



PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

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WHITLOWE R. GREEN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Proposal Defense Announcement

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF A TURNAROUND PROGRAM ON DROPOUT AND GRADUATION RATES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC STUDENTS ATTENDING AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT IN TEXAS

(June 10, 2014)

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In our increasingly fast growing ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse nation, the education system mandates bold restructuring, renewing and transforming of high schools that will ensure the academic success of every student (Lachat, 2001). The 21st century challenges of the American high school create new demands for high schools to educate all students to acquire higher order thinking skills, become effective communicators, problem solvers, and productive members in our global and technological society (Lachat, 2001; Rumberger, 2011). Stillwell (2010) noted that 25 to 30 percent of high school students in the U. S. failed to graduate on time, or decided to drop out of school; consequently, sustaining a lack of basic skills necessary for future success. Each fall, more than four million students in America enter the ninth grade, and over the next four years, one third of these students will

dropout and another one third will graduate without acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in postsecondary education or in the workplace (Amos, 2009).

The critical challenge facing public high schools in America revolves around the problem of turning around approximately 5,000 persistently lowest-performing high schools that do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for five consecutive years. AYP refers to the federal accountability component of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act which requires high schools to meet three annual targets in reading, mathematics, and the graduation rate (NCLB, 2001; USDOE, 2010). Nationally, more than seven thousand students become dropouts daily, resulting in 1.3 million students who will not graduate from public high school as scheduled (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). Unfortunately, twelve percent of the nation's high schools referred to as "dropout factories" produce fifty percent of African American and Hispanic dropout students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011; Rumberger, 2011; USDOE, 2010). Dropout factories include high schools where fewer than 60 percent of entering freshman progress to their senior year (USDOE, 2010). Amos (2009) predicted that if the present dropout rate pattern continues, 13 million students will drop out of school in the next decade. Also, the U. S. economy will lose over \$3 trillion in lost revenues due to lost wages, taxable income, health care, welfare, public housing assistance, incarceration, and other social welfare programs.

The purpose of this quantitative research study revolves around (a) determining the effectiveness of one school district's implementation of a turnaround intervention program on reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students who attended four persistently lowest-performing high schools; (b) determining whether or not the strategies of the turnaround intervention program could serve as a framework to facilitate increasing high school graduation rates of dropout factory schools to assist with meeting AYP and meeting the national high school educational goal of graduating 90 percent of all students by the class of 2020; and (c) determining whether or not the rigor and intensity of

the intervention strategies will drive students to drop out of school or increase their determination to remain in school despite personal, family, school or community obstacles.

The research design of the current study will be causal-comparative. Researchers refer to a causal-comparative study as an “ex post facto” study because both the cause and effect occurred previously and must be studied in retrospect (Jacobs, 2010). Causal-Comparative quantitative research design involves the use of pre-existing groups to explore differences between or among groups (Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle, 2010; Schenker and Rumrill, 2004). Official archived dropout and graduation data for the four high schools investigated in this study will be obtained from Texas Education Agency. The researcher will compare the dependent variables dropout rates and graduation rates of the two ethnic groups of students in grades nine to twelve before implementation (pre-treatment) and after implementation (treatment) of the turnaround intervention program. The independent variable in this study will be the Aspire Turnaround Intervention Program. The total population of students in this study, who attended the four high schools before implementation of the intervention will be 4491 (school year one) and 4169 (school year two). The total population of students in this study who attended the four high schools after implementation (treatment) of the intervention will be 3734 (school year three) and 3651 (school year four).

The results of this investigative study may potentially generate valuable information that will offer a viable turnaround intervention program that could assist school administrators, policymakers and researchers with meeting the challenge of breaking the cycle of escalating dropout rates and improving graduation rates of disadvantaged and underserved students. This study could potentially make a contribution to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the specific strategies of an intervention that will decrease dropout rates and increase graduation rates

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Date: June 10, 2014

Time: 10:00 a.m.

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