

Eradicating English Language Learner Dropouts: A Comprehensive Framework
for Public High Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine what prioritizing factors, with regard to the Five Essentials Framework proposed by *The University of Chicago* may help minimize dropout rates for English Language Learners in two participating urban public high schools in Wisconsin. This information could have a profound impact on ELL student engagement and learning performance that would result in most, if not all, students graduating from high school with the determination and preparation needed to seek a higher education degree.

The researcher investigated and documented high school dropout rates on the Wisconsin Information System for Education Data Dashboard (WISEdash) link to the DPI website during the 2005-06 through 2014-15 school years.

High school dropouts may leave school due to a variety of individual and school related reasons. According to pull-out theorists, when there is a low unemployment rate, students are more likely to leave school because their likelihood of finding employment is high. Push-out theorists argue that students leave school not only because of their individual attributes but also because of the school structure. The problem investigated in this study was the influence these push-out and pull-out factors have on high school students dropping out of school. A second problem investigated was whether English Language Learners (ELLs) are more at risk for dropping out of high school due to these or other factors.

The results found in this investigation were that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers on their perception of the importance of Professional Development on student engagement; years of teaching experience and student engagement; male and female teachers differences on family participation's impact on ELL academic learning, and ELL drop out rates between the two high schools studied. However, the researcher found that faculty Professional Development had an impact on ELL student achievement as measured by student engagement and that there was an impact of high school ELL English achievement and ELL students transitioning successfully into mainstream classrooms.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

Throughout adolescence, high school students make many important decisions regarding whether to continue with their formal education. While making these decisions, high school students face disciplinary policies, employment opportunities, and family responsibilities that may push or pull them out of school. Staying in school or leaving has serious short and long-term implications. In an economy where the level of education attained; strongly influences one's future pay and occupation, high school dropouts are in a very disadvantaged position. Dropouts are less likely to participate, as favorably in the labor force as other adults with a high school education and they often become mired in low-wage jobs with few advancement opportunities (Stearns & Glennie, 2006).

High School dropouts have poorer mental and physical health and an increased probability of being incarcerated for committing criminal acts and/or becoming dependent on government programs (Stearns & Glennie, 2006). All these consequences translate into high social costs in the form of costs for incarceration, income transfer programs, and lost tax income for the government.

English Language Learners (ELLs) are a group of students who are more at risk of not achieving academic success. Not only are these learners initially at risk, they often do not take advantage of the "safety net" offered in the form of a

GED (General Equivalency Diploma). According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey, "Just one-in-ten Hispanic high school dropouts has a GED credential, widely regarded as the best "second chance" pathway to college, vocational training or military service for adults who have not graduated from high school." The Pew Hispanic Center offers more information on this issue. The Institute reports that, "Two-in-ten black high school dropouts and three-in-ten white high school dropouts have a GED" (Fry, 2010). Those who drop out of school at an early age are less likely than older dropouts to ever receive a General Equivalency Diploma (2010).

Scholarly research indicates a need for further investigation regarding state and district programs to keep ELLs in school through graduation. For example, this study was based upon information found in a long-standing 15-year quantitative examination of the academic progress of ELLs in the Chicago Public Schools. The Chicago study identified key support systems most likely to impact the academic success of public school students in grades K-12. The results of the Chicago study served as a framework for the current study of primarily Latino ELL high school students who need additional supports to graduate and prepare for higher educational opportunities after high school.

Statement of the Problem

High school dropouts may leave school due to a variety of individual and school related reasons. According to pull-out theorists, when there is a low unemployment rate, students are more likely to leave school because their likelihood of finding employment is high. Push-out theorists argue that students

leave school not only because of their individual attributes but also because of the school structure. The problem investigated in this study was the influence these push-out and pull-out factors have on high school students dropping out of school. This study also investigated how the ethnicity and gender of the students' impact dropping out of school. A further problem investigated was whether English Language Learners (ELLs) are more at risk for dropping out of high school due to these factors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what prioritizing factors, with regard to the Five Essentials Framework proposed by *The University of Chicago* may help minimize dropout rates for English Language Learners (ELLs) in two participating urban public high schools in Wisconsin.

Research Questions

The questions that guided this study included:

1. To what degree are dropout rates for Latino Limited English Proficient (LEP) students between the two school similar?
2. To what degree are Latino Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, between the two urban high schools with similar demographics, more at risk for higher dropout rates than non Limited English Proficient students?
3. To what degree are the professional development experiences teachers receive relevant to their needs while working with English Language Learners?

4. To what extent do parents need to be involved when their child is an ELL learner in order for the students to be academically successful?
5. To what degree does a school need to provide the professional development required to successfully engage ELL students in learning?

Hypotheses

This study investigated the following hypotheses sets:

1. H₀: Female faculty members when compared to male faculty members believe Professional Development has less than or/an equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement.
H₁: Female faculty members when compared to male faculty members believe Professional Development has a greater impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement.
2. H₀: Faculty members with different number of years of teaching experience believe Professional Development has less than or/an equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement.
H₁: Faculty members with different number of years of teaching experience believe Professional Development has an impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement.
3. H₀: Female faculty members when compared to male faculty members believe a student's family participation differences have less than or/an equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) academic learning.

- H₁: Female faculty members when compared to male faculty members believe a student's family participation differences has a greater impact on English Language Learner (ELL) academic learning.
4. H₀: The two participating public high schools in the district studied, have equal English Language Learner (ELL) drop out rates.
- H₁: The two participating public high schools in the district studied, do not have equal English Language Learner (ELL) drop out rates.
5. H₀: Faculty Professional Development has no influence on English Language Learner (ELL) student achievement as measured by student engagement.
- H₁: Faculty Professional Development influences English Language Learner (ELL) student achievement as measured by student engagement.
6. H₀: Sufficient levels of high school academic English achievement has an impact on English Language Learner (ELL) students being transitioned successfully into mainstream classrooms.
- H₁: Sufficient levels of high school academic English achievement has no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) students being transitioned successfully into mainstream classrooms.

Definition of Terms

- **Dropout** is defined as a student who was enrolled in school at some time during the school term, was not enrolled at the beginning of the next school year (3rd Friday of September), has not completed high school, and does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions: transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved educational program; temporary absence due to expulsion, suspension or school-approved illness; death.
- **ELL/LEP** (English Language Learner or Limited English Proficient) is defined as any student whose first language, or whose parents' or guardians' first language, is not English and whose level of English proficiency requires specially designed instruction, either in English or in the first language or both, in order for the student to fully benefit from classroom instruction and to be successful in attaining the state's high academic standards expected of all students at their grade level.
- **English Proficient** is defined as students with English language proficiency classifications of 6 (formerly ELL/LEP) and 7 (never ELL/LEP).
- **Five Essentials Framework** is defined as a framework of essential supports and contextual resources for school improvement
- **Fluent** is being able to speak or write smoothly, easily, or readily.

- **GED** (General Equivalency Diploma) is defined as being used for educational testing services designed to provide a high school equivalency credential.
- **Habitually Truant** is defined as being absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a semester.
- **Long-term English learner** (LTEL) is a formal educational classification given to students who have been enrolled in American schools for more than six years, who are not progressing toward English proficiency, and who are struggling academically due to their limited English skills.
- **Metropolitan High School Districts** is defined as a district with multiple public high schools in one district.
- **Pull-out Theories** assume that students make a cost-benefit analysis of their economic interest to remain in or leave school.
- **Push-out Theories** concentrate on the school factors that discourage students from continuing with their education.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher introduced the topic of high school dropout rates in two urban public high schools in southeastern Wisconsin. Male and female teachers of those students and their needs associated with effectively teaching students, especially ELL students were introduced. A myriad of factors have impacted Latino ELL students who drop out of high school. However, if students do drop out, there are many ways that this decision impacts the

community and the students themselves. The Literature Review in Chapter Two focuses on staff, community, and student support systems that are most needed to improve the overall learning outcomes and potentially result in higher graduation rates for Latino Ell students.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Background

The purpose of this study was to determine which prioritizing factors, with regard to the Chicago Urban Institute's Five Essentials Framework, may help significantly minimize dropout rates for English Language Learners (ELLs) in two school districts which include two participating urban public high schools in Southeastern Wisconsin. The primary purpose was to study Latino Americans because these students often have an English language deficiency.

Theoretical Framework

The early 1990s was a period of extraordinary ferment and optimism in Chicago, Illinois. A new law had transferred authority and resources from the central administration to the newly formed local school councils and mandated that these new leaders reform the schools. The Five Essentials' Framework was developed to examine how the decentralization impacted school environments. The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) on schools and what makes them successful based it on more than 20 years of research. What CCSR found is not surprising—schools that are well organized, safe, and supportive are much more likely to be successful. During a six-year period, from 1990 to 1996, there were 118 schools out of 477 that had increased the percentage of their students meeting national norms in reading, from 22 to 37 percent Bryk et al. (2010). At the same time, there were another 118 elementary schools where the trend was essentially flat—24 percent met

national norms at the beginning and at the end of the six-year period Bryk et al. (2010). Together, these two sets of diverging schools served more than 150,000 students. The Five Essentials were the guiding premise of this researcher's work as they represent the most longest standing meta-analysis regarding student academic success (CCSR, p.1).

The school leaders of today face a similar challenge to that was faced by the educational leaders in the early '90s: how to create the conditions and enact the practices that ultimately lead students to perform at higher levels. Beyond Chicago, student dropouts continue to be a serious issue facing educators in most major urban districts in the United States (Bender Sebring et al., 2006). Lessons from Chicago conclusively demonstrated there is no "silver bullet" for school reform, but there is a reliable recipe. The key ingredients, which the authors call the "essential supports," are school leadership, parent and community ties, professional capacity of the faculty, student centered learning climate, and instructional guidance (Bender Sebring et al., 2006). Schools that measured strong in all five supports were at least 10 times more likely than schools with just one or two strengths to achieve substantial gains in reading and mathematics (CCSR, p.1). Moreover, a sustained weakness in just one of these areas undermined virtually all attempts at improving student learning.

School reorganization drives improvement and individual initiatives are unlikely to work in isolation. This notion has strong implications for states and districts focused on any number of reforms that have gained increasing political

currency. Examples of these reforms include improving teacher quality, turning around low performing schools, or mandating a single curriculum (CCSR, p.2).

The conceptual framework also recognizes that local leadership and the other four core supports exist within a broader context of a climate of mutual trust and a local community. Trust is a key social resource for school improvement. The essential supports are most likely to develop in schools where mutual trust suffuses the working relationships across the school community. The local community and its history also play a critical role in the development of the essential supports and students' opportunities to learn (Bryk et al., 2010, Chapter 2).

What are the Five Essential Supports?

Faced with these widely divergent sets of outcomes, the Chicago Public School superintendent invited University of Chicago CCSR researchers to join educators and school reformers in Chicago to begin developing a system wide guide for school improvement. These early discussions with educators, examination of national research, pilot surveys, and field studies of schools led to the first articulation of the framework of the five essential supports for school improvement (Bryk et al. 2010). The framework served as both a clinical guide for practitioners and as a theoretical guide for developing surveys to measure each component.

The Five Essential Supports are:

School leadership: Refers to whether principals are strategic, focused on instruction, and inclusive of others in their leadership work. Elementary schools

with strong school leadership were seven times more likely to improve in mathematics and nearly four times more likely to improve in reading than schools weak on this measure (CCSR, p.1).

Parent-community ties: Refers to whether schools are a welcoming place for parents and whether there are strong connections between the school and local institutions. Elementary schools with strong parental involvement were ten times more likely to improve in mathematics and four times more likely to improve in reading than schools weak on this measure (CCSR, p.1).

Professional capacity: Refers to the quality of the faculty and staff recruited to the school, their base beliefs and values about change, the quality of ongoing professional development, and the capacity of the staff to work together. Elementary schools where teachers were highly committed to the school and inclined to embrace innovation were five times more likely to improve in reading and four times more likely to improve in mathematics than schools weak on this measure (CCSR, p.2).

Student-centered learning climate: Refers to whether schools have a safe, welcoming, stimulating and nurturing environment focused on learning for all students. Elementary schools with strong safety and order were two times more likely to improve in reading than schools weak on this measure (CCSR, p.2).

Instructional guidance: Refers to the organization of the curriculum, the nature of the academic demand or challenges it poses, and the tools teachers have to advance learning (such as instructional materials). Elementary schools

with strong curriculum alignment were four times more likely to improve in mathematics and reading than schools weak on this measure (CCSR, p.2).

Graduation Rates for ELLs/Minorities in United States

Graduation rates are unevenly distributed for students of different races, ethnicities, family incomes, disabilities, and English proficiencies. There are no states where the graduation rate for African American, Hispanic, or economically disadvantaged students is above 89 percent. Only 11 states are above the 89 percent graduation rate for white students (America's Promise Alliance, 2013). The national high school graduation rate is 78.2 percent. Currently, about one in five students does not graduate from high school with their peers. However, one in four African Americans and nearly one in five Hispanic students still attend high schools where graduating is not the norm (America's Promise Alliance, 2013). Among students who do graduate, 20 percent need remedial courses in college and far too few earn a college degree (America's Promise Alliance, 2013). Yet more than half of all new jobs in the next decade will require some postsecondary education. Unfortunately, there are 18 states that still allow students to leave school before the age of 18 (America's Promise Alliance, 2013). High school dropouts are more likely to have lower-paying jobs and most are not going back to school for their high school diploma or GED (America's Promise Alliance, 2013).

The consensus of experts in the field of English Language Development (ELD) is that across the nation a significant subgroup of ELLs considered Long Term English Learners (LTELs) are being failed by the public school system

(Adams & Jones, 2006; Maxwell, 2013; Olsen, 2010b; Tung, 2013). The number of ELL students that continue to drop out of public schools would support this wide body of research.

According to Flannery's article, *A New Look at America's English Language Learners*, more than 75% of all ELLs in elementary schools are born in the United States and the rates of ELLs enrolling in school districts across the nation is exploding (Flannery, 2009). ELLs who are born in the U.S. usually do not have any academic instruction or literacy skills in their home language and therefore do not have the benefits usually associated with students who are bilingual and bi-literate (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012). These ELLs usually enter kindergarten eager to learn. However, according to Cummings' threshold hypothesis, students with low academic levels in their home language (L1) and low levels of language in the target language (L2) usually are called "partial" bilinguals, and are likely to "experience academic disadvantages and have impoverished interactions with their educational environments" (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012, p.717).

In contrast, students who are fully bilingual experience no such disadvantages and demonstrate proficiency in both languages, which is considered "additive." Therefore, these fully bilingual ELLs experience all of the positive attributes associated with bilingualism (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012, p. 717).

Drop Out Decisions and Important Data

Dropping out of high school is a serious problem, not only for the individual, the school system and the community, but also for society. Students who drop out of high school have fewer options for employment and usually end up working in low-skilled, low-paying positions with fewer possibilities for advancement (Christle, 2007). Among recent dropouts, 16% are unemployed and 32% live below the poverty line (Messacar, 2013). Dropouts with jobs earn an average of only \$12.75 per hour, with the most common jobs found in construction, food services, and landscaping industries (Messacar, 2013). Dropouts who are 50 years old earn an average of \$16.50 an hour and are most commonly employed in construction, food services, and truck transportation (Messacar, 2013).

An analysis of 2011 American Community Survey data EPE Research Center places the size of the young adult population from 16 to 21 years of age, at about 27.1 million people (Sparks, 2013). Three-quarters of these youths are attending school, with similar shares enrolled at the K-12 (10.7 million) and postsecondary levels (9.5 million) (Sparks, 2013). Nineteen percent of young adults are out of school and completed high school; 6.5 percent have left school without a diploma or other credential (Sparks, 2013). For out-of-school youths, a high school education is strongly tied to securing employment. Little more than one-third (1.2 million) of non-completers are working (Sparks, 2013).

The decision to dropout of school often results from a long disengagement with education that began in elementary school. Patterns of high

absenteeism and lower performance by future dropouts usually start as early as third grade (Messacar, 2013). At young ages, truancy is more often related to parental issues. Addressing parent situations that keep children away from school while working with parents to improve conditions for their children to cope with social and academic challenges of school are ways to foster school engagement (Messacar, 2013). Setting rules and helping with homework are ways that parents can encourage their children to adapt to school early and do well in school in the long term.

Still, there is a large number of students' who dropout with less than two years to go in their high school education. Poor attendance may suggest that students are uninterested in the educational environment, have competing interests outside of school, or their family's resources may be impeding their ability to attend school on a consistent basis. Additional studies that include the voice of students from across the nation may shed invaluable light on why students become disengaged from public school settings.

Student Identified Strategies How Schools Could Improve

When asked what would improve the chance of success for high school students, the dropouts surveyed by Bridgeland (2008) for *The Silent Epidemic* offered some useful recommendations. The high school students who were surveyed for this study were asked what schools need to do in order to improve: make classes interesting, relevant, and hands-on. Overall, 79 percent of students said, "Making academic classes more interesting would have a very or fairly large effect in helping them get the most out of their high school experience" (p.

6). Seventy-eight percent said the same thing about making courses more relevant to their future, and 77 percent felt that way about making classes more hands-on. For at-risk students, those who said, “They could do much better or somewhat better in school and described their school as average or below average in terms of the level of achievement and the percent of students who go on to college” (p. 6). The most common response from student survey respondents was the need to make classes more hands-on, which would have a very or fairly significant effect on students getting the most out of their high school experience. Seventy-three percent of at-risk students felt it was necessary to make classes more interesting, and 68 percent felt school should make courses more relevant to their future (Bridgeland et al., 2008).

The Silent Epidemic concluded that increasing graduation rates requires directly addressing the issues that usually lead students to drop out. The report outlines strategies that can help increase graduation rates:

- Improve teaching and curricula to make school more relevant and engaging and enhance the connections between school and work;
- Improve instruction and access to supports for struggling students;
- Build a school climate that fosters academics;
- Ensure strong adult-student relationships within the school; and
- Improve the communication between parents and schools (Bridgeland et al., 2008).

Service-Learning in our Schools

Service-learning is an educational technique that incorporates community service into the academic curriculum. Service-learning differs from generic community service in that it has specific academic goals that are organized through schools, and involve reflection activities for the participants (Bridgeland et al., 2008). Service-learning can take many forms, including projects in which students write children's books about historical events, to group activities in which an entire class paints a mural depicting themes from their science class. While only two percent of schools had service-learning programs in 1984 (APCO Associates, 1999), approximately 30 percent of schools in 1997 have service-learning. Officials estimate that about 4.7 million students today have participated (Berkas and Thomas, 1997).

Service-learning is most effective when it is well integrated into the curriculum. This integration is the key difference between service-learning and community service. Rather than simply having students work in their communities, service-learning ties that work to the academic material being taught in class. This curricular integration is enhanced by reflection activities like group discussions and journaling that challenge students to think critically about their experiences (Bridgeland et al., 2008). This reflection is best when it takes place before, during, and after the service.

Service-Learning as a Means for Curtailing Student Drop Out Rates

The epidemic of students dropping out of high school has many underlying causes, which are different for each student. Causes vary from passively fading out to actively being expelled, from struggling academically because of poor academic training to being too smart for classes the student finds boring (Bridgeland et al., 2008). For nearly every cause of dropping out, however, service-learning has the potential to make a meaningful difference. The need to embed civic service opportunities for students enables students to engage and raise their self-esteem. Consequently, it is included in the literature review because it may further prevent students from dropping out of school.

Lack of Connection to the School Environment

Too many high school students feel disconnected from their school, and this lack of connection is a primary factor in their failure to graduate. *The Silent Epidemic* found that dropping out of high school is a slow process that involves gradual disengagement from the school community (Bridgeland et al., 2006). One of the primary warning signs for future dropouts is poor attendance. Clear warning signs such as missing class or skipping school often appear at least one to three years before a student drops out, and some national studies show that such signals can be predictive of dropping out as early as elementary school. Between 59 and 65 percent of high school dropouts missed class often during the year they dropped out, and 33 to 45 percent missed class often the previous year (Billig and Klute, 2003). Furthermore, students who eventually dropped out

reported that they often lack adult role models at school with whom they can discuss school or personal problems (Bridgeland et al., 2008). Fostering a school environment in which students feel they can turn to teachers and want to go to school is a crucial step toward keeping students in school and on track to graduate. Students, teachers, and published research explain that service-learning can effectively build a positive learning environment while improving attendance.

Parental Involvement

Parents also need to be actively involved through all levels of their children's education. Ninth grade is the high school year where most dropouts tend to occur. Dropping out may be due to increased academic demands, social adjustments to the high school environment, and an increased responsibility for their own academic progress (Schoenberger, 2012). Although many parents become more involved when learning that their child is considering leaving school, often they are not aware of their child's poor performance until it's too late. When school administrators and teachers communicate with parents more on a regular basis regarding their child's performance, they provide a means for parents to take an active role in their child's education (Messacar, 2013).

Coleman and Moynihan's research explained why working class minority parents are not as "involved" as their middle-class White counterparts has moved beyond the cultural deficit arguments. Reported in their reasoning included blaming minority family cultures, claiming that these parents cared little about the formal education of their children. More contemporary and

culturally relevant arguments focus on why and how poor minority parents, in some cases, may come to feel isolated, ignored, and feeling unwelcome in schools (Cooper & Christie, 2005; Lawson, 2003). Additionally, studies demonstrate those parents' long work hours of work, the holding of multiple jobs, and other familial responsibilities conflict with the hours that urban schools make available for parent involvement (Waanders, Mendez, & Downer, 2007). Furthermore, local barriers in poor inner city communities, such as issues of community safety and availability of transportation and childcare, continue to pose challenges to parent involvement (Drummond & Stipek, 2004).

Other academic literature in this area also indicates that parent involvement is tied to parent-teacher relationships and communication, which varies across cultures. For example, some research suggests that working class Latino parents believe the teacher is responsible for initiating communication, whereas many teachers believe that parents should initiate contact. Additionally, Quiocho & Daoud (2006) emphasize that teachers often unwittingly construct barriers that hamper minority parents' participation by not communicating regularly with parents, not explaining homework policies, as well as not valuing the home languages and cultures of the children.

School Absenteeism and Other Factors Affecting Dropout Rates

In large urban school districts serving high-poverty areas, schools and principals tend to report high rates of daily absenteeism as a severe problem. Increased rates of absenteeism are indicators of student disengagement with an increased likelihood of eventually being a high school dropout (Schoenberger,

2012). Consistent with national data, absenteeism is the most common indicator of overall student engagement and a significant predictor of dropping out. Other warning signs include the following: low grades, discipline and behavioral problems, lack of involvement in class and in school activities, pregnancy, being held back a grade or more, students who transfer from another school, and those who experience difficulty with the transition year of 9th grade itself (Bridgeland, 2006).

Respondents report they started to lose interest in school well before dropping out, with 71 % saying they lost interest in school in the 9th and 10th grades. Nationally, much of the dropping out from school has shifted from the last two years of high school to between 9th and 10th grades today (Bridgeland, 2006).

Urban High School in Southeastern Wisconsin and Dropout Rates

An example of an urban high school in southeastern Wisconsin used in this study was built in 1966. The school located on 68 acres in the southwest section of the communities in southeastern Wisconsin. Its stated mission is, "to educate every student to succeed" (Racine Unified School District Home Page, 2015). The district believes that the school exists in a changing world and a dynamic society and must prepare students to live in such a world. During the 2013-2014 school year 1, 929 students were enrolled at this school. In the 2013-14 school year, 870 students (45.1%) were habitually truant. Also, during the same school year, 1,982 students were expected to complete the school term. Adversely, 1, 904 students actually completed the school term while 78

(3.94%) dropped out of high school. Furthermore, 6.8% African Americans, 4.3% Hispanics/Latinos, 4.8% Asian Americans, and 2.3% Whites dropped out during the 2013-2014 school term (WISEdash, 2015).

Dropout Nation In A Midwest State

In 2006, TIME Magazine featured Shelbyville, Indiana under the headline "Dropout Nation." Shelbyville is a town of almost 18,000 located on the outer fringe of the "doughnut" counties that ring Indianapolis (Thornburgh, 2006). Most people live in single-family houses with yards and fences. Not many are well off, but there is little poverty in Shelbyville because automotive and other factories have given the town a steady supply of well-paying jobs. With a real graduation rate of 75 percent, Shelbyville was the poster child for the dropout crisis in America (Thornburgh, 2006). The U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey asked whether respondents have a diploma or GED. The survey found, "The census count severely underreports dropout numbers, in part because it doesn't include transients or prisoners, populations with a high proportion of dropouts (Thornburgh, 2006)." The Federal Government has been similarly deceptive, producing graduation-rate estimates--usually between 85% and 90%--by relying only on a couple of questions buried deep within the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (Thornburgh, 2006).

For years, Shelbyville had been comforted by its self-reported and wildly inaccurate graduation rate of up to 98% (Thornburgh, 2006). The school district arrived at that number by using a commonly accepted statistical feint, counting any dropout who promises to take the GED test later on as a graduating student.

The people of Shelbyville began to admit the scope of their problem by asking themselves the same simple questions about who was graduating. It helped that their superintendent was new to the job and had a clean slate to have little incentive to make excuses for the old way of doing things (Thornburgh, 2006). The GED trick is one of many deployed by state and local governments around the country to disguise the real dropout rates. For example, Houston had its notorious “leaver codes,” such as pregnancy and military service that were often applied to students who were later reclassified as dropouts (Thornburgh, p. 3).

Sarah Miller was a victim of those old ways in Shelbyville. She was intelligent but a rebellious teenager with no stable home life. Sarah began falling behind in attendance and classwork her freshman year. She and her friends would often skip out of school after lunch. One morning Sarah went to the school office to discuss getting back on track and got a shocking response from an administrator, “Why don’t you just quit school.” With those magic words, she quit school.

Sarah never stepped foot in a high school again. She got her GED, but was too afraid to try community college because she didn’t want to “look stupid”. Unfortunately, researchers call students like Sarah “pushouts,” not dropouts (Thornburgh, 2006). Tom Zobel, Shelbyville’s new high school principal, says he’s familiar with the mind-set. He reports, “Ten years ago, if we had a problem student, the plan was, okay lets figure out how to get rid of this kid. Now we have to get them help” (Thornburgh, p.3).

A common denominator regarding student attendance is that dropping out of school is not an impulsive action; rather it's a cumulative process that more than likely started in elementary/middle school. Unsuccessful school experiences, such as academic failure, absenteeism, being held back in school, behavior and discipline problems build on each to eventually alienate the student from coming to school (Christle, 2007).

GED and High School Graduation among Hispanics and its Impact

In the labor market, about two-thirds of Latinos with GEDs were employed, compared with nearly three-quarter of Latinos with high school diplomas. Hispanic adults with a GED had a higher unemployment rate (9%) than Hispanics who graduated with a high school diploma (7%), (Fry, 2010). Hispanics with a high school diploma were more likely than Hispanic GED holders to be full-year workers (80% versus 75%) (Fry, 2010).

Earnings

The typical GED recipient has finished around 10 years of formal schooling (Clark and Jaeger, 2006), two years less schooling than high school graduates. Although Hispanic GED holders are less likely to have jobs and full-year work than Hispanic high school graduates, the average Hispanic GED holder may be paid more than the average Hispanic high school graduate. Among full-time, full-year workers ages 20-64, mean earnings for GED holders was \$33,504 compared to \$32,972 for Hispanics who ended their education with a high school diploma (Fry, 2010). This is a surprising compensation finding.

This higher average pay is found among only one group of Hispanic workers. For native-born workers, high school Hispanic graduates are paid more than those with GEDs nation wide. Among foreign-born workers, particularly foreign-born males, GED holders earn more than high school graduates (Fry, 2010). The earnings payoff for Hispanic male immigrants who have a GED rather than a high school diploma may be due to a number of factors. Among these factors, the male GED holders are about 2.5 years older, on average, than the male high school graduates and they are less likely to have recently arrived in the United States (Fry, 2010).

Military

A benefit of the GED is that it provides an avenue to enlist in the nation's armed forces. Virtually all (99%) Hispanics on active duty in the U.S. military are either high school graduates or GED holders (Pew Hispanic Center, 2003). The military prefers to recruit high school graduates. Hispanics who ended their education with a GED were slightly more likely to be military veterans than Hispanics who had a high school diploma (Fry, 2010).

Strategies That Help Students Stay in High School

While there are no simple solutions to the dropout crisis in public education, there are clearly "supports" that can be provided within the academic environment and at home that would improve students' chances of staying in school. While most dropouts blame themselves for failing to graduate, there are things they report schools can do to help students graduate.

Improve teaching and curricula to make school more relevant and engaging and enhance the connection between school and work.

Four of five students (81%) in the same focus group conducted by Johnson, said there should be more opportunities for real-world learning and some in the focus groups called for more experiential learning (Johnston, J.H., 2010). They said, “Students need to see the connection between school and getting a job” (Johnston, J.H., 2010, p. 6).

Improve instruction, and access to supports, for struggling students.

Four out of five students (81%) in the for mentioned focus group wanted better teachers and three-fourths wanted smaller classes with more individualized instruction (Johnston, J.H., 2010). More than half (55%) felt that more needed to be done to help students who had problems learning, and 70% believed more tutoring, summer school and extra time with teachers would have improved their chances of graduating (Johnston, J.H., 2010).

Build a school climate that fosters academics.

Seven in ten students in the focus group favored increasing supervision in school and more than three in five students (62%) felt more classroom discipline was necessary (Johnston, J.H., 2010). More than half of the students (57%) felt their schools did not do enough to help students feel safe from violence (Johnston, J.H., 2010). Seven in ten students (71%) said their schools did not do enough to make school interesting (Johnston, J.H., 2010).

Ensure that students have a strong relationship with at least one adult in the school.

While two-thirds of the students (65%) said there was a staff member or teacher who cared about their success, only 56% said they could go to a staff person for school to talk about personal problems (Johnston, J.H., 2010).

Although schools and school personnel cannot change the individual, family, and real world learning variables that may put youth at risk for dropping out of school, they can help provide protective factors that may reduce these risks by providing a positive and safe learning environment, setting high, yet achievable academic and social expectations, and consistently facilitating academic and social success.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed quantitative studies on primarily Latino ELL high school dropout rates, various educational programs designed to reduce Latino ELL high school students from dropping out of school, and making these students more engaged in school by incorporating real world experiences in the educational program. The effects of dropping out and the GED program were reviewed.

Furthermore, the Five Essentials Framework encompassed each section of this researcher's literature review. The five dependent variables reviewed and the strategies that were used to assess them included: Teacher Professional Development, Student Engagement, Parental Involvement, Administrative Practices, English Language Learning 5 program choice models were described.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine which prioritizing factors, with regard to the Five Essentials Framework proposed by *The University of Chicago* may help minimize dropout rates for English Language Learners (ELLs). The study was conducted in two participating urban public high schools in Southeastern Wisconsin. Information from this study will be helpful in assisting high schools to make necessary changes to achieve minimum drop out rates.

Guiding Questions

The questions that guided this study included:

1. To what degree are dropout rates for Latino Limited English Proficient (LEP) students between the two schools similar?
2. To what degree are Latino Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, between two urban high schools with similar demographics, more at risk for higher dropout rates than non Limited English Proficient students?
3. To what degree are dropout rates for Latino LEPs and Latino EPs between two public high schools similar?
4. To what degree are the professional development experiences teachers receive relevant to their needs while working with English Language Learners?

5. To what extent do parents need to be involved when their child is an ELL learner in order for them to be academically successful?
6. To what degree does a school need to provide the professional development required to successfully engage ELL students in learning?

Study Design

This study involved a mixed-method design. The first phase entailed a review of existing demographic survey data as described in the following section. The second phase included an anonymous survey, which provided the researcher with answers to questions regarding what prioritizing factors helped minimize the dropout rates for Latino English Language Learners in two urban public high schools. This phase of the study included an online voluntary teacher survey (See Appendix A). The researcher included a cover letter to potential high school teacher participants indicating that all information provided was voluntary and would be anonymous.

Population and Sample

With regard to the two phases of the study, the first phase did not include any live participants. The first phase used data which included statistics regarding demographic student data in the 2012-2013 Wisconsin Information System for Education Data Dashboard (WISEdash), data report. The second phase included voluntary teacher responses gathered from August 5, 2015 to September 29, 2015. These responses were submitted in an online survey approved by the Carthage Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher surveyed voluntary teaching staff that included two high schools in the district

studied. These two high schools in Southeastern Wisconsin were selected because the attendance rates were lower and they both have high drop out rates. The researcher was interested in better understanding why Latino ELL students attended school less in the district studied and thus were more prone to not graduating with a high school diploma.

Setting

This investigation was conducted in two phases in two Midwestern high schools. The first phase involved a review of the Wisconsin Information System for Education Data Dashboard (WISEdash), data from six public high schools in Wisconsin. Based on a review of this data, schools identified with the highest dropout rates were selected to take part in the second phase of this study.

Variables and Instrumentation

In this study there were five dependent variables and one independent variable. In this chapter, each dependent variable is defined and its collection instruments are described.

Dependent Variable and Measure

The five dependent variables and the instrumentation that was used to assess them are as follows,

1. Teacher Professional Development
2. Student Engagement
3. Parental Involvement
4. Administrative Practices
5. English Language Learning 5 program choice models

Independent Variable and Measure

In this study, there was one independent variable – the ELL high school Latino dropout rate.

Procedures

The following steps and procedures were followed in this study:

1. Carthage IRB approval
2. Submit an official request to office of accountability from the district studied
3. The district approved the online survey and assisted in submission of the form to voluntary teacher participants
4. Voluntary teacher participants filled out and submitted the survey
5. The researcher statistically analyzed this data using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) the survey results and compared them to Wisconsin Information System for Education Data Dashboard (WISEdash) data to look for patterns in Latino ELL high school dropout rates.

The researcher relaxed the confidence level from .05 to .10 for several aspects of this study. Generally, the confidence level in educational research is .05 (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996; Field 2009). However, Bartlett et al. (2001) note that an alpha level of .10 or lower may be used if the researcher is interested in identifying potential marginal differences or other statistical phenomena as a precursor to further studies (p. 45).

In addition, Lind et al. (2010) noted that there is no one level of significance that is applied to all tests. Traditionally, the confidence level is set at the .05, .01, or the .10 level depending on the type of research being conducted

(p. 330). With this in mind, Lind et. al noted the importance of the researcher deciding upon the level of significance before formulating the decision rule and collecting sample data (Lind et. al., 2010). In this case, the researcher did so understanding, in advance, the nature of this exploratory, mixed-methods educational research.

Data Sources

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) website and an anonymous teacher volunteer online survey (Survey Monkey) served as the data sources for this aspect of the study. The data obtained for this study was from Wisconsin Information System for Education Data Dashboard (WISEdash), which is on the Wisconsin DPI website. A wide variety of data about academic performance, attendance and behavior, staff and other school resources, and student demographics have been provided through WISEdash Data Analysis tools.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study was both quantitative and qualitative. For the quantitative analysis, this investigation utilized a t-test, Chi Square Tests and an ANOVA. The t-tests were used to compare the English Language Learner (ELL) dropout rates over time in the two public high schools. A one-tailed test was used with a 10% level of significance used to accept or reject the null hypothesis.

For the qualitative analysis, the answers to the open-ended question on the anonymous teacher volunteer online survey were summarized and

statistically analyzed with a Chi Square Test and responses were reported in summary form.

Reliability and Validity

The research design included a mixed-methods survey to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. Additional measures to ensure validity and reliability were included in order to improve the reliability and the validity of the study. Reliability is described as the ability of the measure survey to produce the same results under the same conditions (Field & Hole, 2008). In other words, reliability instruments measure consistency over time and populations. For instance, the researcher examined individual anonymous voluntary teacher survey responses in order to note any inconsistencies that may need to be addressed.

The researcher also addressed validity with respect to measurement of dependent variables, as “measuring what you think you are measuring.” Field and Hole (2008), note that validity is a necessary but not sufficient condition of a self-report or survey measure. In other words, a sound survey instrument with construct validity should measure what it is designed to measure (Field & Hole, 2008). Establishing validity also means that one can draw meaningful and useful inferences from scores on the instruments. Thus, the researcher used a Likert scale, in part, to strengthen the validity of this study. Validity was further assured by following the strategies noted by Creswell (2008) as a way in which to check the accuracy of findings to further improve the validity of the survey: triangulation of data sources, member checking, and an external auditor (Lincoln

& Guba, 1985). Further, the researcher employed the following elements advised by Fink. When constructing survey response items, Fink (2006) recommends the following the guidelines to help ensure the soundness of the survey:

1. Each question should be meaningful to respondents.
2. Use standard language rules.
3. Make questions concrete.
4. Avoid biased words and phrases.
5. Check your own biases.
6. Use caution when asking for personal information.
7. Each question should have just one thought (p. 21)

This triangulation strategy is important because it represents a “conclusion being drawn and supported by data collected from a number of different instruments” (Fraenkel, Wallend, & Hyun, 2012, p. 458). This strategy may enhance the validity of this research study, which involved utilizing multiple data collection methods including the survey, aggregated data, and the voluntary teachers taking the online survey. Further, the triangulation was utilized as an effective means to directly correlate the study’s variables as a whole. The triangulation assured that the researcher would correlate the findings from the data collection with the literature review and finally with the survey results. Thus, this methodology triangulation table outlined a web of connectivity among each defined category.

Chapter Summary

The researcher described data and the strategy used to study ELL student dropout rates studied in the two urban public high schools in Southeastern Wisconsin. The chapter also described how all of the data was obtained from an anonymous teacher volunteer online survey (Survey Monkey) and the Wisconsin Information System for Education Data Dashboard (WISEdash), through the Wisconsin DPI website. The Data Analysis strategy was described.

Chapter 4

Results

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what prioritizing factors, with regard to the Five Essentials Framework proposed by *The University of Chicago* may help minimize dropout rates for English Language Learners (ELLs) in two participating urban public high schools in Southeastern Wisconsin. This information could have a profound impact on ELL student engagement and learning performance that would result in most, if not all, students graduating from high school with the determination and preparation needed to seek a higher education degree.

Data Analysis

This mixed-method's data analysis used in this study was both quantitative and qualitative. For the quantitative data analysis, the researcher utilized a t-test, Chi Square Test, and an ANOVA. The t-tests were used to compare the English Language Learner (ELL) dropout rates over time in the two public high schools. A one-tailed test was used in five of the six hypotheses with a 10% level of significance used to accept or reject the null hypothesis. The 10% level was used because there is a limited amount of statistical dropout studies involving ELL students.

In terms of null hypothesis one, the t-test results are reported below in Table 1. The researcher found there was no significant difference at the 10% level between female faculty members when compared to male faculty members

who believe Professional Development has less than or/an equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement. Therefore, null hypothesis one is accepted.

Table 1

Professional Development Impact on ELL Engagement

Hypothesis	t critical one-tail	t-value	p-value	Decision
1	1.29	0.45	0.33	Accept

null 1

See Appendix C for Data Analysis

In terms of null hypothesis two, an ANOVA analysis was conducted and the results are reported below in Table 2. The researcher found there was no significant difference at the 10% level between faculty members with different number of years of teaching experience who believe Professional Development has less than or/an equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement. Therefore, null hypothesis two is accepted.

Table 2

Years of Teaching Impact on ELL Engagement

Source	F critical	p-value	F-value	Decision
Between Groups	2.16	0.62	0.60	Accept

null 2

See Appendix D for Data Analysis

In terms of null hypotheses three and four, the t-tests results are reported below in Table 3. The researcher found there was no significant difference at the

10% level for null hypothesis three between female faculty members when compared to male faculty members who believe a student's family participation differences have less than or equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) academic learning. Therefore, null hypothesis three is accepted.

The researcher also found there was no significant difference at the 10% level in null hypothesis four between the two participating public high schools in the district studied, that they have equal English Language Learner (ELL) drop out rates. Therefore, null hypothesis four is accepted.

Table 3

Family and ELL Student Drop Out Rates Analyses

<u>Hypothesis</u>	<u>t Critical</u>	<u>t-value</u>	<u>p-value</u>	<u>Decision</u>
3	1.3 (one-tail)	-0.38	0.75	Accept
Null 3				
4	1.75 (two-tail)	-1.62	0.12	Accept
Null 4				

See Appendix E and F for Data Analysis

In terms of null hypotheses five and six, Chi-Square analyses were conducted; the results are found in Table 4 below. The researcher found there was a significant difference below the 10% level regarding faculty Professional Development having no influence on English Language Learner (ELL) student achievement as measured by student engagement. Therefore, null hypothesis five was rejected and research hypothesis five was accepted. This signifies that those teachers participating in this survey believe that Professional

Development of the teaching staff has a positive influence on ELL student achievement as measured by student engagement in school.

Table 4

Results for ELL Student Achievement

<u>Hypothesis</u>	<u>Chi-Square critical</u>	<u>Chi-Square value</u>	<u>p-value</u>	<u>Decision</u>
5	10.6	21.541	0.005	Reject
Null 5				
6	7.78	8.64	0.10	Reject
Null 6				

See Appendix G and H for Data Analysis

The Chi-Square analysis revealed a significant difference at the 10% level between the impact of sufficient levels of high school academic English achievement on ELL students being transitioned successfully into mainstream classrooms. Therefore, null hypothesis six was rejected and research hypothesis six was accepted. To reiterate, hypothesis six stated that sufficient levels of high school academic English achievement has no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) students being transitioned successfully into mainstream classrooms.

In terms of the qualitative responses from the 80 anonymous teachers surveyed, this data was categorized and is reported below in Table 5. The open-ended question asked, "In your opinion, what is the primary reason that English Language Learners (ELLs) drop out of high school?"

Table 5*Faculty Responses for Latino ELLs High School Dropouts*

Reasons ELLs Drop out of High School	# REDHS Response
Appear Frustrated with School & English	17
Family Issues	14
Work Opportunity	13
No Engagement with Education	12
No Idea	8
Cultural Values	7
No Understanding of English Language	6
Not Enough Faculty Support	6
Failing Grades	3
Non-American Citizen Scholarship	3
Other	1
Total # Responses	90

See Appendix I for Details

The researcher will analyze these anonymous teacher responses in Chapter 5 as they relate to the Five Essentials Framework presented in Chapter 2.

Chapter Summary

The researcher found that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers on their perception of the importance of Professional Development on student engagement; years of teaching experience and student engagement; male and female teachers differences on family participation's impact on ELL academic learning, and ELL drop out rates between the two high schools studied. However, the researcher found that faculty Professional Development had an influential impact on ELL student achievement as measured by student engagement. In addition, there was a strong relationship between high school ELL English achievement and ELL students transitioning successfully into mainstream classrooms. These results are further discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Recommendations, and Limitations

Overview

The purpose of this study was to answer the five primary questions listed below to determine what prioritizing factors, with regard to the Five Essentials Framework proposed by *The University of Chicago* may help minimize dropout rates for English Language Learners (ELLs) in two participating urban public high schools in Wisconsin:

1. To what degree are dropout rates for Latino Limited English Proficient (LEP) students between the two schools similar?
2. To what degree are Latino Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, between the two urban high schools with similar demographics, more at risk for higher dropout rates than non Limited English Proficient students?
3. To what degree are the professional development experiences teachers receive relevant to their needs while working with English Language Learners?
4. To what extent do parents need to be involved when their child is an ELL learner in order for the students to be academically successful?
5. To what degree does a school need to provide the professional development required to successfully engage ELL students in learning?

Discussion

The researcher's findings are discussed in the paragraphs below based upon the results of the data analysis and their implications for each of the six hypotheses studied in this investigation.

In regards to hypothesis set one:

H₀: Female faculty members when compared to male faculty members believe Professional Development has less than or/an equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement.

H₁: Female faculty members when compared to male faculty members believe Professional Development has a greater impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement.

The data analysis results in Chapter 4 indicated that there was no significant difference at the 10% level between female faculty members when compared to male faculty members who believe Professional Development has less than or/are equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement. Therefore, null hypothesis one was accepted. The previous research results that were discussed in Chapter 2 indicated that the decision to dropout of school often results from a long disengagement with education, which began in elementary school. At young ages, truancy is more often related to parental issues. Addressing parent situations that keep children away from school while working with parents to improve conditions for their children to cope with the social and academic challenges of school are ways to foster school engagement (Messacar, 2013). The impact of high school faculty on engagement

did not play a significant role in engaging students in the two urban high schools studied.

Hypothesis Two Analysis:

H₀: Faculty members with different numbers of years of teaching experience believe Professional Development has less than or/an equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement.

H₁: Faculty members with different numbers of years of teaching experience believe Professional Development has an impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement.

The data analysis results found that there was no significant difference at the 10% level between faculty members with different number of years of teaching experience who believe Professional Development has less than or/an equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) student engagement. Therefore, null hypothesis two is accepted. The related literature results that were discussed in Chapter 2 indicated that lessons from Chicago conclusively demonstrated there is no “silver bullet” for school reform, but there is a reliable recipe. The key ingredients, which the authors call the “essential supports,” are school leadership, parent and community ties, professional capacity of the faculty, student centered learning climate, and instructional guidance (Bender Sebring et al., 2006). Schools that measured strong in all five support areas were at least 10 times more likely than schools with just one or two strengths to achieve substantial gains in reading and mathematics (CCSR, p.1). Moreover, a

sustained weakness in just one of these areas undermined virtually all attempts at improving student learning.

Hypothesis Three:

H₀: Female faculty members when compared to male faculty members believe a student's family participation differences have less than or/ an equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) academic learning.

H₁: Female faculty members when compared to male faculty members believe a student's family participation differences has a greater impact on English Language Learner (ELL) academic learning.

The results indicated that there was no significant difference at the 10% level for null hypothesis three between female faculty members when compared to male faculty members who believe a student's family participation differences have less than or equal to no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) academic learning. Therefore, null hypothesis three was accepted. The previous related research results that were discussed in Chapter 2 indicated that patterns of high absenteeism and lower performance by future dropouts usually start as early as third grade (Messacar, 2013). At young ages, truancy is more often related to parental issues. Addressing parent situations that keep children away from school while working with parents to improve conditions for their children to cope with social and academic challenges of school are ways to foster school engagement (Messacar, 2013). Setting rules and helping with homework are ways that parents can encourage their children to adapt to school early and do well in school in the long term.

Hypothesis Four:

H₀: The two participating public high schools in the district studied, have equal English Language Learner (ELL) drop out rates.

H₁: The two participating public high schools in the district studied, do not have equal English Language Learner (ELL) drop out rates.

The researcher found that there was no significant difference at the 10% level between the two participating public high schools in the district studied, in terms of English Language Learner (ELL) drop out rates. Therefore, null hypothesis four was accepted. The previous related research results that were discussed in Chapter 2 indicated that overall, 79 percent of students said, "Making academic classes more interesting would have a very or fairly large effect in helping them get the most out of their high school experience" (p. 6). Seventy-eight percent said the same thing about making courses more relevant to their future, and 77 percent felt that way about making classes more hands-on. For at-risk students, those who said, "They could do much better or somewhat better in school and described their school as average or below average in terms of the level of achievement and the percent of students who go on to college" (p. 6). The most common response from student survey respondents was the need to make classes more hands-on, which would have a very or fairly significant effect on students getting the most out of their high school experience. Seventy-three percent of at-risk students felt it was necessary to make classes more interesting, and 68 percent felt school should make courses more relevant to their future (Bridgeland et al., 2008).

Hypothesis Five:

H₀: Faculty Professional Development has no influence on English Language Learner (ELL) student achievement as measured by student engagement.

H₁: Faculty Professional Development influences English Language Learner (ELL) student achievement as measured by student engagement.

The investigator's results show that there is a significant difference at the 10% level between faculty Professional Development and English Language Learner (ELL) student achievement as measured by student engagement.

Therefore, null hypothesis five was rejected and research hypothesis five was accepted. This means that the teachers surveyed believe that Professional Development of teaching staff has an influence on ELL student achievement as measured by student engagement in school. Teachers receiving in-service and service-learning needs to be connected. One technique that teachers might in-service on is service-learning as a hands on activity that appeal to ELL students. The previous results that were discussed in Chapter 2 indicated that service-learning is an educational technique that incorporates community service into the academic curriculum. Service-learning differs from generic community service in that it has specific academic goals that are organized through schools, and involve reflection activities for the participants (Bridgeland et al., 2008). Service-learning can take many forms, including projects in which students write children's books about historical events, to group activities in which an entire class paints a mural depicting themes from their science class. While only two percent of schools had service-learning programs in 1984 (APCO Associates,

1999), approximately 30 percent of schools in 1997 have service-learning. Officials estimate that about 4.7 million students today have participated (Berkas and Thomas, 1997).

Service-learning is most effective when it is well integrated into the curriculum. This integration is the key difference between service-learning and community service. Rather than simply having students work in their communities, service-learning ties that work to the academic material being taught in class. This curricular integration is enhanced by reflection activities like group discussions and journaling that challenge students to think critically about their experiences (Bridgeland et al., 2008). This reflection is best when it takes place before, during, and after the service.

The epidemic of students dropping out of high school has many underlying causes, which are different for each student. Causes vary from passively fading out to actively being expelled, from struggling academically because of poor academic training to being too smart for classes the student finds boring (Bridgeland et al., 2008). For nearly every cause of dropping out, however, service-learning has the potential to make a meaningful difference. The need to embed civic service opportunities for students enables students to engage and raise their self-esteem. Consequently, it is included in the literature review because it may further prevent students from dropping out of school.

Hypothesis Six:

H₀: Sufficient levels of high school academic English achievement has an impact on English Language Learner (ELL) students being transitioned successfully into mainstream classrooms.

H₁: Sufficient levels of high school academic English achievement has no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) students being transitioned successfully into mainstream classrooms.

The results found in Chapter 4 indicated that there was a significant difference at the 10% level between the impact sufficient levels of high school academic English achievement has on ELL students being transitioned successfully into mainstream classrooms. Therefore, null hypothesis six was rejected and research hypothesis was accepted. This means that research hypothesis six which states, sufficient levels of high school academic English achievement has no impact on English Language Learner (ELL) students being transitioned successfully into mainstream classrooms is accepted.

ELLs who are born in the U.S. usually do not have any academic instruction or literacy skills in their home language and therefore do not have the benefits usually associated with students who are bilingual and bi-literate (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012). These ELLs usually enter kindergarten eager to learn. However, according to Cummings' threshold hypothesis, students with low academic levels in their home language (L1) and low levels of language in the target language (L2) usually are called "partial" bilinguals, and are likely to

“experience academic disadvantages and have impoverished interactions with their educational environments” (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012, p.717).

In contrast, students who are fully bilingual experience no such disadvantages and demonstrate proficiency in both languages, which is considered “additive.” Therefore, these fully bilingual ELLs experience all of the positive attributes associated with bilingualism (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012, p. 717).

Survey Analysis

The researcher analyzed the qualitative responses from the 80 anonymous teachers surveyed. This data was categorized and was reported in chapter 4 in Table 5. Table 5 is presented below.

Table 5

Faculty Responses for Latino ELLs High School Dropouts

Reasons ELLs Drop out of High School	# REDHS Response
Appear Frustrated with School & English	17
Family Issues	14
Work Opportunity	13
No Engagement with Education	12
No Idea	8
Cultural Values	7
No Understanding of English Language	6
Not Enough Faculty Support	6
Failing Grades	3
Non-American Citizen Scholarship	3
Other	1
Total # Responses	90

From the teacher survey, the researcher was able to develop 11 categories from the 80 anonymous teachers surveyed. The epidemic of students

dropping out of high school has many underlying causes, which are different for each student. Causes vary from passively fading out to actively being expelled, from struggling academically because of poor academic preparation to being too smart for classes the student finds boring (Bridgeland et al., 2008).

Thus, there are a large number of students' who dropout with less than two years to go in their high school education. Poor attendance may suggest that students are uninterested in the educational environment, have competing interests outside of school, or their family's resources may be impeding their ability to attend school on a consistent basis. The key ingredients, which the authors call the "essential supports," are school leadership, parent and community ties, professional capacity of the faculty, student centered learning climate, and instructional guidance (Bender Sebring et al., 2006). Schools that measured strong in all five supports were at least 10 times more likely than schools with just one or two strengths to achieve substantial gains in reading and mathematics (CCSR, p.1). Moreover, a sustained weakness in just one of these areas undermined virtually all attempts at improving student learning. School organization drives improvement and individual initiatives are unlikely to work in isolation, therefore, the Five Essential Supports haven't been accepted or adapted in these two urban high schools studied.

Recommendations

If a similar study is conducted in the future, this researcher suggests the study could be improved by incorporating more high schools from different districts and having more teachers from these districts take the anonymous

volunteer teacher survey. Furthermore, additional data should be collected by the surveys, pertaining to specific English Language Learner (ELL) students who dropped out of school regarding why they chose to dropout of high school before they graduated. This survey should also ask at what grade level the student dropped out, the reason/s for leaving school, and what other school interventions might have prevented them from dropping out of high school.

Although there is a large amount of literature that analyzes high school English Language Learner (ELL) dropout rates, research is lacking as to what individual ELL students state about were the reasons they chose to dropout of high school. Future research needs to be done on this topic and further quantitative and qualitative data needs to be investigated regarding documentation specific to that individual students state regarding why they chose to dropout of high school.

Limitations

The sample size of the high schools studied and number of teachers surveyed are the limitations of this study. More districts and a larger teacher sample base would improve the results of this study.

Chapter Summary

This study found that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers on their perception of the importance of Professional Development on student engagement; years of teaching experience and student engagement; male and female teachers differences on family participation's impact on ELL academic learning, and ELL drop out rates between the two high

schools studied. However, the researcher found that faculty Professional Development had an impact on ELL student achievement as measured by student engagement and that there was an impact of high school ELL English achievement and ELL students transitioning successfully into mainstream classrooms. Additional research needs to be completed. Further qualitative and quantitative data needs to be ascertained. English Language Learner (ELL) students are still dropping out of high school before they graduate and becoming disengaged starting as early as elementary school. These two areas that require in depth, student voice in future studies.

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Appendix A

August 2015

Dear Potential Participants:

Greetings! I am a graduate student at Carthage College. I am currently a teacher at a Racine Unified Elementary School. My primary educational interests focus on high academic literacy outcomes. In particular, I am interested in engaging and supporting the social and academic learning needs of all English Language Learners (ELLs). The goal of this voluntary survey is to identify and prioritize specific support systems needed for Latino ELL students. The findings are anticipated to guide individual districts by pinpointing specific practices most necessary for individual, Latino ELLs (and former ELLs), to remain in school in order to reach their academic potential.

Please find enclosed a confidential, anonymous, electronic survey supported by Survey Monkey and Carthage College. It has been approved by the RUSD Department of Assessment and Accountability and the Carthage College Internal Review Board. Appropriate personnel in your district are forwarding the link for this electronic survey to you. I would greatly appreciate your completion of this survey by August 7, 2015. Your input is vital to my research. By filling out any part of the survey, you agree to be a voluntary participant. Once my results are published, with individuals and schools remaining anonymous, I will share them with you. This survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete, but should not be filled out during your contractual work time.

Thank you for your participation. Your input is valuable to student success. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jreichhart@carthage.edu

Yours in Education,

Jaclyn Reichhart

Jaclyn Reichhart

Appendix B

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Please choose the district with whom you are employed.

Racine Unified School District (RUSD)
Kenosha Unified School District (KUSD)

2. What is your gender?

Male
Female

3. Describe the student composition of your classroom.

ESL/ELL
Mainstream

4. On average, how many ESL/ELLs do you have in your classroom?

0-2
3-5
6-8
10 or more

5. How many years have you been a teacher?

0-2
3-5
6-8
10 or more

6. What is the average number of students in your classroom?

0-10
11-20
21-30
31-40

7. Describe the grade level category that best describes your position

- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 9 and 10
- 11 and 12

8. Are you certified as an “English as a Second Language” or Bilingual instructor?”

- Yes
- No

9. How many Latino ELLs, approximately, do you have in your classroom?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20

10. Please describe the average English language proficiency of students in your classroom or school?

- Low (Proficiency 1-2)
- Medium (Proficiency 3-4)
- High (Proficiency 5-6)

11. To what extent do you believe there is an adequate number of state certified ELL staff in your school building?

- Little to none
- Some, but not enough
- Sufficient

12. To what extent do you believe instructional staff receives enough direction to differentiate instruction appropriately (with regard to each ELL’s ACCESS scores) for Latino ELLs?

- Little to none
- Some, but not enough
- Sufficient
- More than sufficient

13. If bilingual or dual programming is offered, do you believe the appropriate level of native language support is provided and then decreased appropriately allowing for a smooth transition to mainstream classrooms?

- Yes
- No
- Not Applicable

14. To what extent do you believe Latino ELL students are sufficiently “engaged” in academic learning in your classroom?

- Very little to none
- Some, but not enough
- Sufficient

15. Describe the level of professional development or training you have received to instruct Latino ELLs.

- Very little to none
- Low
- Medium
- High

16. Do you believe your school employs an adequate number (to meet the needs of your building’s ELLs) of highly qualified staff to educate Latino ELLs in all classrooms?

- Yes
- No

17. Describe the extent to which your school places an emphasis on parental participation regarding their ELL child’s academic needs.

- Little to none
- Somewhat
- Sufficient

18. In your opinion, what is the primary reason that English Language Learners (ELLs) drop out of high school?

- Open-ended question

Appendix C*Professional Development Impact on ELL Engagement*

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	3.377358	3.25
Variance	1.54717	0.804347826
Observations	53	24
Pooled Variance	1.319371	
Hypothesized	0	
Mean Difference		
Df	75	
t Stat	0.450653	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.32677	
t Critical one-tail	1.292941	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.65354	
t Critical two-tail	1.665425	

Appendix D*Years of Teaching Impact on ELL Engagement*

Anova: Single Factor

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Column 1	6	10	1.666667	0.666667
Column 2	6	8	1.333333	0.666667
Column 3	18	22	1.222222	0.183007
Column 4	50	69	1.38	0.607755

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0.929722	3	0.309907	0.595407	0.619935	2.157293
Within Groups	39.55778	76	0.520497			
Total	40.4875	79				

Appendix E*Family and ELL Student Drop Out Rates Analyss*

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	2.214286	2.333333
Variance	1.698701	1.623188
Observations	56	24
Pooled Variance	1.676435	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	78	
t Stat	-0.37686	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.35365	
t Critical one-tail	1.2925	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.7073	
t Critical two-tail	1.664625	

Appendix F*Family and ELL Student Drop Out Rates Analysis*

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	31	32.8
Variance	99.55556	37.51111
Observations	10	10
Pooled Variance	68.53333	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	18	
t Stat	-0.48619	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.316349	
t Critical one-tail	1.330391	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.632698	
t Critical two-tail	1.734064	

Appendix G*Results for ELL Student Achievement*

	Very Little to None		Some, but not enough		Sufficient		Total
	0	E	0	E	0	E	
Very Little to None	9	4.87	37	36.81	13	17.32	59
Low	0	2.48	22	18.72	8	8.81	30
Medium	0	1.24	9	9.36	6	4.40	15
High	0	0.42	0	3.11	5	1.47	5
Total	9	9.0	68	68.0	32	32.0	109

Appendix H*Results for ELL Student Achievement*

	Yes		No		Not Applicable		Total
	O	E	O	E	O	E	
Very Little to None	1	2.4	5	3.4	3	3.3	9
Some, but not enough	12	13.4	17	19.1	22	18.5	51
Sufficient	8	5.2	8	7.5	4	7.2	20
Total	21	21.0	30	30.0	29	29.0	80

Appendix I*Faculty Responses for Latino ELLs High School Dropouts*

Reasons ELLs Drop out of High School	# REDHS Response
Appear Frustrated with School & English	17
Family Issues	14
Work Opportunity	13
No Engagement with Education	12
No Idea	8
Cultural Values	7
No Understanding of English Language	6
Not Enough Faculty Support	6
Failing Grades	3
Non-American Citizen Scholarship	3
Other	1
Total # Responses	90