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Academic Achievement in Schoolwide Title 1 Elementary Schools

Kelli Kay Cronin, EdD

Abstract

This nonexperimental quantitative study addressed whether Title 1 had an effect on low socioeconomic schools by determining if Schoolwide Title 1 elementary schools in South Dakota demonstrated significant student gains in math and reading over a 5-year time period as measured by state standardized assessments.

Problem

The educational problem addressed in this study was that, according to the Nation's Report Card and South Dakota's Report Card, **not all students had met the minimum proficiency level required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)**, but there had been little research addressing performance of schools receiving federal funding under Title 1 to alleviate these deficits in academic achievement in the state of South Dakota.

- The NCLB Act (2001) mandated state accountability and school improvement as a method to improve student achievement with the goal of all students being proficient in math and reading and to close the achievement gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged students.

- Title 1 was included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) initially passed in 1965 (USDOE, n.d.d). As part of Title 1, a Schoolwide program allows schools to use funds from Title 1, Part A, as well as other Federal education funds and resources, to upgrade the entire education program and increase student achievement. To qualify for a **Schoolwide Title 1 school, a minimum of 40% of the student population must live in poverty.**

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to **determine whether Title 1 of the ESEA had an effect on low socioeconomic schools** by determining if Schoolwide Title 1 elementary schools were making significant gains in math and reading as measured by state standardized assessments during the 5 school years of 2008-2009 through 2012-2013 in the state of South Dakota.

Relevant Literature

Theoretical Framework

Bourdieu's (1973) **theory of social and cultural reproduction** guided the exploration of student achievement and socioeconomic status throughout this study. Social reproduction consists of the structures and activities that transfer social inequality from generation to generation. Cultural reproduction consists of transferring existing cultural values and norms from one generation to the next.

Background

- According to the USDOE's data for the 2009-2010 school year, 56,000 public schools across the country use **Title 1 funds, serving more than 21 million children** with services to improve academic achievement. Of these students, 59% were in kindergarten through Grade 5 (USDOE, n.d.d).

- Cascio and Reber (2013) explored how the introduction of Title 1 affected school spending gaps across richer and poorer states. They determined that the **Title 1 program is too small to illuminate the gap**, and although there were some effects on the variation in school spending across states, substantial poverty gaps in spending still remained.

- Socioeconomically disadvantaged children are entering school behind their advantaged peers. That gap tends to increase throughout the years.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a significant difference in academic achievement as measured by standardized tests in reading for Schoolwide Title 1 elementary schools in the state of South Dakota over a 5-year time period?

RQ2: Is there a significant difference in academic achievement as measured by standardized tests in math for Schoolwide Title 1 elementary schools in the state of South Dakota over a 5-year time period?

Procedures

Archived data were used from the results of the Dakota STEP reading and math assessments from the school years of 2008-2009 through 2012-2013.

Data were collected from the SDDOE state report card available to the public. The report card data consisted of reading and math scores for the 48 elementary Schoolwide Title 1 schools in South Dakota having complete data for these years.

Data used included the percentage of students meeting criterion in reading and math in the levels of proficient and advanced in the category of all students in Grades 3, 4, and 5.

Data Analysis

Two **one-way repeated measures ANOVAs** was used for each of the dependent variables, reading scores and math scores.

Bonferroni post hoc tests were used to determine any statistically significant differences between the years.

Findings

Only a **statistically significant increase for math** was found. The scores increased and subsequently decreased over the 5 years of the study. There was a statistically significant mean increase in math scores between Year 1 and Year 2, Year 1 and Year 3, and Year 1 and Year 4. There was a statistically significant mean decrease between Year 3 and Year 4.

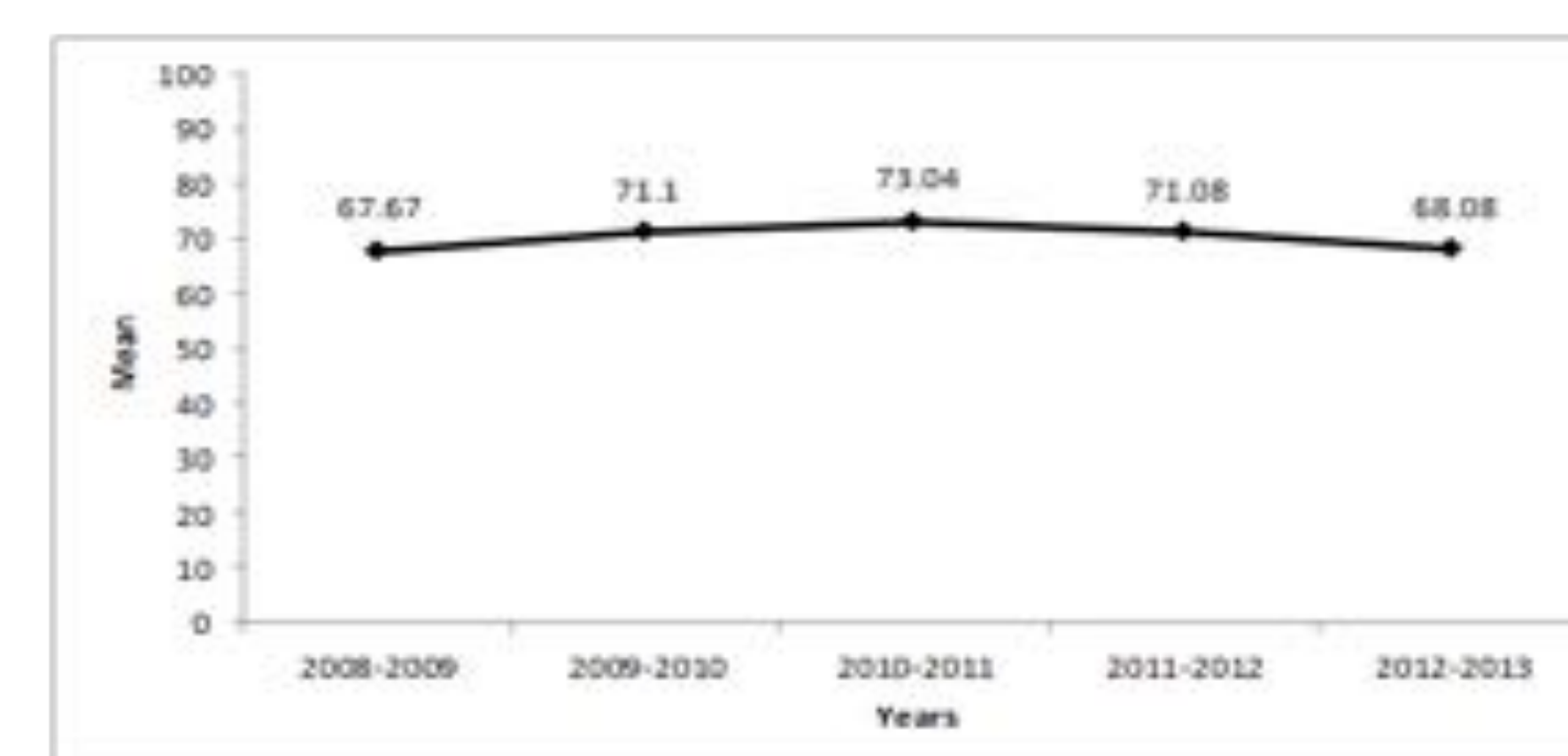


Figure 2. Dakota STEP math mean scores through 5-year time period

Limitations

Limitations may have included:

- A range in percentage of economically disadvantaged students
- Some schools have a significant higher proportion of students from low-income families.
- Other elements included in the students' environments that may have had an effect on testing.
- No accounting for demographics, or any other environmental factors.

Conclusions

Despite attempts to increase student achievement, the findings of this study suggest that Title 1 of the ESEA had little or no lasting impact on low socioeconomic schools in the state of South Dakota, as measured by state standardized assessments during the school years of 2008-09 through 2012-13.

Recommendations include:

- look deeper into the impact Title 1 of ESEA has on student achievement
- evaluations are needed on how funds are allocated to Schoolwide Title 1 schools and how schools are accountable for using those funds effectively
- administrators at the school level need to also evaluate how they are using Title 1 funds to ensure that the funds are used on effective resources

Social Change Implications

Implementations of social change at the local level are to provide an understanding of the purpose of Title 1 and how it can effect student achievement with a positive outcome when used effectively.

Building an awareness of student needs, and using Title 1 funds effectively to meet those needs, may lead to closing the academic achievement gap which promotes society benefits including a higher graduation rate, an increase in job potential, and an increase in enrollment of a higher education.

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