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# Graduation Coach Program Effects on High School Attendance and Graduation Rate

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Anya Miller

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The rise in the number of students who drop out of high school has gained national attention. High school dropout rates in the state of Louisiana are a primary concern to school administrators in the state. The Graduation Coach Program is an intervention implemented in several high schools across Louisiana to assist students with completing their high school education. Many of the programs' attributes are based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, students' needs, and the presence of positive adult relationships that might improve student achievement. The purpose of this study was to compare archival attendance and graduation rates among independent groups from years before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in 4 Louisiana public high schools. Attendance rates included data from 5 years before and 7 years after the program ($n$ = 48), and due to limitations in the archival records, graduation rates included data from 2 years before and 7 years after the program ($n$ = 36). Two independent-samples $t$ tests were conducted, and no significant differences were found between the groups for both measures. Due to power limitations in the group sizes, further research is recommended to include additional campuses that implement the program. Positive social change implications include providing these initial research findings to the study districts' administration to assist with decision making and planning for the Graduation Coach Program used at their campuses. Through continued efforts and research, high school administrators may ultimately improve high school attendance and graduation rates to address the high school dropout problem in Louisiana.

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# Dedication

I dedicate this page to the most important people in my life who gave me guidance, support, and encouragement during one of the most laborious times of my life. When I doubted myself and contemplated not completing my doctoral journey, they would listen but not allow me to give up on my goal. My mother, Sandra Morris, who, through every endeavor, has been my cheerleader and number one supporter. This is for you. My closest friend, Kathy Thomas, who, even through this race of achieving our doctorate degrees, you did not leave me behind. ~Thank you.

## Acknowledgments

To God be the glory! There are truly not enough words or enough time to share the story of this journey. But, I must acknowledge the most special people who walked this journey with me.

This chapter of my life is for the person I love most in my life, my mother, Sandra L. Guidry-Morris. The many times I thought of giving up, I thought of you. Your wishes along with your words of support kept me going. You always wanted to help and when you did…oh my!

To my four princesses, Cassandra Lyn, Christian Marie, Camille Ayana, and Cameo Loren. I pray that my footsteps may guide you to excel and achieve all your hopes and dreams in life. The many nights you stayed up late with me so I could commit to this project. ~Thank you with all my heart.

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Last, I cannot forget all those who may have put hurdles in my way. Thank you.

You made me realize how much stronger I really am. I did it! ~Hallelujah!

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# Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Nationally, in urban, high-poverty schools, approximately 40% of high school freshmen who fail the first year do not graduate from high school (Cooper, 2011). Freshmen enter the hallways planning to one day obtain a high school diploma that will provide them with opportunities to fulfill their dreams, but many do not succeed. However, many leave high school before earning a high school diploma with the intent to return later to obtain a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED) (Bowers & Sprott, 2012; Boylan & Renzulli, 2014).

When children enter elementary school, many aspire to attain a career based on fictional characters. Elementary students base their career options on what is of interest to them at that time (Knight, 2015). Elementary school counselors provide career guidance curriculum to support student's efforts to identify more realistic career choices (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). However, as students transition from elementary to secondary school, certain situations in life, along with unforeseen adult responsibilities, often change some students' desires to attain a high school diploma (Knight, 2015). Many factors may alter a student's plan to graduate. Even after completing nearly 4 years of high school, many students may develop a sense of hopelessness when faced with certain challenge. If these life challenges (that may impede a high school student's ability to graduate) are not addressed, they may contribute to the dropout crisis (Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013).

Attendance is an important aspect to academic success. According to Louisiana's attendance law, students must attend school at least 167 days of the school year to receive

credit for attendance (Louisiana Department of Education [LDOE], n.d.-b). When at-risk students are subjected to certain situations, their school attendance drops. In addition, behavior problems impede their ability to remain in school. Students with behavior problems are often suspended from school, which can lead to disengagement and a disinterest in school. In Louisiana, students must achieve a minimum of 23 course credits to earn a high school diploma. These courses include English, math, science, social studies, and electives. Cooper (2011) found that 40% of ninth-grade students who failed their freshman year were likely to drop out of high school. Course failure prevents them from acquiring the necessary credits to graduate. Ultimately, these factors lead them to dropping out (Balfanz & Fox, 2011).

Facts and statistics indicate that school systems throughout the nation recognized the need to intervene and to reduce the number of students who were dropping out of high school. In 2003, as a response to the number of students who were identified as at-risk of not completing high school within 4 years, the Maryland public school system placed a student intervention specialist at high schools with the highest dropout rate (Michael, 2014). The school system's primary goal was to ensure that students had the support to earn a high school diploma (Michael, 2014). The most current 2012 data show that the cohort graduation rate increased since the induction of the student intervention specialist position (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014a). The 4-year cohort graduation rate rose 82.82% to 83.59% (Maryland State Department of Education, 2013). The student intervention specialist continues to exist in all Maryland high schools due to the positive influence on Maryland's dropout rate.

The Georgia Department of Education (2008) also took the initiative to decrease school dropout rates by implementing the Graduation Coach Program during the 2006–2007 school year in all high schools. The Graduation Coach Program's initial purpose was to identify and provide early intervention services to students who were at-risk of dropping out of school. The primary goal was to improve the graduation rate and decrease the dropout rate. From 2007–2008, the graduation rate increased by an additional 8,277 students, which added more than $75 million to the state's economy (Georgia Department of Education, 2008).

The data collected from the states of Maryland and Georgia showed that the Graduation Coach Program was a positive implementation (Maryland State Department of Education, 2013). The number of graduating students in both states after the start of the program increased significantly. This information was also beneficial to teachers, administrators, and superintendents to understand the role of the graduation coach and the functions of the program (Maryland State Department of Education, 2013).

Louisiana ranks nationally among the top states with the highest dropout rate (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). As a response to the nearly 15,000 students at risk of becoming potential dropouts, Louisiana implemented the Graduation Coach Program (Louisiana Public Broadcasting, 2011). I examined four inner-city public high schools in a southwest Louisiana parish. A parish is similar to a county or district in other states. The parish is located in a Louisiana city that has a population of 195,000 people. The public school system's student mobility rate fluctuates due to recent establishments of charter schools and out of zone permit approvals. In 2007, the closure of a low-

performing high school created an influx of new students enrolling into the four high schools that were selected sites for this study (Dixon, n.d.).

The graduation coach's primary role is to work with at-risk students. This school staff member prevents students from dropping out of high school by providing them with the tools and resources to excel academically and achieve their high school diploma (Pantoja, 2013). The person offers services to the most at-risk students for (a) not transitioning from middle to high school, (b) dropping out, or (c) being ineligible for graduating from high school (Southeast Regional Educational Laboratory, 2008). Graduation coaches look for specific behaviors or warning signs in at-risk students. Attendance, behavior, and course failure are three potential warning signs that may result in a student's decision to drop out of high school (Frazelle & Nagel, 2015). These three warning signs are also known as the ABCs of interventions (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Fox, & Moore, 2011).

At these local sites, public data indicate a 5%–11% absentee rate (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d-a), but discipline and course failure data are not available. This increase in absenteeism may affect course pass rates because to pass the class a student must attend the class (Allensworth, 2013). If a student does not meet the attendance requirement, a student may not receive course credit. The graduation coach intervenes to address the student's emotional, social, psychological, physical, and academic well-being as a means of assisting the student to overcome obstacles to achieve academic success. This quantitative study examined the effect the Graduation Coach Program had on attendance and graduation rates at the four high schools.

## Problem Statement

This study focused on the differences in graduation and attendance rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at four urban public high schools located in a Louisiana parish. From 2006–2014, S1's (S1) graduation rate decreased from 65.8% to 64% (LDOE, 2013ee; LDOE, 2013xx). The attendance rate decreased from 89.6% to 89.4%, during the years of this study (LDOE, n.d.-a). S2's (S2) graduation rate also decreased, during the years of this study, by 0.2% from 80.2% to 80% (LDOE, 2013dd; LDOE, 2013ww). Although S3's (S3) attendance rate increased from 90.7% to 94.5%, during the years of this study, the graduation rate dropped from 90.4% to 86% (LDOE, 2013cc; LDOE, 2013vv). Like S3, S4's (S4) attendance rate increased from 89.2% to 90.9%, whereas, the graduation rate decreased from 70.7% to 51% (LDOE, n.d.-a; LDOE, 2013ff; LDOE, 2013yy). This data did not indicate whether there was a statistically significant difference in attendance and graduation rate due to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to compare attendance and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in four Louisiana public high schools.

The need for an effective dropout intervention program became evident between the years 2006 and 2010 when nearly 57,000 Louisiana students dropped out of school, which was approximately one of every six high school students (Public Affairs Research Council, 2011). This dropout rate cost the state nearly $7 billion in lost wages (Public Affairs Research Council, 2011). Although limited research has examined effectiveness of the Graduation Coach Program, the southwest region of Louisiana attempted to

address the high school dropout rate by implementing the graduation program into its school system (Louisiana Public Broadcasting, 2011).

In the Louisiana program, the graduation coach is a staff member who works in conjunction with counselors, teachers, and district personnel. The graduation coach's primary duty is to prevent at-risk students from dropping out of high school by providing them with the tools and resources to excel academically and achieve their high school diploma (LDOE, 2011). The person monitors specific behaviors, excessive absenteeism, misbehavior, and course failure rate, which are all potential indicators as to why at-risk students choose to quit school (Frazelle & Nagel, 2015). The graduation coach uses daily school attendance, discipline referrals, and course failure reports to prescribe specific interventions per individual student. The coach seeks internal and external resources as well as provides research-based practices to assist the student to overcome intrinsic and extrinsic challenges and to achieve academic success. The graduation coach's ultimate goal is to provide at-risk students with the appropriate supports to obtain a high school diploma. From the moment a student triggers a warning indicator (excessive absence, course failure, or negative behavior) to the moment the student receives his or her diploma, the graduation coach monitors their steps to meeting their academic goal: graduation (LDOE, 2011).

States are taking various initiatives to address the dropout crisis (National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 2015b). The high school dropout epidemic prompted some states, including Louisiana, to implement a Graduation Coach Program or other similar programs. Florida placed graduation coaches in its high schools to address

its 25% dropout rate (Alliance for Excellence Education [AEE], 2015a). New York City matched adult mentors with at-risk youths to decrease its 23% dropout rate (AEE, 2015d). Missouri also placed adult mentors at the largest high schools in its state to monitor students throughout their first 2 years of high school to track at-risk students (AEE, 2015c). Massachusetts implemented graduation coaches into its schools to decrease the 15% dropout rate that existed there (AEE, 2015b). This evidence showed that Louisiana was not alone in its efforts to reduce the number of students who were not obtaining a high school diploma in 4 years.

High school dropouts have a detrimental effect on the nation's economy (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014a). The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated that 2013–2014 high school dropouts contributed to approximately 30% of the country's unemployment rate (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014a). This number was almost double the rate of students who attended college (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014b). The failure to graduate costs the United States $154 billion in potential earnings (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2013).

Pupils at risk of dropping out are more likely to have destructive consequences on the economy, but they are also the staple in the country's prison population. Former Illinois Senate President Emil Jones said, "Dropping out of high school is an apprenticeship for prison" (Gilbert & Gaudiana, 2012, p. 2). Gilbert and Gaudiana (2012) reported that 75% of today's inmate population did not finish high school with a diploma. High school dropout incarceration rate was 63 more times likely than college graduates (Breslow, 2012). Dropping out of high school may be a pipeline to prison as in 1% of the

male high school dropout population were incarcerated, whereas female dropouts represented approximately 2% of the incarceration population (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a, Table 219.80).

Louisiana's efforts to reduce dropout rates also affects economic deficits and incarceration rates. In 2012, a high school graduate earned $10,000 more than a student without a high school diploma (Breslow, 2012). Louisiana's loss of $166 million earned income, $133 million expenditure loss, and an absence of $1.8 billion into the local and state tax revenue are results related to the high school dropout crisis. The *Times-Picayune* (Dreilinger, 2014) reported 8% of Louisiana's inmates (aged 16 to 24 years) had not received a high school diploma, which cost taxpayers more than $16,000 to educate. Therefore, these statistics support the need for effective dropout interventions.

In this study, I focused on four urban, public high schools called S1, S2, S3, and S4 in a parish located in Louisiana. There was a problem with the number of students who completed their studies and graduated on-time at S1, S2, S3, and S4. According to the schools' 2013–2014 report cards, the percentage of students who graduated with a 4-year diploma overall declined and continues to be below the district and state's average, 78% and 74% respectively (LDOE, 2013uu). This problem is worthy of research because the future of this population is at-risk of unemployment, loss of income, under-compensation, and potential incarceration.

Many contributing factors relate to the increase in high school dropouts. Among those factors are excessive absenteeism, negative behavior, course failure, lack of positive relationships, learning difficulties, and teen pregnancy (Doll et al., 2013).

Although the Graduation Coach Program continues to provide services to at-risk students, research does not adequately address the effect of the Graduation Coach Program on graduation or attendance rates in Louisiana high schools.

This study contributed to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by focusing on the effect of the Graduation Coach Program and the overall graduation rate and attendance rate at the selected sites. The independent variable was the Graduation Coach Program and the dependent variables were attendance rate and graduation rate. The findings may provide stakeholders with data to make informed future decisions about investing in the Graduation Coach Program as a dropout intervention program.

## Nature of the Study

I chose the quantitative method as the sole research design because the study's objective was to examine the change in the attendance rate and the graduation rate with the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. This study addressed four public, urban high schools, which are identified as S1, S2, S3, and S4. The schools range from lower to higher social-economic status (SES) communities in a southern Louisiana parish.

The first school, S1, is a Title I school that received a D letter grade for school performance during the 2013–2014 school year (LDOE, 2013uu). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported student enrollment was nearly 1,000 students with 90 faculty members (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Approximately 73% of the students who were enrolled qualified for free/reduced lunch. During the 2013-2014

school year, S1 consisted of majority African-American (84%) students with 12% Caucasian, 3% Hispanic, and 1% Asian. There was one principal, three assistant principals, three guidance counselors, a dean of instruction, and a graduation coach.

The second school, S2, is a Title I school that received a D letter grade for school performance during the 2013–2014 school year (LDOE, 2013uu). NCES reported that the student enrollment was approximately 500 students with 59 faculty members (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Approximately 87% of the students who were enrolled eat free/reduced lunch. During the 2013–2014 school year, S2 consisted of majority African-American (97%) students with 2% Caucasian, and 1% Hispanic. There was one principal, two assistant principals, two guidance counselors, and a graduation coach.

The third school, S3, is a non-Title I school that received a B letter grade for school performance during the 2013–2014 school year (LDOE, 2013uu). NCES reported that the student enrollment was approximately 1900 students with 107 faculty members (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). During the 2013–2014 school year, S3 consisted of majority Caucasian (58%) students with 35% African American, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Asian. There was one principal, five assistant principals, four guidance counselors, and a graduation coach.

The fourth school, S4, is a Title I school that received a B letter grade for school performance during the 2013–2014 school year (LDOE, 2013uu). NCES reported that student enrollment was approximately 700 students with 38 faculty members (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). During the 2013–2014 school year, the fourth school, S4, consisted of majority Caucasian (64%) students and 32% African American. There

was one principal, two assistant principals, one guidance counselors, and a graduation coach.

The study focused on the effect of the Graduation Coach Program on attendance and graduation rate at S1, S2, S3, and S4. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Does a difference exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program?

   $H_0$1: No significant differences exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program.

   $H_a$1: There will be significant differences in S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program.

2. Does a difference exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program?

   $H_0$2: No significant differences exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

   $H_a$2: There will be significant differences in S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

Because this study required the analysis of numerical data, it falls into the category of quantitative methodology. I provided a statistical analysis using numerical data to determine the difference in the attendance and graduation rate before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at the four identified schools. I sought to determine the effect of the Graduation Coach Program on the attendance and graduation rates using statistical data rather than exploring the views of the Graduation Coach Program as noted in qualitative data (Creswell, 2013).

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare attendance and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in four Louisiana public high schools. The Graduation Coach Program is an initiative implemented as a response to intervention (RtI). At the time of this study, limited research had been conducted in southern Louisiana on the effect of the Graduation Coach Program on overall attendance and graduation rate. This quantitative ex post facto study measured S1, S2, S3, and S4's overall attendance rate and graduation rate before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2013).

There appears to be lack of research on the Graduation Coach Program in southern states. Most studies focus on Georgia's Graduation Coach Program. Hunter (2011) and McKeever (2010) found the Graduation Coach Program significantly increased Georgia's graduation rate in its high schools. Wilkins et al. (2014) discussed students with disabilities dropout rate problem in five West Virginia school districts. In each of the schools, a dropout prevention team included at least one graduation coach. In

a 5-year span, due to the implementation of several research-based interventions (including the graduation coach services), the districts decreased the dropout rate for students with disabilities. Hunter found a statistically significant relationship between graduation coach interventions and graduation rates. There appears to be a gap in the research on the effectiveness of the initiative in the southern state. Existing research has not ascertained how the Graduation Coach Program effects southern high schools.

I examined the difference in attendance and graduation rates before and after implementation of the coaching. I discussed the overall effect that the Graduation Coach Program had on S1, S2, S3, and S4's attendance rate by examining the data for the 2001–2005 and 2008–2014 school years. In addition, I examined the 2006–2014 graduation rates to determine the effect of the Graduation Coach Program on the graduation rates at the four schools. The knowledge discovered through this research may affect social change by examining the Graduation Coach Program as a possible method of intervention designed to reduce the dropout rate and increase overall graduation.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Maslow's motivational theory focused on the human hierarchy of needs (Blackburn, 2006). Maslow believed that a healthy individual had five basic needs. Those basic needs are (1) psychological, (2) safety, (3) love and belonging, (4) self-esteem, and (5) self-actualization. Maslow believed that certain negative behaviors occur because one or more of the human needs are unmet. Without the needs being fulfilled, such as food or loves and a sense of

belonging, certain negative behaviors may occur (i.e., failure to attend school, attitude of not caring, quitting school) (America Promise Alliance, 2015).

Daggett and Jones (2014) created a conceptual framework that applies Maslow's third need, love and belonging. Their framework defines seven types of relationships and how they are linked to a student's sense of belonging, which is a factor of student achievement. The framework illustrates how the levels of dependence and independence between people define the intensity of a relationship. As the degree of dependence increases, the level of independence decreases, resulting in forming positive relationships. On the other hand, as the level of dependence decreases and the level of independence increases, isolation may occur. Daggett supported Maslow's theory in that the lack of the sense of belonging may result in the isolation of family, friends, and school. The strong support systems of positive adults, mentors, and close friends could fulfill the need to belong. Daggett and Jones identified these seven levels of relationships (Table 1).

Table 1. Daggett's Seven Layers of Relationships

| Levels | Relationship | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | Isolation | "This is the lack of any positive relationships. The individual feels alone and isolated from relationships that would enhance learning" (p. 7). Student lacks any positive adult or peer support that motivates him to attend school regularly, study, or make right decisions. |
| 1 | Known | "A person must know someone before a relationship is formed. When teachers seek to develop relationships with students, the first step is getting to know them—their likes, dislikes, aspirations, learning styles, and families" (p. 7). In this instance, the student takes a survey that helps the teacher or the graduation coach get to know one another. Also, the graduation coach meets with his students to have informal conversations to build trust and establish comfort. |
| 2 | Receptive | "Often a learning relationship provides the assistance and support that a student needs. However, a preliminary step is for a teacher, for example, to show genuine interest in developing a relationship" (p. 7). Relationship building comes from frequent contacts in multiple settings and active involvement. A student notices the teacher's initiative to know more about the student other than what goes on in the classroom. A teacher may attend a sports event to watch the student participate, visit the student's job site, or sit with students during lunchtime. |
| 3 | Reactive | In this case, "one person receives guidance or support from another. This relationship yields emotional support or cognitive information" (p. 7). When faced with life challenges, the student relies on the graduation coach to connect him or her with the appropriate resources to resolve the matter. The graduation coach may provide a contact. |
| 4 | Proactive | "At this level, the partners have made a proactive commitment to do more than assist when needed and take an active interest in supporting the other person" (p. 7). Level 4 is more intensive than level 3. The graduation coach may provide a contact; but also, assist the student in obtaining the services by completing application or forms, transportation, or scheduling and following-up to make sure the student's needs were met. |
| 5 | Sustained | "Positive support is received from family members, peers, and teachers. These relationships will endure over an extended period" (p. 7). This is the level of relationship after graduation when the student knows that he can contact the graduation coach for support after high school. |
| 6 | Mutually benefitted | "This rarely happens when the graduation coach and the student both contribute support to one another for an extended period" (p. 8). |

*Note*. Adapted from "The Process of Change: Why Change, What to Do, and How to Do It," by W. R. Daggett and R. D. Jones, 2014, International Center for Leadership in Education. Permission granted; see Appendix A.

Daggett's seven layers of relationships describe the scope of each relationship. The seven layers of relationships are significant to a graduation coach. A reactive relationship allows the graduation coach to offer a multitude of opportunities for the student to be successful. A reactive student values the support and assurance that there is a caring person ensuring they stay on the right track (Daggett & Jones, 2014). On the other hand, the graduation coach may have to devote additional time to a student who remains in isolation. An isolated student may not recognize the help that is being extended to him or her because she or he prefers to remain secluded and not advance because of the assistance from others.

The graduation coach may develop a relationship that extends beyond the high school career. The post-high school graduate may contact the graduation coach for post-career choices, family decisions, and other life meaningful events. According to Daggett's framework of relationships, the sustained relationship may evolve to regular check-ins and greetings during holidays and birthdays.

The relationship framework explains that as the familiarity of the relationship increases, the level of commitment strengthens. Other research (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012) supported Daggett's belief that the intensity of the teacher-student relationships will greatly influence student engagement, reduced absences, and better graduation rates. Daggett's relationship framework explains why some students finish school and some do not.

Few studies indicate a positive correlation between student-teacher relationships and achievement. Smith (2011) conducted a study that focused on African-American

male students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships and their effects on learning. Seventy percent of the participants stated teachers who showed they cared gave students extra time, encouraged students, talked and listened to students. Caring, supportive teachers were more likely to reteach until the student understood the lesson and check on the student's well-being. These results are supported by other researchers who have found that high levels of teacher support also resulted in higher levels of student engagements, attendance, and test scores (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). Elledge, Elledge, Newgent, and Cavell (2015) reported that at-risk students are most in need of caring, supportive relationships. On the other hand, Clark (2014) surveyed 73 participants using Pianta's Student Teacher Relationship Scale. The results showed no significant association between teacher-student relationship and student performance.

## Operational Definitions

*Annual (event) dropout rate*: The percentage of "students who were enrolled at some time during the school year and were expected to be enrolled in grades 9–12 in the next school year but were not enrolled by October 1 of the following school year. Students who have graduated, transferred to another school, died, moved to another country, or who are out of school due to illness are not considered dropouts" (U.S. Department of Education, 2014b, para. 6).

*At-risk student*: At-risk students are students who do not learning the skills to succeed after graduation (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2012).

*Average daily attendance* (*ADA*): The ADA is "the aggregate attendance of a school during a reporting period divided by the number of days school is in session during this period" (National Education Association, 2014, p. xiii).

*Credit recovery*: Credit recovery is online learning that allows at-risk learners multiple opportunities to receive credit to graduate on time (actions and operations specifically tied to helping students who are failing or who failed course work (Pettyjohn & LaFrance, 2014).

*Dropout factories*: Dropout factories are high schools that have a graduation rate of 60 percent or less (America Promise Alliance, 2015).

*Dropout rate*: The dropout rate is "the percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalency credential such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate" (U.S. Department of Education, 2014c, para. 1).

*Graduation coach*: A graduation coach is a person who holds at least a bachelor's degree and has had past working experience working effectively with youth. This person is responsible for proving academic guidance, motivating students, and helping them plan for the work force, along with connecting families with school and community service (Dropout Prevention Act, Bill S185, The 187th General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2011).

*Graduation rate* (*cohort graduation rate*): The graduation rate is "the percentage of students who enter the ninth grade and successfully graduate within four years"

(LDOE, 2013vv, What percent of students graduated in four years with a diploma, para. 1).

*Interventions*: Interventions are strategies, methods, or programs that a school offers to a percentage of the school population that helps a child succeed in school (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2012).

*Response to intervention* (*RtI*): Response-to-Intervention is a systematic approach to providing high quality instruction and early intervention before "identifying students as having a learning disability" (Al Otaiba et al., 2014, p. 7).

## Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

### Assumptions

One assumption was that the reported data were accurate. Another assumption was that selected sites used the same formulas to calculate attendance and graduation rates.

### Limitations

Limitations involved the possible weakness of the study that was beyond the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). This study was restricted to four public high schools. In this particular location of Louisiana, only four high schools employed a graduation coach; therefore, the sample size was relatively small. Although I used numbers to indicate the graduation coach's effect on the attendance and graduation rate as a feature of quantitative research, this study lacked the participants' personal stories of their experiences found in qualitative research. A third limitation was that I relied on accurate student data from one longitudinal data system. Longitudinal data systems are an

effective tool for identifying students who will potentially drop out of high school, further research must be conducted to understand how these systems may be leveraged to identify students who are at-risk (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Christenson et al., 2012). The accuracy of archival data was limited to district's information uploaded to LDOE or other reporting agencies. Due to the time span of the study, the student population differed each year. Another limitation was the lack of data for all years. Thus, despite using all of the available data, data for all years were lacking. Attendance rates for the school years 2006 and 2007 were not available. Graduation rates for the school years 2001–2005 were unavailable. Last, I did not consider the fidelity of the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program or the level of district' support or school support of the initiative.

**Scope and Delimitations**

Delimitations are factors that restrain the compass of the research and are within the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). The scope of the study was four urban high schools located in southern Louisiana. Data represented most of the students who attended one of the four schools between the years 2001 and 2014. This study was delimited to the Graduation Coach Program without considering other strategies or interventions.

## Significance of the Study

This study was significant in examining the differences before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and may, therefore, influence the high school dropout rates. Local school administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders may be better informed on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the

Graduation Coach Program. This study may assist administrators to make sound decisions to enhance the program if the program is determined to be effective or try a different intervention if the program is determined to be ineffective. These factors contribute to educator's understanding of the interventions that are used to address the nation's high school dropout crisis, which is affecting the country's economy and prison system.

There appears to be a gap on the research about graduation coach programs since most studies focus on dropout interventions and teacher's involvement with at-risk students (National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 2015a). Few studies have examined the Graduation Coach Program itself (Baldwin, 2012; Gragg, 2015; Hunter, 2011; McKeever, 2010; & Michael, 2014). Moreover, a more limited number of research has studies address Graduation Coach Programs in Louisiana. I intended to examine the attendance and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at four public high schools in southern Louisiana.

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to compare attendance and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in four Louisiana public high schools. In this quantitative study, I accessed public data to analyze the selected sites' attendance rates and graduation rates. Daggett and Jones's (2014) relationship framework was the scaffold for the study. In Section 2, I review related topics that explain why some students drop out of high school and prospective dropout interventions.

Section 2: Literature Review

## Introduction

In this section, I examine the effect of the dropout rate on the U.S. economy. Next, I discuss possible reasons students quit school, followed by a discussion about interventions. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provided a basis that supports the discussion on relationships. Subsequently, I discussed the Graduation Coach Program as a dropout intervention program.

I obtained published research from research databases, such as ProQuest, ERIC, and SAGE. I also used Google Scholar and Walden University library to gather peer-reviewed literature. I used the following keywords to obtain research: *high school dropouts*, *teenage pregnancy*, *response to intervention*, *course failures*, and other similar terms. In addition, I collected reports from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE).

U.S. economic success depends on students graduating from high school. In 2020, 65% of all jobs will require a high school diploma (Amos, 2013a). According to Marguerite Kondracke, former president and CEO of America Promise Alliance, 77 million job replacements will be needed that will require works to be "prepared for the 21st-century global economy" (Fields, 2008). With an estimate of 1.3 million students dropping out each year, the country will not have adequate number of skilled or educated people to meet the demand (American Psychological Association, 2012; Withington & Chapman, 2015). In addition, those who are unemployed will contribute to the cost of health care and welfare. Medicaid expenses could have been reduced by $7.3 billion if

half the number of dropouts had graduated (Amos, 2013b). Evaluating and implementing intervention methods to keep students in school and to increase the number of high school graduates are important to the United States' future economics.

To meet the country's demand, the nation is evaluating ways to address one of its most prevalent crises: high school dropout (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2012). Dropping out of high school is a major concern for our nation and is the reason that Balfanz, a research scientist at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, coined the term *dropout factories* (Balfanz et al., 2012). Fifteen percent of U.S. high schools are labeled as dropout factories (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). These are U.S. high schools that graduate 60% or less of their students (Balfanz et al., 2011, p. 1). Louisiana's schools failed to graduate at least 40% ninth-grade students within 4 years (Whittinghill, 2011). This label has caused schools and districts to focus more attention on the current dropout problem. This concern also began an in-depth research to identify the causes and possible solutions to students dropping out of high school.

To better comprehend the seriousness of the high school dropout rate in the United States, this section was divided into three sections. Each section contained a review of the educational literature that related to topics that are relevant to this study. The topics were as follow: reasons high school students decide to drop out of school, the Response to Intervention model, and the Graduation Coach Initiative. I conclude Section 2 with a review of the literature that related to the graduation coach as a component of the RtI model.

## Reasons Students Quit High School

The decision to drop out of high school is not an overnight decision, but an array of acts and events, such as external school factors, attendance, behavior, course failure, relationships, and teen pregnancy that result in the noncompletion of high school. In *Building a Grad Nation*, Balfanz et al. (2013) identified specific warning signs that indicate that a student is not progressing toward graduation. One significant warning sign is excessive absences. A student who misses 20 or more days of school or 10% of the school year is classified as *at-risk* for dropping out (Balfanz et al., 2013). In a study of 13,000 students from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 60% of those students did not graduate due to behavior (Balfanz et al., 2013). In this same study, sixth-grade students who had received out of school suspension did not graduate on time. Therriault, O'Cummings, Heppen, Yerhot, and Scala (2013) conducted a study that indicated students who failed one or more courses in the first year of high school demonstrated warning signs of being a potential high school dropout. A combination of one or more of these indicators raises a concern and puts the student at-risk for quitting school.

### External School Factors

External school factors are factors, such as family status, race, social-economic status (SES), and class size that affect a student's ability to complete high school. Jeynes (2015) examined the White-Black and Latino achievement gap. One of the purposes of his study was to find whether any particular factors influenced student achievement. The study's findings yielded statistically significant difference between family and classroom structure and student achievement. The findings of Jeynes (2015) and Roscigno (1999)

indicated similar external factors that influenced student achievement.

Roscigno (1999) discussed external factors that influence graduation rate. The diagram below outlines community issues or external school factors that may influence high school graduation rate (Figure 1).

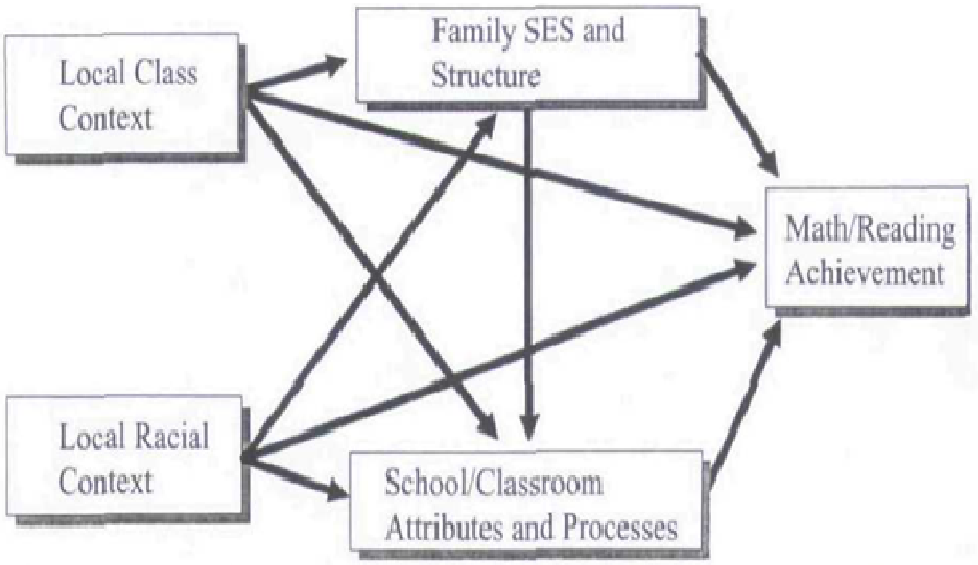



Figure 1. School external influences on achievement. Reprinted from "Conceptualization of Local Class and Race Context and Their Influence on Achievement through Proximate Family and Classroom/School Mechanisms," by V. Roscigno, 1999. Reprinted with permission; see Appendix B.

These external factors include local class content, family structure, math/reading achievement, local racial context ad school/ classroom attributes and processes. Studies have compared various races, genders, academic achievements, and, social-economic status's probability to graduate. In addition, research has shown how one factor affects another (i.e., social-economics affects teen pregnancy, African American male behavior affects academics). These factors intertwine as it relates to whether a student finishes school.

Class and racial contexts in the local area consist of student-teacher ratio and student-teacher ethnicity within a setting. Elias, White, and Stepney (2014) found that social-economic status and race had a greater influence on academic achievement than school and classroom attributes and processes. In this study conducted by Elias et al. (2014) in 144 New Jersey middle schools, it was determined that every 10% increase of Black or Hispanic students in a school, there was an average of 2.6% or 1.3% increase in percent of students who were non-proficient on the language test. According to Peterson, Woessmann, Hanushek, and Lastra-Anadón (2011), the class of 2011, in the United States, produced 11% of African American males who lacked math proficiency and 13% who lacked reading proficiency; in contrast, to their Caucasian counterparts – of whom 42% were proficient in math and 40% proficient in reading. Persell (2014) noted that minority students were more likely to attend high-poverty schools than their Caucasian peers as well. Findings concluded that schools with high poverty showed poor scores.

The family SES and structure consist of the present job rates, single parent families, educational levels, and other environmental factors. Hagans and Good (2013) supported the belief that SES influenced reading achievement. Their study of 50 low SES first- graders and 25 middle-high SES first- graders determined that even with a 10-week intervention plan students remained at risk of reading problems. In contrast, Ready (2010) reported that despite student's low SES or lack academic or social support from home, they may experience academic gains if they attend a high-quality school. When questioning school size relation to academic achievement, Lindahl and Cain (2012) found in their study of Alabama schools that as long as the SES of the student population

remained constant, the school's size had no relation on Alabama's eleventh- grade students' math and reading achievement assessments.

Using findings from previous court cases, researchers reviewed segregation in the public school setting and the effect that it had on Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics regarding the graduation rate. Roscigno's study (1999), noted certain geographical areas produced a lower graduation rate, classified and placed a large number of minority students in sub-level math classes, for providing inadequate resources, and for creating more segregation among the student body. Orfield and Luce (2013) resolved that minorities were at a disadvantage due to a lack of resources and a lack multi-racial intercommunication. The study also evaluated the percentage of each minority group that attended a predominantly white school and compared it with the percentage of white students who attended a majority African-American school. The cross-comparison of races had to justify the possibility of the unknown, as well. The results identified declining scores on standardized tests, and inflation in number of schools that had a tremendous amount of minority students.

Rowley and Wright (2011) conducted an earlier qualitative study similar to Orfield and Luce's (2013) study. Rowley and Wright's investigation focused primarily on why minority students were approximately four years behind in math and reading in relation to their white counterparts (2011). The qualitative method of study analyzed what had been identified in prior studies as the origin of academic attainment – standardized test scores (including race, family structure, geographical location of the school, and student conduct); thus, deriving to a lower graduation rate.

These research studies have indicated there are contributing factors to the three indicators (attendance, behavior, course failure). Family structure and support influence attendance. Social-economics status influences math and reading achievement between Caucasian and non-Caucasian. Attendance and behavior influence course failure. There are underlying factors for the various reasons a student may decide to quit high school.

**Absenteeism**

School absenteeism greatly affects student achievement. Baxter, Royer, Hardin, Guinn, and Devlin (2011) reported that as early as fourth grade, there is a connection between attendance and achievement. Baxter et al. (2011) found that fourth grade students, who were absent 2% of the school days scored higher on the state assessment than students who attended 4.3% of the school days. Balfanz et al. (2012) also found that students, who missed 20 or more days, math performance decreased greater than one point and three-fourths of a point in reading. In Maryland, in the 2002 cohort, six of every 10 students with 10 or more absences in tenth- grade completed high school. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) study also included Chicago schools. Their study found a correlation between test scores and attendance. Their findings showed that a student with high test scores but had excessive absences were more likely to fail a course than a student with low test scores but few absences. Their study attested that despite test scores, attendance was a reliable predictor of course achievement.

School absenteeism is a major indicator of a student detachment from school. Georgia's Department of Education (Barge, 2011) study found students who missed six to 10 days was associated with 7 to 10 percentage point drops in the graduation rate.

Those who missed 11 to 14 days resulted in 11 to 14 point drops in the graduation rate. Schoeneberger's study (2012) found that high school students missing school more than 10% risk of dropping out of high school were significantly higher than students who attended school regularly. He believed that if students were not interested in education they would become disengaged and potentially drop out of high school. According to a study conducted by Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison, approximately 45% of students began missing classes one year prior to dropping out of school, and nearly 65% of those students often dropped out that year (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). Moree (2014) studied attendance and graduation rates at 35 large and small Missouri districts. His study concluded that attendance rates were paralleled to graduation rates. Based on the statistics given, school absenteeism is an early warning sign of school disengagement that may result in dropout.

**Behavior**

Behavior is indicative in students who choose to drop out of school (Mac Iver, 2011). Students may exhibit different behaviors when they are not engaged in schools. Factors that influence these behaviors may be a lack of support, motivation, interest, or social interaction. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) caused the implementation of programs to monitor student academic progress by assessing academic growth and standardized tests (Dee & Jacob, 2011). This intervention was sufficient academically; however, it did not effectively identify students who presented risk factors for dropping out of school due to behavior (Casillas et al., 2012).

Casillas et al. (2012) concluded that students who demonstrated a high level of motivation possessed behaviors that were comparable to their level of motivation, whereas, students who were struggling in school and lacked in motivation behaved poorly. The results of the study also showed that students who were motivated were more likely to achieve academically and to go on to complete their education. In conjunction with Casillas's findings, Osborne and Jones (2011) found students who were less motivated were less likely to graduate.

Social interaction is another area that is relevant to the high school dropout rates (Casillas et al., 2012). If a student has "bounced" around from school to school, he does not have an opportunity to establish positive relationships with faculty, staff, and peers (Casillas et al., 2012). Their attention is not on school, and their attitudes show a lack of interest in their studies.

Student's lack of interest in their education can cause the student to display inappropriate behavior that could lead to disciplinary actions. Losen and Martinez (2013) reported an estimated 2,600 secondary schools had suspended more than 25% of their entire enrollment at least one day during the 2009-2010 school year. One in-school suspension per year resulted in 235 students more likely to dropout than student who received no disciplinary action (Losen, 2015). When students were suspended from school, they were excluded from academic involvement, which resulted in students more likely to dropout (Sprague, Vincent, & Tobin, 2013). It was noted that some schools use out-of-school suspensions to push students with negative behavior out of school (Doll et al., 2013). Fabelo et al. (2011) reported about 10 percent of the students expelled or

suspended between seventh and twelfth grade became high school dropouts. Approximately 59 percent of the students in the study, who had been disciplined 11 times or more, failed to receive a high school diploma within four years. Students who had demonstrated such behavior were potentially at-risk for dropping out of high school.

Student behaviors are factors that affect the social-emotional levels and academic performance in schools today. Educators need to be keenly aware of the effect of these practices, who are being disciplined today; hence, effective interventions should be part of the programming for these at-risk students.

**Course Failure**

The experience of academic failure is another reason many students decide to drop out of high school. In *Dropout Prevention* (Doll et al., 2013), Bridgeland and his colleagues surveyed a group of tenth through twelfth-grade student dropouts. One-third of the participants said they could not keep up with the school work. A larger group reported leaving school because they were failing at school. In addition, 32% of respondents repeated a grade before dropping out. These negative experiences promoted student disengagement and resulted in the students' quitting school.

Researchers have found that many students believe that once they have fallen behind academically, it is difficult for them to recover (Dunham, 2008). A student would have to score nine 100s to replace one zero in a course; this would be difficult for a struggling student. In *The Case Against Percentage Grades*, Guskey (2013) acknowledges that he is a strong non-supporter of a zero as a grade. An accumulation of zeros as grades often leads to course failure. Carifio and Carey (2013) supported the

belief that grading a student with a score of 50 on a 100-point scale, which is still a failing grade, motivates the student to recover from their loss, and possibly pass the course. Prior to 2005, the staff at Darmstadt Middle School discussed the challenges their school faced. They had too many students failing courses. The staff came to a consensus that students should not be allowed to accept a zero for a grade. In 2005, the school implemented the Zero Ain't Permitted (ZAP) program (Dunham, 2008). Within two years, the program showed significant decrease in course failures. During the 2006–2007 school year, the school reported 100% student passing rate for every course. The staff and students contributed this success to the ZAP program.

Carey and Carifio's (2012) reported that administrators implemented the minimum grade 50 on a 100-point scale initiative to reduce course failure rate, giving students the opportunity to recover from a poor grade. This decision meant the lowest grade a student could receive was a 50. It confirmed to be useful for some students but ineffective for many students. Despite staff and administrators efforts, there were 1,159 of 29,187 sets of grades that were assigned a minimum passing grade resulted in students passing the course. The remaining 28,028 resulted in students retaking the course and possibly not graduating on time. Carifio and Carey (2013) conducted another study that researched the effectiveness of the minimum grade. In the seven-year study, of the 343,425 sets of grades, less than 1% of those grades were given a minimum grade of 50 resulted in students passing the course. This study also showed that in spite of student receiving minimum grades, they did significantly better on state assessment.

The grading system is an important consideration for educators as it relates to probable cause for student retention in high school (Rumberger, 2011). Supporting students in their academic performance may include an approach for understanding that students' learning and academic recovery does effect the final grade on a course, as well as, whether or not the student remains on track to graduate in four years.

**Relationships**

Students may decide to separate from school because of lack of supportive relationships. Students enter the classroom with many issues that would go undetected if there were not caring adults present with whom they could develop trusting relationships. In the study completed by Sahin, Arseven, and Kiliç's (2016) there was a lack of parent-child relationships that were related to lack of communication between home and school. Parents who failed to support their child's academics or had no authority resulted in parents accepting their child's failure, which often led to high absentee and dropout. A student needs a trusting adult when he or she experiences death, divorce, or other life obstacles. Hynes (2014) reported that children with one or more incarcerated parent were 79% more likely to quit school. Students with at least one deceased parent were 53% more likely to quit school. And, students were 43% more likely to quit if they had an abusive parent. A mixed-method study was conducted that included 102 interviews and 2,830 surveys (America Promise Alliance, 2015). The data indicated that adult relationships were important factors in high school student's lives. High school graduates who participated felt they had two adults they could talk to about their problems, in contrast to, non-graduates felt they had 1.5 adult. The difference whether a student

attended one class rather than another could have been based on the relationship between the teacher and the student (Shute & Cooper, 2015). The presence or lack of relationships influenced the decision to complete high school or not.

The facts provided indicated that although a majority of students felt there was someone who they could talk to while enrolled in school, the importance of continuing student-school relationship was less significant once a student decided to quit school (America Promise Alliance, 2015). Students, who were most at-risk, felt a need to establish relationships inside and outside of the classroom. Overall, if positive, supportive relationships were established in the school, these students would have a support system that will enable them to cope with external factors that are affecting their education and social being. Figure 2 represents the different types of supports that high school students received in the study (America Promise Alliance, 2015).

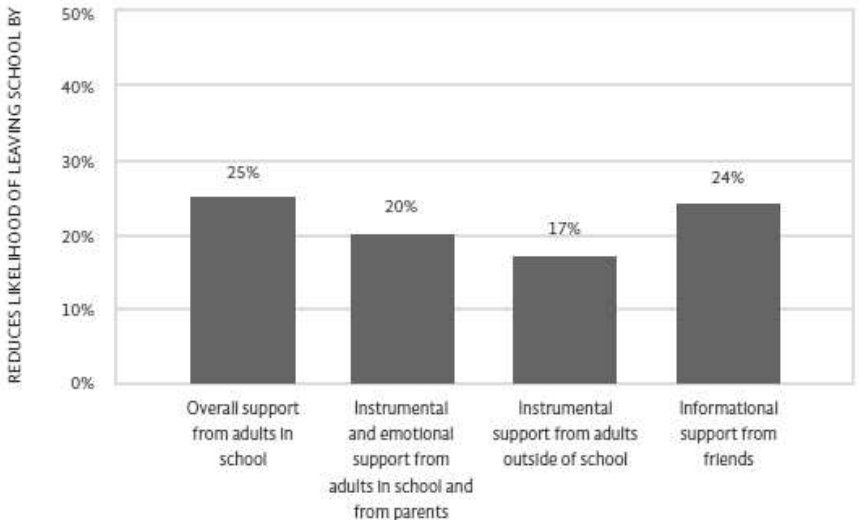



*Figure 2*. The impact of relationships on student's decision to leave school. Reprinted from "Don't Quit on Me: Why Young People Who Left School Say About the Power of Relationships," by America Promise Alliance, 2015. Reprinted with permission, see Appendix C.

As shown in Figure 2, students reported that negative family experiences had the greatest negative effect on their decisions to finish school. Informational support (advice how to find a job or how to apply to college) had a greater influence than instrumental support (tangible resources, such as providing a bus pass or taking the student to visit a college campus) from adults in and outside of the school, as well as, emotional support (caring and support) from adults in school and from parents. However, students who received support that addressed their academic, social, emotional, and health needs had the greatest effect on students' decision to finish school. The level of support decreased or increased the likelihood that students would leave school.

**Teen Pregnancy**

Teens engaging in premarital sex tend to put themselves at greater risk for many things, such as teenage pregnancy and parenthood. Teen pregnancy and parenthood may

be one of the factors influencing female students to drop out of high school (Doll et al., 2013). In 2011, Louisiana was ranked 8th of 51 states with the highest teenage birth rates (Office of Adolescent Health, 2014). The pressures of raising a child at an early age and attending school are strenuous. A baby's inconsistent sleep patterns, medical needs, and other personal needs demand time, energy, and financial support . The young female may not have adequate resources to provide for her baby and continue to meet the requirements for a high school diploma. Ng and Kaye's (2012) study found that 67% of teen mothers who moved out of their family home lived below the poverty level, and 63% of teen mothers received some type of public assistance within the first year of childbirth. The Louisiana Health Report Card for 2015 showed that teen mothers were more likely to give birth to babies born with low birth weights, which often results in childhood health problems (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, 2016). Mollborn and Dennis (2011) focused on infants to preschooler's readiness for school. The research indicated that preschoolers who lived below the poverty line were twice as unlikely to be "ready" for school as children who lived above the poverty line, and struggled later in life in their academics. It also indicated that these children often experienced health problems due to stress because of living conditions, whether directly or indirectly. The student may have to decide whether to remain in school and struggle to meet the needs of her child, or quit school in an attempt to meet the needs of her baby adequately.

Shuger (2012b) found that 36% of all students reported pregnancy and parenthood were the primary reasons for them quitting high school before graduation. Forty of the

participants in the study went on to finish high school, despite the challenges of childrearing. Marcotte (2013) collected data on childbirth from 1993 to 1997 for girls 15-18 years old. Birthrates were parallel to girl ages; respectively, "11.07 per 1000 for 15 years old to 64.48 per 1000 for 18 year olds" (p. 263). Shuger (2012a) reported that one of every three teen mother females is at high risk of dropping out. These young girls represented 20% of the nation's high school dropouts.

It has been shown that the responsibilities of raising a child while attending school may impede a student's opportunity to successfully graduate from high school. The student must not only consider his or her well-being but the well-being of another person who is entirely dependent on them to care for their needs. It is a phase of life, in which, a support system is needed to help the student obtain resources and services to stay on track to finish high school.

Based on the results of the previous studies, it is a fact that teen pregnancy and parenthood are significant factors to the increase number of high school dropouts. Without a solid support system to assist teen mothers with health care for themselves, as well as, for their children, the likelihood of these young ladies finishing high school is slim. They are faced with adult decisions at a young age.

After giving birth, they are challenged with childcare issues and the daily welfare of their children. Although there are public assistance and programs available to assist them with childcare, other factors, such as transportation and timing must be considered, along with balancing school attendance and academics. The obvious dramatic and difficult changes in their lives often lead to little room and time for school attendance and

course work. The compilation of these issues is driving forces to teen mothers quitting school.

## Response to Intervention

Various programs were designed and incorporated to assist students in reaching academic success. For example, in 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act replaced the No Child Left Behind Act, which supported at-risk students with "evidence-based interventions to support school improvement" (Dynarski, 2015, p. 1). Response to Intervention (RtI) is one approach for schools to address student academic and behavior problems (Seedorf, 2014). National Center on Response to Intervention (2013) describes the most current description of RtI:

> Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. With RtI, schools use data to identify students at-risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities. (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2013, p. 2)

This description of RtI emphasizes the multi-level approach to address student academic and behavior needs to support student achievement. According to McInerney and Elledge (2013), "RtI identifies students learning and behavioral problems early so that educators can intervene with specialized instruction to improve academic achievement" (p. 1). The multi-tiered intervention model provides school officials with data to make decisions and

to provide appropriate interventions. The use of data guides educator's decisions to place students in the appropriate tier, so the student receives the appropriate intervention to meet student needs (Abbott & Wills, 2012).

Generally, the RtI model consists of three tiers that determine the intensity level of the intervention (Fuchs, 2011). Tier 1 supports learning of all students. Tier 2 offers moderate intensity that involves most *at-risk* students. Through progress monitoring, students continue receiving Tier 2 strategies until they achieve their goals, or if there is a lack of achievement, the student will proceed to Tier 3. These students receive the most intense interventions in a smaller group setting. Tier 3 interventions include the most intense interventions; including, but not limited to, possible referral to special education services. Students can move back and forth through the three tiers. The goal of RtI is for all students to receive a "high quality instruction" and to identify at-risk students to receive effective interventions early (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2016).

Tier 1 interventions are classroom interventions for all students. Eighty percent of the students benefit from the whole class instruction (National Center on Response to Intervention, n.d.). The first tier consists of teachers' efforts within the classroom to help students who have fallen behind because of academic deficiencies or behavior problems. The teacher establishes clear expectations and routines, positive relationships, and quality instruction (Stormont, Reinke, Herman, & Lembke, 2012). If the student does not achieve at an expected rate, then he or she moves to Tier 2 (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2016).

Tier 2 interventions occur outside the normal class period and at school for students who fall behind their peers by supplementing Tier 1 interventions. It usually addresses 10-15% of the group (National Center on Response to Intervention, n.d.). The interventions may include evidence-based reading or math programs, check-in or check-out with an academic coach, and social skills-specific counseling sessions in small group settings (Stormont et al., 2012). Gilbert et al. (2013) showed that students who were not successful in Tier 1 were placed in Tier 2. These low-level readers were tutored three times a week for 45 minutes for 14 weeks. The lessons were skill-specific based on the students' reading deficiencies. Cho, Compton, D. L. Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bouton (2014) concluded that Tier 2 interventions may be unnecessary for student who did not show improvement. These students could advance to Tier 3 to accelerate the RTI process so that the student may receive the appropriate interventions needed.

Tier 3 interventions are more intensive and may require more time. A smaller percentage of students are placed in Tier 3, usually 1-3 students (Gilbert et al., 2013; National Center on Response to Intervention, n.d.). Students in Tier 3 may utilize a variety of delivery methods of instruction or the repeat of instruction to address their deficiencies. They may also participate in check-in or check-out with an academic coach, distance learning, computer-based learning, and summer school (Stormont et al., 2012).

Response to Intervention is designed to "close the achievement gap by improving instruction for the benefit of all students" (Vallery, 2011, p. 110). The success of the RtI approach depends on the culture and the fidelity of implementation (Isbell & Szabo, 2014). It requires effort, commitment, collaboration, and communication. In 2003, Clark

County School District was one of the fifth largest school districts in the United States (Reitz, Huff, Weires, Jost, & Clark, 2011). It implemented the RtI process and made statistically significant achievement gains. It reduced the number of students referred for special education testing, increased its overall state proficiency in ELA by 11%, and increased its overall state proficiency score in math by 5% (Reitz et al., 2011). After the 2004-2005 school year, Sanger Unified School District in California was identified as one of the 98 lowest-performing school districts (Samuels, 2011). The district took immediate action by implementing RtI district-wide. Six years later, the district exited program improvement and received honors for academic achievement. Page's (2014) study compared students who were taught using the RtI model and those who were not taught using the RtI model. Based on Scholastic Reading Inventory results, 2nd and 3rd grade students' scores increased. O'Connor, Briggs, and Forbes (2013) found that the use of RtI with three children who were ranked the lowest readers in their class positively affected their reading ability. With the use of Tier 2 interventions, the three students were reading on-grade-level by the end of the study. Webster (2014) found mixed results between RtI students and non-RtI students. Two hundred seventy-eight sixth-grade students participated in Tier 1, Tier 2, or no interventions in math instruction. The study reported on the math common assessment Tier 2 students scored an average 74%. Tier 1 students scored 67%. Students who received no interventions scored 87%. Tier 2 students benefitted from the additional interventions. On the STAR math assessment, Tier 2 students had a mean scale score of 677 and Tier 1 students had a mean scale score of 705. Tier 1 students outperformed Tier 2 students on this assessment that demonstrates that

Tier 2 students did not benefit from the additional interventions. Response to Intervention (RtI) was proven successful for use with students in lower elementary grades; however, the results confirmed that RtI was not as effective for middle school students (Webster, 2014). According to results generated from the STAR assessment, six grade students who were classified as Tier 1 and received little or no interventions still outperformed students who were categorized as Tier 2 and received interventions. By middle school, students began to realize when they were academically behind their peers. Freeman et al. (2015) examined the effect that Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) had on student outcomes. PBIS is an intervention to support academics and behavior. Freeman et al. (2015) found that high schools that implemented the interventions with fidelity showed gains in attendance, academics, and a decrease in behavior problems.

Response to Intervention (RtI) has proven effective in helping students achieve academically as the students strive to reach their targeted academic level. Many students benefit from the support services that help students acquire the skills and credits to graduate from high school. Continuing this program is promising to the students and educators alike.

## Graduation Coach Initiative

In 2006, Georgia's Governor Perdue took a stand to overcome one of the nation's highest dropout rates (Harris & Princiotta, 2009). Amongst many interventions, he placed a graduation coach on each of its high schools that had the largest number of *at-risk* students. His mission for graduation coaches was to "strategically move at-risk students to a path towards graduation" (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009, p. 2). A year later, the state of

Georgia expanded its graduation coach initiative to middle schools. The efforts of the graduation coach played a part in the state's graduation rate increasing to 75%; the dropout rate dropped from 4.7% to 3.7% (Georgia Department of Education, 2008). In addition, students who once had truancy issues were no longer considered high risk because of attendance.

In 2007, as a response to its "unacceptable" high dropout rate, Alabama hired 25 graduation coaches and placed them at their at-risk schools (A+ Education Partnership, 2016). In combination with other interventions, Alabama's dropout rate decreased by 30% in six years. Phillips (2010) stated a district in Alabama implemented the Graduation Coach Program into its schools to increase their graduation rates. The district placed graduation coaches into six of its high schools that had the highest enrollment of *at-risk* students. Each graduation coach had a caseload of 40 students. A study found that the 40 students attended class more days. They missed 31 days in contrast to 40 days for students who did not have a graduation coach. The students misbehaved less. They averaged eight suspension days less than other students. The *at-risk* students who had graduation coaches had earned more credits than those who did not have a graduation coach. These data showed that Alabama's graduation coach initiative did have a positive influence on student's decisions to stay in school and graduate.

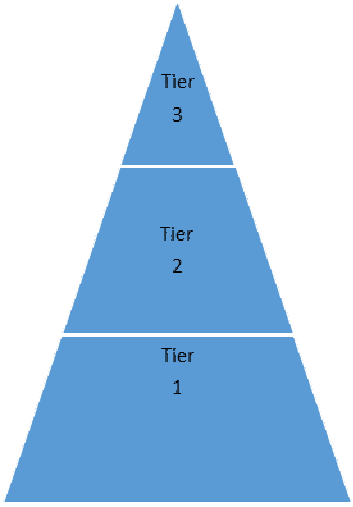
Louisiana's charge to prepare every student for college has caused a greater emphasis on increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the dropout rate. In 2007, Louisiana replicated the Georgia's graduation coach model. Although there has been a lack of study about the effectiveness of Louisiana's Graduation Coach Programs, data

have confirmed its success in other parts of the country; therefore, the state has approved it as an acceptable intervention tool. Within the RtI model for non-academic interventions, a graduation coach is a Tier 3 intervention (see fig. 1). This model shows that the graduation coach works with a small, controllable number of at-risk students after or along with many other interventions.

The graduation coach concept was derived from the notion that a child's chance of graduating from high school increased if there is a positive adult in his or her life. The graduation coach acts a student advocate. As a student begins to show "ABCs of disengagement" from school, the graduation coach intervenes as a Tier 3 intervention by creating an action plan (including student, parent, teachers, administrators) to support the child's efforts to pass the course (Lane, Oakes, Menzies, Oyer, & Jenkins, 2013).

According to Louisiana's Graduation Coach Toolkit, the graduation coach responsibility is to monitor the student's attendance, course progress, and behavior (Louisiana Department of Education, 2011). When a student misses two or three days, the graduation coach may conference with the student, parents, and administrators. If the student lacks sufficient points or course credits, the graduation coach may collaborate with school personnel to design an action plan to assist the student to get back on track. The graduation coach may offer school resources and provide support that will help the student attendance credit, as well as, academic credit. If behavior impedes a child's academic performance, the graduation coach assists teachers, parents, and administration by encouraging the student to correct his or her behavior. The graduation coach may refer the student to alternative programs. Lastly, if all interventions fail, the graduation coach

will conduct a dropout interview with the student that highlights the consequences and challenges that a person faces based on the choice to not complete high school. A visual model to identify the strategies and resources offered to struggling students was created to illustrate the various stages. The three-tiered dropout model (illustrating the graduation coach initiative) is shown in Figure 3:




**Non-Academic Interventions/Strategies**

Tier 3 Interventions
1. Graduation Coach
2. Parent Conferences
3. External Agencies and Organizations
4. Adopt a Student

Tier 2 Interventions
1. Counseling on Attendance
2. Student Contracts
3. Parent Contact
4. Small Group Counseling

Tier 1 Strategies
1. Transition Best Practices (Orientations/Summer Bridge/etc)
2. Career Counseling
3. Freshman Academy/Teaming Processes
4. Rewards and Recognition

*Figure 3.* RtI three-tier model including graduation coach initiative. Adapted from "CPSB Three-Tier Dropout Prevention Model," by P. Deville, 2008. Reprinted with permission, see Appendix D.

In the examination of the three-tiered model, one can see there are a number of resources available to support a student during their high school journey. The National Center for Learning Disabilities (2016) indicates that all students have access to Tier 1 strategies and students who are unsuccessful with Tier 1 strategies are provided Tier 2 strategies. In addition, Tier 3 strategies are offered to students who are most *at-risk* of not completing their secondary education successfully. These three tiers model has specific interventions that can be used to support students and further explanation will explain how the tiers work simultaneously to meet the needs of students.

**Tier 1**

C.S.D. Greene and Greene (2012) refer to the Tier 1 stage as the foundation of the intervention pyramid. It is a school-wide approach that emphasizes the quality of instruction and promotes positive academics and behavior in hopes to reduce special education referrals (Fisher & Frey, 2013). PBIS is a school-wide behavior model that Principal Ross implemented at his school in Kentucky. All students are provided the opportunity to earn rewards and recognition for positive behavior that is clearly established (Ross, 2016). In five years, Ross's school discipline referrals decreased by almost 200 referrals. In addition, the school's reading and math assessment scores increased. Emmett and McGee (2012) studied a large high school in California. The staff identified that many of their incoming ninth-graders entered high school unprepared and at-risk of falling behind. The school established Freshman Academy that was offered to all first-time ninth-grade students. Initially, one counselor was assigned to the Freshman Academy to support teachers and students. The teachers collaborated to meet the needs of

the individual students. Within two years a result of the staff and community efforts, freshman promotion increased, reading skills improves, and suspensions decreased. West High School Freshman Academy provided the necessary supports and interventions for their ninth-grade students to stay on track to graduate within four years. In Tier 1, effective instruction is the best intervention.

**Tier 2**

Burns describes Tier 2 as supplemental interventions (Burns, 2016). At this level, a small group of 5%-10% students is identified as not being successful with receiving solely Tier 1 interventions (Stormont et al., 2012). These students are targeted based on specific *at-risk* factors – attendance, behavior, and course failure. If student's attendance, behavior, or academics become a concern, the school intervenes by receiving 20-30 minute small group instruction weekly, peer assistance, check-in/check-out with a mentor, counseling focused on social skills in a small group setting, instructed or prompted with visual cues. Fisher and Frey (2013) reported that students were offered to participate in after school programs. They were given the opportunity to ask specific questions about their academic learning, improve grades, and additional instructional time. Tier 2 students are monitored more closely than the Tier 1 students. If students demonstrate progress, they may return to Tier 1; if not, students may be placed in Tier 3 (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2016).

**Tier 3**

Tier 3 is describes as individualized intervention (Burns, 2016). No more than 5% of students may have severe academic or behavior disabilities (Stormont et al., 2012).

A student who receives Tier 3 supports is monitored more closely and provided more one-on-one instruction. Based on student needs, the students may receive more time pulled out of the regular classroom setting. Although RtI is not intended to service special education students, it is a part of the special education referral process.

The three-tier intervention model is a visual to show what services are offered to all students to ensure they have the opportunity to be high school graduates. The seven-year case study by Epler (2013) found that using the RtI model, graduates reading performance increased from 76% to 84%. The dropout rate decreased from ten to less than one. In Fisher and Frey's (2013) case, students were scheduled time during core classes to practice on reading deficiencies. Within two years, the RTI process had evolved to one teach and one mentor providing individualize intervention to at least one student. Although Carver High School could not contribute its' accomplishments to the implementation of the RTI program, their attendance and academics increased and special education referrals decreased. The RTI model had a positive effect on reducing the dropout rate, special education referrals, and improving the graduation rate. The three-tiered model flexibility allowed the graduation coach to adjust the level of intensity to meet the needs of the student.

In conclusion, each tier of the three-tier model clearly explains the population that it services. The model's spectrum extends from the general education to the more specialized classrooms. Most importantly, the model provides a picture of the support that the school system provides so that students can remain in school, behave, and receive the services needed to meet high school requirements.

## Summary

Section 2 reviewed the literature related to the implementation of the graduation coach at the study site, the primary reasons students drop out of high school, and how the graduation coach fits into the RtI model. At the time of this study, there was limited research that indicated if the Graduation Coach Program decreased attendance or graduation rates at S1, S2, S3, and S4. In this study, I examined the difference in the attendance and graduation rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. Moreover, this study provided the basis for expansion and future exploration of the Graduation Coach Program in other settings and with different student populations. Section 3 presented the research methods used in this quantitative study to examine the difference in the attendance and graduation rate before and the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at the four selected sites.

## Section 3: Research Method

Attendance and graduation success were two challenges that this study's four public high schools faced. These two factors also aided in identifying students as at-risk of dropping out of high school. The purpose of this study was to compare attendance and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in four Louisiana public high schools. I used public data to collect graduation and attendance rate from two periods (before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program). Before 2007, the program was nonexistent in the four schools that were included in the study (Calcasieu Parish, n.d.). I examined graduation and attendance rate data to determine whether the intervention affected the four school's overall graduation and attendance rate.

To examine the difference in high school attendance and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at S1, S2, S3, and S4, the following research questions and hypothesis were tested:

1. Does a difference exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program?

   $H_01$: No significant differences exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program.

$H_a1$: There will be significant differences in S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program.

2. Does a difference exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program?

   $H_02$: No significant differences exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

   $H_a2$: There will be significant differences in S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

In Section 3, I discuss the following sections: (a) research design and approach, (b) setting and sample, (c) instrumentation and materials, (d) data collection and analysis, and (e) protection of participant's rights.

## Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this study was to compare attendance and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in four Louisiana public high schools. This study compared independent groups pertaining to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in 2007. This type of research was most appropriate to answer the research questions.

There are four major types of quantitative research – survey, correlational, causal-comparative, and experimental. "Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that

population" (Creswell, 2014, p. 13). Rather than providing a treatment to one group and withholding from another as one would do if conducting experimental research, one "uses questionnaires or structured interviews" to generalize from "a sample to a population" (Creswell, 2014, p. 13). Causal-comparative and correlational designs are more complex methods of the four designs. Causal-comparative compares two or more groups in terms of a cause that has already happened, whereas, correlational studies individuals (Suter, 2012). Like causal-comparative research, correlational research describes the relationship between two or more variables or set of scores (Klazema, 2014). Unlike correlational studies, causal-comparative research uncovers a cause and effect relationship among variables.

The non-experimental, ex post facto design provides appropriate answers to the research questions (Dixon, Singleton, & Straits, 2016). I examined the difference in attendance and graduation rate before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. To determine the statistical significance of the Graduation Coach Program on attendance and graduation rate at Schools 1, 2, 3, and 4, a quantitative approach was the appropriate design because it provided a broad, general set of findings (Brown & Coombe, 2015; Patton, 2015). In contrast, quantitative study sought to gain the perceptions of a few number of people to gain a wealth of detailed information (Patton, 2015).

In addition, an ex post facto study is a non-experimental study that explores the effect that already exists between or among groups prior to the research (Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2014). An ex-post facto design was most suitable because the implementation of

the Graduation Coach Program had already taken place. The sites selected were chosen by purposeful sampling. Each school implemented the Graduation Coach Program in 2007 to address its attendance and dropout rates (Calcasieu Parish, n.d.). The study included all participants within the specified time span, so there was no need to randomly assign participants. I did not manipulate the dependent and independent variables, i.e., attendance and graduation rates, and the Graduation Coach Program.

This quantitative design tested the hypotheses through statistical analysis of numeric data to determine if there were differences for graduation rates and attendance rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. The graduation rate was a dependent variable. *Graduation rate* is defined as "the percentage of students who enter the ninth grade and successfully graduate within four years" (LDOE, 2013vv, What percent of students graduated in four years with a diploma, para. 1). To measure the difference in graduation rates, the overall graduation rates for S1, S2, S3, and S4 were collected and compared for 2006 – 2007 to 2008 – 2014 school years. This variable's value ranged from 0 to 100 percentage. A second dependent variable was attendance rate. Attendance rate is defined as the aggregate attendance of a school during a reporting period divided by the number of days school is in session during that period (National Education Association, 2014, p. xiii). Louisiana's attendance law requires students to attend school at least 167 days of the school year, (LDOE, n.d.-b). To measure the difference in attendance rates, the overall attendance rates for S1, S2, S3, and S4 were collected and compared for 2001 – 2005 to 2008 – 2014 school years (attendance rates

for 2006 and 2007 school years were not available). The attendance variable was measured also using percentage.

## Setting and Sample

The four high schools (S1, S2, S3, and S4) chosen for this study were selected by purposive sampling based on their implementation of the graduation program into their school system. Denscombe (2014) discussed purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling. In this study, the four high schools were selected on the basis of the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in 2007, in which, the other high schools in the area did not implement into their school system. The school's attendance rates five years prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and seven years after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program, as well as the graduation rates two years prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and seven years after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program were used to determine if there was or was not a significant difference in attendance and graduation rates due to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. Due to the limitation of high schools that implemented the Graduation Coach Program in 2007, the study's population included four of the twelve high schools in this particular area.

The study utilized statistical data from the state's website, LDOE, which is audited for validity and reliability. The 2001-2014 attendance rates (excluding 2006 and 2007 school years) and the 2006–2014 graduation rates were retrieved for review. The 2001–2005 attendance rates and the 2006–2007 graduation rates were compared to the 2008–2014 attendance and graduation rates to determine if a difference existed before the

implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

## Instrumentation and Materials

Archived 2006–2014 graduation rate data and 2001–2005 and 2008–2014 attendance rate data were collected from LDOE websites. Publicly accessible LDOE websites were the primary data collection instrument. I manually changed the parameters of the data (school's name, year, and test data) within the search engine on the site. These data represented overall attendance rates five years before the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and seven years following the implementation. In addition, the data represented the overall graduation rates two years before the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and seven years following the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at the four southern Louisiana school sites. I assumed the data collected were accurate and valid because the state's systems are audited for validity and reliability. The archived data were downloaded into excel spreadsheet from the websites. Then, the files were transferred to a Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for statistical analysis.

## Data Collection

I obtained permission from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study. The 2001–2014 attendance rates (excluding 2006 and 2007 school years) and 2006–2014 graduation rates data for the four selected high schools were retrieved from the LDOE state's website. The state's website maintains educational data for school systems in Louisiana. LDOE provides data to schools' information; such

as, demographics, attendance, graduation rate, dropout rate, truancy, discipline, performance, and other pertinent educational information. For the purpose of this study, the school report cards were the primary documents retrieved from LDOE to identify each school's enrollment, attendance rates, and graduation rates. Overall, these data represented attendance rates five years before the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and seven years following the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at S1, S2, S3, and S4. In addition, the data represented graduation rates two years before the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and seven years following the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at the four selected sites. I assumed the data collected were accurate and valid because the state's systems are audited for validity and reliability. I downloaded the archived data into an excel spreadsheet from the websites. I transferred the files to Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for data analysis.

Data (hard copies) collected will be stored at my house in a secured file cabinet. Soft copies will be saved on my flash drive, and secured in a locked file cabinet for five years.

## Data Analysis

According to Laerd Statistics (2015), an independent-samples *t* test is appropriate when comparing numeric means of independent groups. The means of graduation and attendance rates were compared before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at four public high schools. For each analysis, Group 1 represented the graduation rates and attendance rates before the implementation of the Graduation Coach

Program and Group 2 represented the graduation rates and attendance rates after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. These data were collected and input into an excel spreadsheet. The information was transferred into a Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, a computerized analysis program, for statistical analysis. SPSS reported the means of the graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program, and whether or not any observed differences were statistically significant. In addition, SPSS reported the means for the attendance rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program, and whether or not any observed differences were statistically significant.

## Protection of Participants' Rights

According to Walden's Code of Ethics, this study complied with ethical standards. IRB approval was obtained on May 13, 2016 to conduct this study (Walden IRB approval no. 05-13-16-0132699). Archived graduation rates for 2006–2014 school years and attendance rates for 2001–2014 school years (2006 and 2007 attendance rates were not available) were collected from LDOE public websites as shown in Appendix E. It was not necessary to obtain permission from either parents or students because only the school's names were used for the study (excluding identifiable and non-identifiable student information). There was no risk to the participants or stakeholders.

Public data were collected for this study; therefore, there was no risk to participants. During the 2007–2010 school years, I was employed as one of the four high school graduation coaches hired in this parish. However, my role, as a graduation coach, had ceased due to change of employment; hence, there was no access to students who

attended the selected high schools nor any working relationship between me and any of the sites included in this study.

## Summary

Section 3 outlined the quantitative methodology. The quantitative study used archival data to determine the difference in the attendance rates and graduation rate before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at S1, S2, S3, and S4. The data for the attendance rates were collected for the 2001–2014 school years (2006 and 2007 attendance rates were not available). The graduation rates were collected for the 2006–2014 school years. SPSS software was used to calculate independent-samples *t* tests on graduation and attendance rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program to determine if variations exist between graduation and attendance rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in four inner city public high schools. In Section 4, I discuss the findings of the data analysis.

# Section 4: Results

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to compare attendance and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program in four Louisiana public high schools. Attendance rates and graduation rates at the four high schools are concerns for the southern school district. Thus, these concerns provide a compelling reason to examine the differences in graduation and attendance rates before and after the implementation of the program at four urban public high schools located in a southern Louisiana parish.

## Data Collection

LDOE was the primary data collection instrument and the site maintains educational data for school systems in Louisiana. The attendance rate data from 2001–2014 (2006 and 2007 attendance rates were not available) were retrieved from the state's website, LDOE. The graduation rate data for the 2001–2005 school years were not available; therefore, the graduation rate data from 2006–2014 were retrieved from LDOE to conduct the study. The data are accessible to the public and are provided in Appendix E. I accessed the data for analysis based on the research questions.

I collected data for each school and combined the data in the data file. I used the independent-samples *t* test to determine if the graduation rates before the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program would be the same as the graduation rates after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. In addition, I used an independent-samples *t* test to determine whether the attendance rates before the implementation of the

Graduation Coach Program would be the same as the attendance rates after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

**Data Analyses for Research Questions**

An independent-samples *t* test was appropriate because I was comparing numeric means between two independent groups. The dependent variable was in percentage (ratio) form and the sample groups were considered independent of each other. The four schools' attendance and graduation rate data were analyzed together using two independent-samples *t* tests. Group 1 represented the graduation rates and attendance rates before the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. Group 2 made up the graduation rates and attendance rates after the implementation of the graduation coach.

**Study Variables of Interest**

**Graduation rate.** Graduation rate was a dependent variable that was in ratio form (percentage). The median graduation rate was 73% ($n = 36$) with a minimum of 51% and a maximum of 90.40 % for a range of 39.4%.

**Attendance rate.** Attendance rate was a dependent variable that was in ratio form (percentage). The median attendance rate was 92.25% ($n = 48$) with a minimum of 88.20% and a maximum of 96.90% for a range of 8.7%.

**Research Question 1**

Does a difference exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program?

$H_0 1$: No significant differences exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program.

$H_a 1$: There will be significant differences in S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted using SPSS v.23 to evaluate if there was a statistically significant difference in the mean graduation rate before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. The group statistics are presented in Table 2. The mean graduation rate following the program was $M = 73.42$ ($SD = 11.03$) and the mean graduation rate before the program was $M = 74.91$ ($SD = 8.76$).

Table 2. Graduation Rate: Group Statistics

| | GradTime | *N* | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Graduation | Before | 8 | 74.9125 | 8.76396 | 3.09853 |
| | After | 28 | 73.4214 | 11.02658 | 2.08383 |

Table 3 includes the independent-samples *t* test results for the graduation rate analysis. Based on the Levene's Test for equality of variances, equal variances were assumed. The results of the *t* test were not statistically significant and the null hypothesis of no difference failed to be rejected. There were no differences in mean graduation rates from before and after implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

Table 3. Graduation Rate: Independent-Samples *t* Test Results

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | *t*-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *F* | Sig. | *t* | *df* | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | 1.903 | .177 | .351 | 34 | .728 | 1.49107 | 4.24957 | -7.14510 | 10.12724 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .399 | 14.020 | .696 | 1.49107 | 3.73406 | -6.51660 | 9.49874 |

**Research Question 2**

Does a difference exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program?

$H_0$2: No significant differences exist in S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

$H_a$2: There will be significant differences in S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted using SPSS v.23 to evaluate if there was a statistically significant difference in the mean attendance rate before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. The group statistics are presented in Table 4. The mean attendance rate following the program was $M = 92.40$ ($SD = 2.32$) and the mean attendance rate before the program was $M = 91.67$ ($SD = 2.42$).

Table 4. Attendance Rate: Group Statistics

| | Time | *N* | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attendance | Before | 20 | 91.6650 | 2.41602 | .54024 |
| | After | 28 | 92.4000 | 2.32156 | .43873 |

Table 5 includes the independent-samples *t* test results for the attendance rate analysis. Based on the Levene's Test for equality of variances, equal variances were assumed. The results of the *t* test were not statistically significant and the null hypothesis of no difference failed to be rejected. There were no differences in mean attendance rates from before and after implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

Table 5. Attendance Rate: Independent-Samples *t* Test Results

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | *t*-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *F* | Sig. | *t* | *df* | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .032 | .860 | -1.063 | 46 | .293 | -.73500 | .69124 | -2.12639 | .65639 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -1.056 | 40.063 | .297 | -.73500 | .69595 | -2.14149 | .67149 |

## Summary

Section 4 began with an overview of the data collection procedure, which included the technique used to calculate the graduation rate, followed by the research questions and hypotheses. This study examined if a difference existed in graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. In addition, the study examined if a difference existed in attendance rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

The null hypotheses testing for graduation rates did not show significant differences in graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program. In addition, the null hypotheses

testing attendance rates did not show significant differences in attendance rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program.

In Section 5, I present a discussion on the findings of this study, a conclusion, as well as recommendations for future studies. The section provides the reader with clear interpretations of the data. In addition, Section 5 presents implications for social change, recommendations for action, and further research for further discussion.

# Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

## Introduction

The problem that I addressed in this study developed from four high schools implementing a dropout intervention program to address the dropout rate. I used the ex post facto design because this design was most suitable for examining the schools' attendance rates and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. I used purposeful sampling to select the four high schools for this study. To provide at-risk students with support to graduate from high school, four public southwest Louisiana high schools implemented a Graduation Coach Program in 2007 to address the dropout rates. I focused on the four selected high schools attendance rates and graduation rates. I did not manipulate the dependent and independent variables.

The study was limited to the attendance rates and graduation rates at the four selected sites. An ex post facto design was most suitable because the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program had already taken place. I used purposeful sampling to select the participating sites. Each school implemented the Graduation Coach Program in 2007 to address its attendance and dropout rates (Calcasieu Parish, n.d.). I collected graduation rate data for the 2006–2014 school (graduation rate data were not available for 2001–2005). I collected attendance rate data were collected for the 2001–2014 school (attendance rate data were not available for the 2006 and 2007 school years). I did not manipulate the dependent variables (attendance rates and graduation rates) or the independent variable (Graduation Coach Program).

In Section 5, I review research questions and hypotheses. I then provide a summary of findings followed by recommendations for action and further research.

## Interpretations of Findings

The results of this research produced information for district staff and high school administrators regarding the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. Educators and administrators who make financial and academic decisions should have access to pertinent data relating to the Graduation Coach Program. I examined the effect that the Graduation Coach Program had on attendance rates and graduation rates at four public high schools in southwest Louisiana. Results from this study showed that there was not a significant difference in attendance and graduation rates prior to and after the implementation of the program.

Research Question 1 was used to determine if there was a difference in graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

**RQ1**: Does a difference exist between S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program?

$H_0 1$: No significant differences exist between S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program.

$H_a 1$: There will be significant differences between S1, S2, S3, and S4 graduation rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program.

In summary, I addressed Question 1 by analyzing the 2006–2014 graduation rates of the four high schools that implemented the Graduation Coach Program in 2007 using independent-samples *t* tests. The results proved that there were no significant statistical differences in the mean graduation rate before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program; therefore, the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at the selected sites was an ineffective dropout prevention program. In contrast to previous studies, the independent-samples *t* test results indicated that implementing the Graduation Coach Program did not create a significant increase in the schools' graduation rates. Therefore, the hypothesis for Research Question 1 was not supported by the test results.

Research Question 2 was used to determine if there was a difference in attendance rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

**RQ2:** Does a difference exist between S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program and after the implementation of the program?

$H_02$: No significant differences exist between S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

$H_a2$: There will be significant differences between S1, S2, S3, and S4 attendance rates prior to and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program.

In summary, I addressed Question 2 by analyzing the 2001–2014 attendance rates (2006 and 2007 attendance rates were not available) of the four high schools that implemented the Graduation Coach Program in 2007 using independent-samples *t* test.

The results proved that there were no significant statistical differences in the mean attendance rate before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program; therefore, the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at the selected sites deemed to be an ineffective dropout prevention program. In contrast to previous studies, the independent-samples *t* test results indicated that implementing the Graduation Coach Program did not create a significant increase in the schools' attendance rates. Therefore, the hypotheses for research question two were not supported by the test results.

## Implications for Social Change

Findings of this study will provide stakeholders with data that will allow them to make informed decisions about investing in the Graduation Coach Program and utilizing it as an effective dropout intervention tool. This study did not investigate the fidelity of implementing the program. The way the program was implemented at the four high schools could be a reason why there was not a significant change in the attendance and graduation rates. In addition, the small sample size (e.g., 2 data points before the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program) could possibly be an insufficient amount of data to indicate a significant difference in attendance rates and graduation rates. The Graduation Coach Program could generate opportunities to implement other intervention programs that might be more effective and beneficial to faculty, staff, and students as well. Thus, the importance for this study is to continue to assess the data over several years.

## Recommendations for Action

The dropout crisis is worthy of research because the future of this population is at-risk of unemployment, underemployment, loss of income, and potential incarceration. In 2020, it is estimated that 65% of all jobs will require a minimum of a high school diploma. If the U.S. does not produce at least 1.3 million high school graduates each year, it will not have enough skilled workers to meet its job demand. Although dropout programs are continuing to be developed, there is still a lack of sound research to support program effectiveness. The results of this study indicated that high school Graduation Coach Program as implemented in this part of the southern region did not have a significance effect on attendance rates when compared five years prior to the implementation of the program to seven years after the implementation of the program. In addition, the results indicated that the program did not have a significant effect on graduation rates when compared two years prior to the implementation of the program to seven years after the implementation of the program. It is recommended that school administrators in this parish evaluate the fidelity of implementing the Graduation Coach Program, continue to seek ways to enhance the program, or evaluate the effectiveness of other programs that will address their concerns. School administrators may also seek to implement a different program that has proven to be successful in other high schools in the parish so that all students may have the additional support to graduate from high school. The findings of this study make it imperative that school administrators examine the effectiveness of intervention programs that are implemented into high schools to address the high school dropout problem that currently exist.

## Recommendations for Further Study

Further research about the Graduation Coach Program can be explored. I focused on the difference in attendance rates and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program at four public high schools in southwest Louisiana but the following questions should be investigated to help further the research about the program.

1. Is there a difference in course failure rate before and after the implementation of the program?
2. What is the student's perception of the Graduation Coach Program or services?
3. How did school level support influence the effectiveness of the Graduation Coach Program?
4. How does the fidelity of implementing a Graduation Coach Program effect the success of the program?
5. Repeat the study and ask participants to complete a survey.

As pointed out in the limitation section, the sample size was relatively small; therefore, the Graduation Coach Program warrants the study of additional years. In addition, a more diverse population may be included and there may be use of more than one type of data collection instrumentation. Also, I believed that a survey of students could be conducted to find out how many of them experienced attendance problems, behavior problems, course failure, or other obstacles/factors during high school. Lastly, the Graduation Coach Program did not harm participating schools, so studies could

explore more schools in other geographical locations to examine if the program worked or did not work.

## Summary

The findings in this study were not comparable to the findings of other studies about the Graduation Coach Program (A+ Education Partnership, 2016; Harris & Princiotta, 2009; Phillips, 2010). Results of the independent-samples *t* tests showed that the median between the two groups on attendance and graduation rates were statistically indifferent. The null hypotheses, $H_o1$ and $H_o2$, were not rejected. There was no sufficient evidence to conclude a significant difference in attendance rates and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. The Graduation Coach Program did not prove to positively effect attendance and graduation rates at the four public high schools in southwest Louisiana.

This study uncovered that the Graduation Coach Program had no positive effect on the attendance rates and graduation rates at the four public high schools in southwest Louisiana. Although there was an increase in the number of students graduating, there was not a significant difference in attendance rates and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. In the review of literature, the findings in this study are in contrast to other researchers' findings that showed that other Graduation Coach Programs had proven to be successful; whereas, this study did not confirm the effectiveness of the program (A+ Education Partnership, 2016; Harris & Princiotta, 2009; Phillips, 2010).

The results of this study can help administrators make informed decisions to retain the program to make changes and revisions to enhance the program. Or, educators may decide to remove the program from their campus and research other dropout programs that have proven to be successful. The effect of this study can also have a positive social change by examining the Graduation Coach Program as an ineffective dropout intervention; therefore, reallocating resources to effective research-based programs that have successfully reduced the dropout rate, and increased the overall graduation rate and attendance rate.

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Appendix A: Copyright Permission

International Center for Leadership in Education

RIGOROUS LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

February 10, 2016

Anya Miller
6715 Cheval Drive
Iowa, LA 70647

Dear Anya:

Thank you for contacting the International Center for Leadership in Education regarding your research project in which you'd like to reference *The process of change: Why change, what to do, and how to do it* by Dr. Bill Daggett and Dr. Richard Jones.

As we discussed, we are happy to grant you this permission. We do ask that you please ensure that we are given proper attribution in both your citations.

Sincerely,

Kris Ross
Managing Editor

# Appendix B: Copyright Permission

Gmail

Anya Miller <anya.miller@waldenu.edu>

**Permission Request**
3 messages

**Anya Miller** <anya.miller@waldenu.edu> Thu, Oct 29, 2015 at 6:31 PM
To: roscigno.1@osu.edu

Hello:

My name is Anya Miller. I am currently pursing an Ed.D in Educational Leadership from Walden University. My current research is on the relationship between the graduation coach program and high school graduation rate. I am writing to obtain permission to apply one graph from your article, "The Black-White Achievement Gap, Family-School Links, and the Importance of Place". I provided in the attachment on how the chart would be applied in support of my study. I greatly appreciate your consideration and hope that you grant me permission in allowing your chart to support of my study's effort. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anya Miller
Walden Doctoral Student
337.240.1240

**Roscigno Permission Request.docx**
151K

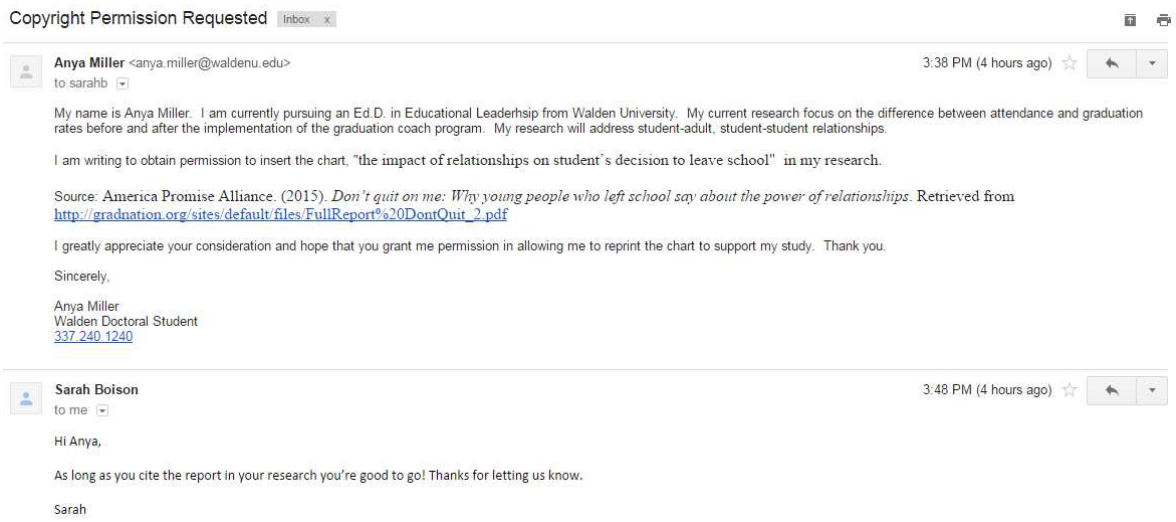
**Roscigno, Vincent** <roscigno.1@osu.edu> Sat, Oct 31, 2015 at 7:13 AM
To: Anya Miller <anya.miller@waldenu.edu>

Hi Anya,

Certainly. I grant permission for you to use the figure in your project. Best wishes for your study!

Vincent. J. Roscigno
Distinguished Professor of Arts & Sciences in Sociology
Department of Sociology
238 Townshend Hall | 1885 Neil Avenue Mall
Columbus, OH 43210
614-292-1618 Office
Roscigno.1@osu.edu

# Appendix C: Copyright Permission



Copyright Permission Requested Inbox x

**Anya Miller** <anya.miller@waldenu.edu> 3:38 PM (4 hours ago)
to sarahb

My name is Anya Miller. I am currently pursuing an Ed.D. in Educational Leaderhsip from Walden University. My current research focus on the difference between attendance and graduation rates before and after the implementation of the graduation coach program. My research will address student-adult, student-student relationships.

I am writing to obtain permission to insert the chart, "the impact of relationships on student's decision to leave school" in my research.

Source: America Promise Alliance. (2015). *Don't quit on me: Why young people who left school say about the power of relationships*. Retrieved from http://gradnation.org/sites/default/files/FullReport%20DontQuit_2.pdf

I greatly appreciate your consideration and hope that you grant me permission in allowing me to reprint the chart to support my study. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anya Miller
Walden Doctoral Student
337.240.1240

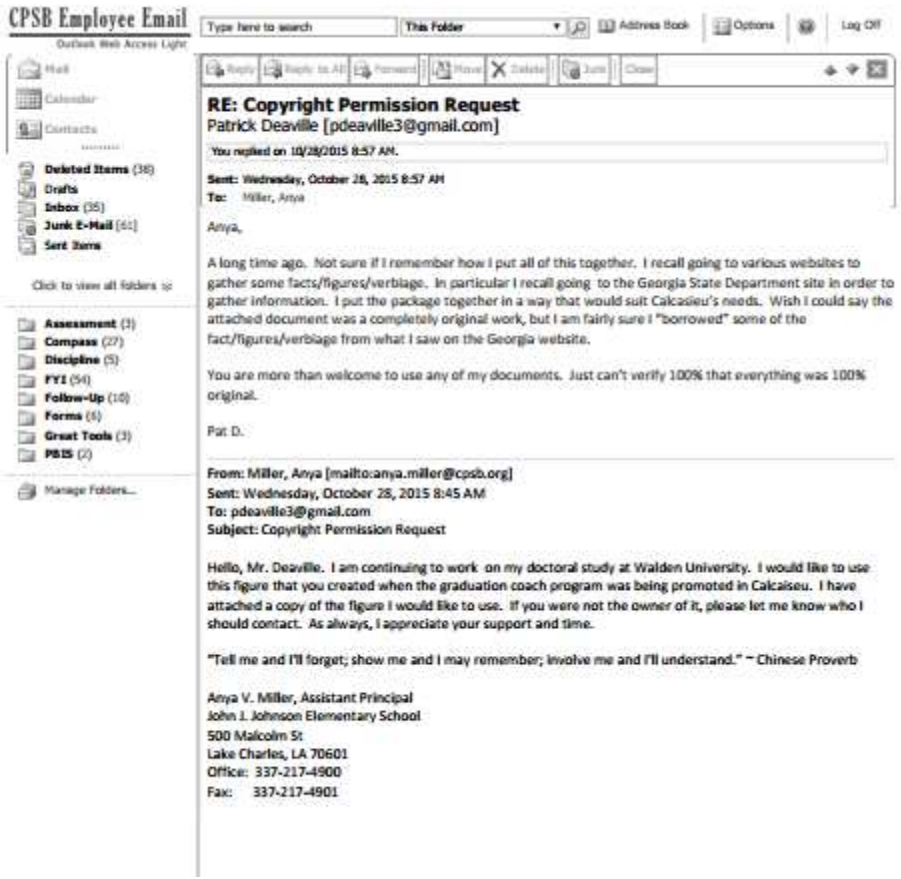
**Sarah Boison** 3:48 PM (4 hours ago)
to me

Hi Anya,

As long as you cite the report in your research you're good to go! Thanks for letting us know.

Sarah

# Appendix D: Copyright Permission



CPSB Employee Email

Outlook Web Access Light

Type here to search | This Folder | Address Book | Options | Log Off

Mail
Calendar
Contacts

Deleted Items (38)
Drafts
Inbox (35)
Junk E-Mail (61)
Sent Items

Click to view all folders

Assessment (3)
Compass (27)
Discipline (5)
FYI (54)
Follow-Up (10)
Forms (6)
Great Tools (3)
PBIS (2)

Manage Folders...

Reply | Reply to All | Forward | Move | Delete | Junk | Close

**RE: Copyright Permission Request**

Patrick Deaville [pdeaville3@gmail.com]

You replied on 10/28/2015 8:57 AM.

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 28, 2015 8:57 AM
**To:** Miller, Anya

Anya,

A long time ago. Not sure if I remember how I put all of this together. I recall going to various websites to gather some facts/figures/verbiage. In particular I recall going to the Georgia State Department site in order to gather information. I put the package together in a way that would suit Calcasieu's needs. Wish I could say the attached document was a completely original work, but I am fairly sure I "borrowed" some of the fact/figures/verbiage from what I saw on the Georgia website.

You are more than welcome to use any of my documents. Just can't verify 100% that everything was 100% original.

Pat D.

---

**From:** Miller, Anya [mailto:anya.miller@cpsb.org]
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 28, 2015 8:45 AM
**To:** pdeaville3@gmail.com
**Subject:** Copyright Permission Request

Hello, Mr. Deaville. I am continuing to work on my doctoral study at Walden University. I would like to use this figure that you created when the graduation coach program was being promoted in Calcasieu. I have attached a copy of the figure I would like to use. If you were not the owner of it, please let me know who I should contact. As always, I appreciate your support and time.

"Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand." ~ Chinese Proverb

Anya V. Miller, Assistant Principal
John J. Johnson Elementary School
500 Malcolm St
Lake Charles, LA 70601
Office: 337-217-4900
Fax: 337-217-4901

# Appendix E: S1 Through S4 Demographics for 2001–2014 School Years

Table E1

*Attendance, Enrollment, Dropout Rate, and Graduation Rates at Schools 1-4, 2001-2007*

| School | School Year | Enrollment | Attendance Rate | Graduation Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2000-2001 | 1134 | 89.60 | -- |
| | 2001-2002 | 1116 | 91.90 | -- |
| | 2002-2003 | 1063 | 90.30 | -- |
| | 2003-2004 | 986 | 94.30 | -- |
| | 2004-2005 | 976 | 89.90 | -- |
| | 2005-2006 | 888 | -- | 64.9% |
| | 2006-2007 | 996 | -- | 65.8% |
| 2 | 2000-2001 | 505 | 92% | -- |
| | 2001-2002 | 486 | 92.4% | -- |
| | 2002-2003 | 521 | 90.7% | -- |
| | 2003-2004 | 491 | 95.1% | -- |
| | 2004-2005 | 508 | 88.4% | -- |
| | 2005-2006 | 513 | -- | 75% |
| | 2006-2007 | 522 | -- | 80.2 |
| 3 | 2000-2001 | 1652 | 90.7% | -- |
| | 2001-2002 | 1657 | 90.7% | -- |
| | 2002-2003 | 1712 | 90% | -- |
| | 2003-2004 | 1778 | 96.9% | -- |
| | 2004-2005 | 1779 | 91.4% | -- |
| | 2005-2006 | 1806 | -- | 81.8% |
| | 2006-2007 | 1829 | -- | 90.4% |
| 4 | 2000-2001 | 788 | 89.2% | |
| | 2001-2002 | 764 | 88.2% | -- |
| | 2002-2003 | 720 | 92.3% | -- |
| | 2003-2004 | 692 | 95.7% | -- |
| | 2004-2005 | 744 | 93.6% | -- |
| | 2005-2006 | 688 | -- | 70.3% |
| | 2006-2007 | 665 | -- | 70.7% |

*Note*. Demographics before the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. Adapted from *School Report Cards* [series] by Louisiana Department of Education, 2013. Retrieved from https://www.louisianabelieves.com/data/reportcards/

Table E2

*Attendance, Enrollment, Dropout Rate, and Graduation Rates at Schools 1-4, 2008-2014*

| School | School Year | Enrollment | Attendance Rate | Graduation Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2007-2008 | 1198 | 90.2% | 64.2% |
| | 2008-2009 | 1169 | 88.4% | 68.7% |
| | 2009-2010 | 1049 | 93.2% | 61.3% |
| | 2010-2011 | 1017 | 93.7% | 69% |
| | 2011-2012 | -- | 92.7% | 67% |
| | 2012-2013 | 995 | 89.9% | 64% |
| | 2013-2014 | 993 | 89.4% | 62% |
| 2 | 2007-2008 | 534 | 92.4% | 73.1% |
| | 2008-2009 | 566 | 92.6% | 81.7% |
| | 2009-2010 | 569 | 94.1% | 80.4% |
| | 2010-2011 | 566 | 94.7% | 88% |
| | 2011-2012 | -- | >95% | 85% |
| | 2012-2013 | 578 | 92.7% | 81% |
| | 2013-2014 | 490 | 92.3% | 80% |
| 3 | 2007-2008 | 1870 | 93.3% | 84.9% |
| | 2008-2009 | 1871 | 92.9% | 86.9% |
| | 2009-2010 | 1938 | >95% | 84.1% |
| | 2010-2011 | 1921 | >95% | 86% |
| | 2011-2012 | -- | >95% | 83% |
| | 2012-2013 | 1892 | 94.4% | 83% |
| | 2013-2014 | 1894 | 94.5% | 86% |
| 4 | 2007-2008 | 720 | 89.8% | 72.9% |
| | 2008-2009 | 711 | 89% | 66.5% |
| | 2009-2010 | 711 | 92.2% | 64.1% |
| | 2010-2011 | 684 | 91.2% | 62% |
| | 2011-2012 | -- | 91.1% | 68% |
| | 2012-2013 | 647 | 88.6% | 52% |
| | 2013-2014 | 693 | 90.9% | 51% |

*Note*. Demographics after the implementation of the Graduation Coach Program. Adapted from *School Report Cards* [series] by Louisiana Department of Education, 2013. Retrieved from https://www.louisianabelieves.com/data/reportcards/