Statement of the Problem

Since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) became federal law in January 2002, high school graduation rates have played an increasingly important role in educational policy circles (Swanson, 2004). According to the National High School Center (2011), the goals of NCLB were to ensure that all students achieve at the highest levels and that they graduate from high school prepared for college, work, and beyond. NCLB focuses on strengthening accountability by requiring the state to implement statewide accountability systems covering all students and schools. Furthermore, as a

mandate of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the state of Texas has instituted the Student Success Initiative (SSI). This particular initiative was enacted by the 76th Texas Legislature in 1999 and was later modified by the 81st Texas Legislature in 2009 (Texas Education Agency, 2011a). The SSI grade advancement requirements apply specifically to the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading and mathematics tests at grades five and eight. The SSI also mandates students to meet requirements in reading and mathematics for fifth and eighth grades in order to be promoted academically.

As educators and researchers work together to translate student dropout rate numbers into practical, useful statistics, one message is clear: too many students are being left behind or simply being lost from the education system. In 2000, the national percentage of students between the ages of 15-24 classified as dropouts was 10.9%. This equates to over three million students who did not graduate from high school. For the graduating class of 2009-10 in the state of Texas, 119,836 students were lost from public school enrollment. Hispanic and African American students historically have comprised a larger proportion of students leaving school without a diploma (Johnson, 2010a). During the past 30 years, according to Aud, et al. (2010), 3 out of every 10 Hispanic students between the ages of 16-24 in the United States were not enrolled in a school setting and lacked a formal high school credential. This translates to 30% of the Hispanic population in an eight-year age range.

According to the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media (2009), approximately three-fourths of the 2003-04 freshman class graduated from a public high school within four years, earning a formal high school diploma during the 2006-07 school year. In addition, The Alliance for Excellent Education (2009) believed that over one

million American students who enter into the ninth grade will fail to graduate with their peers during the four-year period. Johnson (2010b) summarized the research from the Intercultural Development Research Association that revealed approximately every 3 out of 10 students from the freshman class of 2006-07 exited school prior to graduating with a high school diploma. The literature also suggested that the first year of high school was a critical transition period (Allensworth & Easton, 2007). More importantly, students who succeeded during their first year experienced increased success in subsequent school years. Consequently, they were more likely to graduate during the four-year time period with their cohort peers. Additional literature highlighted a number of discouraging trends, namely that ninth grade students held the record when compared to the other grade levels as having the lowest grade point averages, missing the most classes, having the highest number of failing grades, and holding the highest number of discipline referrals (Fritzer & Herbst, 1996; McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010). The literature also showed the transition into ninth grade from eighth grade as particularly important to the future success of the student.

During the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, grade nine had the highest enrollment per grade level due, in part, to grade level retention when compared with other grade levels. Grade level retention refers to when a student is not promoted to the subsequent grade level. In 2010-11, 390,655 students were enrolled in grade nine (TEA, 2011b). This high level of ninth grade enrollment may indicate an increased retention rate for freshman students, a higher dropout rate for students after completing grade nine, or it may be a combination of both phenomena (Blue & Cook, 2004). The Intercultural Development Research Association believed that the attrition gap between the rates of

Caucasian and Hispanic students increased from 18% to 24% (Johnson, 2010a). Attrition rates among ninth grade students were more pronounced in urban, high-poverty schools. For example, Maurer and Lillie wrote in *Education Week* (2006) that 40% of dropout students in low-income secondary schools left after the ninth grade.

The 2010 U. S. Census Bureau reported a rise in the national population. Over a 10-year calculating period, it increased from 281.4 million to 308.7 million people. This was an increase in population of 9.7% (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011). The same increase was also representative of the prison population. According to Harlow (2003), based on the total number of Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American inmates, minorities accounted for the highest number of the state prison population not completing high school nor holding a General Educational Development (GED) as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Percentage of Prison Inmates without a High School Diploma or a GED

Ethnicity	Inmates Without a Formal High School Diploma or a GED
Caucasian	27%
African American	44%
Hispanic	53%

According to Petersen and Assanie (2005), the population of Texas is faster growing, younger, and more diverse than any other state in the nation, which may lead to both positive and negative consequences. As past literature has shown, these rapid

demographic changes present challenges for the future. This comes as no surprise to current educators in the classroom and in administrative settings.

National demographic and ethnicity statistics also highlight that the Southern United States has a more culturally diverse population when compared to other sections of the country. Hispanics are expected to become the majority population group by 2020 (Petersen & Assanie, 2005). Student enrollment data from the TEA (2011b) showed that during the 2010–11 school year, the Hispanic student population accounted for 50.2% of the total 4.9 million students in the public school system. That means that 2,459,800 students of the total enrolled student population are Hispanic in origin. Additionally, this trend is represented in the overall population of Texas. According to Petersen and Assanie (2005), the Texas State Data Center forecasted that by 2020 Hispanics will comprise the majority of the population of Texas while Caucasians will become the second most populous ethnicity. Furthermore, by the year 2040, Hispanics will account for over 50% of all Texans while only one-third of the population will be Caucasian (Murdock et al., 2002). Due to this anticipated growth, it may be assumed that the public school demographics will also change significantly in the classrooms.

The data for this study were gathered in Harris County. According to Ennis et al. (2011), the growing Hispanic population in Harris County resulted from the exponential and continued growth among Hispanic residents. Harris County, the fifth largest metropolitan area in the United States, is currently home to over 4.1 million residents from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, Harris County residents in 2010 of Hispanic or Latino origin were calculated at a rate of 40.8%. When compared to the U.S. Hispanic population at 16.8%, there was a difference in Harris County of 24%.

Significance of the Study

The transition to high school has become more important because of the high rate of course failures and dropout rates in the ninth grade. The single most predictive indicator of high school dropout is the academic standing of the student during the ninth grade (Williamston, 2010). The move to a larger environment, the reduction in personal support, and greater academic challenges essentially can be overwhelming for these students trying to find their way through uncharted territory (Smith, 2007). Smith also asserted that the experiences of the students in their first year of high school often predicted their success throughout the remainder of their high school years and beyond. Smith supported that a difficult ninth grade transition may result in flagging academic performance, increased dropout rates, and reduced on-time graduation. Therefore, understanding the difficulties faced by ninth grade students is critical, particularly in large, comprehensive high schools where this failure rate is commonplace (Smith, 2007). Typically referred to as the *ninth grade bulge*, many students repeat their ninth grade term. Consequently, many of these students drop out by their 10th grade year, thereby leading to a decrease in the overall number of 10th grade students.

The implications of dropping out of high school without a diploma have severe repercussions for students and society, thereby resulting in a variety of social and economic failures. Literature clearly demonstrated that those who do graduate from high school significantly increased their prospects for a productive, stable, and successful future (National High School Center, 2011). As summarized by Harlow (2003), a minority of state (prison) inmates were generally less educated than their Caucasian peers. Approximately 44% of African American state prison inmates and 53% of Hispanic

inmates had not graduated from high school or received a GED diploma compared to 27% of Caucasians in state prisons.

According to Aud et al. (2010), dropouts were more likely, on average, to be unemployed when compared to their high school graduate counterparts and earned less money when they did secure work. One way to reduce the wage gap is through education and training. "...every dollar invested in the higher education system returns five dollars or more to the Texas economy" (Harlow, 2003, p. 5). Conversely, statistics also showed that 65% of the convicted populations in the United States were high school dropouts and that lack of a formalized education was one of the strongest predictors of criminal activity. A dropout was eight times more likely to be incarcerated when compared to a high school graduate and nearly 20 times more likely to be incarcerated when compared to a college graduate. "It is essential that the education system keep up with the changing demographics within the state" (Petersen & Assanie, 2005, p. 42).

According to Jerald (2006), most dropouts were on the path to failure in their middle grade years and engaged in risky behaviors that strongly correlated to dropping out in high school. He also suggested that various researchers identified specific risk factors, such as low attendance or a failing grade, which may signal the potential for future dropouts. Some educators believe the current dropout rate is sustained by extraneous factors that lie beyond the internal locus of control for students (i.e., family issues, personal difficulties, and academic challenges). Other educators believe graduation rates can be raised in the educational system, as a whole, by increasing academic rigor in the classrooms. "Academic rigor is determined not just by what is taught, but how it is taught and how it is assessed...a rigorous curriculum is focused,

coherent, and appropriately challenging” (Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media, 2009, p. 3). In other words, raise the educational bar by elevating expectations and increasing academic standards.

It also means changing the expectations and behavior of our students, faculty, administrators, and leaders. We need to have the mindset that all our children must go to college or get technical training in order to be prepared for 21st century jobs. (Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media, 2009, p. 6)

In order to accomplish this feat, proficiency levels of students must be set in subjects such as English, mathematics, science and social studies. With the changes in national, state, and local demographics, the well-documented *ninth grade bulge* shows there exists a dire need to research the effects of variables on Hispanic eighth graders in order to discover the contributing factors for successful ninth grade promotion.

Research Questions

The lack of research on Hispanic students that focuses on variables potentially predicting successful completion of 9th grade with their entering cohort raises many questions. In discovering the answers, the research study intends to inform educators about factors that contribute to student success, not only in ninth grade, but also in being promoted to 10th grade and beyond. The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. What impact does the academic achievement of 8th grade Hispanic students, as measured by Lexile and Quantile levels, have on their 9th grade promotion to 10th grade?

2. What impact does 8th grade attendance have on Hispanic students' promotion from 9th to 10th grade?
3. What impact does the Limited English Proficiency status of Hispanic students have on their promotion from 9th to 10th grade?

Purpose of the Study

According to Murdock et al. (2002), public education will change rapidly in the coming decades as the population changes. While students with certain personal characteristics will more likely dropout, the immediate causes for leaving school are educational in nature (Jerold, 2006). The purpose of this study was to predict if academic achievement in 8th grade, daily attendance in 8th grade, and LEP status for Hispanic students had an impact on their 9th grade promotion to 10th grade with their entering cohort. As reiterated by Jerold (2006):

Students who earn failing grades and low-test scores, who fall behind in course credits, and who are held back one or more times are much less likely to graduate. The same is true for students who exhibit high absenteeism, poor classroom behavior, and bad relationships with teachers and peers. Disengagement from school and poor academic performance often are closely related, with each reinforcing the other. (p. 2)

The following three indicators were investigated within the study:

1. Hispanic students' eighth grade academic achievement status (as measured by Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Lexile, and Quantile level);
2. The daily attendance of Hispanic students while in eighth grade; and

3. Hispanic students' LEP status (i.e., whether they are receiving English Language Learner services).

This study is unique in the research of two things: 1) the use of Lexile and Quantile Levels and 2) the use of reclassification of promotion standards versus pass/fail on the statewide assessment.

Terms and Definitions

The following terms are used throughout the study. Due to the abundance of terms found throughout this study, the table format is large and spans several pages. Additionally, due to size limitations, the font has been altered to 11-point Times New Roman. A brief description of each term is provided below in Table 2:

Table 2

Terms and Definitions Used Throughout the Study

Term	Definition
Attrition Rates	Measures the number of students lost from enrollment between two points in time (e.g., 9th grade and 12th grade enrollment four years later). Attrition data are similar to cohort data (Johnson, 2010b).

Table 2 (continued)

Terms and Definitions Used Throughout the Study

Cohort	A cohort is simply identified as a group having something in common. For the purposes of this study, however, a cohort is defined as students entering the ninth grade in high school during the same academic year.
Compulsory Attendance	According to Texas Education Agency (Anderson, 2011), compulsory attendance applies to students who are at least six years old as of September 1 of the applicable school year. The law requires a student to attend public school until the student's 18th birthday, unless the student is exempt under §25.086. This requirement is enforced through §§25.093 and 25.094.
Grade Point Average (GPA)	This term represents the academic average number of grade points a student earns for each graded high school course. Dividing the total grade points earned by the student by the total course credits attempted determines the GPA of the student.
Graduation	Individuals who have satisfactorily completed the requirements of an educational program and have been awarded a certificate, diploma, or degree indicate graduation.
Hispanic	As defined by the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics are those people who classify themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the Census questionnaire (Ennis et al., 2011).
Lexile Level	A Lexile level is the most widely adopted reading metric, measuring both reader ability and text difficulty on the same scale. Lexile levels range from below 200L for beginning readers and text to above 1700L for advanced readers and text.
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	For the purposes of this study, LEP is defined as whether the student received instruction in mainstreamed classes and/or classes conducted in the native language of the student. Some schools also refer to these students using the term English Language Learner (ELL). For the purpose of this study, the terms are used interchangeably.
Ninth Grade	For this study, ninth grade is defined as the first year at a 9–12 grade high school campus
Quantile Level	The Quantile framework is instrument-independent, meaning all mathematics tests and instructional programs have the ability to report the scores of the student as Quantiles. For the purposes of this study, the specific assessment used was the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test.
Student Success Initiative (SSI)	As published and defined by Texas Education Agency (2011a), the Student Success Initiative was enacted by the 76th Texas Legislature in 1999 and modified by the 81st Texas Legislature in 2009. SSI grade advancement requirements apply to the TAKS reading and mathematics tests at grades five and eight.
Success	This term is defined as the student receiving a passing grade and being promoted to the 10th grade immediately following their 9th grade cohort year. Specifically stated, "Successful" students have sufficient course credits at the end of their 9th grade school year to be promoted to the 10th grade.

Table 2 (continued)

Terms and Definitions Used Throughout the Study

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)	The TAKS assessments are designed to measure the extent to which a student has learned and is able to apply the defined knowledge and skills at each tested grade level (Texas Education Agency, 2011c). TAKS is the state assessment measure used in this study.
Texas Education Code §25.085	Compulsory attendance applies to students who are at least six years old as of September 1 of the applicable school year. The law requires that students attend public school until their 18th birthday (Anderson, 2011).
Texas Education Code §25.092 (the “Ninety Percent” Rule)	Conditions credit for a class on a student’s attendance for at least 90% of the days a class is offered. A student who attends for at least 75%, but less than 90%, of total days a given class is offered may receive credit if that same student completes a plan approved by the principal. This principal-approved plan provides specially modified contingencies for the student to meet the instructional requirements of the class (Anderson, 2011).

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the topic, statement of the problem, the need and purpose of the research, and definitions and terms used throughout the study. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature focused on the research questions. Chapter Three explains the methods used in the study, a description of the participants used in the study, and defines the data collection and instrumentation used. Chapter Four presents the results with an analysis of the data. Finally, Chapter Five provides possible limitations of the study, recommendations for future studies and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The persistence of a high rate of dropouts among Hispanic students, along with the predictions and evidence of rapidly increasing number of Hispanic students, signals an increase in the overall percentage of dropouts. Non-completion of grades, especially at the high school level, limits employment opportunities and earnings of young individuals (Snyder & Hoffman, 2001). Dagget and Hasselbring (2007) also reiterated this belief when they wrote:

The reading requirements for entry-level jobs were higher than the reading ability level of about 75% of eleventh grade American students. To be specific, entry-level reading requirements fell across a range of between approximately 1200L to 1500L, while the 75th percentile of 11th grade students fell at just over 1200L. (p. 4)

In their 2004 report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*, Biancarosa and Snow (2006) noticed that students with below-level reading skills were twice as likely to drop out of school as those who read at or above the appropriate level grade level of reading proficiency. Most of the 3,000 secondary students who drop out of school every school day in the U.S. are poor readers.

Within the context of this literacy crisis in American schools, the transition of the students into the ninth grade represents a critical phase in their lives and in their academic careers. The move to a larger environment, the challenges associated with greater personal issues, a reduced reliance on parents and/or guardians, and the greater academic

challenges posed by high school courses is often too problematic for incoming ninth grade students (Smith, 2007). Smith also pointed out that the experiences of students in their first year of high school often predicted their success throughout high school and beyond.

According to Stutz (2010), retention rates for African American and Hispanic students in Texas in 2009 were more than twice that for White students, as more than three-fourths of all students retained were African American or Hispanic. The pattern of grade-level advancement for ninth graders is a trend that is repeated in secondary schools across the nation (Maurer & Lillie, 2006). In Texas, “ During both the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, Grade 9 had the highest enrollment, in part because of high grade-level retention in Grade 9 compared to other grades. In 2010-11, 390,655 students were enrolled in Grade 9” (TEA, 2011b, ix). Due to the large number of enrolled freshman, combined with concern for these particular students to advance to their next grade level, the literature is beginning to reveal the reasons why Hispanic students are dropping out at such high rates. However, data have shown that students fail ninth grade more than any other high school grade. Many students are retained, creating what is known as the *ninth grade bulge* and leave school by 10th grade, thereby contributing to the *tenth grade dip* (National High School Center, 2011).

Students who graduate from high school significantly increase their prospects for a productive, stable, and successful future (National High School Center, 2011). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) predicted that of those who fail to graduate with their peers, only one-quarter eventually will earn a diploma, one-quarter will earn a GED certificate, and the remaining half will not have either credential.

This research study examined how annual academic achievement scores in eighth grade by Hispanic students, their daily attendance in eighth grade, and their LEP status may be used to predict whether promotion to the next grade level will occur.

Allensworth and Easton (2007) reported that academic success in ninth grade course work is highly predictive of eventual graduation. This chapter reports upon the current literature relevant to the stated purpose of the study and is divided into four sections: (1) high school dropout literature; (2) the academic achievement of a student as supported by their state assessment scores in reading (Lexile level) and mathematical (Quantile level) capabilities; (3) eighth grade attendance; and (4) the LEP status of a student.

Additionally, it reviews data and other historical works focusing on Hispanic students, which support successful completion of the ninth grade year.

High School Dropout

Guzman (2001) states that, Hispanics are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In his work, Guzman (2001) also stated the Hispanic population increased by 58% in 10 years, going from 22 million in 1990 to 35 million in 2000. In comparison, the total U.S. population increased 13% during the same time period, a difference of 45%.

Guzman (2001) estimated the number of Hispanics to be approximately 50.5 million or approximately 16% of the U.S. population, an increase of 43% from the 2000 Census. As noted by Scommegna (2004) in the Population Reference Bureau, “The U.S. is getting bigger, older, and more diverse” (¶2). According to Ennis et al. (2011), the Hispanic population increased by approximately 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010, which is growth of 43% in 10 years. Those with a Hispanic or Latino origin across the

U.S. are projected to increase steadily through 2050, increasing from 12.6% in 2000 to 24.4% in 2050. As documented by Murdock et al. (2002),

The total enrollment in elementary and secondary schools (both public and private) increased by 45.3% from 1980 to 2000. Texas may add nearly 3.5 million more students over the next 40 years and school populations will be increasingly non-Anglo. (p.53)

Dropout rates remained disturbingly high among certain populations, in certain parts of the country, and particularly, in major cities (Johnson, 2010b). In Texas, a student in grades 7 through 12 was identified as a “dropout” if that student was absent from the school day without a defined, approved excuse. Additionally, they were classified as being a dropout if there was no evidence of a documented transfer, if the student did not return to school during the next school year, or if the student completed the current school year but did not re-enroll for the following school year (Texas Education Agency, 2011b). Poor school performance, as measured by standardized achievement tests or course grades, was consistently found related to school dropout rates. Balfanz and Herzog (2009) stated:

When a Middle School student continues to fail courses and may not achieve on-time promotion to the next grade, the student then enters high school, overage for the grade with a history of course failure. Lacking the skills, knowledge, and self-confidence to succeed in high school and feeling distanced from his or her peers, the student continues to fail, does not earn promotion to the tenth grade, and, at this point, may well have reached the legal age for dropping out. (p.4)

Hispanic dropout rates persist at approximately 30% annually with minimal change. This rate is exceeded only by Native American dropout rates of 40% (Snyder & Hoffman, 2001). A study conducted by educators, Blue and Cook (2004), supports the fact that “as minimal skill expectations have increased at every educational and employment entry point, so has the importance of attaining a high school diploma” (p.1). In the U.S., failure to graduate from high school is a widespread problem. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2010), a Washington, D.C.-based national policy and advocacy organization, 1.3 million students dropped out of high school, an increase of 8%, compared with 1.2 million students who quit high school in 2008 before receiving their diplomas. “Nationally about 71% of all students graduate from high school on time with a regular diploma, but barely half of African American and Hispanic students earn formal diplomas with their peers” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009, p.1).

The economic consequences of leaving high school without a diploma are severe. According to Aud et al. (2010), high school dropouts, on average, were more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates and earned less money when they did secure work. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2009) expanded on the consequences, “...not only do individuals themselves suffer, but each class of dropouts is responsible for substantial financial and social costs to the communities, states, and country in which they live” (p. 1). Their research indicated that most dropouts were already on the path to failure during the middle grade years and engaged in behaviors that were strongly indicative of dropping out in high school (Jerald, 2006). Likewise, Rouse (2005)

suggested, as a direct example of this negative correlation, that research also has suggested that a high school dropout earns approximately \$260,000 less in a lifetime than a high school graduate. Harlow (2003) reported, “About 75% of state prison inmates, almost 59% of federal inmates, and 69% of jail inmates did not complete high school” (p.3).

Academic Achievement

As defined by the Texas Education Agency (2011c), the TAKS assessment is designed to measure the extent to which a student has learned and is able to apply the defined knowledge and skills at each tested grade level. Each question that appears on the TAKS test is grounded in the assessment questions and is designed with the knowledge and skills statements as well as with the state-mandated student expectations curriculum. Specifically, TAKS measures the knowledge and skills students should have in reading, math, writing, science, social studies and English/language arts against a system of grade-specific standards called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). According to the TEA (2011c),

Test results can be used to evaluate the performance of a group over time.

Average scale scores and the percentage of students meeting the standard/meeting minimum expectations can be analyzed across administrations within the same grade and subject area to give insight into whether student performance is improving across years. (p.1)

The TEKS provide an outline of skills each student should master by the end of a particular grade level. The TEA (2011c) has grade-level and subject-specific information booklets outlining these standards. After taking the TAKS, each student earns a score of

Met Standard, Did Not Meet Standard, or Commended Performance. Met Standards indicates a minimum numerical score of 60% to 70%, depending on the grade level. *Did Not Meet Standards* indicates a numerical score below 60% or 70% on the subject tested. *Commended Performance* reflects a numerical score of 90% or better depending on the grade level, which exceeds the standards set by the TEKS curriculum.

The TAKS is meant to provide educators, administrators, and parents with a guidepost for student success in reading and mathematics from 3rd to 10th grades, as well as in additional subjects determined by grade level. TAKS provides a measurement of the Lexile level of a student as part of TAKS *Confidential Student Report*, but standards for TAKS do not state a required Lexile level required to pass the examination. Nonetheless, specific areas of student achievement can be categorized appropriately using various subject measures.

Reading achievement. Each student within the public American education system is exposed to the concepts of reading and literacy at an early age. The application of these skills becomes more important as one continues aging and progressing through a formal education. Hernandez (2011) stated, “Educators and researchers have long recognized the importance of mastering reading by the end of third grade” (p.3). Most importantly, however, students who fail to reach this critical milestone often falter in the latter grades and dropout before earning a high school diploma. Due to their advanced cognitive abilities, avid readers, on the other hand, stand out from those students who struggle to both grasp and apply the main tenets of early literacy.

Oak (2012) suggested that if students are to be successful in school, they must first demonstrate the ability to acclimate themselves to new concepts with a satisfactory

degree of understanding. This skill set is not only required for reading classes, but for all other subject areas. Results of the longitudinal study conducted by Hernandez (2011) that consisted of nearly 4,000 students indicated that those who did not read proficiently by third grade were four times more likely to leave school without a diploma when compared to proficient readers.

Recognizing the importance of early reading skills, the NCLB Act of 2001 required states to test reading skills annually for all students beginning in third grade and to report these results by poverty status, race-ethnicity, English Language Learners, and for students with disabilities. However, it was at the discretion of each state to abide by the NCLB Act, and three states opted not to participate in the federal policy. As defined in a Special Report written by Fiester for the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010), results from National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that only 42% of Caucasian students read at the proficient level in fourth grade. According to the Southern Regional Education Board (2005), “Aligning the middle grades language arts and reading, mathematics and science curriculums to the standards that students are expected to meet in high school is a critical action for student success” (SREB, 2005, p.3).

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, the Lexile framework, which tests difficulty, has been developed continuously for the past 15 years by MetaMetrics, an independent education company (Lennon & Burdick, 2004). Lennon and Burdick (2004) also described that the Lexile level of a student confirms the level of text that can be read with an anticipated comprehension level of 75%. The 75% comprehension level corresponds to that balance of skill and difficulty that allows reading to be positive but

adequately challenges and encourages the reader to grow in proficiency and motivation (2004). The TEA (2012) defined the Lexile level as follows:

The Lexile measure can be found on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) *Confidential Student Report*. The Lexile Framework is an educational tool that has been developed to measure reading comprehension and text difficulty by placing readers and text on the same scale. The TAKS reading/English scale score has been linked with the Lexile scale. The Lexile scale is a developmental scale for reading/English ranging from below 200L for emergent readers to above 1700L for advanced readers. (p.1)

Biancarosa and Snow (2006) believed that literacy is the gateway skill that students must master if they are to be successful in any course. In other words, low literacy levels translate into poor grades, grade repetition, and eventual disengagement from school, all of which tend to precede the decision of a student to drop out. With these challenges in mind, Lennon and Burdick (2004) stated, “As the most widely adopted reading measures in use today, lexiles are part of reading and testing programs at districts, state and federal levels” (p.13).

Math achievement. As previously noted, the NCLB Act of 2001 defined the state standards in reading and mathematics and required annual testing for all students in grades three through eight with annual statewide progress objectives being represented through the federal mandate (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The intent was to ensure that all groups of students reached proficiency within 12 years of public schooling. However, according to Hemphill and Vanneman (2011), “Mathematics scores increased

overall, yet the achievement gap between Hispanic and Caucasian students did not change significantly at either grade four or eight from 1990 to 2009” (p.iv). According to Hemphill and Vanneman (2011), “For eighth graders, scores increased from 2007 to 2009 for Hispanic and Caucasian students, but the gap between the two ethnicities was 26 points” (p. iv) with the Caucasian group being higher.

MetaMetrics (2009) reported that Quantile levels serve as a hands-on tool that demonstrates the mathematical skill a learner has mastered and the ones requiring further instructions. The Quantile framework uses a common, developmental scale to measure student mathematical achievement and task difficulty (MetaMetrics, 2009). They also referenced the fact that “Many major standardized math tests and instructional mathematics programs can report student mathematical achievement in Quantile measures” (MetaMetrics, 2009, ¶1.4). Educators can use these levels to match students by readiness level to instructional strategies and to forecast future understanding.

Attendance

In the American public educational system, a persistent concern is school attendance. Average daily attendance rates are a common determiner for school funding. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) stated that success in ninth grade is critical to graduate from high school. Some students struggle immediately by failing multiple classes or having high absentee rates in the first term of their ninth grade year (Pinkus, 2008). In their work, Allensworth and Easton (2005) found that “Information on absences is available early in the school year and might be the most practical indicator for identifying students for early interventions” (p.6). The writings of Balfanz and Herzog (2009) further emphasized this belief:

School districts with low graduation rates usually have significant and often unrecognized chronic absenteeism in the middle grades. It is in the middle grades that students learn they can miss first a few and then a growing number of school days with few or no repercussions. (p. 8)

More than one “F” letter grade earned for the semester in a core subject and/or fewer than five full course credits by the end of ninth grade year are key indicators that a student is not on track to graduate (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

Pinkus (2008) summarized the work by Railsback (2004), suggesting that:

Student attendance is more difficult to control, of course, as students get older and have increased autonomy over their schedules and transportation; absenteeism due to reasons other than illness and cutting individual classes increases with each grade, starting in the sixth. (Pinkus, 2008, p. 4)

Allensworth and Easton (2007), through their educational work for The Consortium on Chicago School Research, focused on the performance of students in their coursework during their freshman year, how it was related to eventual graduation, and how personal and school factors contributed to success or failure in freshman year courses. They observed the following:

Just one to two weeks of absence per semester, which are typical for CPS freshmen, are associated with a substantially reduced probability of graduating. In the 2000–01 cohort, only 63% of students who missed about one week (five to nine days) graduated in four years, compared to 87% of those who missed less than one week. (Allensworth & Easton, 2007, p. 6)

Limited English Proficiency

Students who speak a language other than English at home, but speak English at school are referenced as being Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. Students identified as LEP, who do not speak English as their primary language, and have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English, may participate in bilingual or English as a Second language (ESL) programs (TEA, 2011b). An article in the 2004 issue of Education Week, *English Language Learners*, contained the following editorial opinion: “The United States experienced phenomenal growth in the number of English language learners over the first decade of the 21st century, expanding the need in many public schools to provide special language instruction” (¶1). These individuals may be entitled to language assistance with respect to a particular type or service, benefit, or encounter. As stated in this article, the United States experienced phenomenal growth in the number of English language learners over the first decade of the 21st century and expanded the need in many public schools to provide special language instruction. Capps et al. (2005) provided a full description of the LEP student population within the nation:

The demographics of U.S. elementary and secondary schools are changing rapidly as a result of record-high immigration...No Child Left Behind has the potential to improve the education of children of immigrants and limited English speaking children in several important ways. Most key provisions affecting limited English proficient and immigrant students are set out in Title I and Title III of the Act. (Capps et al., 2005, p. 1)

The authors also suggested that many schools with extensive LEP populations have large Hispanic, Asian, and low-income student populations since children of immigrant

families often share these characteristics. Schools serving these large populations must meet performance standards for all groups or face the interventions threatened by the NCLB Act.

In 2011, the TEA found that the Texas ELL population (as collected by Public Education Information Education System 2010 data), has over 120 languages represented in Texas schools, with over 91% being Spanish speakers (TEA, 2011b). The number of students identified as LEP increased by 45.8% between 2000-01 and 2010-11, and the number of students receiving bilingual or ESL instructional services increased by 56.4% during the same time period. Both LEP students and students receiving bilingual or ESL services experienced increases of more than a quarter of a million students (TEA, 2011b).

The NCLB Act of 2001 was designed to “facilitate the comprehensive planning by states and school districts needed to ensure implementation of programs that benefit all LEP students by helping them learn the English language while simultaneously meeting the same high academic standards as other students” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p.3). According to Murdock et al. (2002), such changes in the demographics have substantial implications relative to enrollment in specialized elementary and secondary programs. Those programs most impacted by non-Anglo enrollment increases (e.g., Bilingual/ESL, Economically Disadvantaged, Immigrant, LEP, and Title I) would have increases from 2000 to 2040 in the projected number of students involved in these programs that exceed 100% (Murdock et al., 2002).

Hemphill and Vanneman (2011) stated, “The increase of over 15 million Hispanics from 2000 to 2010 accounted for more than half of the total population increase in the U.S. during that time” (p. iii). As this statement reflects, the share of the U.S. population that

is Hispanic is increasing rapidly. Hemphill and Vanneman (2011) also stated, “Mexican American students, whether foreign born or native to the United States, made up about two thirds of Hispanic eighth-graders in public schools nationally in 2009, according to data collected by the 2009 NAEP Reading Assessment” (Hemphill and Vanneman, 2011, p.3). Moreover, Hemphill and Vanneman (2011) continued by stating that “Thirty-five percent of all Hispanic fourth-graders and 20 percent of all Hispanic eighth-graders were identified as English language learners (ELL) in the 2009 NAEP Reading Assessment” (p.4). Furthermore, additional data collected in 2009 by the U.S. Department of Education indicated that a substantial proportion of Hispanic students in grades four and eight are English Language Learners, at 37% and 21% respectively.

The LEP student population is growing rapidly across the country with more growth observed at the secondary level. Capps et al. (2005) summarizes that as mandated by the NCLB Act of 2001, school districts are accountable for ensuring that all students learn English and perform at grade level on standardized subject tests, often given in English. Students who do not score well on tests, such as late entering immigrants and those who have difficulty learning English, may grow discouraged by their poor performance and possibly dropout of school. High LEP dropout rates create additional challenges for high-LEP schools, which must meet state set graduation standards required under NCLB for LEPs and other students (Capps et al., 2005).

According to Hemphill and Vanneman (2011), within the Hispanic, eighth grade student population, the 39-point reading achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL Hispanic students in 2009 was wider than the gap in 1998 and 2007. At grade eight in 2009, the 34-point mathematic achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL Hispanic

students was larger than either the 26-point gap for all Caucasian and Hispanic students or the 19-point gap for Caucasian and non-ELL Hispanic students (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011). On the NAEP reading test, the percentages of limited English students who reached proficient was lower than for the math test in fourth and eighth grades. While only 3% of ELL students met that standard in eighth grade reading in 2009, 34% of non-ELL students met the same standard during the same year, a difference of 31% (Education Week, 2004).

The following tables provide a summary review of the historical literature research studies broken into the following three areas: (1) Academic Data/Variables found in Table 3; (2) Change in Demographic/Population found in Table 4; and (3) Dropout/Graduation/High School Completion found in Table 5. Each table provides the source, the purpose of the study, and a summary of the findings. Due to the abundance of research studies cited in these tables, the table format spans several pages and the font has been altered to 11-point Times New Roman as a spacing measure in this document.

Table 3

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Academic Data/Variables

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
<p>Alliance for Excellent Education. (2009). <i>High school dropouts in America</i>. Washington, D.C.: (Author)</p>	<p>The purpose of this study was to present an overall picture of high school dropouts in America. The study focused on who, where, and why studies are dropping out of high school. The study also presented the costs to the individual and to the economy when students drop out of high school.</p>	<p>Over a million students who enter ninth grade fail to graduate with the same cohort four years later, more than half of them are from minority groups. Nearly half of Hispanic students earn diplomas with their peers.</p> <p>Over the course of life, a high school dropout earns about \$260,000 less than a graduate. If U.S.'s high schools and colleges raise the graduation rates of Hispanics, African Americans, and Native American students to the level of Caucasian students by 2020, the potential could add more than \$310 billion to the U.S. economy.</p>
<p>Alliance for Excellent Education. (2010). <i>High school dropouts in America</i>. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from http://www.all4ed.org/files/HighSchoolDropouts.pdf</p>	<p>The purpose of this study was to present an overall picture of high school dropouts in America. The study focused on who, where, and why studies are dropping out of high school. The study also presented the costs to the individual and to the economy when students drop out of high school.</p>	<p>Each year, approximately 1.3 million students fail to graduate from high school; more than half are students of color.</p>

Table 3 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Academic Data/Variables

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Anderson, D. (2011). Attendance, Section 25.092: Attendance, admission, enrollment, records and tuition. TEA Correspondence. Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency. Retrieved from http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/taa/legal1081710-2.html	Attendance: The statutes described apply to open-enrollment charter schools in addition to school districts, except for §25.092 (Minimum Attendance for Class Credit).	<p>§25.085: Compulsory attendance applies to students who are at least six years old as of September 1 of the applicable school year. The law requires a student to attend public school until the student's 18th birthday.</p> <p>§§25.092: Ninety Percent Rule conditions credit for a class on a student's attendance for at least 90% of the days a class is offered. A student who attends for at least 75%, but less than 90%, of the days a class is offered may be given credit if the student completes a plan approved by the principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirement of the class.</p>

Table 3 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Academic Data/Variables

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Biancarosa, C., & Snow, C. E. (2006). <i>Reading next—A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York</i> (2 nd ed.). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.	Presents a need to improve adolescent literacy and this need is all the more pertinent because of the rapidly accelerating challenges of modern society.	<p>“One of the most commonly cited reasons for dropping out is that students simply do not have the literacy skills to keep up with the high school curriculum, which has become increasingly complex” (Kamil, 2003; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003).</p> <p>Approximately eight million young people between 4th and 12th grade struggle to read at grade level.</p>
Daggett, W. R., & Hasselbring, T. S. (2007). <i>What we know about adolescent reading</i> . [Fact Sheet]. Retrieved from http://www.maine.gov/education/diploma/adolescentreading.pdf	Reading proficiency has historically been valued as the fundamental enabling competency in public education in the minds of parents, educators, and the public.	<p>Reading is the key enabler of learning for academic proficiency across all subject areas and over all grades. People who cannot read with confidence and efficiency are socioeconomically at risk in most adult roles as consumers, as citizens, and as parents but especially as wage earners in an increasingly literate global economy. In a study on the Lexile Framework for Reading, created by MetaMetrics, the readability of representative samples of reading materials.</p> <p>Almost all the reading requirements for entry-level jobs were higher than the reading ability level of about 75% of America’s 11th grade students.</p>

Table 3 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Academic Data/Variables

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
<i>English Language Learners</i> . (2004). As published in <i>Education Week</i> . Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/english-language-learners/	“For measuring accountability, the law requires states to develop English-language-proficiency standards and implement English-language-proficiency tests. The English-proficiency standards had to be linked to state academic standards. Regulations for the law stipulate that ELLs must be tested in math beginning with the first round of state exams after the students enter a U.S. school, and in reading after they’ve been in a U.S. school for at least one year.”	“The United States experienced phenomenal growth in the number of English-language learners over the first decade of the 21st century, expanding the need in many public schools to provide special language instruction.”
Fritzer, P. J., & Herbst, P. S. (1996). Make yourself at home: The “house” concept in ninth grade transition. <i>American Secondary Education</i> , 25, 7-9.	Ninth graders have the lowest grade point average, the most missed classes, the majority of failing grades, and more misbehavior referrals than any other high school grade level.	The ninth grade also has the highest enrollment rate in high schools. This is mainly because approximately 22% of students repeat ninth grade classes (Fritzer & Herbst, 1996). This number, however, can be even larger in some places, especially large comprehensive urban high schools.

Table 3 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Academic Data/Variables

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Hemphill, F. C., & Vanneman, A. (2011). <i>Achievement gaps: How Hispanic and White students in public schools perform in mathematics and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress</i> [Statistical Analysis Report]. Retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education website: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2011459.pdf	This report provides detailed information on the size of the achievement gaps between Hispanic and Caucasian public school students at the national and state levels and describes how those achievement gaps have changed over time.	In 2009, NAEP mathematics scores for both Hispanic and Caucasian students in grades 4 and 8 nationwide were higher than in 1990. At the national level, reading scores increased for both groups significantly, but the achievement gap between Hispanic and Caucasian students did not change for fourth or eighth graders when comparing 1992 to 2009.

Table 3 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Academic Data/Variables

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Hernandez, D. J. (2011). Double jeopardy: How third-grade and poverty influence high school graduation. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Topics/Education/Other/DoubleJeopardyHowThirdGradeReadingSkillsandPoverty/DoubleJeopardyReport040511FINAL.pdf	<p>Results of a longitudinal study of nearly 4,000 students find that those who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers.</p> <p>The study relies on a unique national database of 3,975 students born between 1979 and 1989. For purposes of this study, the researchers divided the children into three reading groups which correspond roughly to the skill levels used in the National Assessment of Educational Progress: proficient, basic and below basic.</p>	<p>One in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade does not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers.</p> <p>Graduation rates for African American and Hispanic students who were not proficient readers in third grade lagged far behind those for Caucasian students with the same reading skills.</p> <p>The rate was highest for poor African American and Hispanic students, at 31% and 33% respectively, or about eight times the rate for all proficient readers.</p>
Lennon, C., & Burdick, H. (2004). <i>The lexile framework as an approach for reading measurement and success</i> . Retrieved from http://www.lexile.com/m/uploads/whitepapers/Lexile-Reading-Measurement-and-Success-0504_MetaMetricsWhitepaper.pdf	Lexile levels provide a common scale for matching ability and text difficulty.	Lexiles are part of reading and testing programs at district, state, and federal levels. All major standardized reading tests report their results in Lexiles.

Table 3 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Academic Data/Variables

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
MetaMetrics. (2009). <i>The Quantile Framework for Mathematics: Linking Assessment with Mathematics Instruction</i> . MetaMetrics. N.C. Retrieved from http://www.quantiles.com/pdf/The%20Quantile%20Framework%20--%20Briefing%20Document.pdf	A Quantile provides a tool that demonstrates which math skills a learner has mastered. A Quantile measures a student's math achievement and task difficulty.	Quantile framework for math can be used to monitor a student's math progress, forecast a student's performance on end-of year assessments, link big mathematical concepts with state curriculum, and determine if a student is ready for a new math skill.
Oak, M. (2012). <i>Why is reading important?</i> Retrieved from http://www.buzzle.com/articles/why-is-reading-important.html	Reading helps a person be successful in life.	Research has shown that avid readers stand out from the rest because of improved cognitive abilities. They can think creatively. It improves their grasping power. It makes them better analyzers and problem solvers.

Table 3 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Academic Data/Variables

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Snyder, T. D., & Hoffman, C. M. (2001). <i>Digest of Education Statistics</i> . Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education website: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/2002/2002130.pdf	Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools rose 20 % between 1985 and 2001. Public secondary school enrollment is expected to increase 3% between 2001 and 2011. Most of the student performance data in the <i>Digest</i> are drawn from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).	Overall achievement scores on the long-term trend reading assessment for the country's 9-, 13-, and 17-year- old students are mixed. Results from assessments of mathematics proficiency indicate that scores of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students were higher in 1999 than in 1973 but have remained unchanged since 1994. This pattern was similar for Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic students.
Texas Education Agency. (2011a). <i>Student Success Initiative</i> . Retrieved from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/ssi/	SSI grade advancement requirements apply to the TAKS reading and mathematics tests at grades 5 and 8.	“The goal of the SSI is to ensure that all students receive the instruction and support they need to be academically successful in reading and mathematics. This effort depends greatly on schools, parents, and community members working in partnership to meet individual student needs.”
Texas Education Agency, (2011c). <i>TAKS resources</i> . Retrieved from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/taks/	The TAKS assessments are designed to measure the extent to which a student has learned, and is able to apply, the defined knowledge and skills at each tested grade level.	After taking the TAKS, each student earns a score of <i>Met Standard</i> , <i>Did Not Meet Standard</i> , or <i>Commended Performance</i> .

Table 3 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Academic Data/Variables

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Texas Education Agency, (2012). <i>Lexile</i> . Retrieved from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/results/	Assessment results can be used to evaluate the performance of a group over time. “The Lexile Framework is an educational tool that has been developed to measure reading comprehension and text difficulty by placing readers and text on the same scale. The TAKS reading/ELA scale score has been linked with the Lexile scale.”	The TAKS reading/ELA scale score has been linked with the Lexile scale. The Lexile scale is a developmental scale for reading/ELA ranging from below 200L for emergent readers to above 1700L for advanced readers.
U.S. Department of Education. (2009). <i>Archived: Executive summary of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001</i> . Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.html	The NCLB Act strengthens Title I accountability by requiring states to implement statewide accountability systems covering all public schools and students. These systems must be based on challenging state standards in reading and mathematics, annual testing for all students in grades 3-8, and annual statewide progress objectives ensuring that all groups of students reach proficiency within 12 years.	<i>No Child Left Behind</i> stated President Bush's unequivocal commitment to ensure that every child can read by the end of third grade. Assessment results and state progress objectives must be broken out by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and Limited English Proficiency to ensure that no group is left behind.

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Change in Demographics/Population

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
<p>Ennis, S., Rios-Vargas, M., & Albert, N. (2011). <i>The Hispanic population: 2010</i>. [Census Brief]. Available from U.S. Department of Commerce website: http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf</p>	<p>Analyzes population and housing data collected from the 2010 Census, and it provides a snapshot of the Hispanic or Latino population in the United States. Hispanic population group distributions and growth at the national level and at lower levels of geography are presented.</p>	<p>The Hispanic population accounted for over half the growth of the total population in the United States between 2000 and 2010.</p>
<p>Guzman, B. (2001). <i>The Hispanic population: 2000</i>. [Census Brief]. Available from U.S. Department of Commerce website: http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf</p>	<p>The Census Bureau is required by federal directive to collect data on Hispanic origin.</p> <p>In Census 2000, 281.4 million residents were counted in the United States; 35.3 million or 12.5% were Hispanic.</p>	<p>The Hispanic population increased by 57.9%, from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2000, compared with an increase of 13.2% for the total U.S. population.</p> <p>Half of all Hispanics lived in just two states: California and Texas.</p>

Table 4 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Change in Demographics/Population

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Harlow, C. W. (2003, January. Revised April 15, 2003). <i>Education and correctional populations</i> . Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.	Data for this report were taken from the <i>Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities</i>	<p>“About 41% of inmates in the Nation’s State and Federal prisons and local jails in 1997 and 31% of probationers had not completed high school or its equivalent. In comparison, 18% of the general population age 18 or older had not finished the 12th grade.”</p> <p>Sixty-eight percent of state prison inmates did not receive a high school diploma. Minority state inmates were generally less educated than their Caucasian peers.</p> <p>About 44% of African American state prison inmates and 53% of Hispanic inmates had not graduated from high school or received a GED compared to 27% of Caucasians in state prisons.</p>

Table 4 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Change in Demographics/Population

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
<p>Murdock, S., White, S., Hogue, M. N., Pecotte, B., Xiuhong, Y., Balkan, J., & Wang, X. (2002). <i>The Texas challenge in the twenty-first century: Implications of population change for the future of Texas</i>. Retrieved from The Center for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research and Education website: http://txsdc.utsa.edu/Reports/2002/TexasChallenge/TxChall2002.pdf</p>	<p>Murdock et al. presents the results of projections made using population projections completed by the Texas Population Projections Program in the Texas State Data Center and Office of the State Demographer in the Department of Rural Sociology in the Texas A&M University System. The population projections were made using a cohort-component procedure which projects populations within each age, sex, and race/ethnicity group (or cohort) for each county and for the State as a whole. The race/ethnicity groups used include Anglos (non-Hispanic Caucasians), African Americans (non-Hispanic African Americans), an Other category (which includes persons from other races [except Caucasians and African Americans] who are non-Hispanic) and Hispanics of all races.</p>	<p>An examination of racial/ethnic differences indicates that the major socioeconomic differences are between Anglos (and sometimes persons from the Other racial/ethnic group) and African Americans, and Hispanics.</p> <p>The lower levels of education and income historically exhibited by African Americans and Hispanics lead to opposite patterns. One of the reasons for the emphasis placed on education is that it is closely tied to socioeconomic success.</p> <p>For example, the average income for a household in the United States in 2000, in which the householder is not a high school graduate, was \$28,974. For a high school graduate, it was \$45,368, but for a college graduate it was \$84,029.</p>

Table 4 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Change in Demographics/Population

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Petersen, D., & Assanie, L. (2005, October). <i>The changing face of Texas: Population projections and implications</i> . Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Retrieved from http://dallasfed.org/research/pubs/fotexas/fotexas_petersen.pdf	Hispanics, already a dominant force in Texas, are expected to become the majority population group by 2020. The significant increase in this population (both immigrant and native) has far-reaching implications for education, housing, and the labor force. This article examines the population growth and demographic changes of recent decades.	<p>The Texas State Data Center projects that by 2020, Hispanics will make up the majority of Texas' population. One way to reduce the wage gap is through education and training.</p> <p>In fact, according to the Texas comptroller, every dollar invested in Texas' higher education system returns \$5 or more to the Texas economy.</p> <p>Hence, it is essential that the education system keep up with the state's changing demographics.</p>
Scommegna, P. (2004). <i>U.S. growing bigger, older, and more diverse</i> . Retrieved from the Population Reference Bureau website: http://www.prb.org/	The U.S. population is expected to increase 49% to reach 420 million in 2050.	<p>The nation's Hispanic and Asian populations are expected to triple by 2050, while non-Hispanic Caucasians is expected to grow more slowly to represent about one-half of the nation's population.</p> <p>Between 2000 and 2050, the population of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race) will increase from 36 million to 103 million. Their portion of the country's population will nearly double, from 13% to 24%, during that period.</p>

Table 4 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Change in Demographics/Population

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Smith, T. (2007). <i>Managing the transition to ninth grade in a comprehensive urban high school</i> . National High School Center. Retrieved from http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_Snapshot_EdisonAcademy.pdf	The transition into ninth grade is a critical phase in students' lives and academic careers. The move to a larger environment, the reduction in personal support, and the greater academic challenge posed by high school courses is too often problematic for rising ninth grade students.	Difficult ninth grade transitions can result in flagging academic performance, increased dropout rates, and reduced on-time graduation. In urban school districts, particularly in the large, comprehensive high schools, these problems are commonplace.
Stutz, T. (2010, November 27). 8 th grade retention rate is same as before law required passage of TAKS. <i>The Dallas Morning News</i> . Retrieved from http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20101127-8th-grade-retention-rate-is-same-as-before-law-required-passage-of-taks.ece	An education law that was designed to cause more eighth graders who cannot pass the TAKS test to be held back is actually having little impact on the percentage of students who are retained.	Overall, 4% of all students in Texas schools (177,701 pupils) were retained for the 2009-10 school year based on their grades and test scores in the Spring of 2009. The highest retention rate in the elementary grades was 5.6% in the first grade, and the highest in secondary grades was 12.3% in the ninth grade. Much of the attention in Texas has been on fifth and eighth graders because they are the only students required to pass the TAKS to gain promotion under a 1999 law passed by the Legislature to curtail the widespread practice of social promotion.

Table 4 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Change in Demographics/Population

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Texas Education Agency. (2011b). <i>Enrollment in Texas public schools 2010-11</i> . [Data file]. Available from Texas Education Agency Division of Research and Analysis Department of Assessment and Accountability website: www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/Enroll_2010-11.pdf	This report provides information on enrollment in the Texas public school system from the 2000-01 through 2010-11 school years, based on data collected through the Texas Public Education Information Management System. Enrollment data are provided by grade, race/ethnicity, gender, and economically disadvantaged status, and for special populations and instructional programs.	During both the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, Grade 9 had the highest enrollment, in part because of high grade-level retention in Grade 9 compared to other grades. In 2010-11, 390,655 students were enrolled in Grade 9.

Table 5

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Dropout/Graduation/High School Completion

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
<p>Allensworth, E., & Easton, J. (2005). <i>The on-track indicator as a predictor of high school graduation</i>. Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago. Retrieved from http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p78.pdf</p>	<p>The first year of high school is a critical year for students. Those who succeed in their first year are more likely to eventually graduate.</p> <p>The study defines on-track students being students who have enough credits by the end of the school year to be promoted to 10th grade.</p>	<p>The majorities of students who are off-track have failed at least two semesters of a core course and have earned fewer than five credits.</p> <p>Students who enter high school with high achievement scores are more likely to be on-track than lower-scoring students are. However, low-scoring students can and do perform well in their course work that can lead to graduation.</p>
<p>Allensworth, E., & Easton, J. (2007). <i>What matters for staying on-track and graduating in Chicago public high schools: A close look at course grades, failures and attendance in the freshman year</i>. Retrieved from http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/07%20What%20Matters%20Final.pdf</p>	<p>Identified four predictors of whether Chicago public high school students would graduate within four years.</p>	<p>The researchers found that ninth graders were more likely to graduate on time if they: (1) remained on-track (by accumulating at least 10 semester credits and earning no more than one semester "F" in a core academic course), (2) earned higher GPAs, (3) failed fewer semester courses, and (4) had fewer absences.</p>
<p>Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlichm, L., Kemp, J., & Tahan, K. (2010). <i>The condition of education</i>. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011033.pdf</p>	<p>To ensure reliable, accurate, and timely data, which are necessary to monitor the progress of education in the United States, Congress has mandated that the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) produce an annual report, <i>The Condition of Education</i>.</p>	<p>Three out of every 10 Hispanic students between the ages of 16-24 in the United States were not enrolled in a school setting and lacked a formal high school credential.</p>

Table 5 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Dropout/Graduation/High School Completion

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Balfanz, R., & Herzog, L. (2005). <i>Putting middle grade students on the graduation path: A policy practice brief</i> . Retrieved from http://www.amle.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research_from_the_Field/Policy_Brief_Balfanz.pdf	Progress in middle grades reading has stalled, and the news is not much better in math. The reading situation is serious enough that a special SREB committee of leaders from across the region recently called for SREB states to make improving adolescent reading the immediate priority in public schools.	Research is now clear that the high school dropout problem is rooted far earlier, as early as sixth grade, as some education policy leaders had thought. National studies and analyses of successful school practices show that the middle grades need a special focus to ensure that all students have the academic and career preparation they need for high school and beyond. This is especially important as SREB states face major demographic shifts. These shifts include growth in the proportion of students from low-income families and increases in the number of Hispanic children, as well as children from other backgrounds who are learning English.
Blue, D., & Cook, J. E. (2004). High school dropouts: Can we reverse the stagnation in school graduation? <i>Issue Brief 1(2)</i> , 1-11. Retrieved from http://www.edb.utexas.edu/hsns/HSNSbrief2.pdf	The study focused on the factors that affect high school dropouts. The factors included family income, social and emotional factors, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, grade retention, and institutional influences.	Blue and Cook found that 38.6% of all dropouts in 2000 were Hispanics. Over the last 30 years, 3 out of 10 Hispanics aged 16-24 in the U.S. were out of school and lacking a high school diploma. Retained students are 2-11 times more likely to dropout during high school than those who are not retained.

Table 5 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Dropout/Graduation/High School Completion

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
<p>Capps, R., Fix, M., Murray, J., Oat, J., Passel, J. S., & Herwanto, S. (2005). <i>The new demography of America's schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act</i>. Retrieved from http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311230_new_demography.pdf</p>	<p>The demographics of U.S. elementary and secondary schools are changing rapidly because of record-high immigration. These demographic shifts are occurring alongside implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the landmark 2002 federal law that holds schools accountable for the academic performance of limited English speaking children and other groups that include many children of immigrants. This report explores how immigration is changing the profile of the nation's elementary and secondary student population during this era of reform.</p>	<p>Most LEP students in elementary and secondary schools were born and raised in the United States, and many have U.S.-born parents.</p> <p>The fact that over half (56%) of LEP children in secondary schools are U.S. born makes it clear that many children are not learning English even after seven or more years in school.</p>
<p>Fiester, L. (2010). <i>Early warning! Why reading by the end of third-grade matters</i>. A Kids Count Special Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecialReport/Special%20Report%20Executive%20Summary.pdf</p>	<p>Children who read on grade level by the end of third grade are more successful in school, work, and in life.</p>	<p>If current trends hold true, 6.6 million low-income children in the birth to age 8 group are at increased risk of failing to graduate from high school on time because they will not be able to meet NAEP's proficient reading level by the end of third grade.</p>

Table 5 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Dropout/Graduation/High School Completion

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
<p>Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media (2009). <i>Understanding and reporting on academic rigor: A Hechinger Institute primer for journalists</i>. Retrieved from http://www.lrdc.pitt.edu/pubs/Abstracts/FiezRigorous.pdf</p>	<p>One purpose of this publication is to “demonstrate that rigor and how it is defined are at the heart of many of the education issues journalists cover, including state achievement standards, the achievement gap, dropouts, remediation, test scores, international competitiveness, teacher quality, textbooks, and college completion.”</p>	<p>“Three-fourths of the 2003-04 freshman class graduated from a public high school within four years, earning a formal high school diploma during the 2006-07 school year.”</p>
<p>Jerald, C. (2006). <i>Dropping out is hard to do</i>. [Issue brief]. Retrieved from http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/CenterIssueBriefJune06.pdf</p>	<p>While students with certain personal characteristics are more likely to dropout, the immediate causes for leaving school are educational.</p>	<p>Recent research has found that both poor academic performance and educational disengagement are reliable predictors of whether students will leave high school without a diploma. Students who earn failing grades and low-test scores, who fall behind in course credits, and who are retained one or more times are much less likely to graduate.</p> <p>The same is true for students who exhibit high absenteeism, poor classroom behavior, and bad relationships with teachers and peers. Disengagement from school and poor academic performance are often closely related with each other and reinforce the other.</p>

Table 5 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Dropout/Graduation/High School Completion

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
<p>Johnson, R. L. (2010a). <i>Overall attrition rate declines, but gaps persist among racial and ethnic groups</i>. Retrieved from http://www.idra.org/IDRA_Newsletter/October_2009_School_Holding_Power/Texas_Public_School_Attrition_Study_2008_09/</p>	<p>For the graduating class of 2009-10, 119,836 students were unaccounted for from public school enrollment between the 2006-07 and 2009-10 school years in Texas.</p> <p>Historically, Hispanic students and African American students have comprised a large proportion of these unaccounted for students.</p>	<p>The gaps between the attrition rates of Caucasian students and rates of Hispanic students and African American students are dramatically higher than 25 years ago.</p> <p>For the class of 2009-10, African American students and Hispanic students are about two times more likely to leave school without graduating with a diploma than Caucasian students.</p> <p>For the period of 1985-86 to 2009-10, students from ethnic minority groups account for nearly three-fourths (71.3%) of the estimated 3 million students lost from public high school enrollment. Hispanic students account for 52.5% of the students lost to attrition.</p>
<p>Johnson, R. L. (2010b). <i>More than 3 million students have been lost from Texas high schools since 1986</i>. Retrieved from http://snassoc.com/images/IDRA_Attrition_Study_2010.pdf</p>	<p>“For the first time in the 25 year history of reporting trends in dropout and attrition rates in Texas public schools, IDRA’s latest study shows that less than 30 percent of students were lost from public enrollment prior to graduation with a high school diploma.”</p>	<p>“The latest finding suggests that the ability of Texas public high schools to keep students in school until they graduate has improved somewhat for students overall in recent years. The current attrition rate for each racial and ethnic group was lower than the rate found in the 1985-86 study. However, the gaps between the attrition rates of White students and rates of Hispanic students and Black students are dramatically higher than 25 years ago.”</p>

Table 5 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Dropout/Graduation/High School Completion

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Maurer, M. & Lillie, V. (2006). <i>Over 1.2 million students will not graduate from high school in 2006, report warns; Freshmen the most likely to drop out.</i> Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2006/06/22/index.html	The report gives high school graduation rate data at the national, state, and district level.	According to the authors, "This report can be a vital resource for our state and local leaders, educators, parents and others working to find the best ways to prepare our young people for college and career success."
McCallumore, K. M., & Sparapani, E. F. (2010). The importance of the ninth grade on high school graduation rates and student success in high school. <i>Education Digest</i> 76(2), 60-64. Retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3673/is_3_130/ai_n52943092/	The ninth grade also has the highest enrollment rate in high schools. This is mainly because approximately 22% of students repeat ninth grade classes (Fritzer & Herbst, 1996).	Studies in Philadelphia found that a sixth-grader that had one of the identifying characteristics for failure at the end of their sixth grade year had a three in four chance of eventually dropping out of school. The identifying characteristics included a final grade of "F" in math or English, attendance below 80% for the year, or at least one "unsatisfactory" behavior mark on their report card.

Table 5 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Dropout/Graduation/High School Completion

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
National High School Center (2011). <i>High school graduation</i> . Retrieved from http://www.betterhighschools.org/topics/On-TrackIndicators.asp	The goals of No Child Left Behind include ensuring that all students learn to high levels and that they graduate from high school prepared for college, work, and beyond. Our nation's prosperity and economic competitiveness depends on ensuring that every child graduates from high school.	Early warning systems can help educators predict which students may be in danger of dropping out of high school by using indicators, such as attendance and course performance, to identify when students have fallen behind.
Pinkus, L. (2008). Using early-warning data to improve graduation rates: Closing cracks in the educational system. Retrieved from http://www.all4ed.org/files/EWI.pdf	This brief explores the predictive power of early-warning data, offers examples of current efforts to use such data to guide secondary school interventions across the country, and discusses the policies that can support these efforts.	Students who dropped out usually had received a failing grade in core courses (especially in math or English), earned a low grade point average (GPA), or scored low on achievement tests. They often were retained in grade because they had not earned enough credits to be promoted. As a result, many were older than the other students in their class.
Rouse, C. (2005). Labor market consequences of an inadequate education (A working paper prepared for the symposium on the Social Costs of Inadequate Education). Retrieved from http://devweb.tc.columbia.edu/manager/symposium/Files/77_Rouse_paper.pdf	Because of the strong relationship between years of completed education and annual earnings, education is the traditional route to upward mobility in the United States.	The empirical literature suggests that education has a causal effect on earnings.

Table 5 (continued)

Summary of the Literature Review Studies: Dropout/Graduation/High School Completion

Source	Study/Purpose	Findings
Southern Regional Educational Board. (2005). <i>HSTW and MMGW: Keeping students moving forward on the journey from the middle grades into high school</i> . SRBE Newsletter. Retrieved from http://publications.sreb.org/2005/05V66w_mgttohstrantransitionobjective6.pdf	One in three students in the Southern Regional Education Board states does not graduate on time. The picture is especially bleak for minority and male students. Fewer than half of African American and Hispanic male students receive a high school diploma in four years.	Aligning the middle grades language arts and reading, mathematics, and science curricula to the standards that students are expected to meet in high school is a critical action for student success. Students need to begin preparing for high school and beyond while they are in the middle grades.
Swanson, C. B. (2004). <i>Who graduates and who doesn't? A statistical portrait of high school graduation, class of 2001</i> . Retrieved from the Urban Institute Education Policy Center website: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410934_WhoGraduates.pdf	This study presents a detailed perspective on the issue of high school completion by examining graduation rates for the overall student population, for specific racial and ethnic groups, and by gender.	The national graduation rate is 68%, with nearly one-third of all public high school students failing to graduate. Students from historically disadvantaged minority groups (American Indian, Hispanic, and African American) have little more than a 50-50 chance of finishing high school with a diploma.
Williamston, R. (2010). Transition from middle school to high school. <i>Education Partnerships, Inc.</i> Retrieved from http://www.educationalpartnerships.org/	“The transition from one school to another can be challenging for many students and their families, particularly when it involves moving to a different building and losing the familiar routines and long-established social support systems.”	“Students that have a successful transition are more likely to achieve in the 9th grade, to attend regularly and to not drop out of school. They are more likely to develop and sustain positive social relationships with peers and with adults.”

Summary

Twenty-nine states see their greatest “leakage” in the “education pipeline” occur during the ninth grade (Maurer & Lillie, 2006). According to the TEA (2011b), research indicated the chances of a student dropping out greatly increase when a student has poor grades in core subjects, has low attendance, fails to be promoted to the next grade, or has behavioral problems. A disproportionate number of dropouts are economically disadvantaged, come from non-English speaking backgrounds, and are African American or Hispanic. Additionally, male students have higher dropout rates than female students.

The literature reviewed in this chapter revealed scholarship on the relationship between factors such as demographic changes, high school dropout literature, the importance on academic achievement, data on the attendance rate of the student, and if a student received LEP services as it related to their ninth grade success. Far less historical research existed to link the above factors to 9th grade completion and promotion to 10th grade with their entering cohort. The literature reviewed in this chapter also revealed extensive investigation regarding the fact that over one million of the students who enter ninth grade will fail to graduate with their peers four years later (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). Pinkus (2008) offered the following summary:

Students who dropped out usually had received a failing grade in core courses (especially in math or English), earned a low grade point average (GPA), or scored low on achievement tests. They were often retained in grade because they had not earned enough credits to be promoted; as a result, many were older than the other students in their class were.

Furthermore, as demonstrated by low attendance rates and disciplinary

problems, these students were frequently not engaged in their education or aware of its importance to future opportunities. (p. 2)

The issue of students leaving school before earning a high school diploma is a matter of importance and plays a prominent role in the current national educational policy agenda. Daggett and Hasselbring (2007) presented the following view:

Reading is the key enabler of learning for academic proficiency across all subject areas and over all grades. If students cannot read, they are hamstrung in all other academic areas, including math and science. They cannot deal with advanced coursework or pursue lifelong learning. While humans are “hard-wired” for oral language, reading must be taught and learned. Moreover, the process must continue into the middle grades, high school, and beyond. (p. 1)

Moreover, Balfanz and Herzog (2009) highlighted that progress in middle grade reading has stalled, and the news is not much better in math. The reading situation is serious enough that a special Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) committee of leaders from across the region recently called for SREB states to make improving adolescent reading the immediate priority in public schools (SREB, 2005).

This study may benefit educators as they seek various ways to identify potential high school dropouts at an early stage. Moreover, this inquiry aims to initiate a wave of progressively improved, research-based methods for early intervention for all students that may be at risk of dropping out of school. This study provides information that serves

as a useful tool to assist educators and policy makers as they seek effective strategies that support the successful completion of students' ninth grade year.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Dropping out of high school, particularly among the growing, young Hispanic population, must be viewed and treated as an educational ailment. It is important to realize that educators cannot change the socioeconomic status of a family or other family background characteristics, often strongly associated with a high risk of dropping out of school. Schools can make changes to what and how material is taught in ways that reduce some of the risk factors. It is important to be able to identify the factors responsible or associated with Hispanic students leaving high school. The purpose of this study was to determine which factor(s) contribute(d) to high dropout rates among Hispanic students.

Problem and Purpose Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine what measurable variables influenced the promotion from 9th grade to 10th grade as measured by credit completion. The researcher reviewed the students' TAKS score (Lexile and Quantile levels) in their eighth grade year, their eighth grade attendance, and their LEP status. This research study was conducted with a quantitative approach and utilized archival data. Quantitative research design uses mathematical and statistical data to conclusively measure results.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used during the research phase and begins with a description of the participants. A general description of the school district's demographics enables the reader to better understand the study's population. It also provides the necessary contextual framework for the study. The data collection

process and the instrument(s) used are also explained in this chapter. Chapter Three concludes with the data analysis procedures utilized throughout the study.

Participants

The participants in this study were students identified as being Hispanic on their official school registration forms. Completing the registration form is a requirement set by the schools. There were 1,161 students in the district's eighth grade 2008-09 cohort. The population studied was in the same cohort of students. In other words, every student identified entered and remained together during the eighth grade in the 2008-09 school year as well as during the 2009-10 school year as ninth grade students. Additionally, this population was projected to be enrolled in the 10th grade together during the 2010-11 school year. Analysis of the data provided the following snapshot information.

Of the 1,161 students, 133 students were identified for the study. These 133 students were from the same school district and remained in the district beginning in the 8th grade through the 10th grade. Those students beginning in the district during the 8th grade year but leaving before the 10th grade year were not included in this study. Of the 133 students identified for this study as being Hispanic, 13 students were identified as a LEP student. Of the 133 identified, 60 were female, and 73 were male.

As previously defined, the purpose of this study was to determine what measurable variables influenced the promotion from 9th grade to 10th grade as measured by credit completion. Table 6 illustrates the number of credits earned by each of the identified 133 Hispanic students during their ninth grade school year. As shown, the credits ranged from zero to eight. The majority of the cohort (73%) earned 6.5-7 course credits during their freshman year, which promoted the students to the 10th grade.

Table 6

Number of Credits Earned by Students during the Ninth Grade

Credit	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
	Earning Credit	Earning This Credit
0.0	1	0.8
4.5	1	0.8
5.0	3	2.3
5.5	12	9.0
6.0	13	9.8
6.5	30	22.6
7.0	67	50.4
7.5	5	3.8
8.0	1	0.8

The first indicator investigated was the students' academic achievement – Lexile level. As shown in Table 7, the Lexile levels (measuring both reader ability and text difficulty) indicated a range from 555 to 1210. Nine scores are missing from the data, which decreased the study field to 124 students. The data depicts that 43:124 students had a Lexile level of 1210 (32.3%). As explained in Chapter Two, Lexile levels range from below 200L for beginning readers and text to above 1700L for advanced readers and text.

Table 7

2009 Eighth Grade Lexile Levels

Level	f	%
555	1	0.8
610	2	1.5
675	2	1.5
710	1	0.8
745	1	0.8
800	2	1.5
815	1	0.8
855	2	1.5
900	2	1.5
920	2	1.5
945	3	2.3
970	3	2.3
1000	5	3.8
1030	7	5.3
1065	10	7.5
1100	8	6.0
1150	14	10.5
1205	15	11.3
1210	43	32.3

Note. Nine scores are missing from the data, which decreased the study field to 124 students

As shown in Table 8, the Quantile levels (demonstrate mathematical skills) indicated a range from 570 to 1145. Additionally, nine scores are missing from the data, which decreased the study field to 124 students. The data depicts that 30:124 students had a Quantile level of 1145 (22.6%). The scales of the Quantile measurement for K-12 education range from 10Q to 1400Q.

Table 8

2009 Eighth Grade Quantile Levels

2009 Quantile Levels	f	%
570	1	0.8
620	1	0.8
635	1	0.8
665	2	1.5
685	4	3.0
700	1	0.8
715	1	0.8
730	2	1.5
760	3	2.3
775	2	1.5
805	1	0.8
810	4	3.0
825	3	2.3
840	2	1.5
860	7	5.3
875	7	5.3
895	2	1.5
915	5	3.8
935	6	4.5
955	9	6.8
980	7	5.3
1005	7	5.3
1030	8	6.0
1060	2	1.5
1095	6	4.5
1145	30	22.6

Note. Nine scores are missing from the data, which decreased the study field to 124 students.

The second indicator investigated was the daily attendance of Hispanic students while in eighth grade. As shown in Table 9, the cohort attendance data indicate that absences ranged from 1 to 20 days. As explained in Chapter Two, Texas Education Code §25.092 conditions credit for a class on a student's attendance for at least 90% of the days a class is offered. Additionally, nine scores are missing from this data bringing the study field to 124 students. The largest frequency was that of 20 students – 15%. This percent depicts that the majority of school days missed was 4.

Table 9

2008-09 School Days Absent by Students in the Ninth Grade

School Day(s) Absent	f	%
1	14	10.5
2	14	10.5
3	13	9.8
4	20	15.0
5	12	9.0
6	5	3.8
7	5	3.8
8	6	4.5
9	7	5.3
10	2	1.5
11	4	3.0
12	5	3.8
13	7	5.3
14	2	1.5
15	2	1.5
16	1	0.8
17	1	0.8
19	2	1.5
20	2	1.5

Note. Nine scores are missing from the data, which decreased the study field to 124 students.

Study District

The school district in this study is comprised of 39 total schools: 4 at the high school level, 9 at the intermediate level and 26 at the elementary level. The participants in this study were classified as Hispanic eighth grade students in one of the nine intermediate schools. Additionally, the district services an average of 45,000 students annually and reports that it provides a full range of educational services appropriate to each grade level and student ability level. The educational services include regular and enriched academic education, special education, occupational education, and language training for those with Limited English Proficiency. Furthermore, the district offers a Spanish bilingual program at most of the elementary schools. These basic programs are supplemented by a wide variety of offerings in the fine arts and athletics. Table 10 illustrates the ethnicity of the district's students during the 2010-11 school year. The data depicts that Hispanic and Caucasian students have the highest percentage of the students enrolled/served in the District. There are only 2.8% more Caucasian students (38.7%) enrolled/served than Hispanic students (35.9%) in the study school district.

Table 10

2010-11 Student Ethnicity in Study District

Student Ethnicity	% Enrolled
Native Hawaiian	0.2
American Indian	0.4
Two or More	2.7
Asian	8.3
African American	13.8
Hispanic	35.9
Caucasian	38.7

According to Texas House Bill III, Chapter 9, to determine ratings under the standard accountability procedures, the accountability rating system for Texas public schools and districts uses three base indicators:

(1) performance on the TAKS assessment in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science where tested;

(2) the completion rate I (graduates and continuers) which applies to high schools; and

(3) the annual dropout rate for grades 7–8 which applies to middle schools. The first administration of the TAKS occurred in spring, 2003. Annual district performance ratings with the standard accountability labels of *Exemplary*, *Recognized*, *Academically Acceptable*, and *Academically Unacceptable* became part of the state accountability system in Texas for public schools.

Using the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) annual report, which includes a wide range of information on the performance of students in each school and districts in Texas, the following data were collected on the district. Although the study focused on data from the 2008–09 eighth grade cohort, historical data provided a picture of the district over a three year period. The AEIS report reflected that the study district was rated as Academically Acceptable in 2007-08 and Recognized in the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years. The district has undergone steady growth, as evidenced by a 2007-08 student enrollment of 42,801 to 44,695 students three years later. This was an increase of 1,894 students during that three year period.

Not only did the total student enrollment increase, but the number of Hispanic students increased in the district. During the same three year period, the district's student enrollment increased from 13,042 students to 14,514 students. Of this 1,894 total student increase, 1,472 of those were Hispanic students or 77.72%. This increase supports the demographic changes presented previously in Chapter Two.

The AEIS report also provides extensive information on staff, finances, programs, and demographics for each school and district. With the continual increase in enrollment, an increase in employee staffing was also reflected in the district, specifically professional staff as teachers. There were 2,788 teachers working in the district during 2007-08, and it increased to 2,937 teachers during 2009-10.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The data collection and instrumentation utilized the results from the reading and mathematics portions of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the number of days absent, and the number of ninth grade credits earned by each student. Specific factors were explained to address the topic of Hispanic students whom dropped out of high school without a formal degree. More specifically, it addressed the high percentage of dropouts between the 9th and 10th grades.

Archival data were used for the study, and they were collected from the district with all personal identifiers removed. The independent variables were the achievement status of eighth grade Hispanic students in mathematics and reading, their eighth grade daily attendance, and their LEP classification status. The dependent variable was the number of ninth grade credits earned by the student, which was the measure of successful promotion as defined by this study.

Achievement status. In the state of Texas, there are a series of standardized tests given to public school students in grades 3 through 12 called the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) assessments. These assessment measures are based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards for minimal achievement in a course. These define knowledge and skills that students should master in academic subjects at any given graded level.

The TAKS test is administered for the subject of reading during grades 3 and 9, for math in grades 3 through 10, and as an exit level (grade 11) exam. It is administered for writing during grades 4 and 7; in English/language arts in grades 10, and at the exit level (grade 11); in science during grades 5, 8, 10, and exit level (grade 11); and in social studies during grades 8, 10, and exit level (grade 11).

According to the TEA (2011c):

Assessment results can be used to evaluate the performance of a group over time.

Average scale scores and the percentage of students meeting the standard/meeting minimum expectations can be analyzed across administrations within the same grade and subject area to give insight into whether student performance is improving across years. (p.1)

The TEA (2011c) also presented the following:

The basic score on any test is the raw score, which is simply the number of questions correct. A raw score can be interpreted only in terms of a particular set of test questions. Unlike raw scores, scale scores can be interpreted across different sets of test questions. Scale scores allow direct comparisons of student performance between specific sets of test questions from different test

administrations. A scale score is a conversion of the raw score onto a scale that is common to all test forms for that assessment. The scale score takes into account the difficulty level of the specific set of questions on which it is based. It quantifies a student's performance relative to the passing standards or proficiency levels. (¶1)

For this study, the research study analyzed the Hispanic students' TAKS Lexile and Quantile levels. The TEA (2012) presented the following:

The Lexile Framework is an educational tool that has been developed to measure reading comprehension and text difficulty by placing readers and text on the same scale. The TAKS reading/ELA scale score has been linked with the Lexile scale. The Lexile scale is a developmental scale for reading/ELA ranging from below 200L for emergent readers to above 1700L for advanced readers. (p.1)

The same is true for Quantile levels, but these levels are focused on math ability/skills. The other eighth grade 2008-09 cohort demographic information indicators collected in this research are the Hispanic students' number of absences in eighth grade, students' LEP status, and the number of course credits completed in ninth grade leading to promotion to tenth grade.

Daily absences. As defined in Chapter One, compulsory attendance applies to students who are at least six years old as of September 1 of the applicable school year. The law requires a student to attend public school until the student's 18th birthday. The Ninety Percent Rule conditions credit for a class on the attendance of the student for at least 90% of the days a class is offered. A student who attends for at least 75%, but less than 90%, of the days a class is offered may be given credit if the student completes a

plan approved by the principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirement of the class.

LEP status. According to the study district's 2010-11 school year handbook: English as a Second Language (ESL) in the content areas (sheltered classes) are regular content specific courses offered to the ESL students for state credit at the secondary level. These courses are taught based on student need by teachers certified in those content areas. The courses cover all mandated essential elements with priority placed on modifying the methods and materials for instruction of second language learners. The study districts handbook also states that, all LEP students are eligible for secondary sheltered course offerings. (pp. 4-5) The term *LEP* was defined in Chapter One as whether the student receives instruction in mainstreamed classes and/or classes conducted in the native language of the student. Students who speak a language other than English at home but speak English at school are referenced as being a LEP student.

As defined in Chapter Two, the NCLB Act of 2001 was designed to facilitate a need for comprehensive planning by states and school districts. This need ensured the implementation of beneficial programs for all LEP students by helping them learn the English language. At the same time, the same high academic standards for other students are upheld.

Completed course credits. According to the study district's 2011-12 handbook: ...students shall be classified as freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors based on the number of semester credits earned prior to the first day of the school year in conjunction with the number of years they have been in high school. For a student to be classified as a sophomore it must be at least the student's second year in high school and the minimum

number of credits for sophomore classification must be accumulated. A student must be a high school student for one school year prior to being classified as a sophomore regardless of semester credits accumulated. (p. 9) Table 11 lists the number of credits required by the school district to be classified as a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior. In order for a student to be promoted to sophomore status, a student must earn a minimum of 5.5 credits during their freshman year. In order to be classified as a sophomore, a student must earn between 6-10.5 credits during their 10th grade year.

Table 11

Number of Credits Earned in Relation to Grade Level Classification

Semester Credits Earned	Grade Level Classification
17 and above	Seniors
11 – 16.5	Juniors
6 – 10.5	Sophomores
0 – 5.5	Freshmen

Some school districts require this number of credits with some being course specific.

The district used in this research does not specify the courses needed to earn the 5.5 credits. In the district for this research, a student can earn seven credits each school year. If a student passed all classes, they would have more than enough credits at the end of each school year to advance to the next level.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis procedures utilized for this study were completed with the descriptive, regression, and cross-tabulation model. This model is a process used to create a statistical model of future behavior. Predictive analytics is the area of data mining concerned with forecasting probabilities and trends. In this study, the prediction sought to determine whether a student was successful in 9th grade (advancing to 10th grade) based on their 8th grade academic achievement, their 8th grade attendance, and their LEP status.

A predictive model is made up of a number of predictors, which are factors that are associated with a studied outcome or dependent variable. For this particular study, the predictors will be eighth grade student assessment data measured by the Lexile and Quantile levels on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the attendance of the eighth grade students measured by the number of days absent, and the students' LEP status to predict ninth grade promotion in one academic year.

Linear regression is a common statistical data analysis technique that is used to determine the extent to which there is a linear relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. There are two types of linear regression: simple linear regression and multiple linear regression. Simple linear regression is a single independent variable used to predict the value of a dependent variable. Multiple linear regression uses two or more independent variables to predict the value of a dependent variable. The difference between the two is the number of independent variables. In both cases there may be multiple independent variables. The research study utilized a simple linear regression for the study.

Most applications of linear regression fall into one of two broad categories. If the goal is prediction or forecasting, linear regression can be used to fit a predictive model to an observed data set of y and x values. After developing such a model, if an additional value of x is given without its accompanying value of y , the fitted model can be used to make a prediction of the value of y .

According to StatSoft:

Cross tabulation is a combination of two (or more) frequency tables arranged such that each cell in the resulting table represents a unique combination of specific values of cross-tabulated variables. Thus, cross tabulation allows us to examine frequencies of observations that belong to specific categories on more than one variable. By examining these frequencies, we can identify relations between cross-tabulated variables. (StatSoft, 2011, definition section)

Data analysis for Research Questions One and Two utilized descriptive statistics, using a linear regression model, while the data analysis procedure used for Research Question Three consisted of cross tabulation. Data were collected by using archival statistics from the study district. Table 12 describes each research question, data sources, and the data analysis technique(s) utilized for each research question.

Table 12

Summary of Data Sources and Data Analysis for Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Sources	Data Analysis
What impact does the academic achievement of 8th grade Hispanic students, as measured by Lexile and Quantile Levels, have on their 9th grade promotion to 10th grade?	<p>Eighth grade 2009-10 Cohort (in ninth grade in 2010-11)</p> <p>Contains data from Hispanic students only.</p> <p>Eighth grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (Lexile and Quantile levels)</p>	Simple Linear Regression Analysis
What impact does 8th grade attendance have on Hispanic students' promotion from 9th to 10th grade?	<p>Eighth grade 2009-10 Cohort (in ninth grade in 2010-11)</p> <p>Contains data from Hispanic students only.</p> <p>Eighth grade attendance</p>	Simple Linear Regression Analysis
What impact does the Limited English Proficiency status of Hispanic students have on their promotion from 9th to 10th grade?	<p>Eight grade 2009-10 Cohort (in ninth grade in 2010-11)</p> <p>Contains data from Hispanic students only.</p> <p>LEP status (yes/no)</p>	Cross Tabulation

Ethical Assurances

The data were collected from the study school district without student identification information from the district's Research, Evaluation, and Demographics Officer. In terms of the beginning timeline for collection, the data were requested during the summer of 2011. Archival data without any student identification information were used in order to maintain student confidentiality. Data were electronically stored and will

be deleted upon completion of the study. Permission was obtained to conduct research from the study district's Department of Quality Research. Refer to Appendix A for the study district's Approval to Conduct Research and Appendix B for University of Houston's Consent to Participate in Research.

Summary

By understanding the population researched, describing the school districts' demographics, and explaining the methodology used during the research phase, the reader is provided with the necessary contextual framework for the study. According to Johnson (2010a), usually the result of poor basic skills, students' academic deficits become more obvious as they move through the school system, often culminating with failure on high stakes tests or in key courses at the secondary level. This creates an endless cycle of remediation, failure, and boredom that leads to poor academic self-esteem and renewed efforts by failing students to escape from the school as soon as possible.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the academic achievement, daily attendance, and LEP status of 133 Hispanic students entering school in a suburban school district located in the Southwest region of the U.S. influenced their successful ninth grade promotion to tenth grade. This cohort of students remained together during the eighth grade in the 2008-09 school year as well as during the 2009-10 school year as ninth grade students. Additionally, this population was projected to be promoted to the 10th grade together during the 2010-11 school year. The ultimate goal was to target the high dropout rate between 9th and 10th grade. Archival achievement data were examined from the 2008-09 eighth grade cohort. The study attempted to answer the following three research questions:

1. What impact does the academic achievement of 8th grade Hispanic students, as measured by Lexile and Quantile levels, have on their 9th grade promotion to 10th grade?
2. What impact does 8th grade attendance have on Hispanic students' promotion from 9th to 10th grade?
3. What impact does the Limited English Proficiency status of Hispanic students have on their promotion from 9th to 10th grade?

To analyze the data, the research study utilized three sources of information: (1) Hispanic students' eighth grade academic achievement status (as measured by Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Lexile and Quantile levels); (2) the daily

attendance of Hispanic students while in eighth grade; and (3) Hispanic students' LEP status (i.e., whether they are receiving ELL services). For the purpose of this study, successful ninth grade promotion was determined by the advancement from 9th to 10th grade with their entering cohort. In this particular school district, students earn placement based on the number of credits earned. Advancement from 9th to 10th grade was a minimum of 5.5 credits (Table 11).

Data Analysis

Research Questions One and Two were analyzed with descriptive statistics and a regression model. As previously noted, linear regression is a common statistical data analysis technique used to determine the extent to which there is a linear relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The research study utilized a simple linear regression for the study, which uses two or more independent variables to predict the value of a dependent variable. To answer Question One, the information from the independent variables, Lexile and Quantile levels, were used with the dependent variable being the credits earned in ninth grade. To answer Question Two, the information from the independent variable, students' eighth grade attendance, was utilized with the dependent variable again being the credits earned in ninth grade.

Question Three was analyzed using cross tabulations. Cross tabulation determines if there is an interdependent relationship between two values. For the purpose of this research, the interdependent relationship was determined by credits earned in ninth grade and the students' LEP identification. The LEP indicator was not included in the regression model because of the low number of students identified as LEP (13:133).

There were 1,161 total students in the district's eighth grade 2008-09 cohort. When the cohort moved to ninth grade, 133 Hispanic students remained and were identified for this study.

Research Question One: What impact does the academic achievement of 8th grade Hispanic students, as measure by Lexile and Quantile levels, have on their 9th grade promotion to 10th grade?

The researcher studied the relationship between the dependent variable (credits earned) and the independent variables (e.g., Lexile and Quantile levels).

Research Question Two: What impact does 8th grade attendance have on Hispanic students' promotion from 9th to 10th grade?

The researcher studied the relationship between the dependent variable (credits earned) and the independent variable (e.g., students' 8th grade attendance).

Table 13 presents the results of the model summary used. Table 13 depicts the R and R square values. The R value is 0.321, which indicates a correlation. As such, about 10.3% of the variance was accounted for in the model indicating a low/medium degree of correlation. The R square value indicates the extent to which the dependent variable, credits earned and days absent, can be explained by the independent variables (e.g., Lexile, Quantile, and days absent). In this model, about 10.3% of the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables.

Table 13

Results of the Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.321 ^a	.103	.079	.5912

Table 14 depicts the results on each of the predictor variables. This table presents information regarding the prediction of credits earned from Quantile levels, Lexile levels, and days missed by the students.

Table 14

Coefficient Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.521	.458		14.223	.000
	2009 Quantile	.001	.000	.133	1.201	.232
	2009 Lexile	.000	.000	-.052	-.484	.630
	2008-09 Days Missed	-.035	.012	-.271	-2.912	.004

Note. Dependent variable is credits earned in ninth grade.

Based on this table, the number of days missed by students in 2008-09 contributed significantly to the model. The significance level of 0.004 was less than 0.05. Quantile

and Lexile variables in this model, while they may have had an effect, did not exhibit significance. Meaning they were more than the 0.05 significance level.

Based on data in Tables 13 and 14, the number of days missed by students in 2008-09 significantly influenced the number of credits earned in ninth grade. This finding aligns with previous research that suggested attendance was a key component of success and academic achievement. The more days a student is absent, the greater the likelihood of that student being retained in 9th grade. The less days a student is absent, the greater the likelihood of that student being promoted to 10th grade. This finding is critically important when coupled with additional research that suggests students who receive poor grades, who repeat a grade, or who are over age for their class are more likely to drop out (Johnston, 2010).

Research Question Three: What impact does the Limited English Proficiency status of Hispanic students have on their promotion from 9th to 10th grade?

The researcher studied the number of credits earned in ninth grade for non-LEP and LEP identified students. Table 15 depicts that out of the 133 total students in the research study, 120 were identified as not being LEP students. Only 13 students in this research were identified as LEP. With this low number of LEP identified students, a cross tabulation was utilized for Question Three.

Table 15

Credits Earned in Ninth Grade by LEP Students

		<u>LEP</u>		Total	
		No	Yes		
Credits Earned in Ninth Grade	0.0	Count	1	0	1
		% within LEP	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%
	4.5	Count	1	0	1
		% within LEP	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%
	5.0	Count	3	0	3
		% within LEP	2.5%	0.0%	2.3%
	5.5	Count	12	0	12
		% within LEP	10.0%	0.0%	9.0%
	6.0	Count	12	1	13
		% within LEP	10.0%	7.7%	9.8%
	6.5	Count	27	3	30
		% within LEP	22.5%	23.1%	22.6%
	7.0	Count	58	9	67
		% within LEP	48.3%	69.2%	50.4%
	7.5	Count	5	0	5
		% within LEP	4.2%	0.0%	3.8%
	8.0	Count	1	0	1
		% within LEP	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%
Total		Count	120	13	133
		% within LEP	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

According to Table 11, Number of Credits Earned in Relation to Grade Level Classification, a student who earned 0-5.5 credits was classified as a freshman. As indicated in Table 15, the total number of students in this range was 17. Of those 17 identified students, all of them were identified as not being LEP students.

A ninth grade student earning 6.0-10.5 credits was classified as a sophomore. As indicated in Table 15, the total number of students in this range was the remaining 116 students. Of those 116 identified students, 43 of them were between the 6.0 and 6.5

range. Of these 43 students, only 4 were identified as LEP students, with the remaining 39 not identified as LEP students. Within that same 6.0-10.5 range, 73 students were between the 7.0 and 8.0 range. Of these identified 73 students, only 9 were identified as being LEP students, with the remaining 64 not identified as LEP students. Figure 1, Ninth Grade Credits Earned by LEP and Non-LEP Students, graphically presents this same data.

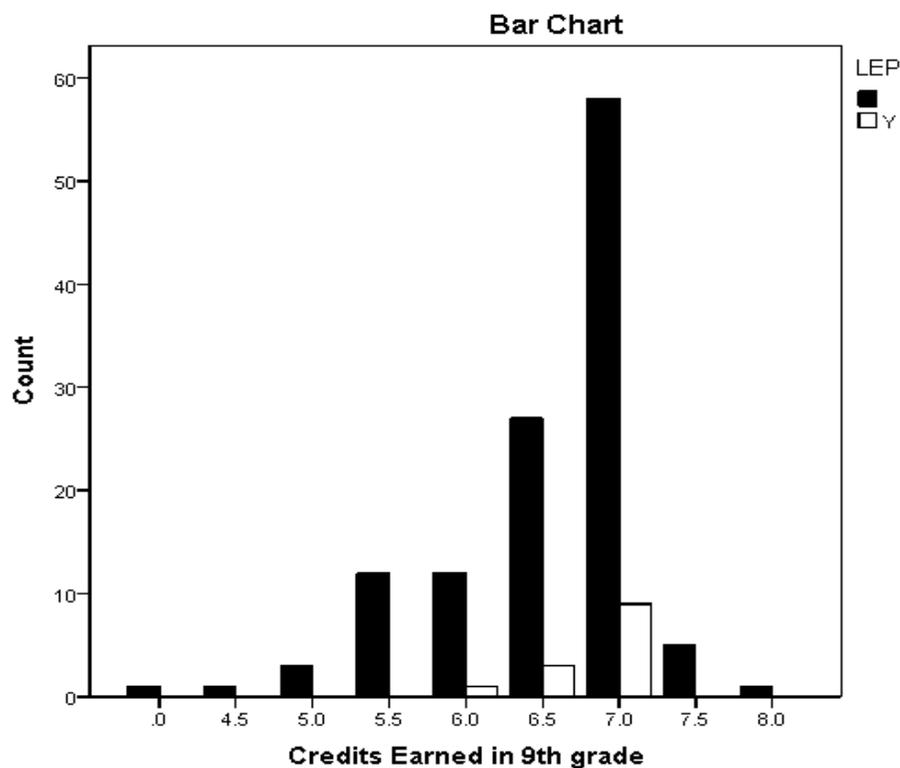


Figure 1. Ninth Grade Credits Earned by LEP and Non-LEP Student. This figure illustrates the number of credits earned by 9th grade LEP and Non-LEP students.

Summary

Focused on question one, which studied the relationship between the dependent variable (credits earned) and the independent variables (e.g., Lexile and Quantile levels) the data showed no statistical significance among a student's eighth grade Lexile and Quantile levels and the credits they earned during their ninth grade year. However, question two, which studied the relationship between the dependent variable (credits earned) and the independent variable (e.g., students' 8th grade attendance), the results indicated that a student's eighth grade attendance did have an impact on the number of credits earned while in the ninth grade. Finally, based on question three where the researcher studied the number of credits earned in ninth grade for non-LEP and LEP identified students, the data in Figure 1 depicted that there were more non-LEP identified students earning more credits in 9th grade than a LEP identified student.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In order to address the high percentage of Hispanic students dropping out of high school between 9th and 10th grade, this research study sought to identify variables that influenced the achievement of Hispanic 8th graders' ninth grade promotion to 10th grade. The researcher conducted a quantitative study using TAKS data, attendance rate, and LEP status to predict ninth grade promotion in one year in the study district. To examine this issue, achievement data were used from the eighth grade 2008-09 cohort. The researcher conducted simple linear regression analysis and cross tabulation. The purpose of this final chapter is to discuss the results of this study. This chapter also provides a review of implications for practice and future studies.

Study Limitations

This study was limited by the number of cohorts analyzed; the number of students, specifically those identified as LEP; using only three variables; and the manner in which the attendance data were reported. This study only used the data from the eighth grade 2008-09 cohort of the district. Due to using one cohort of students versus multiple cohorts, its results may not be representative of other cohorts' 10th grade promotion.

There were 1,161 eighth grade students who were in the district's eighth grade 2008-09 cohort. When the cohort moved to ninth grade, only 133 Hispanic students remained, and they were identified for this study. Of the 133 identified students, a limited number of 13 were LEP identified, which added constraints to the data analysis. Therefore, a larger number of students' data analyzed may provide stronger conclusions

as to the promotion of students to 10th grade. Future studies should incorporate a larger sample, including LEP students. On a related note, the reason behind the low number of LEP students is unclear. Districts' exit policies typically impact this decision. Some districts attempt to exit students out of the LEP category during elementary and middle school which may contribute to the low number of LEP students in this study.

Another limitation was that the research study used three variables in the analysis. A student's eighth grade Lexile and Quantile levels, a student's eighth grade attendance data, and a student's LEP status were used to determine if there was a correlation and/or relationship to the student's 10th grade promotion. This may be problematic by using only three variables to determine the promotion of a high school 9th grader. As such, future studies should incorporate more variables into the model such as economically disadvantaged status, mobility and/or retention.

Finally, the attendance data used reported the number of days students were absent at the aggregate level. It was possible to have this attendance data reported by reading and mathematics content areas. This aggregation may provide additional factors that influenced the 9th grade promotion to 10th grade. As such, future studies should incorporate attendance at a more granular level, possibly by content area or by class period. It is possible that some students who may have been marked in attendance for a particular day to have been absent for one or two periods during that same day. Attendance data at a more specific level (e.g., content area/class period) may offer more information that can be incorporated into the model.

Implications for Future Studies

Since there is limited research on Hispanic students that focuses on variables potentially predicting promotion of 9th grade students to 10th grade with their entering cohort, further studies need to be considered. Further research needs to be conducted to study the importance that LEP identified students may have on the number of credits earned in ninth grade. This research needs to include a larger number of LEP identified students. The TEA (2011b) suggested:

Enrollment data in Texas include student demographic information, such as race/ethnicity, gender, and economically disadvantaged status, and information on student participation in special programs. Data on student characteristics and program participation are essential for monitoring educational progress and planning educational programs at all levels of the education system. The study's findings may serve as a beneficial structure for school districts trying to address the high dropout rate of Hispanic students from 9th to 10th grade. (TEA, 2011b, p1)

Another recommendation for further study is the inclusion of the reclassification process. To be retained in a grade means to be 'held back' or not be promoted to the next grade level. To be retained, a student will not advance with their entering cohort of students to the next grade level. When a student is retained, they are reclassified and repeat the same grade level. However, Johnston (2010) suggested that students who are retained in ninth grade exhibit a higher risk of becoming dropouts. As such, the issue of retention in ninth grade needs to be further investigated. This issue is heightened by the fact that retention and promotion policies in high schools are a local decision. Some

districts choose to include credits earned as an indicator for placement while others require a specific number of credits in addition to specific courses.

Lastly, an additional suggestion for future research is to consider the diversity of Hispanic students. According to Conchas in *The Principals' Partnership* (2001):

...one of the problems with research on Hispanic student achievement is that not all Hispanic students are alike nor do they achieve alike. It is important to consider the diversity of experience of Hispanic students when discussing their attitudes toward, and participation in, education. (p.2)

This notion is particularly important because most studies attempt to study the impact of certain factors on passing the statewide assessment tests.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of eighth grade achievement scores, eighth grade attendance, and LEP status with a given set of students in a large, suburban school district located in the Southwest region of the U.S. The research study conducted simple linear regression and cross tabulation in order to examine the promotion of a cohort from 9th to 10th grade. The research studies ultimate goal was to target indicators that influence the high dropout rate between 9th grade and 10th grade, by using 2008-09 archival data. Focused on question one, the data showed no statistical significance among a student's eighth grade Lexile and Quantile levels and the credits they earned during their ninth grade year. However when considering question two, the data analysis provided the researcher with the information needed to emphasize the importance that daily attendance has on the amount of credits a student earns, ultimately advancing to the next grade level. Finally when targeting question three, the data depicted that there were

more non-LEP identified students earning more credits in 9th grade than a LEP identified student.

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APPENDIX A

STUDY APPROVAL FORM FOR DISTRICT RESEARCH

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STUDY APPROVAL FORM FOR DISTRICT RESEARCH

Independent School District

July 13, 2011

Mindy Muñoz
Associate Principal for Curriculum & Instruction

Dear Ms. Muñoz:

The Independent School District (ISD) is pleased to inform you of their approval for you to conduct your study "The Effects of Identified Variables on Hispanic Eighth Graders Contributing to Their Ninth Grade Course Completion in a Large Urban High School". It is our understanding that this is a quantitative study requiring TAKS data and Limited English Proficiency status to predict 9th grade course completion in one year in the ISD.

Approval to conduct the study in the ISD is contingent on you meeting the following conditions:

- District nor campus personnel are not identified in the study.
- Data remains confidential.
- The study remains quantitative in nature.
- Approval to conduct the study is granted only for fulfillment of the Ed.D. in Executive Leadership at the University of Houston.
- The district receives copies of the completed final report within 30 days after its completion.

Any changes or modifications to the current proposal must be submitted for approval to the ISD's Department of Accountability and School Improvement. The district reserves the right to forego its participation in the study at any time without reason. Should you need additional information or have any questions concerning the process, please contact Stanley D. Hall, Ph.D. at

Sincerely,



Susan Borg, Ed.D

Cc: Angie Anderson, Ph.D.

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

April 16, 2012

Mindy Munoz
c/o Dr. Michael Emerson
Curriculum and Instruction

Dear Mindy Munoz,

Based upon your request for exempt status, an administrative review of your research proposal entitled "Predicting Ninth Grade Course Completion: What Makes a Difference for Hispanic Students?" was conducted on March 12, 2012.

At that time, your request for exemption under **Category 4** was approved pending modification of your proposed procedures/documents.

The changes you have made adequately respond to the identified contingencies. As long as you continue using procedures described in this project, you do not have to reapply for review. * Any modification of this approved protocol will require review and further approval. Please contact me to ascertain the appropriate mechanism.

If you have any questions, please contact Alicia Vargas at (713) 743-9215.

Sincerely yours,



Kirstin M. Rochford, MPH, CIP, CPIA
Director, Research Compliance

*Approvals for exempt protocols will be valid for 5 years beyond the approval date. Approval for this project will expire **February 1, 2017**. If the project is completed prior to this date, a final report should be filed to close the protocol. If the project will continue after this date, you will need to reapply for approval if you wish to avoid an interruption of your data collection.

Protocol Number: 12282-EX

