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Current Realities for Public Schools
Pauline M. Sampson, Scott Bailey, and Kerry Roberts

Community and Student Engagement: A Committee’s Weaknesses and Strengths
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Superintendent Transitioning: When is the Right Time to Make a Move?
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Call for Manuscripts

The editorial staff of School Leadership Review seeks high-quality, original manuscripts in consideration for the upcoming publication of the journal. The School Leadership Review is an internationally refereed journal sponsored and published by the Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration and is designed to offer a publishing opportunity to professors of educational leadership across the country on topics related to school administration. We encourage submissions from new professors as well as those with years of valuable experience. Manuscript guidelines are as follows:

- Submissions should be 2,000 to 3,000 words in length (approximately 20 pages including references).
- Articles, including references, must follow the guidelines in the 6th edition of the APA Manual. Submissions in different formats will be automatically rejected.
- Limit the use of tables, figures, and appendices, as they are difficult to import into the journal text layout.
- Manuscripts must include a cover page with complete contact information (name, position, institution, mailing address, phone, email, and fax) for one or all authors.
- Manuscripts may be submitted at any time for consideration through the journal's blind review process.

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Administrators in today’s schools work in a constant state of flux; change is the norm. Congress’ recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act, through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), provides a signal example. Just as many were beginning to fully understand and adjust to the implications of the now defunct No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, there’s a new set of rules to play by.

Still, though much changes, much remains the same. The current reality defining public schools remains unchanged. Schools must strive to meet the current educational needs of each and every individual student, regardless of circumstances, and to prepare those students for the steps they will take after school. And schools do this work in an environment characterized by accountability intended to expand educational opportunity and improve educational outcomes.

This issue of the School Leadership Review offers several insightful manuscripts on issues that directly impact our public schools and highlight the current realities of them. Administrators and teachers in public schools are working harder than ever to ensure that all students master higher levels of concepts as well as mastery for ALL individual students, including those at-risk of not graduating. Additionally, administrators are supporting their teachers with a renewed focus on teaching and learning in a strong, collaborative, and innovative work environment.

Such collaboration and innovativeness can lead to tensions between required teaching content and methods of teaching. We do not want to lose sight of teachers’ desire and need for some autonomy in the “how” of teaching. Teaching is an art, not a script, requiring high levels of skills and knowledge from practitioners. Any focus on teaching needs to address teachers’ morale as well as their commitment to engaging students, as higher teacher morale impacts the retention of quality teachers. Though not a new concern for public schools, retention remains an area demanding a continual search for ways to keep our most capable teachers within the ranks as well as retain new teachers as they strive to hone their craft.

Another area that is not new to the current realities is the engagement of families and community members. School administrators and teachers must constantly search for ways to have strong and effective communication with partnering families and communities. This communication needs to be constant, two-way, and open in order to build relationships and trust between schools and the public they serve.

Further, today’s school principals serve as critical advocates for guiding their campuses, students, and by extension, communities, to higher levels of performance in many different areas. There may be disagreement on standardized tests, but principals must advocate for strong teaching and learning, perhaps because of—or perhaps in spite of—these tests. Many states have new teacher and principal evaluation instruments and processes. While the instruments may not have all new items, the process for using the instruments requires a more collaborative process between teachers and principals. This collaborative process does take more time, but produces a higher level of professionalism in the education field.
The superintendents leading our schools today must also be strong advocates for their schools, students, teachers, staff, and community. Critically, superintendents are leading the charge on the vision while managing needed changes amidst limited resources. Superintendents must look at the entire system and realize a change in one component affects the change in many other parts of the system as well. Many superintendents may transition to other districts for many reasons. This leadership change for a district often might change the district's focus and vision. Sometimes that change is good; but other times there may be a loss in consistency and forward movement for a school district.

Each of the of the selections in this issue of School Leadership Review addresses the current realities of today's schools in a meaningful way.

*Community and Student Engagement: A Committee's Weakness and Strengths* by Stacy Hendricks and Malinda Lindsey describes one school district's commitment to Texas' House Bill 5 component of local committee involvement in a school's performance evaluation. The study examines the 15-member committee led by the district's Director of Curriculum and Instruction process. This committee was tasked with establishing the evaluation criteria. The authors tell about their strengths and weaknesses in process to embark on continuous improvement as well as celebrating successes.

*Examining How Campus Contextual Factors Correlate to Teacher Morale in a Secondary School Setting* by Scott Bailey and Allison Marz looks at a teacher survey on morale. Their findings show that factors of teacher interaction, classroom size, and the perceptions of administrative support impact morale. This action research study was conducted at a mid-sized school in Texas with a survey involving 25 teachers.

*Changes in Principal Evaluation Standards: A Case Study of North Dakota Principals* by Tsoonee Molapo, Laura Parson, Cheryl Hunter, and Jonathan Butz examines the perceptions of 31 principals regarding a new North Dakota state requirement of the principal evaluation process. The results revealed that principals saw the new process as fair and positive. Similarly, the state of Texas has also recently changed its principal evaluation process to a more formative system with collaboration in goal setting.

*Superintendent Transitioning: When is the Right Time to Make a Move* by Karon Radford, Kerry Roberts, Pauline M. Sampson, Wesley Vinson, and Ralph Marshall looks at the reasons superintendents move to different districts or retire as well as their increased tenure in one district. This qualitative study was conducted with 38 superintendents in Texas with a follow-up more in-depth interview with 10 superintendents. The results indicated that superintendents made a move based on new challenges, board policies, salary, family, community politics, health, media, and an inner sense that it was time to move. Interestingly, 47% of the 38 superintendents said they left at the right time, while 31% said they should have left sooner and 22% said they left too early.
The Effectiveness of an Online Credit Recovery Program on Improving the Graduation Rates of Students at Risk of School Failure by Carrie Eddy and Julia Ballenger is a quantitative study on the effectiveness of online credit recovery program for high school students. The program is Edgenuity. This study found that the credit recovery program increased the students' chances for graduation.

Overall, schools—and the administrators and teachers who staff them—have a moral obligation to not only educate students, but also to do so equitably and at high levels, while demonstrating fiscal responsibility. Hopefully, this issue of School Leadership Review casts some light on how to do that.

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Community and Student Engagement: A Committee’s Weaknesses and Strengths

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Good, bad or indifferent...things are not always as they seem. The first glance often deceives many. School districts are no different; districts face many challenges every day, and with these challenges come weaknesses and strengths. Some of the challenges include areas such as assessment and accountability, teacher turnover, vouchers, diversity, bullying, technology, and funding (Cavanagh, 2011; Harris, Irons, & Crawford, 2006; Nelson, 2014; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Spector, 2013; & Terry, 2010). With these challenges, legislative mandates often create a level of apprehension or uneasiness for school district personnel. In May 2013, House Bill (HB) 5 was passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature. There were many aspects from HB 5 that affected all Texas school districts.

Specifically, HB 5 created “new directions for instruction, assessment, and graduation plans...” (Texas Association of School Boards, 2013, p. 1). As a result, HB 5 established the new Foundation High School Program. Among the requirements delineated in the new Foundation High School Program was the development of a new graduation plan for high school students entering ninth grade in 2014-2015. With this new curriculum change, HB 5 also “includes a section that now requires districts to conduct an annual performance evaluation on their community and student engagement efforts.” (Texas Association of School Boards, 2013, p. 1). Obviously with the new curriculum change, it is important that school districts continue to provide a quality education in all areas. Moreover, it is equally important that the districts evaluate each of the curriculum programs. Thus, in HB 5, Section 46, the Texas Legislature added an annual performance evaluation requirement. The performance evaluation for community and student engagement (CSE) efforts began in the 2013-3014 school year. The CSE component of HB 5 allows districts to evaluate the community and student engagement in a variety of areas; determine strengths and weaknesses; collect feedback from the students, parents, and community members; and spotlight community values and accomplishments (Texas Association of School Boards, 2013).

Kirby and DiPaola (2011) noted, “the survival of a school depends upon its environment and on the interactions between its component parts” (p. 557). Their study determined that higher levels of community engagement created higher levels of student achievement. It is worth noting that the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 required districts to investigate how they were meeting the needs of all students, regardless of economic status or race. HB 5 (Section 46) requires all districts to evaluate their performance in a variety

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of categories. Therefore, between the two systems, school districts evaluate specific academic programs or areas and ensure that the needs of all students are met in all areas. As a result, it is important that school leaders create an environment that not only involves students, teachers and parents, but also the entire community. Collaborative involvement of the community, parents, and teachers provides an atmosphere that promotes student success (Kirby & DiPaola, 2011).

With the CSE portion of HB 5 being new, there were some unanswered questions. However, Regional Service Centers and professional organizations provided training for district officials concerning the execution of HB 5; it generally was not specific or prescriptive in nature because the language of the law itself did not provide clear direction. While the intent clearly indicates improvement of the connection between schools and their communities, HB 5 provides little relief or direction on methodology or reporting. Organizations such as the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) gave suggestions on where to start, who to include on the local committee, what to include as the criteria, and possible ways to determine the ratings. While the suggestions were helpful, HB 5 allowed access for a wide range of freedom to evaluate campuses and districts on the CSE component.

While the “how” school districts conducted the performance evaluation with the CSE component of HB 5 was missing, there were certain requirements associated with the law. The major condition by HB 5 was to involve the work of a local committee throughout the evaluation process. Additionally, other requirements are: (1) evaluate the district on community and student engagement, (2) assign rating of exemplary, recognized, acceptable or unacceptable in each of the nine designated areas by campus and district, (3) report ratings to Texas Education Agency (TEA) through PEIMS by August 8th and (4) make ratings public as provided by commissioner rule (Texas Association of School Boards, 2013). As stated in HB 5 (Section 46) the nine required categories to evaluate are: fine arts, wellness and physical education, community and parental involvement, 21st century workforce development program, second language acquisition program, digital learning, dropout prevention strategies, educational programs for gifted and talented students, and record of the district and campus in complying with statutory reporting and policy requirements (Texas Association of School Boards, 2013).

With the HB 5 requirement, one Texas district moved forward in compliance with the House Bill by first developing an eighteen member committee. However, three committee members could not make the time commitment, so the final committee consisted of 15 members. The committee was comprised of the following: two parents, three community members, three teachers, and seven district directors/coordinators. The committee was led by the district’s Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

The committee met four times during the Spring 2014 semester. Committee members were asked to review the state guidelines from HB 5 as well as the specific categories for evaluation, review sample performance measures, set performance indicators and develop the criteria for each indicator. In order to work efficiently, out of the nine evaluation categories, the committee members were asked to concentrate their examination on one specific category. With this structure, the goal was for two committee members to collaborate to create evaluation criteria for each category. Another goal was to include at least one district employee working with a community member on a category. This would allow the employee to answer questions from the community member on unfamiliar topics. As with any committee operating on a specific but
unfamiliar task, much information was gleaned from the experience. This information revealed both weaknesses and strengths within the process of complying with the CSE component of HB5.

Weaknesses

In order to improve, the weaknesses in the evaluation process must be identified and addressed. Reflecting on the work of the committee, several weaknesses were revealed. Specifically, five major weaknesses were identified. First, one weakness was the number of members on the committee. While originally 18 committee members were asked to participate, three could not, so the final committee consisted of 15 members. As noted above, the structure of the work was to include at least two committee members on each category. With nine CSE categories, there were not enough committee members to have two members on each of the categories. Also, it is rare that all committee members were present at each meeting, and this also added to the workload of others on the committee.

Another weakness of the committee was the lack of community members on the committee. Instead, the majority of the committee consisted of either district employees or individuals with close relationships with the school district, being past educators in the district, a spouse of an employee, or, in the case of one, a parent who is also a district employee. While these individuals made great contributions, the committee should consist of a variety of committee members representative of the entire community, including areas outside of the school district.

On the contrary, an additional weakness identified was the lack of knowledge community members had regarding the educational terminology and familiarity with the material and evaluation process. Therefore, school district personnel attempted to educate the community members about the issues being discussed and evaluated, providing reasoning for the district’s desire of one community member and one district employee on each of the nine categories. While it is important to gain more community members, equally important is educating the committee members with the appropriate educational terminology and knowledge for each committee member to be as informed and knowledgeable about the subject matter as possible.

Next, the evaluation instrument lacked specificity. The committee created a rubric for each of the nine categories. When creating the rubric, it appeared to be clear and understandable to all members on the committee. However, after the evaluation process was completed, it was determined that the language of the rubric was vague and sometimes left the reader to interpret its meaning. Also, the evaluation indicators within the nine categories did not contain consistent data sources such as state assessment reports, PEIMS reports, Eduphoria, Advanced Placement exams, and Dual Credit courses. Using consistent data sources could certainly improve the rubric, which, in turn, improves the evaluation process and consistency in results.

Communication is essential for the work of all committees. While there was certainly an attempt to communicate with the CSE committee, there was a need for better communication. Some communication issues were out of the control of those in charge. For example, inclement weather caused meetings to be delayed or canceled unexpectedly. Another communication problem was the lack of closure at the CSE meetings. While the committee worked
collaboratively in small groups, there wasn’t follow-up with the whole committee at the end of each meeting. Finally, there was a communication breakdown releasing the final results. Instead of hearing the results in a final committee meeting, the members had to read the results in the newspaper. Communication is important with the work of any committee. Luckily, these communication issues can be easily corrected.

Weaknesses always seem to have a negative connotation. However, if one wants to ever improve, the weaknesses must be identified and addressed. In this CSE evaluation process, the committee members have identified the weaknesses and addressed them during the 2014-2015 evaluation process.

Strengths

There were many positive contributions to the work of the CSE committee. A variety of strengths were identified from the work of the committee. First, there was a strong commitment of the core group of committee members. Not only did the core group continue to attend all meetings, but they also participated in group discussions and small group activities. Moreover, this core group was compliant throughout the entire evaluation process. Secondly, this group provided a congenial working environment during each meeting. Although the work of the committee was taken very serious at each meeting, the atmosphere was filled with ease, laughter and a sense of caring. The “sense of caring” was for the education of all students regardless of their ethnicity or socioeconomic status. The evaluation tool was the result of a diligent group of people that put their individual needs aside and worked collaboratively to accomplish the goals of the committee.

Next, a strength afforded to the committee was the ability to place a district employee on each of the nine CSE categories. This was important due to the lack of working knowledge of those committee members outside of the district. While community members bring their own perspective, they do not completely understand the day-to-day operations and educational programs of the school district. Therefore, many committee members found it beneficial to have a district employee working with a community member to answer any questions or provide additional information when needed.

As mentioned above, community members bring their own perspective. This “outside” perspective was invaluable to the work of the committee throughout the CSE evaluation process. With a variety of committee members with differing positions, including community members and district employees, the committee gained different perspectives and experiences. This diversity provided the entire committee with a wealth of knowledge that positively affected the work of the committee.

An advantage of any committee is the ability to see areas of excellence and areas of weakness. The CSE committee created an evaluation rubric for each of the nine categories. The results from the CSE evaluation rubric allowed the committee members and school district personnel to determine the strengths and weaknesses within the school district and campuses. With these results, each campus and the district as a whole can celebrate the successes and make measurable
goals for the areas of improvement. Through this process, the entire district will improve in a variety of areas.

Lastly, through this evaluation process, it is imperative that the district continue to make necessary changes to further enhance the work of the committee for the betterment of the district. For example, the district built upon the work of the 2013-2014 committee as the 2014-2015 committee began. This evaluation process allows the district to tweak items as needed to improve the evaluation process and provide the district with the necessary results to move the community and district forward.

The first attempt at anything is difficult. With this being the first committee charged with the CSE evaluation process, several strengths were identified. It takes long hours and hard work to accomplish good things. The CSE committee provided the long hours and hard work and the result was a good evaluation tool and results that the district can use to bridge the community and student engagement component within the school district.

Changes in Progress

As a new school year begins, it is time to implement the necessary changes from the CSE evaluation results from the 2013-2014 school year. As Henry Ford would say, “If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.” The same is true with the CSE committee. With the same charge as the previous year, the district has decided to make some adjustments for the 2014-2015 CSE committee. The following are changes to be addressed:

- Increase the number on the committee
- Increase the number of community members on the committee
- Review data and how the evaluation instruments were used by campuses
- Provide more information to principals
- Provide a follow-up from individual groups before adjourning meetings
- Review evaluation rubric for language specificity
- Plan a final meeting to discuss results

The beauty of an evaluation is the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses. More so, the evaluation process provides an opportunity for the areas of weaknesses to be addressed. After all, the idea of an evaluation is to show continuous improvement. In order to improve, changes must happen. However, before dealing with the changes, a celebration of the successes must occur.

Concluding Thoughts

Although school districts face new challenges every year, it is imperative that every student receives a quality education in all areas. HB 5 provides Texas school districts the opportunity to complete a self-assessment in a variety of areas in a flexible manner. After the CSE evaluation process, school districts can not only use the data to make the needed adjustments to improve within the district and on individual campuses but also showcase the strengths that are happening within the entire school district.
Since school districts have now completed the first years of the CSE performance evaluation process, legislatures might consider requesting feedback from the school districts. An example of evaluative feedback might include adding specificity to the performance evaluation process. The language of the law was not specific in nature leaving much control to the local school districts. Normally, local control is a wonderful notion; however, in this instance, conclusions or comparisons between the local CSE data and the state CSE data cannot be made. Each Texas district had the same nine evaluation categories, but the evaluation criteria and rating system was undoubtedly different across each school district in the state. Thus, the inconsistency in the evaluation tool will possibly deter districts from using the state data; instead, districts are likely to focus only on district and campus information. If more guidelines were given for the evaluation process, perhaps it would allow districts to make comparisons with other districts in the state. Then, ideas could possibly be shared among the school districts in the state. Moreover, if more specificity was given in the language of HB 5, maybe some of the weaknesses experienced by this CSE committee could possibly have been avoided.

Nonetheless, HB 5 initiated the performance evaluation process of CSE involvement in Texas schools. This evaluation process is certainly a first step that gives school districts the opportunity to evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of their community and student engagement activities. The next step for districts is to use the performance evaluation data to improve their district and campuses in the nine categories evaluated in the CSE portion of HB 5. Through this performance evaluation process, districts will be able to continuously improve in the nine categories evaluated through the CSE portion of HB 5. Involving the community in the school district is a “win-win” for students, teachers, parents and the entire community.

References


Examining How Campus Contextual Factors Correlate to Teacher Morale in a Secondary Setting

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Introduction

Far too often in education the term “burnout” is used to describe a teacher who has been disenchanted with education and seems to be waiting till the day retirement becomes available. A teacher suffering from burnout exhibits signs of low morale for teaching, involvement with staff and involvement in the school and community. There is no specific clue or symptom that leads to burnout, and there isn’t a specific amount of years leading to teacher burnout. Interestingly enough, new teachers suffer burnout in aggressive numbers similar to experienced teachers. Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) found that 14% of new teachers leave by the end of their first year, 30% leave within three years, and 50% leave by the end of year five. With these statistics, it’s not surprising that class sizes are larger than ever and “burnout” is synonymous with “I’ve given up.” As teacher retention continues to be a problem, it is important to look at the reasons behind the dissatisfaction in order to find a solution. It is the principal’s responsibility to anticipate possible threats to morale and satisfaction to create a happier, more productive environment.

Problem

Many teachers have voiced their frustrations at what appears to be a lack of effort to boost teacher morale. New teachers, in particular, have increasingly made comments about the lack of morale amongst teachers. From a teacher’s perspective, low morale seems to be distributed across groups rather than focused in one particular discipline or age group. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not contextual variables in a school impact teacher morale and, subsequently, student performance. Lack of morale is a problem for both teachers and students. The aim for this study is to examine the controllable variables, including school leadership and climate, contributing to low morale and to determine the issues that can be reasonably fixed.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of contextual variables (administration, involvement in extracurricular activities, team planning vs. individual planning, location of classrooms, schedule, amount of preps, class sizes, and more) on teacher morale?

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2. What can reasonably be changed in a school to increase morale?
3. Is there a correlation between teacher morale and student performance?

**Perspective**

When evaluating morale levels across the state of Texas, Lumsden (1998) found that, of Texas teachers surveyed from across the state in 1996, more than 40 percent of respondents would not choose to select teaching as a profession again and 57 percent planned on leaving education if something "better comes along." The purpose of this study is to determine the contextual variables, both positive and negative, contributing to the state of morale on a campus.

For the purpose of this research, contextual variables are defined as factors pertaining to a particular school or district outside of a teacher's control. Thus, a teacher suffering from a bad mood will not be examined as a contextual variable contributing to low morale because emotional expression would be an internal factor the teacher has the ability to control. In fact, Prieto, Martinez, & Schaufeli (2008) discovered via a series of experiments testing many factors, that mental demands in fact were not a significant predictor of burnout making the examination of external factors more relevant. Briggs & Richardson (1992) found several external causes of low morale, including lack of recognition (or none at all), excessive extra duties, criticism, large classes, autocratic administration, and lack of support for good discipline. The perception of a principal's support is also a weighty factor in engagement levels (Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke, & Baumert, 2008). Those findings were corroborated by the study of Klassen, Perry, and Frenzel (2012) that contended teachers who perceive autonomy support from administration connected better with students and staff members. Higher relatedness, they argued, resulted in increased engagement and less emotional exhaustion. Relatedness is also a psychological need crucial to meet to form social connections necessary for building relationships with students and enhancing student success. Prieto et. al (2008) noted perception of an imbalance between demands of the job and resources provided by the job can also lead to burnout.

In addition to resources and job demands, some studies argued gender and age play a significant role in teacher morale. Klusmann et. al (2008) found that male teachers are more likely to be less engaged, with increasing age also indicated as predictor for decreased engagement. Rubie-Davies, Flint, & McDonald (2011) added male teachers typically have lower levels of teaching efficacy. Since this was not a prevalent theory or common in many of the studies, it will not be considered as a contextual factor for the purposes of this review. It is mentioned only to expose other factors and methods for evaluating teacher morale and engagement.

In order to examine the effects of contextual variables on teacher morale, the aforementioned causes will be grouped into three categories based on the current research available: job demands (extra duties, class size, discipline management, hours on the job), administrative support (perception and availability of support from administration, views of leadership, autonomy), and school climate (environment, opportunities to be heard, classroom locations, staff relationships and interactions, and pressure on teachers). Is one category more straining on a teacher than the other, or do they all combine to equally contribute to dissatisfaction? Zhang & Yu (2007) deduced that all of the causes are factors possibly leading to burnout and low morale, and none of them are more significant than the others. Briggs & Richardson (1992) argued that the most
common cause of morale is lack of recognition, which was also related to the feeling of being “ignored.” Jao-Nan (2013) contended type of leadership was the most significant cause (or prevention) of low morale, and believed a leadership relying on empathy and care was most effective for improving teachers' work performance and attitudes. Regardless of the differing opinions, it is clear that low morale cannot be traced back to one singular factor, but is instead a combination of many contextual factors perhaps responsible for detrimental effects across a school.

Method

The location for this action research study was a mid-sized high school in Texas which has recently undergone substantial changes in organizational structure and leadership. A purposeful sample of 25 teachers from the campus was surveyed using a locally-developed instrument intended to measure teacher perceptions of the state of morale on campus in light of the contextual variables described above. Prior years' AEIS reports and campus plans were analyzed to determine patterns in student performance, staff turnover, and campus initiatives to inform the survey.

Once collected, the survey data from 18 respondents was informally analyzed to discern prominent response patterns and to isolate the most affective variables, which will be discussed at length in the results. Overall, teacher responses indicated four factors had a dominant role in teacher morale: location of team members, class size, teacher interaction, and perception of administrative support. These four categories represent contextual factors within control of administrators.

Results

The findings of the study were narrowed down to four dominant categories contributing to staff morale: location of team members, class size, teacher interaction (amongst academies), and perception of administrative support. These categories were based on the responses of the teachers in the survey and examination of the most recent AEIS data and Campus Improvement Plans for the school. Upon further examination of the data, location of team members and teacher interaction were combined into the category of “teacher interaction” with the assumption that classroom location falls under that umbrella.

**Perception of administrative support.** One pattern in the perceived administrative support category was the greater percentage of returning teachers scoring this category negatively as compared to new teachers. Returning teachers also showed decreased support for the redo policy, as set by administration, compared to new teachers. Other information obtained by separating new and returning teachers did not offer enough a distinction to warrant further analysis.

**Teacher interaction.** Regardless of which academy the participant was in, only 7 out of 18 participants teachers selected “true” for the statement “I am able to connect and build relationships with teachers outside of my academy.” The academy-oriented questions indicate that location of classrooms does indeed affect teacher morale negatively, and teachers do not feel as
if they are able to connect outside the academy. Since 14 out of 18 participants said that “the amount of interaction with other teachers positively affects my morale,” it can be assumed from the survey that amount of teacher interaction is a significant factor positively affecting morale.

**Classroom size.** The classroom size results were incongruous, as numbers reported by teachers did not match the numbers reported on AEIS. Since the numbers reported by the AEIS report are averages, it was very informative to look at individual teacher responses. One freshman English teacher had 30 honors students in one class, while her lowest average was in an on-level class at 17. A senior government teacher had 5 AP classes ranging from 30 students in a class to 35 students in the biggest class. Looking at patterns, it seems that on-level classes rise in number as the grade levels rise. The highest amount of students in a freshman on-level class was 22, while the highest amount of students in a junior class was 29. The results of the AEIS report and the survey were compared to demonstrate the marked difference in numbers with the survey results being much higher. The discrepancies between the numbers reported in the survey and the AEIS report are likely due to the special education, modification, and accommodations classes factored into the overall average. Though these classes typically include a co-teacher, they are often much smaller in number even dropping as low as six students in one modifications classroom. Whatever the cause, the discrepancies provided a continual source of angst for the teachers.

**Implications**

As previously noted, low staff morale can lead to serious consequences like high turnover rates, teacher burnout, and apathy towards the job and/or administration. This could even negatively impact students. It is important for administrators to not only be self-aware of how their actions affect morale, but also to notice problems immediately and take action to make sure low morale doesn’t spread like an infectious disease. If problems are ignored, the perception of administration is affected, one of the main factors contributing to low morale, and negative attitudes are likely to spread if nothing changes.

Clearly, a central problem is teacher interaction and, in particular, classroom locations. A school can still have flourishing career academies, even if teachers are in their appropriate content areas. Administration should reevaluate the effectiveness of current classroom arrangements with teacher input.

Classroom sizes also need to be controlled. Most teachers can handle having a class with the maximum amount of kids, but many teachers are upset when the maximum is continually increased. Administration and counselors need to work together to set limits for classroom sizes, considering grade level and content, and then be consistent with following those limits in the next school year. Teachers want consistency, and being consistent with classroom sizes will not only fulfill that need for morale, but also increase positive perception of administrative support.

Ultimately, low teacher morale can have unforeseen consequences in the classroom, and must be avoided at all costs. It is essential to keep teachers happy in order to ensure the highest quality learning experiences for all students.
Significance of Research

Researching causes for low morale helps isolate significant problem areas and create viable solutions. Teacher morale is a concern for many schools because it can positively or negatively affect an entire staff and student body. Zhang & Yue (2007) found that teachers with low satisfaction affect students because the teachers behave coldly towards students, establish lower requirements for students, display obvious weariness, show intolerance to failure, lose interest in students, and show little to no enthusiasm for students’ work. All of these emotive actions can contribute to poor student performance and attitude towards learning. As found by Briggs & Richardson (1992), teachers feeling dissatisfied become more openly hostile and likely to form cliques spreading the negative attitudes around school staff. This can create a very hostile climate especially for teachers who may not be dissatisfied, but fear social rejection from teachers who vocalize their frustrations. Frustrated teachers are more likely to resist change which can cause a barrier against any administrative pushes for improvement, and the same teachers are more likely to be absent, causing their students to miss valuable instruction (Briggs & Richardson, 1992). When disgruntled teachers are present in the classroom, they are more likely to create a poor quality classroom environment that can harmfully affect students (Klassen et. al, 2012), and while teachers enjoy teaching more when they sense student enjoyment, if the teacher has low morale, he or she will not enjoy teaching and will create a low quality environment.

References


Changes in Principal Evaluation Standards: A Case Study of North Dakota Principals

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In recent years, increased demands and political scrutiny have been placed upon schools to improve student achievement. With these demands, a principal’s role is paramount (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Reeves, 2009). School principals are second only to classroom teachers in influencing student achievement (Grissom & Loeb 2011; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Likewise, Fenton, Kelemen, et al., (2010) and Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) conclude that principal quality accounts for nearly 25% of a school’s total impact on student achievement.

Therefore, as principals’ roles evolve, evaluating their performance becomes imperative in informing superintendents about the principals’ competence and influencing future actions to improve outcomes. Research on the topic of principal evaluation is minimal. But scarcer is scholarship conveying the voices of school principals regarding their evaluation process, especially as evaluation standards are changing. This case study sought greater understanding of the range of experiences and perceptions across a statewide demographic of principals, both rural and urban, as the state moved to revise and update evaluation standards.

Literature Review

A growing body of research on principal evaluations have revealed that evaluation instruments (1) failed to focus on the right things, (2) were not based on clear performance standards, and (3) did not align with best practices in evaluation theory (Condon & Clifford, 2010; Goldring et al., 2009; Kearney, 2005; Reeves, 2009). Goldring and her colleagues (2009) found that evaluation systems focused on “general management” and often failed to pay closer attention to “critical behaviors that... influence student achievement” (p.34). Most evaluations have consisted of a checklist to comply with district policies, resulting in very little impact on principals’ professional development and other school outcomes (McMahon, Peters, & Schumacher, 2014).

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Moreover, evaluation instruments have not directly aligned with research-based professional standards; most relied on rating scales rather than rubric-based assessments (Goldring, 2009; Kimball, Heneman, & Milanowski, 2007). Reeves (2009) found that “the standards themselves are ambiguous or the performance expectations are unclear” (2009, p. 4).

Principal evaluation systems have also been plagued with lack of rigor in design and implementation as well as inadequate reliability (Goldring et al., 2009). Regardless of the limitations of evaluations, most principals viewed their evaluations as fair and consistent, although some question if evaluations improve job performance (Muenich, 2014; Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengston, 2012). Principals considered evaluation an ongoing process and value feedback and support from their evaluators “as a component of … daily communication and formal evaluation” (Parylo et al., 2012, p.228). Lastly, many principals regarded students’ achievement as the most important criterion for evaluation (Muenich, 2014; Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengston, 2012).

The common theme found in the literature was that recent evaluations did not align in practice, and therefore, it is imperative to understand principals’ perceptions and experiences as evaluation policies and standards are changing. Focusing on the perceptions and experiences of principals helps us better understand how principals view these incipient evaluation changes as well as potential challenges to implementation. If current evaluation measures don’t seem to match with what principals do, nor do they align with recommended best practice, it appears that principal evaluation may be missing the target. What are principals’ current perceptions and experiences of principal evaluation processes, specifically as these evaluation processes are changing?

Methods

A descriptive case study methodology was chosen to describe the events and experiences of North Dakota principals undergoing principal evaluation policy changes. The case study is, “an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1989, p. 23). “[C]ase study…does not represent a ‘sample,’ and the investigator’s goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (Yin, 1989, p. 21).

A case study was chosen because it could best represent a holistic view of the phenomena (experiences of change in principal evaluation) and, in this case, provides the complexity using both voices of principals as well as policy and context documents to provide a more complete picture of the perceptions of change in principal evaluations. This case study sought greater understanding of the experiences and perceptions of principals as the state moved to revise and update principal evaluation standards.

The larger, statewide setting of North Dakota was chosen in order to provide insight into the “uniqueness and complexity” of principal evaluation in North Dakota, and “its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts” (Stake, 1995, p. 16) because North Dakota could offer a case where school sizes had great variability; thus principals with diverse experiences. While this data
can also be used to inform state policy so that the implementation of principal evaluation standards and future changes could address the needs of North Dakota students, schools, and principals, the rationale for selecting North Dakota specifically was to examine the widest range of school sizes to ensure the researchers solicited the widest range of experiences from principals. North Dakota was selected as the setting for this case study because it provided variability among responses; small school (enrollment: 32) principals to larger school (enrollment: 1,414) principals.

Data Collection

Data consisted of two main types: primarily, interviews; and secondarily, documentation (Yin, 1989). First, 30-45 minute focused interviews (Yin, 1989) were conducted with 31 North Dakota principals in Summer and Fall, 2014. Principals were asked about their experiences with principal evaluation and their perceptions and feelings about potential evaluation changes. Specifically, principals were asked: (1) Tell me what principal evaluations mean in your situation. In your opinion, what are the biggest benefits to principal evaluation? What are its biggest limitations? (2) How has principal evaluation changed since you became a principal? What have your experiences been with those changes (if applicable)? Where do you see principal evaluation going in ND? Where do you think it should go and how should it be used? Participants were recruited at the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders (NDCEL) summer leadership conference and through snowball sampling.

Second, documentation data was collected about the case itself through policy documents, blogs, and news articles which included the state principal evaluation standards, and memorandums about incipient changes. These documents were found through online searches and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction website. This archival data was analyzed to create a comprehensive description of the case and to provide insight into principal interview data, especially as related to the timing of principal evaluation standard changes at the time the interviews were conducted.

Participants

Participants were eight elementary principals, four middle school principals, 11 secondary principals, and eight combination principals (Mid/Secondary and Elementary/Mid/Secondary). The demographics of the overall sample differed from the larger population of North Dakota schools (171 Elementary, 24 Middle/Jr. High, 32 Secondary, 135 combination schools, and 10 one room/teacher schools) (“ND Educational Directory,” 2014). Seventy-one percent of the interview participants were male (N=22) and 29% were female (N=9). Enrollments at these schools ranged from 32 to 1,414. The average enrollment was 356.42. Because the research question involved principal perceptions, sampling the widest range of principals meant drawing from the smallest schools (32 students) to the largest schools (1,414 students). North Dakota was an ideal state to use as a case because it could draw principals from remote frontier areas with one-room schools to larger urban areas with greater populations.
Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of North Dakota principals as state principal evaluation standards are changing. The questions that guided the study were: (a) How do principals perceive evaluation measures (current, past and future) as accurate, consistent and reliable measures of their performance? (b) How do North Dakota principals perceive principal evaluation? (c) What are the perceptions of North Dakota principals regarding incipient evaluation changes? Data analysis proceeded in two stages. First, a description of the case setting and chronology of events in the principal evaluation policy changes was created using state policy documents. Understanding the setting informed data analysis of the transcribed interviews. Within case study methodology, we analyzed the embedded units or interviews (Yin, 1989) using constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba 1985) to search for commonalities of terms in the responses. Open coding process was utilized to break sentences down into “meaningful units” to which labels were attached (Gardner, 2009, p.103). These units identified the following themes: (a) inconsistent measures of performance, (b) feedback and (c) concerns.

Results

Inconsistent measures of performance. The majority of principals interviewed reported being evaluated by their superintendent or assistant superintendent. Principals reported that while the evaluations have been fair, positive, and often viewed as a tool for improvement, most have been informal and not based on clear research-based performance standards. Therefore, many principals deemed these evaluations as an inconsistent measure of principals’ performance accompanied by unclear expectations.

One male high school principal explained: “we had to fill out what we were doing and set goals... [W]e would [then] meet with the assistant superintendent and he would read... what we thought we were doing well... [T]here wasn’t much ...that stated that you need to do this better.” Similarly, a female elementary school principal commented that in her first year she was asked to make a list of things that have given her direction as principal. The supervisor then, “asked for the list ... [and] addressed maybe a couple of things...[A]fter that it was just like a brief narrative that said pretty much the same thing every year.”

Another principal elaborated that while evaluations were based on professional learning communities’ model, they were “somewhat objective...but fairly subjective” because the district lacked a standard-based evaluation tool. A male middle school principal remarked that while he regarded his superintendent as a great mentor, evaluations were rather “generic and vague” because his district lacked a comprehensive evaluation tool.

Another male elementary school principal expressed that though he constantly interacted with his evaluator to share successes and concerns, the evaluation was an inconsistent measure of his performance. It often entailed yes or no questions, followed by a brief narrative and suggestions for improvement. He explained, “My evaluator didn’t seem to know what he was evaluating.” A female elementary school principal shared that her evaluation was mainly a “manager evaluation,” focusing solely on “day to day duties” of a principal. Finally, one K-12 principal
commented that although he visited daily with the person responsible for his evaluations (unspecified supervisor), there was no formal evaluation. Rather, the evaluator only intervened “if there was a problem.”

Feedback

A majority of the principals interviewed viewed feedback as an essential element in their growth and success as educators, and lack of feedback as detrimental. Many conceptualized feedback as a form of support. Therefore, principals valued any feedback they could get from their evaluators. One female high school principal expressed, “I felt like it helped me focus on goals and connect with how my performance was received with people that mattered.”

A male high school principal stated that he sat down with his supervisor “...every quarter about our progress... [and] goals ...and he would provide me with some solid feedback.” This process allowed the principal and superintendent to “share some struggles, frustrations” and improvements the principal needed to make. He viewed feedback as a form of “dialogue through self-reflection in having a conversation about performance.”

Concerns

Many principals had concerns about current evaluations as well as about rumors regarding changes in evaluation standards. While many believed that student achievement was an important component in the evaluation process, they feared that judging principal effectiveness solely on student achievement would be unfair. A male high school principal reflected: “I hope that any evaluation...is not tied into test scores. I don’t see a correlation... it makes me a little nervous.” Another male high school principal shared: “I am nervous about how [principal evaluations] will be tied to any kind of state assessment that has no value... for my students.” The principals stated that state assessments represent one aspect of school outcome.

Therefore judging principals solely on how their students achieve on such assessment would not be a fair nor accurate measure of principal effectiveness. Moreover, more fear emerged from the fact that research hasn’t formulated evaluation models connecting student achievement to principal effectiveness. Hence, principals were concerned that state mandated evaluation measures might only be based on student achievement. Regardless of their concerns, most principals still viewed student achievement as their major priority.

Second, principals worried about a statewide move towards more universal principal evaluations. An alternative school’s principal feared that state regulators and some superintendents don’t really know what’s going on in schools. Many principals seemed to enjoy the autonomy and flexibility districts have to evaluate. Most of these principals were used to the informal routines of principal evaluations, even though they sometimes did not really measure what they were supposed to measure. But at the same time, principals feared that state mandated evaluations would not be any better. More specifically, principals anticipated that the state might implement value-added measures outside of the district/school context because many state administrators lacked knowledge about everyday school issues principals have to attend to. Hence many were content with the way things were at the moment unless the state implemented research-based and
fair evaluation measures. However, fear remained that new standards would allow bureaucratic control of the schools at the expense of instructional leadership.

Principals also feared that state-mandated evaluation standards would face implementation dilemmas. One principal stated that there already existed a tension between school personnel and state administrators, and pointed to the implementation failures of NCLB. Consequently, if there was tension between stakeholders, the implementation of these new standards might not be very effective. Moreover, because North Dakota schools differed in their student population size, formulating and implementing universal standards serving the needs of each school might be difficult.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore experiences and perceptions of North Dakota principals as state evaluation standards change. While principal evaluation has changed across many states and districts, from assessing principals as managers to assessing them as instructional leaders, North Dakota remains behind in adopting research-based standards. Most principals reported being evaluated at least once during the academic year. While many perceived their evaluations as fair and often positive, almost all reported that their district’s evaluation instruments lacked clear performance standards.

Furthermore, many principals viewed evaluations as informal, often consisting of yes or no checklists that had no impact on their daily duties as school leaders. Sometimes the main component of evaluations was to write a reflection on how they thought they were performing. This finding mirrored McMahon, Peters and Schumacher (2014) that principals perceived evaluations as checklists to comply with district policies, with very little impact on school outcomes. Therefore, as districts continue to use evaluation models that lack research-based standards the question still remains whether or not North Dakota will institute evaluation measures that have impact on school outcomes. Would state mandated formal evaluation eliminate the perception that evaluations are only completed to comply with district policies?

Principals valued feedback from both their evaluators and their peers. They appreciated the opportunity to learn from supervisors “what great work they doing” and how to improve. They discussed how feedback “helped them focus on their goals” and “connect” with how others received their performance. Further, principals perceived feedback as a “dialogue through self-reflection in having a conversation about performance”. This finding was congruent with prior research (Parylo, Zepeda, and, Bengston, 2012). As in our study, Parylo and colleagues (2012) discovered that many principals viewed positive formative and summative “feedback as an important component of the daily communication and the formal evaluation” (p. 228). Our data added that many principals appreciated the feedback from their evaluators and viewed it as a form of mentorship. Therefore, it is imperative that any evaluation tools that states implement should include an element allowing some constructive dialogue between principals and evaluators.

This study contributes to the scarce literature on the experiences and perceptions of principals regarding their evaluations. The data suggested that principal evaluation should be based on clear
performance standards. Further, states looking to make principal evaluation changes should address the concerns of principals prior to implementation.

References


Superintendent Transitioning: When is the Right Time to Make a Move?

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Introduction

Leadership preparation programs prepare superintendents every year to enter the profession. One aspect that needs to be incorporated into this learning is the understanding of when it’s the right time to leave as many superintendents leave their current position every year for one reason or another. These reasons can range from being fired to career advancements to leaving the profession. Leaving at the right time is crucial for your career and the district. Lashway (2002) posited that almost a quarter of the superintendents serve less than three years, there are many superintendents leaving positions.

A chair of a department in higher education (2011) told about a professor that needed to leave because his “time was past.” He was cantankerous, received very poor student evaluations, and was not a productive member of the faculty. In addition, the professor was of the age he could retire and had health issues. Why didn’t s/he understand it was time to leave? Additionally, some superintendents have their contracts non-renewed because they don’t understand it’s time to leave the district. The superintendent needs to be adept about understanding this, as leadership programs need to be concerned about issues of importance (Hoyle, Collier, & Glass, 2005).

It is often difficult to find the correct number of superintendents because there are often open positions during the school year, and some small school districts share a superintendent. Additionally, it is difficult to know the gender numbers of superintendents since few of the databases have gender specified. However, some studies have examined gender in superintendents. For example, one study in 2006 found that 22% of the superintendents were women, while in 2010 the percentage of women superintendents was 24% (Kowalski, McCord,

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Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010). However, Sampson and Davenport (2010) found that only 16% of the Texas superintendents were women.

Robinson (2013) found differences in gender in the reason for leaving a district superintendent position, with female superintendents leaving due to dissonance in job expectations from lack of involvement in instruction, political complexities of the position, the political influence and volatility of the school board, (particularly female board members), the difficulties presented by the intersectionality of familial and work-life identities, stressors on physical and mental health, financial retirement contingencies, and job setting incongruence. Robinson (2013) indicated that political conflict with the school board, and concern for income were likely role specific more than gender specific. No studies were found that examined the relationship between the gender of superintendents and their tenure. Lashway (2002) determined that many superintendents serve only three years. However, Kowalski et al. (2010) found that the tenure had increased to five years. Another aspect of turnover has been job satisfaction for superintendents; however this has remained at high levels according to Kowalski et al. (2010).

The superintendent’s role has changed over the last years because of increased accountability during changing demographics (Lashway, 2002). There is a sense that the superintendent job is becoming more demanding with increasing numbers of requirements (Houston, 2001). Some of the reasons for these increased requirements are: 1) changing demographics, 2) fragmenting culture, 3) deregulations of schooling, and 4) increased accountability with the same authority (Houston, 2001). This changing role of the superintendent has also changed from a highly respected position of authority to a position often criticized for decisions that need to be made during the high expectations present amidst budget constraints and accountability (Kowalski, 2005; Nykl, 2009; Rueter, 2009). Further complicating the situational context for superintendents, “...teacher and principal shortages, inadequate school funding, deteriorating and crowded school facilities, and excessive time demands have created a leadership crisis.” (Trevino Jr., Braley, Brown, & Slate, 2008, p. 107) There has been some research on why superintendents leave a district with the majority advancing to a larger district or retirement. However, there is little research on when a good time is to make a transition.

Statement of the Problem

There is research on why superintendents leave, but the research reveals little about understanding when it’s time to leave a position or retire. Because of this lack of knowledge, some superintendents will leave a position or retire prematurely or too late. Not understanding the proper timing could effect district operations and student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was based on the understanding of the position of the superintendent and why superintendents leave a position (Pino, 1997; Van Tuyle, 2008; Dykiel, 2003; and Giaquinto, 2010). This study went one step further and focused on cleared understanding of transitions which is part of leadership preparation and accountability.
Review of Literature

According to Spillane and Regnier (1998) the role of a superintendent is that of a conductor and the focus is “three fold.” The superintendent sets standards, establishes measures, and holds people accountable. “The superintendent’s tasks are much like other chiefs in the for-profit and not-for-profit world: set policy, hire smart people, exhort, and get out of the way” (p. 19). Callan and Levinson (2011) identified the role of the superintendent as “providing instructional leadership, promoting student learning, recommending board policy, setting and implement goals, managing district finances, communicating with all constituents, understanding collective bargaining, implementing state and federal laws, and [handling] personnel” (p. 4).

There is a need to understand the reasons for superintendent changing positions. There is a difference of reasons between genders. Women superintendents changed positions because of poor fiscal resources, conflicts with stakeholders, and poor teacher relationships (Pino, 1997). Additional reasons cited by women superintendents for changing were increased personal challenges and opportunities in a larger district. If a woman superintendent was involuntary asked to leave a district, it was because of differences with the school board. Some other reasons for women superintendents leaving their current superintendent position were employment opportunities, family responsibilities, and a lack of peer support (VanTuyle, 2008). Conversely, superintendents remain longer in their positions when there was positive board relations (Patillo, 2008). Other factors in decisions to leave a superintendent position were related to the commute time and relocation decisions (Sperandio & Devdas, 2015).

The relationship with the school board is major reason for superintendent longevity both for women and male superintendents (Dykiel, 2003; Hawley, 1991; Pino, 1997). The relationship with the school board was also more positive with a more stable school board (Tekniepe, 2015). This may be due to the fact that when new school board members join the school board, there is often some unrest, causing decreased school board and superintendent relationships.

Another factor that relates to the superintendent tenure is connected with the school board and their perception of the superintendent’s ability to handle changes while fulfilling their expectations of the job (Giaquinto, 2010). Some other variables that have a relationship with superintendent tenure are the perception of the superintendent’s honesty, diversity of the population, time demands, meeting political and instructional needs, and mandated board training (Atherton, 2008; Patillo, 2008).

Many leaders enjoy the challenges of solving problems that are a part of their job. These leaders find a connection with their work to a personal moral purpose in the position that allows them to enhance the learning of others. The superintendents are committed to their position (Hackett, 2011). Superintendents that have longer tenure have learned to navigate the public climate in communities (Grisom & Andersen, 2012).
There has been some research on business leaders’ understanding of when to leave a position that is applicable to superintendents’ understanding of when to leave. McKay (2011) identified the following reasons for business leaders understanding of why it’s hard to know when you should leave: (a) You don’t want to admit that you’ve stayed too long; (b) You don’t usually just “walk away;” (c) You don’t have a good enough reason to leave; (d) It’s a game to see if you can outlast the board or other people while not knowing that damage is being done; (e) You don’t want to admit health complications; and (f) You don’t want to admit mental complications. Additionally, Kjerulf (2007) listed four reasons for how you know when it’s time to leave:

First, you will never know for sure and it’s a judgment call. Second, you probably do know and it’s called intuition or inner wisdom. Third, you’re doing no one a favor if you’re staying and not happy at work. Fourth, if your job doesn’t make you happy, it’s time to get out of Dodge. (p. 1)

Research Question

The overarching research question that guided this study was: How do superintendents know when it is time to leave? The answer to this question helps guide school superintendents to competently navigate this decision. The goal is that the best decision is made for the district and for the superintendent. Additional questions that guided this study were:

1. How did you know when it was time to leave?
2. Have you ever left too soon or too late?
3. If it’s time to leave, why would you stay?
4. What would the conditions have to be like to have prevented you from leaving the position (board relations, family or stress on family/self, advancement, financial, job simplification, personal issues, legislative/legal issues, and other)?

Data Sources and Methods

This study utilized a qualitative method conducting interviews with a select group of superintendents who either just retired or had changed positions. Qualitative research was used because it is “done for the purpose of understanding social phenomena” (p. 13). The researchers interviewed 38 superintendents in east Texas. Questions the superintendents responded to were developed by the researchers and required short answer responses. Follow-up, in-depth interviews were then completed by 10 superintendants. Creswell (2012) posited that follow-up in-depth interviews provide deeper understanding. The data were thematically transcribed from interview using open coding and axial coding (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis and Findings

Findings of this qualitative study revealed eight themes which determined when the superintendents knew it was time to leave or quit. These themes were: 1) assume a new challenge, 2) board politics, 3) salary, 4) family, 5) community politics, 6) health and/or stress, 7) media, and 8) had an inner “gut” feeling.
When the superintendents were asked a corollary question of, "how did you know it was time to leave?", themes were: a) loss of enthusiasm, b) easier to leave going up than going down, c) harm to the district is you stay, d) board relationships and e) health. Further analysis of the data revealed that the superintendents tended to link board relationships and community relationships together, as they felt the board represented the community. When the superintendents quit, they said they had an inner peace and a "release in their spirit" from their current position. They felt they had done their best, whether they were going up or coming down. All of these superintendents said they were in education for student learning.

Another corollary question that was asked of the superintendents was "have you ever left too soon or too late?" A majority of the superintendents, forty-seven percent, said they had left at the right time, while thirty-one percent said they had left a district too late, and twenty-two percent said they had left too soon. Another corollary question, tied into the above question, asked the superintendents, "if it was time for you, to leave why would you stay?" Themes revealed by the analysis of the superintendent responses are superintendents felt they could "ride out the storm", "make things better in the district", "ego/not a failure", "family", or "purchased a home/tired of moving".

In regards to the conditions that would have prevented superintendents from leaving their current position, the number one reason discussed was board relations, the second was opportunity for advancement, and the third was family/stress on family or self (Table 1).

Table 1

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Conclusion

The overwhelming theme of this study, *when it's the right time to leave*, implies that there are eight reasons. This information is critical for superintendent certification programs as, not only do we need to prepare future superintendents to be successful, we also need to prepare them to be alert and aware of their situation. If a superintendent ignores his/her situation, it could be very detrimental to his/her career.

Understanding when it's the right time to leave requires that leaders read the signs correctly and know their inner self. For example, if leaders have no more of a challenge and they get bored, then it's time to move on so they don't harm the district. Future superintendents also need to be able to gauge the climate of their school board and community. New boards members can
change how the board is viewed and views the superintendent. A superintendent that might have been on the right path may not be considered as competent by new board members. Navigating the social climate of the school community is also an area to keep abreast. A community’s perception can change with one minor faux pas. For instance, a bond for a new football field instead of fixing a district’s aging school buildings can be a concern for the community.

Board members need to have some voice on this topic. As one superintendent told me, “I’d like to see what board members think and see if we’re looking at the topic the same way. It would be very beneficial to us.” The board is one of the most important factors in knowing when it is the right time to leave. Being able to work well with the board is most important because when this relationship fails, it is not only detrimental to the superintendent, but also to the entire district.

Finally, this type of information should be presented in superintendent programs, regional superintendent meetings, and state organization conferences as professional development. This study illuminated voices of superintendents concerning tenure discussions and found understanding in issues of preparation and practice.

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The Effectiveness of an Online Credit Recovery Program on Improving the Graduation Rates of Students at Risk of School Failure

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Introduction

Students are dropping out of high school at alarming rates. Reports suggest that between 6,300 and 7,000 high school students drop out daily (Dessoff, 2009; Stanley & Plucker, 2008), and more than 1.3 million students drop out each year (Long-Coleman, 2009; Zehr, 2010). In the United States, nearly one in five individuals has not earned a high school diploma or General Equivalency Degree (GED) (Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2004). Every member of society feels the impact of high school dropouts, given the enormous economic and social costs (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009). For example, over the course of a lifetime, the average high school dropout earns roughly $260,000 less, compared to a high school graduate (Rouse, 2005). Dropouts are also more likely to be arrested or become pregnant during their teenage years (Sum, McLaughlin, & Khatiwada, 2008). Long-Coleman (2009) estimated that dropouts cost society $325 billion in lost wages, tax revenue, and productivity annually.

Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) indicated that nearly 30% of all students dropped out of America’s high schools, and for African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American youth, the dropout rate approaches 50%. Orfield (2004) stated, “Every year, across the United States, a dangerously high percentage of students—mostly poor and minority—disappear from the educational pipeline before graduating from high school” (p. 1). According to Northeastern University (2009), “In 2007, an astounding 16% of persons between 16 and 24 years of age (nearly 6.2 million people) were high school dropouts” (p. 2). It is little wonder President Obama declared that the United States has “one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation” (2009, para. 61). The President also agreed that helping students graduate high school is everyone’s responsibility (Long-Coleman, 2009).

To address the dropout problem, school districts in Texas have implemented proven research-based strategies such as creating learning environments that are challenging and personalized to individual students, utilized data systems that identify struggling students in need of early intervention, provided students who are behind in school with additional academic support, and used mentors as role models and advocates for students. Texas has also targeted millions of state and federal dollars to reduce the number of dropouts and increase high school graduation rates.

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through dropout prevention programs, recovery initiatives, and college readiness initiatives (TEA, n.d.-a.). The TEA (n.d.-b.) reported that in less than 2 years, almost 1,300 previous dropouts had completed the requirements for graduation through innovative recovery strategies.

One innovative recovery strategy is the use of online credit recovery programs. These programs are designed to target students with credit deficiencies who are deemed at risk for dropping out or not graduating on time because of failed coursework. Edgenuity is the online credit recovery program that has been implemented in the district in which this study was conducted. According to Edgenuity’s developers, this program has provided one-on-one online instruction in core and elective courses for students in grades 6-12 since 1998. The program’s curriculum is aligned to state and national standards and is designed to help students graduate from high school. (Edgenuity, n.d.).

The foundation of the Edgenuity program is based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which incorporates three methods of flexible and individualized learning. The first method of UDL emphasizes multiple representations of information using various formats and media. The second method allows for multiple means of student actions of understanding and interaction with the material. The third method of UDL is flexibility, which focuses on engaging and motivating students through multiple pathways (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

These principles are used in all Edgenuity platform features and course structures. School districts that use Edgenuity are able to customize content delivery and assessment, and students are able to bypass material already mastered through prescriptive testing, personalized passing thresholds, and a variety of assessment options. Additionally, teachers and administrators are able to assign, monitor, and assess student progress through management, tracking, and reporting tools available through Edgenuity (Edgenuity, n.d.).

Significance of the Study

Public education in the United States has been addressing the challenge of increasing high school graduation rates for more than a decade. In 2008, the national high school graduation rate was 72%, and in Texas, the graduation rate was 66.6% (Graduation, 2011). The Editorial Project in Education Research Center (2011) predicted that 1,154,132 students would not graduate with the class of 2011. Amos (2013) reported that U.S. graduation rate for 2011 was 78.2%.

Dropping out of high school has a negative impact on the life of the dropout as well as on society (Ou & Reynolds, 2010). Bridgeland et al. (2006) asserted that dropouts have an increased chance of being unemployed, having health problems, living in poverty, receiving government assistance, and becoming single parents with children who also drop out of high school. The researchers also suggested several reasons for dropping out of school including peer pressure, economy, lack of interest in the course work, getting behind on courses, and being unable or unwilling to recover credit (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) raised the stakes for graduation rates nationwide by requiring states to develop single statewide accountability systems that required districts to report secondary student graduation rates (Bridgeland et al., 2006). In response, high schools began implementing credit recovery programs to increase on-time graduation rates (Trotter, 2008). A
credit recovery program allows a student who has failed a high school course a second chance to master the material and receive the credits required for graduation (Watson & Gemin, 2008).

McCabe and St. Andrie (2012) noted that dropout programs should be tailored to the needs of the student population being served. School districts nationwide offer several forms of credit recovery programs that are currently not regulated or defined at the state or federal levels. Credit recovery programs have been available as fully online, blended learning, or in-person (McCabe & St. Andrie, 2012; Picciano & Seaman, 2007; Watson & Gemin, 2008). According to Zehr (2010):

The surge of interest in online credit recovery programs has also come despite scant research on the programs’ effectiveness. While studies have been conducted on online learning in general, studies haven’t been conducted on the effectiveness of online learning specifically for the use of credit recovery, researchers say (para. 21).

Gouskova and Stafford (2005) found that, on average, households headed by a high school graduate accumulated ten times more wealth than did households headed by a high school dropout. Thus, this research aimed to determine whether Edgenuity’s online credit recovery program is a viable option to keep students engaged in school by giving them the opportunity to regain lost credit.

Purpose of the Study

The professional literature offered information on the growth and effectiveness of virtual schools (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010; Watson & Gemin, 2008; Watson, Gemin, Ryan, & Wicks, 2009); however, literature documenting the effectiveness of these online learning programs as a credit recovery option is limited (Blackboard K-12, 2009; O’Dwyer, Carey, & Kleiman, 2007; Zehr, 2010). Therefore, further examination of the effectiveness of online learning programs is warranted. Thus, the purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the extent to which Edgenuity, an online credit recovery program, improves graduation rates by allowing students to regain lost credits and advance with their cohort.

Research Questions

The following research questions formed the basis of accomplishing the purpose of this quantitative study:

1. Has using Edgenuity assisted the at-risk student population in the recovery of lost credits?
2. What is the relationship between credit accrual and credit recovery and students’ abilities to graduate with their 2012-2013 cohort?
3. Does a statistically significant difference exist in the percent of students who successfully used Edgenuity for English course credit recovery and passed English the subsequent school year compared to students who did not successfully use Edgenuity for English course credit?
4. Does a statistically significant difference exist in the percent of students who successfully used Edgenuity for English course credit recovery and passed the End-of-Course (EOC) English assessment the subsequent school year compared to students who did not successfully use Edgenuity for English course credit?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses contribute to the growing body of research on the effectiveness of online credit recovery programs. Overall, it is proposed that Edgenuity is a viable credit recovery program option for school districts looking for ways to help students recover credit and improve the graduation rate. The following research and null hypotheses guided this study:

**Hypothesis 1**

H$_{a1}$. A statistically significant relationship exists between credit accrual and successful credit recovery and students' abilities to graduate with their 2012-13 cohort.

H$_{o1}$. No statistically significant relationship exists between credit accrual and successful credit recovery and students' abilities to graduate with their 2012-13 cohort.

**Hypothesis 2**

H$_{a2}$. A statistically significant difference exists in the percent of students who successfully used Edgenuity for English course credit recovery and passed English the subsequent school year compared to students who did not successfully use Edgenuity for English course credit.

H$_{o2}$. No statistically significant difference exists in the percent of students who successfully used Edgenuity for English course credit recovery and passed English the subsequent school year compared to students who did not successfully use Edgenuity for English course credit.

**Hypothesis 3**

H$_{a3}$. A statistically significant difference exists in the percent of students who successfully used Edgenuity for English course credit recovery and passed the EOC English assessment the subsequent school year compared to students who did not successfully use Edgenuity for English course credit.

H$_{o3}$. No statistically significant difference exists in the percent of students who successfully used Edgenuity for English course credit recovery and passed the EOC English assessment the subsequent school year compared to students who did not successfully use Edgenuity for English course credit.

**Methodology**

A quantitative method was used to ascertain the effectiveness of Edgenuity. The use of archival data indicated that the research design was non-experimental. Non-experimental research is an "empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulatable" (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 348). This design was appropriate because the data analysis
did not require the investigator to manipulate variables. Course completion through Edgenuity was the predictor variable.

Data Collection

The request for archived data for this study began once Texas A&M University-Commerce Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and receipt of the site letter from the studied district was received. Archived data from the studied district were obtained from the district’s Skyward student management system and Edgenuity, the district’s online credit recovery program.

Data collected consisted of the following: (a) an Excel spreadsheet that contained an entry for each credit recovery course attempted through Edgenuity since the fall 2010 that provided the name of courses attempted and the students’ final grade; (b) an Excel spreadsheet that contained student data from Skyward for the 2012-2013 cohort group indicating student entry date into high school, number of credits that each student had at the completion of his or her first, second, third, and fourth years of high school, number of credits recovered through Edgenuity at the completion of the first, second, third, and fourth years of high school, and each student’s enrollment status at the end of his or her fourth year of high school (graduated, still enrolled, moved, or dropped out); and (c) an Excel spreadsheet from Skyward that contained an entry for each student who attempted to recover English credits through Edgenuity and each student’s grade in English the subsequent school year. Using the district’s data management systems for data collection provided assurance of both data reliability and validity.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to answer Research Question 1. Logistic regression was performed to answer Research Question 2. The analysis of data included computing the probabilities of students graduating based on predictor variables. Logistic regression analyzes the effect a specific independent variable has on a dependent variable while controlling for the other independent variables (Huck, 1996).

A chi-square test for independence was used to answer Research Questions 3 and 4 to explore the relationship between two categorical variables. The chi-square test compares the observed frequencies or proportions of cases occurring in each of the categories with the values that would be expected if there were no association between the two variables being measured (Pallant, 2010).

Student credit recovery data from Edgenuity, student credit accrual data from Skyward, and student reading End-of-Course (EOC) assessment data were exclusively archival and quantitative. SPSS, Version 21.0 was used for the statistical analysis. Three research questions were analyzed at the $p < .05$ confidence level, and null hypotheses were rejected if data were statistically significant. All procedures included the data setup and analysis following the outline provided in the *SPSS Survival Manual* (Pallant, 2010).
Findings and Conclusions

This study examined the extent to which Edgenuity was effective at improving graduation rates by allowing students to regain lost credits and advance with their cohort group. The sample population was comprised of a purposeful sample drawn from a midsized school district in Texas. The sample district used Edgenuity to assist students with credit deficiencies, and students seeking course acceleration (these students were not assessed in this study). The sample district began using Edgenuity for online credit recovery intervention to target students deemed at risk for dropping out or not graduating on time in August 2010.

The research collected archival data from two sources: the sample district’s Skyward student management system and Edgenuity. The sample of students was narrowed to those who used Edgenuity for credit recovery during their high school careers to avoid skewing the data with students using this program for acceleration.

The following section offers a description of the findings for each research question followed by a summary of findings from the data collected.

Research Question 1

This study evaluated half-credit courses that were attempted for credit recovery through Edgenuity since the district began using the program in 2010. Research Question 1 was as follows: Has using Edgenuity assisted the at-risk student population in the recovery of lost credits? Descriptive statistics were determined from data obtained from Edgenuity for each credit recovery course taken through Edgenuity since the fall 2010 in the study district to determine whether at-risk students successfully recovered credits through this program. A success rate of 67% was obtained among at-risk students who used Edgenuity for credit recovery. These data indicated that Edgenuity is a viable option for students who wish to regain lost credits and continue progressing toward graduation. These results support previous research that indicated online instruction allows schools to reach students who struggle in the traditional classroom (McCabe & St. Andrie, 2012; St. Andrie, 2012; Trotter, 2008; Watson, 2007).

The percentage of students who were successful at recovering credits through Edgenuity was lower than that reported by other researchers who evaluated different programs. For example, Gordon (2007) examined the online credit recovery program PLATO and found that 94% of participating students were successful in regaining credits needed for promotion. Washburn (2004) reported that 80% of the students who used the PLATO program regained English credits and were promoted to the next grade level. Volkerding (2012) studied at-risk students who attempted to regain credits with NovaNET, and found that more than 70% of participants were successful.

Research Question 2

The 2012-2013 student cohort group from the sample district was studied to address Research Question 2, which asked: What is the relationship between credit accrual and credit recovery and students’ abilities to graduate with their 2012-2013 cohort? A logistic regression was conducted
to assess the impact of a number of factors on the likelihood that students in the 2012-2013 cohort would graduate with their cohort. An examination of the findings indicated that the full model containing all predictors was statistically significant. The predictor variables that yielded the greatest significance were students having enough credits to be classified as a senior at the end of the third year of high school, students having enough credits to be classified as a junior at the end of the second year of high school, and students recovering credits during their senior year of high school.

Of the 21 students who graduated with their cohort but did not have enough credits to promote to the 10th grade after their second year of high school, 95.2% recovered credits using Edgenuity. Of the 31 students who graduated with their cohort but did not have enough credits to promote to the 11th grade after their third year of high school, 96.8% recovered credits using Edgenuity. Lastly, of the 25 students who graduated with their cohort but did not have enough credits to promote to the 12th grade after their fourth year of high school, 100% recovered credits using Edgenuity.

Using credit recovery increased the probability of graduating over other outcomes such as dropping out, staying enrolled in school, or moving. For those who did not have enough credits to advance to 10th grade, the probability increased from 14% to 39% when students used credit recovery. For those not having enough credits to advance to 11th grade, the probability increased from 9% to 40% with credit recovery. Students who did not have enough credits to advance to 12th grade and did not use credit recovery had an 8% probability of graduating. However, students who did not have enough credits to advance to 12th grade and used credit recovery increased their chances of graduating to 23%. These findings supported Allensworth and Easton (2005) who suggested that the NCLB mandate is achievable. Specifically, when students were successful in their first year in high school, they were 3.5 times more likely to graduate in 4 years than were students who are not successful at earning enough credits to promote to sophomore status by the end of their first year in high school (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

The current findings demonstrated the importance of students accruing the required credits to be promoted to the next grade level each year. Students who do not meet the expectations needed to recover credits in a timely manner increase the risk of dropping out of school or not graduating with their cohort. Additionally, students who receive a failing grade at some point in their educational careers are more likely to not graduate high school on time.

As students fall further behind in their course work, they lack the number of credits to be promoted to the next grade, are required to repeat classes and grades, and become older than their classroom peers—all factors that make these students more likely to drop out of school (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; Bridgeland et al., 2006). In keeping with the research (Bridgeland et al., 2006, Schargel & Smink, 2004), the data demonstrated that students need support programs to help them recover credits after they have failed a course. This concurs with the finding that support programs such as credit recovery have been shown to keep adolescents in school and improve their grades (Schargel & Smink, 2001).
Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked: Does a statistically significant difference exist in the percent of students who successfully used Edgenuity for English course credit recovery and passed English the subsequent school year compared to students who did not successfully use Edgenuity for English course credit? Student data were purposefully refined to examine those students who took English coursework through Edgenuity. A chi-square test for independence was conducted on data obtained from Edgenuity and the Skyward student information management system to explore the relationship between students who passed a traditional English class the following school year and students who took English through Edgenuity the prior semester. From the analysis of the English I data, the Pearson chi-square value was significant for students who recovered their English I credits through Edgenuity. In other words a student who passed English I with Edgenuity was five times more likely to pass English II without credit recovery the following year than a student who failed English I with Edgenuity.

The significant difference obtained could be a result of freshman students’ adjustment to high school and the reality that failing a single course requires that the course be recovered. According to NCLB (2001), students must finish one grade level per year beginning with the ninth grade to satisfy high school graduation requirements. From the analysis of the data for English II and English III, the Pearson chi-square value was not significant for students who recovered English II or English III credits through Edgenuity. Therefore, a student who passed English II with Edgenuity was 1.9 times more likely to pass English III without credit recovery the following year than was a student who failed English II with Edgenuity. Additionally, a student who passed English III with Edgenuity was 4.2 times more likely to pass English IV than was a student who failed English III with Edgenuity.

The lack of a significant difference between English II to English III or English III to English IV was unclear; perhaps student maturity and desire to graduate from high school on time motivated them to pass English the subsequent school year after the experience of recovering or attempting to recover English credits through Edgenuity. This rationale may also explain why the number of students recovering English through Edgenuity declined from 228 in English I, to 147 in English II, to 91 in English III. This rationale was also supported by Picciano and Seaman (2009) who determined that student success was dependent on the student’s level of maturity, self-discipline, and the possession of certain basic skills in reading and math to succeed in online credit recovery courses. Perhaps participating in Edgenuity re-engaged students in school and gave them hope that they would be able to graduate with their cohort.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked: Does a statistically significant difference exist in the percent of students who successfully used Edgenuity for English course credit recovery and passed the EOC English assessment the subsequent school year compared to students who did not successfully use Edgenuity for English course credit? Data were purposefully refined to examine those students who took English coursework through Edgenuity. A chi-square test for independence was conducted on data obtained from Edgenuity and the student management
system to explore the relationship between students who passed the EOC after recovering English credits through Edgenuity.

An examination of the findings for Research Question 4 indicated no significant difference between students who passed or failed English I or English II through Edgenuity and whether they passed the 9th or 10th grade reading EOC. The lack of significance may be that students failed English because of zeros on assignments rather than because a failure to understand the English TEKS for their grade level.

An additional variable that may need to be considered is the EOC passing standard at Phase 1 of three phases. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) adopted a phase-in standard approach to provide districts time to adjust instruction, provide additional staff training, and close knowledge gaps because of significant increase in the rigor of the new state assessment, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Performance standards are based on the year students take their first EOC assessment. Students taking their first EOC reading assessment in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 were held to the first set of Level II phase-in performance standards (1875 score). Students taking their first EOC reading assessment in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 will be held to the second set of Level II phase-in performance standards (1950 score). Students taking their first EOC reading assessment in 2015-2016 or later will be held to the final set of Level II phase-in performance standards (2000 score) (TEA, 2012).

Summary. The findings of this study indicated that Edgenuity was a viable option for students who wish to regain lost credits and continue progressing toward graduation. The results yielded a significant difference for students who recovered English I credits through Edgenuity and their success the subsequent school year. While the results of the study did not yield significant differences between English credits recovered and student success the subsequent school year or on the reading EOC, the fact that students successfully regained credits needed for graduation made the program effective for many. This study also found that the number of credits students accrued by the end of the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, along with the number of credits recovered with Edgenuity during these grade significantly predicted whether they would graduate.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the current findings:

1. Districts, campuses, administrators, and educators are inundated with programs, sellers, and vendors who may be genuine and authentic, or who may be selling unreliable products. Therefore, campuses and districts that have experienced positive outcomes using their credit recovery programs should begin speaking out and disseminating these successes to the larger community.
2. The findings of the current study yielded a 67% success rate with Edgenuity since its implementation in 2010. Therefore, additional research is needed to determine why some students are not successful at regaining credits using this program.
3. Based on the positive results from this study and the reduction in school funding and additional budget cuts, campuses and districts should conduct financial analyses to determine available funding that could be allocated to fund Edgenuity.
4. With the positive gains of Edgenuity as a credit recovery program, counselors and administrators must continue to identify students in need of credit recovery early in their high school careers.
5. The district studied should reconsider the impact of Edgenuity on students who are recovering English through credit recovery and their success on EOC assessments required for graduation after multiple years of data are available.

Recommendations for Future Study

To continue understanding the positive impact of Edgenuity, future research is suggested in the following areas:

1. No program addresses the needs of all learners; therefore, future research should determine the characteristics of successful students who participate in the Edgenuity program. This knowledge could assist teachers and administrators in placing students in the appropriate programs and courses.
2. The current study should be expanded to include teachers’ and students’ perceptions of Edgenuity and its effectiveness.
3. Future research should determine the criteria that counselors or administrators use to enroll students in the Edgenuity online program.
4. Future research should evaluate the role that the teacher assigned to the Edgenuity class plays in the success of students recovering credits through this program.
5. Continued investigation should focus on the impact of Edgenuity on EOC assessments. The current study did not yield a significant difference in EOC success after credit recovery; however, only two years of data for 9th grade reading EOC and one year of data for 10th grade reading EOC were available. Future studies might also include data from a campus or district with a low reading EOC success rate to determine whether Edgenuity can significantly improve these rates.
6. The district used in this study traditionally had a 94% or higher graduation rate. Therefore, research needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of Edgenuity in a district with lower graduation rates.
7. The current study found a decline in the number of students recovering English credits over the four years in high school. Therefore, future research needs to examine this relationship. For example, is a transfer of skills or information facilitating this success? Are students improving academically in terms of content knowledge or are certain qualities of Edgenuity increasing and transferring to student success in face-to-face classes such as satisfaction with school or academic self-efficacy? This study identified such a pattern of credit recovery; understanding why this pattern existed may illuminate areas that could increase student achievement.
8. Given the gap in research at the secondary education level concerning online learning, the possibilities are endless for researchers interested in this area of study. There is such a great need for more information concerning the effective implementation of online learning programs that any topic is worthy of study as long as the research is of a rigorous nature.
References


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