University of Nevada, Reno

Helping Students Get to Graduation:
A Case Study of One School District's Re-Engagement Centers

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by

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BACHELOR OF ARTS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Since the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001, school districts throughout the

United States have faced increasing pressure from state and federal governments to raise

graduation rates. This focus on graduation rates has resulted in innovative efforts by

many school districts to get students who have dropped out back on track to graduate. In

this thesis, the researcher studies six re-engagement centers being used as a dropout

recovery strategy by one mid-sized school district in Nevada. The thesis explores the

questions of how these re-engagement centers operate and whether they include

components that are recognized as important for effective dropout recovery programs by

providing an in-depth description of the centers and comparing their features to

recognized best practices for dropout recovery. This study has the potential to enhance

these re-engagement centers and can provide guidelines for other school districts looking

to design and implement effective re-engagement centers of their own.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Current Graduation Rates

Graduation rates often act as a gauge for how well a state, school district, or individual school is performing. Since the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001, school districts throughout the United States have been facing increasing pressure from state and federal governments to raise graduation rates. A high graduation rate indicates that students' needs are being met and that the education system is fulfilling its purpose of preparing youth for the workforce. A low graduation rate points to problems in the education system, as schools are leaving students with inadequate preparation for the future.

Since graduation data collection and analysis take time, the most recent statistics available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) were published in 2011 but are based on the 2008-09 school year. Chapman, Laird, Ifill, and KewalRamani (2011) reported the averaged freshman graduation rate, which is the percentage of high school freshmen going on to graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma, for the nation and all fifty states. This graduation rate only counts students in public high schools and does not include students who earn alternative graduation credentials (Chapman et al., 2011). It is important to remember that the averaged freshman graduation rate is only one way of calculating and reporting graduation rates, and other sources may use different formulas, resulting in different rates.

According to Chapman et al. (2011), the national rate of students graduating in four years with a regular diploma was 75.5% in 2009, meaning one in four high school freshmen did not go on to graduate. Figure 1 below shows graduation rates by state.

Figure 1. Graduation Rates of Public High School Students By State: 2008-09 School Year
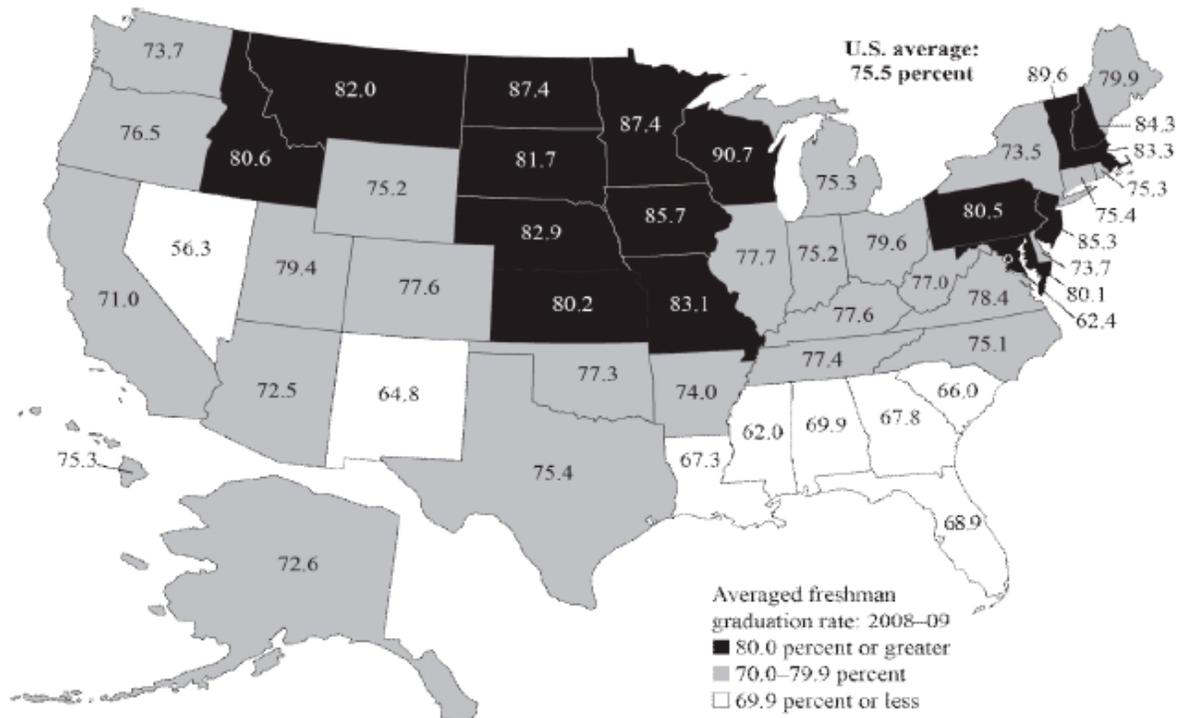
SOURCE: Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., & KewalRamani, A. (2011). *Trends in high school dropout and completion rates in the United States: 1972-2009* (NCES 2012-006). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

The highest state graduation rate in 2009 was in Wisconsin at 90.7%. Most states' graduation rates fell between 70% and 90%. Eight states had graduation rates below 70% in 2009. The only state with a graduation rate below 60% was Nevada, which had the lowest graduation rate of all fifty states in 2009 at 56.3% (Chapman et al., 2011).

Problems Associated with Dropping Out

Students who drop out of high school face negative consequences for doing so. Martin and Halperin (2006) have reported that high school dropouts have a 3.5 times higher chance of being incarcerated in their lifetime, as well as higher unemployment and death rates. The data show that high incarceration, unemployment, and death rates impact African American males most significantly (Martin & Halperin, 2006).

The clearest consequence of dropping out is the significant earnings gap between high school dropouts and graduates. Although the most recent information available from the U.S. Census Bureau regarding earnings was published in 2011, the data are from 2009. Table 1 at the top of the next page depicts this earnings gap between high school dropouts and graduates.

Table 1. Mean Earnings by Highest Degree Earned: 2009

Characteristic	Total persons	Mean earnings by level of highest degree (dollars)							
		Not a high school graduate	High school graduate only	Some college, no degree	Associate's	Bachelor's	Master's	Professional	Doctorate
All persons [1]	**42,469**	**20,241**	**30,627**	**32,295**	**39,771**	**56,665**	**73,738**	**127,803**	**103,054**
Age:									
25 to 34 years old	36,595	19,415	27,511	31,392	35,544	45,692	58,997	86,440	74,626
35 to 44 years old	49,356	24,728	33,614	39,806	42,353	65,346	80,593	136,366	108,147
45 to 54 years old	51,956	23,725	36,090	44,135	46,413	69,548	86,532	148,805	112,134
55 to 64 years old	50,372	24,537	34,583	42,547	42,192	59,670	76,372	149,184	110,895
65 years old and over . . .	37,544	19,395	28,469	29,602	33,541	44,147	45,138	95,440	95,585
Sex:									
Male.	50,186	23,036	35,468	39,204	47,572	69,479	90,964	150,310	114,347
Female.	33,797	15,514	24,304	25,340	33,432	43,589	58,534	89,897	83,708
White [2]	43,337	20,457	31,429	33,119	40,632	57,762	73,771	127,942	104,533
Male.	51,287	23,353	36,418	40,352	48,521	71,286	91,776	149,149	115,497
Female.	34,040	15,187	24,615	25,537	33,996	43,309	58,036	89,526	85,682
Black [2]	33,362	18,936	26,970	29,129	33,734	47,799	60,067	102,328	82,510
Male.	37,553	21,828	30,723	33,969	41,142	55,655	68,890	(B)	(B)
Female.	29,831	15,644	22,964	25,433	29,464	42,587	54,523	(B)	(B)
Hispanic [3]	29,565	19,816	25,998	29,836	33,783	49,017	71,322	79,228	88,435
Male.	32,279	21,588	28,908	35,089	38,768	58,570	80,737	(B)	89,956
Female.	25,713	16,170	21,473	24,281	29,785	39,566	61,843	(B)	(B)

B Base figure too small to meet statistical standards for reliability of a derived figure. [1] Includes other races not shown separately. [2] For persons who selected this race group only. See footnote 2, Table 229. [3] Persons of Hispanic origin may be any race.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Table 232: Mean earnings by highest degree earned: 2009. In U.S. Census Bureau (Ed.), *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012* (131st ed.). Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0232.pdf

Table 1 shows that while the mean earnings in 2009 for high school graduates were $30,627, the mean earnings for people who were not high school graduates were only $20,241 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Although mean earnings varied significantly based on age, sex, and race, every group's earnings improved with the attainment of a high school diploma. The earnings gap became even more significant when high school graduates went on to pursue undergraduate or graduate degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

The negative effects of dropping out of high school impact not only the students who drop out, but the rest of society as well. Dropouts cost states and the nation billions of dollars in lost wages and taxes. Martin and Halperin (2006) have reported that

dropouts pay in taxes only about half the amount paid by high school graduates. Despite the fact that these dropouts contribute less economically, they cost society more because dropouts have higher crime rates and are more likely to rely on welfare benefits (Martin & Halperin, 2006).

Strategies for Raising Graduation Rates

Researchers have worked to develop strategies to decrease dropout rates and increase graduation rates (e.g., Dynarski et al., 2008; Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011; Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004; Martin & Halperin, 2006). These strategies take two forms: dropout prevention and dropout recovery. Dropout prevention strategies are designed to keep students from dropping out in the first place, whereas dropout recovery strategies are used with students who have already dropped out of school (Zammitt & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2011).

On a broader scale, school districts and schools can use these strategies to improve the instruction, environment, and services they provide to all students. For example, Dynarski et al. (2008) have recommended creating a more inclusive learning environment and making education feel personal and relevant to students as ways to prevent students from dropping out. Lehr et al. (2004) have supported providing tutoring, reducing class sizes, and offering alternative schooling options.

On a more individual level, these strategies can be used to target specific students and provide those students with the supports they need in order to succeed in school. One way to target those students early is to use warning signs to predict which students are at risk of dropping out and to intervene before those students quit school. Lagana-Riordan et

al. (2011) and Martin and Halperin (2006) have both proposed guidelines for strategies designed to recover students who have already dropped out and help them transition back to school.

Purpose of the Thesis

The purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth description of one dropout recovery strategy being used by one mid-sized school district in Nevada and to compare its features to recognized best practices for dropout recovery. The dropout recovery strategy studied takes the form of six re-engagement centers. The school district uses these re-engagement centers to provide students who have dropped out of high school with the supports and services they need to get back on track to graduate. Re-engagement centers are a relatively new form of dropout recovery, so research on them is limited. A description of the centers allows for a better understanding of how this type of program is set up and functions. A comparison of the re-engagement centers to recognized best practices for dropout recovery lends more evidence to the necessity of certain components and points to areas that can be improved in order to increase the centers' effectiveness for students.

In this thesis, the researcher explores the questions of how the re-engagement centers implemented by one mid-sized school district in Nevada operate and whether they include components that are recognized as important for effective dropout recovery programs. To answer these questions, the researcher uses information obtained from interviews with the centers' directors and observations of the centers' daily functioning to examine the program's design, setting, and services. The re-engagement centers are then

compared to the criteria that have been determined necessary in order for a dropout recovery program to be effective. These criteria, put forth by Martin and Halperin (2006) and Lagana-Riordan et al. (2011), are enumerated in Chapters 2 and 3. This study has the potential to enhance the re-engagement centers being used by one mid-size school district and can provide guidelines for other school districts looking to design and implement effective re-engagement centers of their own.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Defining Graduation Rates

Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, and Thompson (2004) have pointed out that it is difficult to get a consensus on graduation and dropout rates because of variation between school districts, states, and the national government in how these rates are defined and measured. The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 required states to report their graduation rates annually, but states' plans for measuring these rates were not all the same (National Governors Association, 2005). For example, Nevada chose to use the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) leaver rate, which divides the number of graduates in a given year by the sum of the number of graduates, the number of students completing alternative graduation tracks, and the cumulative number of dropouts over the previous four years (Curran & Reyna, 2010). In 2010, twenty-five other states were also reporting the NCES leaver rate. In contrast, Hawaii chose to report the percentage of ninth graders earning a high school diploma in four years, without taking into account students who transferred into the school system during high school (Curran & Reyna, 2010).

In order to create a uniform system for reporting graduation rates, all fifty state governors signed the National Governors Association Graduation Counts Compact in 2005 (Curran & Reyna, 2010). The Compact created a common formula for calculating graduation rates, known as the four-year adjusted cohort rate. For a given year, this formula divides the number of students graduating with a high school diploma in four years by the number of first-time freshmen four years before plus the difference between the number of students transferring in and out of the school system (National Governors

Association, 2005). Figure 2 below contains a visual representation of how the NCES

leaver rate and the four-year adjusted cohort rate are calculated.

Figure 2. Formulas for NCES Leaver Rate and Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Rate

$$\text{NCES Leaver Rate} = \frac{\text{\# of graduates in year x}}{\begin{array}{c}\text{\# of graduates + \# of alternative completers +} \\ \text{\# of dropouts in year x-1 + \# of dropouts in year x-2 +} \\ \text{\# of dropouts in year x-3 + \# of dropouts in year x-4}\end{array}}$$

$$\text{4-Year Adjusted Cohort Rate} = \frac{\text{\# of students graduating in 4 years in year x}}{\begin{array}{c}\text{\# of first-time } 9^{th} \text{ graders in year x-4 +} \\ \text{\# of transfers in - \# of transfers out}\end{array}}$$

SOURCES: 1. Curran, B., & Reyna, R. (2010). *Implementing graduation counts: State progress to date, 2010.* Washington, DC: NGA Center for Best Practices.

2. National Governors Association. (2005). *Graduation counts: A report of the national governors association task force on state high school graduation data.* Washington, DC: NGA Center for Best Practices.

Neither the NCES leaver rate nor the four-year adjusted cohort rate includes

students who complete alternative graduation tracks, such as those who obtain the

General Educational Development (GED) credential, because only students who earn a

high school diploma are allowed to be included in the graduation rate reports required by

the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (Lehr et al., 2004). In 2008, federal regulations

required states to begin reporting the four-year adjusted cohort rate as soon as their data

allowed them to. By 2010, twenty-six states had used the formula agreed on in the

National Governors Association Graduation Counts Compact to report their graduation

rates. Nevada was expected to begin reporting the four-year adjusted cohort rate beginning in 2012 (Curran & Reyna, 2010).

Why Students Drop Out

Despite the negative ramifications of dropping out of high school, there are many reasons why students choose to drop out. Stearns and Glennie (2006) have described students' reasons for dropping out as belonging to two categories: pull factors and push factors. Pull factors are circumstances outside the school that motivate students to drop out. Examples of pull factors include employment opportunities and family responsibilities. Push factors are circumstances within the school that discourage students from staying in school. Examples of push factors include academic struggles and disciplinary issues (Stearns & Glennie, 2006).

Stearns and Glennie (2006) analyzed the impact of these push and pull factors, as well as other uncategorized factors like moving and attendance, by ethnicity, grade level, and gender in their study of when and why dropouts leave school. A table indicating the percentage of dropouts leaving school by student characteristics and dropout factors can be found in Appendix A. Table 2a shows that younger students are more likely to leave school for disciplinary reasons than older students, with 10.66% of ninth graders leaving school for disciplinary reasons compared to 4.3% of twelfth graders. The disciplinary push factor is especially prevalent among ninth-grade African American males at 19.44%. On the other hand, older students are more likely to drop out for academic reasons than younger students, with 10.44% of twelfth graders leaving school for academic reasons compared to 6.54% of ninth graders (Stearns & Glennie, 2006).

Table 2a also shows that males are more likely to leave school for employment reasons, especially as they get older. The employment pull factor contributes to 20.05% of eleventh-grade White males leaving school. On the other hand, females are more likely to quit school for family reasons, especially in the higher grades. The family pull factor accounts for 14.29% of twelfth-grade Latina females dropping out of school. Attendance is the most significant dropout factor for all students at all ages, ranging from 59.96% of ninth-grade students to 58.51% of twelfth-grade students. In general, moving is of much smaller significance, ranging from 6.95% of ninth graders to 5.69% of twelfth graders, although these percentages are higher for Latino students (Stearns & Glennie, 2006).

Hammond, Linton, Smink, and Drew (2007) classified factors that cause students to drop out into four domains: individual, family, school, and community. These four domains give a broader perspective on the reasons why students drop out. The domains also provide a more detailed understanding of areas that programs can target at the individual, family, school, and community levels in their efforts to improve graduation rates.

The individual domain includes factors such as antisocial behavior, belonging to a high-risk peer group, poor academic performance, lack of extracurricular involvement, poor attendance, and frequent changing of schools (Hammond et al., 2007). School districts can use the existence of these factors as early warning signs to identify students who are at risk of dropping out. Academic performance, attendance, and extracurricular involvement are also individual problems that schools can help students remedy.

The family domain includes factors such as parents' education level and attitudes toward education, low parental expectations, having a sibling who dropped out, lack of

contact between the family and the school, level of household stress, and low levels of monitoring and regulation by parents (Hammond et al., 2007). Although school districts can use these risk factors as early warning signs of future dropouts, there is little that schools can do to change a student's home life. However, schools can make an extra effort to go beyond the student by involving, supporting, and educating parents and family members.

The school domain includes school size, teacher quality, discipline policies, the overall performance of students in the school, and negative or unsafe school environments (Hammond et al., 2007). The school domain is the domain over which school districts have the most control. Although school reform takes time, schools have the ability to hire highly qualified teachers, set fair and consistent rules and consequences, and create a school culture that emphasizes students' strengths. Addressing dropout factors in the school domain improves the education of all students, not just potential dropouts.

The community domain includes factors such as geographic location, being in an urban area, community demographics such as the proportion of minorities or people in poverty, and high drug and violence crime rates (Hammond et al., 2007). Besides using these factors as early warning signs, there is not much that school districts can do to affect the community domain. Nonetheless, schools can attempt to put students in contact with appropriate resources and educate their employees on strategies for dealing with students in high-risk communities.

Lehr et al. (2004) separated dropout factors into two categories based on their ability to be changed. Factors that are difficult or impossible to change are labeled status

variables. Status variables are age, gender, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, native language, region, mobility, ability, disability, parental employment, school size and type, and family structure. Factors that can potentially be changed are labeled alterable variables. Alterable variables are grades, disruptive behavior, absenteeism, school policies, school climate, parenting, sense of belonging, attitudes toward school, educational support in the home, retention, and stressful life events (Lehr et al., 2004). This division between status variables and alterable variables allows school districts to identify which dropout factors they may be able to influence. Efforts at decreasing dropout rates focus on the alterable variables.

Balfanz (2007) split dropouts into four classes: life events, fade outs, push outs, and failing to succeed. The life events class includes students who get pregnant, get arrested, or need to work. The fade outs class includes students who are frustrated or bored with school. The push outs class includes students who are asked to withdraw or transfer from the school. The failing to succeed class includes students who are not doing well in school and are not receiving the supports they need in order to do better (Balfanz, 2007). According to Balfanz (2007), the majority of dropouts come from the failing to succeed class. The students in the failing to succeed class do not usually drop out, though, until after they have experienced repeated failure.

Some dropout factors are more influential for certain groups than for others. Factors vary in the significance of their impact on a student depending on the student's age, grade level, gender, race, and other individual factors. Hammond et al. (2007) have noted that no one risk factor can predict which students will drop out. Instead, multiple factors interact and compound over time until a student eventually makes the decision to

drop out. This variability in when and why students drop out requires that programs use a multifaceted and individualized approach to address the diverse needs of each high school dropout.

Dropout Prevention

Using their knowledge of what causes students to drop out, school districts are now implementing programs that aim to prevent students from leaving school. One way to prevent students from dropping out is to target those who are most at risk. Many students at risk of dropping out could easily be identified before they finally make the decision to quit school. Balfanz (2007) has stated that school districts could identify half of future dropouts by the end of sixth grade and three-quarters of future dropouts by ninth grade if the districts had systems in place for recognizing and countering early warning signs.

Many school districts have put in place such identification systems. By considering factors such as performance on standardized tests, number of credits earned, attendance, and other issues associated with school failure, schools are able to determine which students are at risk of dropping out due to failing to succeed. The school district studied in this thesis has adopted one such risk index, which places elementary, middle, and high school students along a continuum from no risk to high risk. The school district has correlated students at high risk with having the lowest attendance, GPA, credit attainment, and reading and math proficiency. The school district has also found that students at high risk are the most likely to be suspended and, as expected, the most likely

to drop out (Hayes, 2012). Charts depicting these risk index correlations can be found in Appendix B.

Using this risk index, the school district has been able to determine that students who are Native American, African American, and Hispanic are at much higher risk than Asian or White students. Figure 3 below indicates that only 12% of Asian students and 15% of White students are identified as high risk, whereas 30% of Hispanic students, 31% of African American students, and 31% of Native American students are identified as high risk. Interestingly, multi-racial students have a low percentage of students identified as high risk at 16% (Hayes, 2012).

Figure 3. Risk Distribution by Race/Ethnicity in the School District Studied
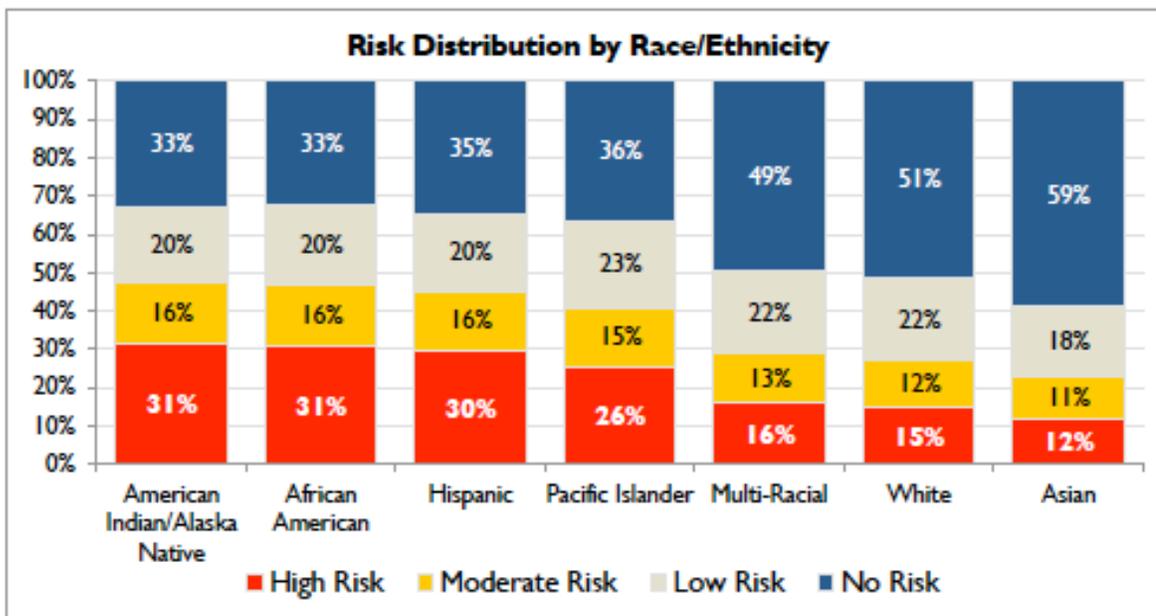
SOURCE: Hayes, B. (2012). Risk Index Charts. Report presented to Board of Trustees. Adapted from Balfanz, R. (2007). *What your community can do to end its drop-out crisis: Learnings from research and practice.* Baltimore, MD: Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University.

Figure 3 on the previous page similarly indicates that Asian and White students are more likely to be at no risk than are Hispanic, African American, or Native American students. Although 59% of Asian students and 51% of White students are identified as no risk, only 35% of Hispanic students, 33% of African American students, and 33% of Native American students are identified as no risk. Despite major differences in the high risk and no risk categories, all races and ethnicities show similarities in the moderate risk and low risk categories. The percentages of students identified as moderate risk and low risk are 12% and 22%, respectively, for White students, compared to 16% and 20%, respectively, for Hispanic students (Hayes, 2012).

School reform is another way to prevent students from dropping out. Balfanz (2007) has suggested that reforms need to be put in place at the points where students transition from one level of schooling to another. Setting up students for successful transitions to elementary, middle, and high school involves not only taking into account their academic needs, but also providing social supports and clear expectations (Balfanz, 2007).

Lehr et al. (2004) have reported that most dropout prevention strategies used in schools can be categorized into five types: personal/affective, such as individual counseling; academic, such as tutoring; family outreach, such as home visits; school structure, such as reducing class size or creating an alternative school; and work-related, such as vocational training or volunteer work. Schools may implement all of these dropout prevention strategies or choose a few. These five types of dropout prevention strategies fit well with the dropout factor domains identified by Hammond et al. (2007) discussed in the previous section. Personal/affective, academic, and work-related

strategies address the individual domain. Family outreach strategies impact the family domain, while school structure strategies affect the school domain.

Dynarski et al. (2008) have given a number of recommendations for preventing students from dropping out. Dynarski et al. (2008) ask school districts to use school data to identify students at risk of dropping out, provide at-risk students with adult advocates, institute programs designed to help students improve their academic and behavioral performance, create a learning environment in which all students feel like they belong, and engage students in learning by making their education feel relevant. By implementing these efforts at improving the curriculum, instruction, school environment, and support services, school districts are ultimately helping all students, not just students at risk.

Dropout Recovery

Many students continue to drop out despite prevention efforts. Dropout recovery programs target those students who slip through the cracks, as they aim to "recruit students back into an educational setting or support the attainment of a diploma or GED" (Shannon & Bylsma, 2003, p. 59). Dropout recovery programs can take a number of forms. According to Martin and Halperin (2006), these programs can be set within traditional public schools, alternative schools, for-profit schools, charter schools, virtual schools, non-profit community programs, community colleges, and many other settings. Dropout recovery programs vary significantly because they must take into account the characteristics, needs, and resources of each individual community. Martin and Halperin

noted that "there is no one perfect model or blueprint for successful dropout recovery" (p. 7).

Despite the fact that no one-size-fits-all approach to dropout recovery exists, several characteristics of effective dropout recovery programs have been identified. Martin and Halperin (2006) examined twelve dropout recovery programs and identified eight important components: open-entry/open-exit; flexible scheduling and year-round learning; teachers as coaches, facilitators, and crew leaders; real-world, career-oriented curricula; opportunities for employment; clear codes of conduct with consistent enforcement; extensive support services; and a portfolio of options for a varied group. Lagana-Riordan et al. (2011) identified six additional elements essential to an effective dropout recovery program: creating supportive and non-judgmental teacher-student relationships; fostering home-school connections; improving school climate; having flexible school rules and choices with consequences; educating staff members and support services on at-risk students; and adopting a strengths-based approach. When dropout recovery programs are designed and implemented, all fourteen of these research-supported components need to be considered.

Credit Recovery

Credit recovery refers to what students do to make up academic credits they need to earn in order to graduate. Summer school and repeating a course are previous forms of credit recovery. Now, most credit recovery is done online using modern technology. School districts can buy credit recovery software sold by education curriculum providers (Plummer, 2012). Registered students then log in to the program and complete interactive

lessons and assessments for each course, which the software customizes to each student's individual needs. As Plummer (2012) noted, online credit recovery programs can be used by students independently but are more effective when they are blended with face-to-face supervision. Teachers can then answer students' questions, help students with their lessons, give students feedback, and hold students accountable for completing their coursework.

Online credit recovery allows students to work at their own pace and skill level, as the online programs customize learning to each individual student. Online programs are also more flexible, so they can accommodate students' schedules. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of online credit recovery for high school dropouts is that they are able to complete courses in shorter periods of time, so they can get back on track to graduate more quickly (Plummer, 2012).

Re-Engagement Centers

Re-engagement centers are one type of dropout recovery program. Re-engagement centers have been set up in several cities around the United States (e.g., Boston, Des Moines), but research on this form of dropout recovery program is limited because re-engagement centers are so new. School districts that employ this type of program identify students who are not attending school and work with those students individually to determine what supports they need in order to get back in school and on track to graduate. Centers located in the community then provide these students with credit recovery programs, tutoring opportunities, and connections to resources.

Employees at the re-engagement centers include school social workers, teachers, tutors, and others who provide academic and social services.

Regardless of a lack of specific research on the topic, re-engagement centers can be compared to other dropout recovery programs, such as alternative schools or schools-within-a-school. Re-engagement centers also need to embrace the characteristics of an effective dropout recovery program identified by Martin and Halperin (2006) and Lagana-Riordan et al. (2011) discussed earlier in this chapter. The next chapter illustrates one method of comparing re-engagement centers to these characteristics of effective dropout recovery programs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Thesis Question

In this thesis, the researcher looks to answer the questions of how the six re-engagement centers being used as a dropout recovery strategy by one mid-sized school district in Nevada operate and whether they incorporate recognized best practices for dropout recovery programs. The first objective of this study is to describe how the six re-engagement centers are set up and how they actually function on a daily basis. The second objective is to compare the features of these centers to the criteria that have been determined important for a dropout recovery program to be effective.

Research Design

Before beginning this study, the researcher submitted a determination request to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nevada, Reno. The Institutional Review Board determined that this project did not require human research protection oversight.

A case study was chosen as the research design for this thesis and was based on a format described by Creswell (2012). The case is the program of the six re-engagement centers being used by one mid-sized school district in Nevada, and the thesis is an intrinsic case study since the focus is on the program itself (Creswell, 2012). As a descriptive case study, this thesis seeks to provide a detailed description and comparison of the re-engagement centers. The study relies on qualitative data, as data were collected through interviews and observations.

To obtain background information about the re-engagement centers, the researcher conducted interviews with the Director of Graduation & Re-Engagement (referred to as Interviewee A from here on) and the Community Engagement Administrator (referred to as Interviewee B from here on) for the school district studied. In both of the interviews, the researcher used the interview questionnaire found in Appendix C. The interview questionnaire includes questions regarding student demographics and recruitment, teacher training, schedule flexibility, alternative pedagogical methods, rules and consequences, choice, relationships with parents, and resources and services provided. Through these interviews, the researcher was able to obtain information on the re-engagement centers' design, the services offered by the centers, and the characteristics of the population served by the centers. A second interview was done with Interviewee A to obtain further information on how the centers are evaluated as well as past and future changes to the program.

To obtain more specific information about each of the re-engagement centers, the researcher then conducted a one-hour observation of each of the six centers. In all of the observations, the researcher used the observation log found in Appendix D. The reason that only one observation of each site was needed is that most of the observation log focused on the centers' structures and available resources, which were fixed and unchanging. Although the time of day and day of the week did not affect the observations, the researcher observed each of the sites on a Tuesday morning from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. to maintain uniformity. The observation log includes items that provide data on each center's location and accessibility, quality of the building and materials, technology, visibility and availability of services, number of teachers and support personnel, and

number and demographics of students utilizing the centers. Through these observations, the researcher was able to get a closer look at each center's daily functioning, setting, and ability to meet the needs of the target population.

Research Analysis

The data obtained from the two interviews and six observations were used to describe in detail the overall program and each individual re-engagement center. This thorough description aligns with the first objective of this thesis and makes up Chapter 4.

The second goal of this thesis required the identification of research-supported criteria important for a dropout recovery program to be effective. These criteria were found in two scholarly works. The first work was by Martin and Halperin (2006), who identified eight important components: open-entry/open-exit; flexible scheduling and year-round learning; teachers as coaches, facilitators, and crew leaders; real-world, career-oriented curricula; opportunities for employment; clear codes of conduct with consistent enforcement; extensive support services; and a portfolio of options for a varied group. The second work was by Lagana-Riordan et al. (2011), who identified six more components: creating supportive and non-judgmental teacher-student relationships; fostering home-school connections; improving school climate; having flexible school rules and choices with consequences; educating staff members and support services on at-risk students; and adopting a strengths-based approach.

For each of the fourteen components, the researcher created "yes" or "no" questions that could be answered about the re-engagement centers using the information obtained through the interviews and observations. These questions are found in Table 2

below and continued on the next page. The fourteen components were then grouped

together around common themes to form six categories: program variables, staff variables,

curriculum variables, discipline variables, school environment variables, and family and

community variables.

Table 2. Categorized Essential Components and Corresponding Questions

Category 1: Program Variables	
Open-entry/open-exit	*Do students work through the curriculum at their own pace?*
Flexible scheduling and year-round learning	*Are the re-engagement centers open beyond normal school hours? Are they open during the summer? Can students set their own schedules that accommodate other responsibilities?*
A portfolio of options for a varied group	*Does the school district offer a wide range of program options? Is a student able to choose the dropout recovery program that best fits his/her needs?*

Category 2: Staff Variables	
Teachers as coaches, facilitators, and crew leaders	*Are relationships between staff and students close and informal? Do staff members monitor students and keep them on track?*
Creating supportive and non-judgmental teacher-student relationships	*Do staff members provide students with personal attention?*
Educating staff members and support services on at-risk students	*Do in-service trainings teach staff members about students' problems and skills for helping students with those problems?*

Category 3: Curriculum Variables	
Real-world, career-oriented curricula	*Is the curriculum designed to prepare students for post-graduation employment in their area of interest?*
Opportunities for employment	*Do the re-engagement centers arrange employment opportunities for students? Do the centers arrange internship opportunities for students?*

Category 4: Discipline Variables	
Clear codes of conduct with consistent enforcement	*Are the rules and expectations made clear to students? Are these rules and expectations regularly enforced? Is positive reinforcement used more than punishment?*
Having flexible school rules and choices with consequences	*Do school rules take into account students' special circumstances? Can students work with staff members to make choices about appropriate consequences?*

Category 5: School Environment Variables	
Improving school climate	*Is the school environment positive, welcoming, and non-threatening, providing a feeling of safety and acceptance to students?*
Adopting a strengths-based approach	*Do the re-engagement centers follow a solution-focused model? Is the emphasis on accomplishments rather than obstacles?*

Category 6: Family and Community Variables	
Extensive support services	*Are barriers to learning (e.g. pregnancy, homelessness) met with appropriate support services? Do the centers refer students to resources in the community?*
Fostering home-school connections	*Do the re-engagement centers work with parents/guardians and take an interest in students' lives outside of school?*

The data from the description in Chapter 4 were then compared to these identified essential components of an effective dropout recovery program. The researcher answered "yes" or "no" to the questions in Table 2 using the information obtained through the observations and interviews. Using these answers, the researcher determined for each of the six categories whether the category was incorporated or could be improved for each re-engagement center. This comparison of the re-engagement centers to recognized best practices, including the identification of areas in which the centers incorporated essential components and areas in which the centers could improve, makes up Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Description of the Re-Engagement Centers

Overall Program

The re-engagement centers were created after a five-year $14 million High School Graduation Initiative grant was awarded to the school district by the U.S. Department of Education. The first center opened in May of 2011, and the sixth and most recent center opened in March of 2012. According to Interviewee A, the re-engagement centers serve as an alternative education method that falls under the same umbrella as a local alternative high school and schools-within-a-school. According to Interviewee B, the model of re-engagement centers was chosen because this type of program takes into account the fact that school success depends on more than just academics and recognizes that all students do not have the same needs.

The sites of the six re-engagement centers were chosen because of their locations within local neighborhoods and in various areas around the school district. The school district partners with local agencies to create centers in areas where a high population of students labeled as dropouts reside. According to Interviewee A, the six re-engagement centers together served 800 students during their first year (2011-2012). Currently, there are 220 active full-time students being served by the centers, with 37 of those students qualifying for special education. The majority of students are White or Hispanic. Interviewee A described the students as high-risk adolescents who often have had some sort of trauma in the home, from homelessness to parents who are in jail or who have substance abuse problems.

The goal of the re-engagement centers is either to get students to earn a graduation credential or to help them transition back to their local high school. Students may also transfer to the school district's alternative high school or schools-within-a-school. Students can stay in the re-engagement centers from 90 days to 9 months, but their time in the centers must be temporary. Interviewee B stated that data show that in the first year (2011-2012), 70% of students at the re-engagement centers, or 560 students, transitioned back to another high school, while 20% of students at the re-engagement centers, or 160 students, dropped out.

Most students are brought into the re-engagement centers by the centers' employees, who use school district data to search for and recruit students who are no longer attending school. Some students walk in after hearing about the centers, and some students are referred by their regular high schools or the juvenile justice system. According to Interviewee B, the centers complete an intake assessment of each student's basic needs, do a home visit, and provide case management. Case management is family-centered and provides services such as rental assistance, food, clothing, health services, and counseling.

The re-engagement centers also work with each student to create an academic personalized plan that sets out what he or she needs to accomplish at the centers. Students agree to a personal schedule of when they will come to the centers and what they will complete while at the centers. All students are expected to come into the centers at least once per week. Credit recovery is done online using the A+ program, which is the online credit recovery software the school district has contracted with its provider, K12 Inc., to use. Students take notes while they complete lessons and quizzes. Coursework is self-

paced, but students are expected to complete three lessons each time they come into the centers. Since the A+ program is online, students can also work on coursework at home if they have access to a computer.

In the A+ program, students have two attempts to demonstrate mastery of a lesson by obtaining a 70% on the quiz. According to Interviewee A, the fact that the A+ program is mastery-based allows students to move through courses faster, since students only have to focus on concepts they have not yet mastered. Final exams are open-note and proctored by licensed teachers. Interviewee B described an internship program that is a new part of the re-engagement centers' curriculum. In this program, students are placed in internships based on their own career interests. For example, a student interested in working on cars could complete an internship with a mechanic. This program allows students to earn credits, get hands-on experience, and even work toward certification in their field of interest.

The re-engagement centers are open year-round, but attendance is poorer during the summer. Students usually walk to the centers or are provided with bus passes. According to Interviewee A, a van is even available sometimes to pick up students and bring them to the centers. Students are subject to certain behavioral expectations while at the centers. Students are expected to come to the re-engagement centers according to their agreed-upon schedules and to complete at least three lessons each time they come in. Students are also expected to respect themselves, others, and the center, and to keep safe by adhering to the technology policy and by not bringing weapons or drugs. Each center has a set of guidelines for routines at the center, including entering the center, working independently, taking a break, and exiting the center. Interviewee B explained that

students who do not come to the centers according to their agreed-upon schedules and who are not making progress are contacted, and the centers try to work with those students to provide them with the supports they need in order to get back on track.

The re-engagement centers employ re-engagement specialists, family advocates, case managers, certified teachers, and tutors. According to Interviewee B, re-engagement specialists, family advocates, and case managers do not have to hold a bachelor's degree but must have six months to two years of experience in a related field, like social work. Certified teachers grade assignments and are the only ones who can proctor tests. Tutors provide one-on-one assistance to students at the centers. Interviewee B stated that staff members receive ongoing specialized training in case management, academic personalized plans, cultural sensitivity, working with gangs, suicidality, child abuse and neglect, and recognizing sexual exploitation. Many staff members are also bilingual in English and Spanish.

Since the re-engagement centers are funded by a federal grant, the centers are subject to ongoing evaluation. One full-time evaluator monitors the performance of the centers. According to Interviewee A, an early problem for the re-engagement centers was local schools referring students to the centers who were not truly at-risk, vanished youth. The school district addressed this problem by training schools and employees on the purpose and intended population of the centers. A future problem for the centers will be the end of the grant funding. Interviewee A stated that the school district is working on sustainable measures for the centers so that two or three centers will be able to remain open long-term.

Re-Engagement Center #1

The first re-engagement center is located inside a homeless shelter. The building complex contains a men's shelter, women's shelter, family shelter, health clinic, and food kitchen. The re-engagement center is located in a suite on the second floor of one of the buildings. Outside the building, dozens of homeless men, women, and children congregate. The center is easily accessible, as there is a parking lot and a bus stop nearby.

The center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday through Friday. The center includes a reception area, several offices, a kitchen area, a lounge area, and a computer lab. The reception area has children's toys and a bookshelf with books that students can take for free. A wall of fliers in English and Spanish is also found in the reception area, advertising a crisis call center, locations for students to get free dinner, free flu shots at the homeless shelter, classes for parents, and early learning resources. A posted sign contains information about the educational rights of homeless youth. An employee at the reception window lets students and visitors into the actual re-engagement center. The lounge area has a couch, and the kitchen area contains a refrigerator, table, and snacks.

The computer lab has ten Windows HP computers. A cabinet contains each student's notebook, which students leave at the re-engagement center. Pens, paper, hand sanitizer, dictionaries, and a few textbooks are also available. Signs are posted in the lab that list the behavioral expectations and provide instructions for how to use the A+ program. Another posted sign advertises weekly drawings for prizes. A Wall of Fame displays posters in the shape of stars on which students' names and the credits they have earned are written.

To enter the re-engagement center, students must be let in by an employee at the reception window and then sign in upon entering the computer lab. On the day the researcher completed the observation of re-engagement center #1, there were five students at the center. Three of the students were female, and two students were male. The students were of White and Hispanic backgrounds. The students were taking the proficiency tests required by the state to earn a high school diploma, so the room was absolutely silent. All of the students were focused on their tests, although two frustrated students each put their heads down for about thirty seconds to take a break from the test.

On the day of the observation, there were two staff members in the room with the students. These staff members were a test proctor and a tutor. One staff member was male, and the other staff member was female. The staff members were of White and Hispanic backgrounds. Staff monitored students as they worked on their tests but did not speak to the students. A sign on the door to the computer lab requested that everyone be quiet since testing was in progress, and all of the staff and the students complied.

Re-Engagement Center #2

The second re-engagement center is located inside a family, children, and youth center. The building contains a food bank and access to family, children, and youth services. The re-engagement center is located in a suite on the second floor of the building. Other buildings nearby include houses, apartments, the Division of Child and Family Services, and converted shops and offices. The center is easily accessible, as there is a parking lot and a bus stop nearby.

The re-engagement center is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday through Friday. The center includes a computer lab, several offices, and a kitchen area. The kitchen area contains a refrigerator and a microwave, and snacks such as soup are available for students. In the computer lab, there are seven Windows HP computers. Pencils, calculators, dictionaries, and textbooks are available. There are also two desks for staff use and a storage space for each student's notebook.

On the wall, a poster lists the re-engagement center's classroom rules. The ten classroom rules address being respectful of oneself and others, staying on schedule, and displaying appropriate behavior. A posted sign advertises a contest to design the new logo for the re-engagement centers, which will be displayed on t-shirts. On one wall, there is a Re-Engagement Center Hall of Fame. Students' names are posted along with the date they earned their diploma or GED. A photocopy of one female student's identification card from a local community college is also posted and labeled "Now a college student."

When students enter the re-engagement center, they must sign in before logging onto the computer and working on their coursework in the A+ program. On the day the researcher completed the observation of re-engagement center #2, there were three students at the center. Two students were male, and one was female. The students were of White and Hispanic backgrounds. One student who was supposed to have come into the center that day had missed his bus and so was not there. One male student was texting on his phone instead of working on his coursework, so he was told twice to put it away. The other male student only came in to discuss enrolling at the re-engagement center.

On the day of the observation, there were four staff members who interacted with students. These staff members were a site re-engagement coordinator, an AmeriCorps volunteer, and two tutors. Three of the staff members were female, and one staff member was male. The staff members were of White and African American backgrounds. Other staff members were in the building but remained in their offices during the entire observation. The staff members sat together while they worked on student records and discussed recent and upcoming trainings on the computer system, academic personalized plans, and behavioral intervention. Staff also checked in with students on their progress approximately every fifteen minutes and identified students who needed to study for their proficiency tests using a proficiency preparation course in the A+ program.

Re-Engagement Center #3

The third re-engagement center is located inside a community learning center that is part of a high school. The center is housed in one half of a portable toward the back of the high school campus. There is one room for students to work in and an office for staff. Other buildings nearby include a health center, a center for family resources, and older houses. The center is easily accessible, as there is a parking lot and a bus stop nearby.

The re-engagement center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday through Friday. There are fifteen Windows HP laptops that students check out when they enter the center. Pencils, pencil sharpeners, dictionaries, and textbooks are also available. The student workroom is filled with tables and chairs for students to sit at with their laptops. The room contains a storage area for each student's notebook as well as several storage cabinets for other school district programs.

Signs posted in the student workroom list the behavioral expectations and guidelines for routines at the center. A current events board contains advertisements for a Re-Engagement Family Night, where families can meet staff and learn about the centers, and a contest to design the new logo for the re-engagement centers. Photos of the students reading with children are hung on a bulletin board, and a poster titled "Pizzalicious Progress" shows that students are not far away from earning a pizza party. Fliers are also posted that provide information about teen pregnancy, a crisis call center, adult English Language Learner classes, immigration services, and scholarships at a local community college.

When students enter the re-engagement center, they sign in and check out a laptop. Students then begin working on their coursework in the A+ program. On the day the researcher completed the observation of re-engagement center #3, there were eight students at the center. Three of the students were female, and five students were male. The students were of Hispanic and African American backgrounds. All of the students were taking notes or completing their lessons, and there were no discipline issues.

On the day of the observation, there were three staff members working at the center. There were two family advocates and one tutor. Two of the staff members were female, and one staff member was male. The staff members were of White and Hispanic backgrounds. The family advocates worked on computers in the office and called two students into the office separately to discuss the proficiency tests. The tutor sat among the students and spent the majority of the observation helping one male student with his math lesson.

Re-Engagement Center #4

The fourth re-engagement center is located inside a middle school. The re-engagement center is located in one classroom on the first floor of the two-story building. The middle school is located along a busy road and is surrounded by restaurants, gas stations, houses, and an empty desert lot. The center is easily accessible, as there is a parking lot and a bus stop nearby.

The re-engagement center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday through Friday. The classroom contains both a student work area and an office area. Due to the availability of a school cafeteria, this re-engagement center is unique in that the center offers a fifteen-minute period during which staff members take students to get lunch. The center has fifteen Windows HP laptops that students check out upon entering the center. In the student work area, there are tables and chairs along the wall where students sit with their laptops. There is also a bookshelf with textbooks and a storage area for each student's notebook. On the wall, posted signs list the behavioral expectations, guidelines for routines at the center, and instructions for using the A+ program. There are also student-made posters on the wall stating their goal of getting to graduation. The office area consists of three desks and desktop computers for staff use.

When students enter the middle school, they first must sign in at the front office. Students then sign in upon entering the re-engagement center and check out a laptop computer. On the day the researcher completed the observation of re-engagement center #4, there were four students at the center. Three of the students were male, and one student was female. The students were of Hispanic and White backgrounds. Two of the male students, who entered the center together that day and sat next to each other, spent

the majority of the observation chatting, which distracted them from their coursework. The other students took notes and worked on their lessons silently.

On the day of the observation, there were six staff members working at the center. There were two family advocates, one re-engagement specialist, one teacher, and two tutors. Four of the staff members were female, and two staff members were male. The staff members were of Hispanic and White backgrounds. The teacher, who travels between three re-engagement centers, graded assignments and checked student progress. Other staff members called students who had not come into the center as scheduled to plan a time for those students to come in soon. At one point, a student from the middle school's front office requested assistance from one of the family advocates in translating between Spanish and English during a short parent phone call. The other family advocate frequently interacted with the students. He checked in with students on their progress and helped two of the male students with their lessons, even using a textbook to explain a math concept better.

Re-Engagement Center #5

The fifth re-engagement center is located inside a Boys and Girls Club. Although the Boys and Girls Club is a large two-story building, the re-engagement center only takes up two rooms on the first floor at the back of the teen section. One room is a computer lab, and the other room is an office. The Boys and Girls Club is surrounded by houses and apartments. The center is easily accessible, as there is a parking lot and a bus stop nearby.

The re-engagement center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday through Friday. The computer has five Windows HP computers along one wall. Each student's notebook and a few textbooks are kept under a table across from the computers. On the table, there are pencils and paper available. Hanging on the wall above the table is a news board that includes a notice that a student store is coming soon. Posted next to the news board are a number of fliers in English and Spanish providing information about a food bank, suicide, pregnancy, and local community colleges. Signs posted around the computer lab also list the behavioral expectations, guidelines for routines at the center, and instructions for using the A+ program. A door between the computer lab and office is closed, although a window allows staff members to monitor students as they complete their coursework.

Upon entering the Boys and Girls Club, students have to swipe a Boys and Girls Club card at the front desk. Students are provided with this card as part of their registration with the re-engagement center. The students then sign in upon entering the re-engagement center and begin working on their coursework in the A+ program. On the day the researcher completed the observation of re-engagement center #5, there was only one White, male student at the center. He worked on his lessons throughout the observation and had no discipline issues.

On the day of the observation, there were three staff members working at the center. These staff members were a family advocate, a re-engagement specialist, and a case manager. All three staff members were female, and the women were of White and Hispanic backgrounds. Two of the staff members worked on computers in the office, and the third staff member worked on a computer in the computer lab. The staff member who

sat in the computer lab called students who had not come into the center as scheduled and got one of the students to agree to come into the center the next day. This staff member also checked in once with the one student at the center on his progress.

Re-Engagement Center #6

The sixth re-engagement center is the most recently opened center. The center is located inside a computer lab in another Boys and Girls Club. Other buildings nearby include a center for Hispanic services, a center for family resources, a health center, a police substation, houses, and apartments. A large park is also next to the center. The center is easily accessible, as there is a parking lot and a bus stop nearby.

The center has the shortest hours of the six re-engagement centers, as it is open from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday through Friday. The reason the center must close at 2 p.m. is that the Boys and Girls Club uses the computer lab as part of its after-school program. The center also moves to a nearby high school during the summer when the Boys and Girls Club uses the computer lab all day. Since the rest of the Boys and Girls Club is closed until 2 p.m., entrance to the re-engagement center is limited to a side door that opens directly into the computer lab.

In the computer lab, there are nine Windows HP computers set up along one wall. The rest of the room is filled with tables, chairs, and cabinets. One cabinet stores each student's notebook, along with pencils, calculators, and snacks. There are two bookshelves next to the computers that contain textbooks, encyclopedias, and other books.

Upon entering the re-engagement center, students must sign in before they start working on their coursework in the A+ program. On the day the researcher completed the

observation of re-engagement center #6, there were three students at the center. Two of the students were male, and one student was female. The students were of White and Hispanic backgrounds. The students took notes, worked on their lessons, and took quizzes silently during the entire observation. There were no discipline issues.

On the day of the observation, there were three staff members working at the center. These staff members were a family advocate and two tutors. One staff member was male, and the other two staff members were female. The staff members were of African American and Hispanic backgrounds. The staff members monitored students, worked on student records on the computer, and discussed with each other the need to contact a few students who had not shown up as scheduled. Although the staff members praised the students once for working hard, the interaction between students and staff mostly occurred when a student left the re-engagement center. At that time, the family advocate gave the student a bus pass to get home if necessary, verified that the student had completed his or her three lessons for the day, discussed when the student would be coming into the center next, and asked what was going on in the student's life besides academics.

Chapter 5: Comparison of the Re-Engagement Centers to Recognized Best Practices

Category 1: Program Variables

Category 1 contains the program variables of open-entry/open-exit, flexible scheduling and year-round learning, and a portfolio of options for a varied group. For the component of open-entry/open-exit, the question is whether students work through the curriculum at their own pace. Since all of the re-engagement centers use the A+ online credit recovery program, which allows students to work at their own pace and mastery level, the answer to the question is "yes" for all six centers. Although students are expected to complete three lessons each time they come into the center, students can take as much time as needed and can complete more than three lessons.

For the component of flexible scheduling and year-round learning, the first question is whether the centers are open beyond normal school hours. Although none of the centers are open on weekends, the answer is "yes" for five of the centers because re-engagement centers #1-5 are open until 5 p.m. However, the answer is "no" for re-engagement center #6 because this center is occupied by another program after 2 p.m. and thus closes at that time. The second question is whether the centers are open during the summer. The answer is "yes" for all six centers. Although re-engagement center #6 changes its location during the summer, the center continues to offer its services. The third question is whether students can set their own schedules that accommodate other responsibilities. The answer is again "yes" for all six centers because although students are required to come in at least once per week, students set up their own schedules for

when they will come into the center in their academic personalized plans. Students can also work online at home at their convenience if they have access to a computer.

For the component of providing a portfolio of options for a varied group, the questions are whether the school district offers a range of program options and whether students can choose the dropout recovery program that best meets their needs. The answer to both of these questions is "yes." The locations of the re-engagement centers offer choices for students, as the six sites are spread throughout the school district. In addition to the re-engagement centers, the school district offers students the opportunity to attend an alternative high school or schools-within-a-school. Students can choose the dropout recovery program from among these options that best fits their needs. Table 3 on the next page visually represents this analysis of the incorporation of the program variables in the re-engagement centers.

Table 3. Category 1: Program Variables

Questions	REC #1	REC #2	REC #3	REC #4	REC #5	REC #6
1. Open-entry/open exit a. Do the students work through the curriculum at their own pace?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Flexible scheduling and year-round learning a. Are the re-engagement centers open beyond normal school hours?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
b. Are the re-engagement centers open during the summer?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
c. Can students set their own schedules that accommodate other responsibilities?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. A portfolio of options for a varied group a. Does the school district offer a wide range of program options?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
b. Is a student able to choose the dropout recovery program that best fits his/her needs?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall incorporation of program variables	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

As Table 3 shows, all six of the re-engagement centers incorporate the program variables well overall. The re-engagement centers use these recognized best practices in their design and in their daily functioning. Ways the centers could incorporate these program variables better, though, would be to open the centers during the weekend and to offer even more dropout recovery program options.

Category 2: Staff Variables

Category 2 contains the staff variables of teachers as coaches, facilitators, and crew leaders; creating supportive and non-judgmental teacher-student relationships; and educating staff members and support services on at-risk students. For the component of teachers as coaches, facilitators, and crew leaders, the first question is whether relationships between staff and students are close and informal. At all of the re-engagement centers, students called staff members by their first names, but relationships between students and tutors were closer than students' relationships with other staff members. At the centers where staff members worked in separate offices, students were separated from staff, creating a more distant relationship. Thus, the answer to the question is "no" for re-engagement centers #1, #2, #3, and #5 because these centers separated students from staff. The second question is whether staff members monitor students and keep them on track. The answer to this question is "yes" for all six centers. Not only did staff members monitor students who were at the center, but staff members also contacted students who did not show up as scheduled and who were not making progress.

For the component of creating supportive and non-judgmental teacher-student relationships, the question is whether staff members provide students with personal attention. The answer is "yes" for all of the centers because each student has an academic personalized plan and receives support for each of his or her needs through case management. Staff members monitor each student's attendance and progress, contacting the student if problems occur. The close ratio of students to staff members at any one time allows students to receive one-on-one attention when they are at the centers.

For the component of educating staff members and support services on at-risk students, the question is whether in-service trainings teach staff members about students' problems and skills for helping students with those problems. The answer is "yes" for all of the centers. As Interviewee B stated, staff members receive ongoing specialized training in case management, academic personalized plans, cultural sensitivity, working with gangs, suicidality, child abuse and neglect, and recognizing sexual exploitation. Staff members also receive information about services and resources available to students. Table 4 on the next page visually represents this analysis of the incorporation of the staff variables in the re-engagement centers.

Table 4. Category 2: Staff Variables

Questions	REC #1	REC #2	REC #3	REC #4	REC #5	REC #6
1. Teachers as coaches, facilitators, and crew leaders a. Are relationships between staff and students close and informal?	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
b. Do staff members monitor students and keep them on track?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Creating supportive and non-judgmental teacher-student relationships a. Do staff members provide students with personal attention?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. Educating staff members and support services on at-risk students a. Do in-service trainings teach staff members about students' problems and skills for helping students with those problems?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall incorporation of staff variables	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

As Table 4 shows, all six of the re-engagement centers incorporate the staff

variables well overall. Re-engagement centers #1, #2, #3, and #5 only come up short with

regard to close and informal relationships between students and staff. These four centers

could incorporate that component better by moving staff out of their offices into the

student work area to decrease the amount of separation and create a closer relationship.

Another way for the centers to incorporate these staff variables better would be to provide

students with more personal attention at the centers. Staff members at re-engagement

center #6 modeled what this attention should look like by having a conversation with each student as they entered and left the center about his or her progress, schedule, and needs and activities beyond academics.

Category 3: Curriculum Variables

Category 3 contains the curriculum variables of real-world, career-oriented curricula and opportunities for employment. For the component of real-world, career-oriented curricula, the question is whether the centers' curriculum is designed to prepare students for post-graduation employment in their area of interest. The answer to this question has to be "no" for all of the centers. Of course, the centers provide education in the basics needed for post-graduation employment, including math, science, reading, and writing. However, the curriculum does not take into account students' individual interests and goals. All students complete the same online courses in the A+ program to earn credits needed for a high school diploma.

For the component of opportunities for employment, the first question is whether the re-engagement centers arrange employment opportunities for students. The centers do not arrange employment opportunities, so the answer is "no" for all of the centers. The second question is whether the centers arrange internship opportunities for students. The answer to this question is "yes" for all of the centers. Interviewee B described an internship program that is a new part of the re-engagement centers' curriculum. In this program, students are placed in internships based on their own career interests. Table 5 on the next page visually represents this analysis of the incorporation of the curriculum variables in the re-engagement centers.

Table 5. Category 3: Curriculum Variables

Questions	REC #1	REC #2	REC #3	REC #4	REC #5	REC #6
1. Real-world, career-oriented curricula a. Is the curriculum designed to prepare students for post-graduation employment in their area of interest?	No	No	No	No	No	No
2. Opportunities for employment a. Do the re-engagement centers arrange employment opportunities for students?	No	No	No	No	No	No
b. Do the centers arrange internship opportunities for students?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall incorporation of curriculum variables	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**

As Table 5 shows, the six re-engagement centers do not incorporate the

curriculum variables well. Although the internship program improves the centers'

incorporation of these variables, the other aspects of the curriculum do not focus enough

on the career goals and interests of the student. The basics of math, science, reading, and

writing are necessary for post-graduation employment, but real-world curricula that align

with students' future goals and interests give students more motivation to go to school

and allow students to see how education is relevant to their lives. Curriculum variables

are areas in which the re-engagement centers could improve in order to be more effective

for students.

Category 4: Discipline Variables

Category 4 contains the discipline variables of having clear codes of conduct with consistent enforcement and having flexible school rules and choices with consequences. For the component of having clear codes of conduct with consistent enforcement, the first question is whether the rules and expectations are made clear to the students. The answer to this question is "yes" for all of the centers. Not only do students agree when they register with the re-engagement centers to fulfill the expectations of coming in at least once per week and completing three lessons each time they come in, but each center also posts signs that list behavioral expectations and guidelines for routines at the center.

The second question is whether these rules and expectations are regularly enforced. The answer is again "yes" for all of the centers. Students are monitored while at the center to make sure they are on task and completing their three lessons for the day. Students who are not working diligently are asked to stop their problem behaviors. In addition, the staff members of the centers call students who do not show up to the centers as scheduled and who are not making progress to get them back on track. The third question is whether positive reinforcement is used more than punishment. The answer is "yes" for all of the centers. Students are not punished if they do not show up to the center as scheduled, but students are often praised when they come into the center and work hard. Rewards such as drawings for prizes at re-engagement center #1 and pizza parties at re-engagement center #3 are further examples of positive reinforcement being used to motivate students.

For the component of having flexible school rules and choices with consequences, the first question is whether school rules take into account students' special

circumstances. The answer is "yes" for all of the centers because the rules allow for flexibility. There are relatively few rules compared to a regular high school. For example, a dress code is not enforced, and students are allowed to eat in the centers. Students can enter and leave the centers at will. The major expectation is that students come into the centers once per week, but students set up their own schedules that accommodate other responsibilities. Although students are expected to be on task instead of using their phones or talking, students are allowed to take important calls in the hallway and to take breaks when necessary. The only rules that are not flexible are respecting oneself and others and not putting oneself or others in danger. These are rules, though, that cannot be compromised if the centers are to be effective for all students.

The second question is whether students can work with staff members to make choices about appropriate consequences. The answer is "yes" because the centers are designed to be helpful rather than punitive. Unless a student breaks the rules of respect or safety, there are no consequences against the student. If a student does not meet expectations with regard to attendance or progress, the centers' employees contact the student to find out what is going on and whether extra supports are needed to keep the student in school. If the student chooses to drop out after many re-engagement efforts, the centers allow him or her to do so. Table 6 on the next page visually represents this analysis of the incorporation of the discipline variables in the re-engagement centers.

Table 6. Category 4: Discipline Variables

Questions	REC #1	REC #2	REC #3	REC #4	REC #5	REC #6
1. Clear codes of conduct with consistent enforcement a. Are the rules and expectations made clear to students?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
b. Are these rules and expectations regularly enforced?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
c. Is positive reinforcement used more than punishment?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Having flexible school rules and choices with consequences a. Do school rules take into account students' special circumstances?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
b. Can students work with staff members to make choices about appropriate consequences?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall incorporation of discipline variables	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

As Table 6 shows, all six of the re-engagement centers incorporate the discipline variables well overall. The re-engagement centers use these recognized best practices in their design and in their daily functioning. During the observations, the only discipline issues other than attendance issues were talking and texting. Students required little input with regard to their behavior other than positive reinforcement from staff members. One way the centers could improve with regard to the discipline variables would be to provide more positive reinforcement in the form of rewards for students who exhibit exceptional

behavior and exceed expectations, as modeled by re-engagement centers #1 and #3 with their prize drawings and pizza parties.

Category 5: School Environment Variables

Category 5 contains the school environment variables of improving school climate and adopting a strengths-based approach. For the component of improving school climate, the question is whether the school environment is positive, welcoming, and non-threatening, providing a feeling of safety and acceptance to students. The answer to this question is "yes" for all of the centers. Staff members welcome the students when they enter the center and praise students for working hard. Staff members help students with their problems without judgment. Students are provided with one-on-one assistance academically and with appropriate social supports to allow for school success. Rules strictly require respect and safety in the centers. The lounge and kitchen areas in re-engagement centers #1 and #2 are especially welcoming, as these areas show that after working hard, students can reward themselves by relaxing and having a snack. The contest to design the new logo for the re-engagement centers, which will be displayed on t-shirts, aims to create a feeling of community among students at the centers.

For the component of adopting a strengths-based approach, the first question is whether the re-engagement centers follow a solution-focused model. The answer to this question is "yes" for all of the centers. Students' needs and problems are identified in the intake assessment but are not made into excuses. Instead, the focus is on providing appropriate resources to meet students' needs so that they can be more successful academically. The second question is whether the emphasis is on accomplishments rather

than obstacles. The answer is "yes" for all of the centers. The best examples of this emphasis on accomplishments are the Wall of Fame at re-engagement center #1 and the Re-Engagement Center Hall of Fame at re-engagement center #2. These displays recognize students' achievements by showing their accomplishments off for everyone at the centers to see. Table 7 below visually represents this analysis of the incorporation of the school environment variables in the re-engagement centers.

Table 7. Category 5: School Environment Variables

Questions	REC #1	REC #2	REC #3	REC #4	REC #5	REC #6
1. Improving school climate a. Is the school environment positive, welcoming, and non-threatening, providing a feeling of safety and acceptance to students?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Adopting a strengths-based approach a. Do the re-engagement centers follow a solution-focused model?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
b. Is the emphasis on accomplishments rather than obstacles?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall incorporation of school environment variables	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

As Table 7 shows, all six of the re-engagement centers incorporate the school environment variables well overall. Re-engagement centers #1 and #2 provided a model for how the rest of the centers could incorporate these variables better with their wall displays recognizing students for their academic achievements. Other ways the centers

could improve school environment variables would be to provide more opportunities for community building among students and to provide lounge areas in all of the centers so that students have a comfortable and welcoming place to take breaks.

Category 6: Family and Community Variables

Category 6 includes the family and community variables of extensive support services and fostering home-school connections. For the component of extensive support services, the first question is whether barriers to learning (e.g. pregnancy, homelessness) are met with appropriate support services. The answer to this question is "yes" for all of the centers. Students' barriers to learning are identified during their intake assessment, and students are provided with the support services they need in order to be successful in school. The second question is whether the centers refer students to resources in the community. The answer is again "yes" for all of the centers. The re-engagement centers work with family resource centers, food banks, youth centers, and other local agencies to get students the services they need. In addition, fliers in English and Spanish are posted in re-engagement centers #1, #3, and #5 advertising local services such as a crisis call center, immigration assistance, and parenting classes.

For the component of fostering home-school connections, the question is whether the re-engagement centers work with parents/guardians and take an interest in students' lives outside of school. The answer to this question is a clear "yes" for all of the centers. Case management is family-centered, and the centers' employees often do home visits. Re-engagement center #3 even held a Re-Engagement Family Night to further involve parents in their children's education. An essential aspect of the centers is that they

consider students' lives outside of school. The centers take into account the fact that

school success depends on more than just academics and recognize that all students do

not have the same needs. Table 8 below visually represents this analysis of the

incorporation of the family and community variables in the re-engagement centers.

Table 8. Category 6: Family and Community Variables

Questions	REC #1	REC #2	REC #3	REC #4	REC #5	REC #6
1. Extensive support services a. Are barriers to learning (e.g. pregnancy, homelessness) met with appropriate support services?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
b. Do the centers refer students to resources in the community?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Fostering home-school connections a. Do the re-engagement centers work with parents/guardians and take an interest in students' lives outside of school?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall incorporation of family and community variables	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

As Table 8 shows, all six of the re-engagement centers incorporate the family and

community variables well overall. However, there is one barrier to learning that strays

from the norm by not being met with appropriate support services. Students who qualify

for special education do not receive these services at the re-engagement centers, as these

students are expected to complete the same A+ curriculum as other students. One way the

re-engagement centers could improve their incorporation of these variables would be to

provide students who qualify with special education services. Another way the centers

could improve with regard to family and community variables would be to make support

services more easily accessible to students by having health and mental health

professionals, meals, clothing, etc. at the re-engagement centers rather than having to

refer students to outside resources. Finally, re-engagement center #3 provided a model for

how the rest of the centers could involve parents better with its Re-Engagement Family

Night.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Significance

After comparing the re-engagement centers to components considered important for dropout recovery programs to be effective, it is clear that the centers incorporate best practices well. The re-engagement centers showed a need for improvement in only one of the six categories of components. In addition, the school district has already recognized a deficiency in the category of curriculum variables and is taking steps to improve in that area.

This study did find areas for improvement in the re-engagement centers. The identification of areas for improvement has the potential to enhance these re-engagement centers. Also, since the re-engagement centers implemented best practices so well, the description of the overall program and individual centers can provide guidelines for other school districts looking to design and implement effective re-engagement centers of their own.

Implications

Re-engagement centers are designed to target a challenging population of learners. These students have had negative experiences with the education system, including having failed academically, received inadequate support from teachers and staff, or been the target of punitive discipline. These students have also dealt with barriers to learning coming from outside the school, such as problems in the home. The fact that students drop out makes it clear that schools are not meeting the needs of all students. The

existence of re-engagement centers represents a step toward the mainstream implementation of educational strategies that take into account the diverse needs of all students.

To improve the education provided to high-risk students, part of the focus needs to be on teachers and staff. Many of the employment positions at the re-engagement centers, such as the position of family advocate, do not have specific training or experience requirements. It might be beneficial to set in place certain preparation requirements, including classes and field experience, so that employees are equipped with the necessary information and skills before working with high-risk students. Since so many students are classified as high-risk, teacher education programs should also make it the norm to educate future teachers on how to help high-risk students be successful in school.

One surprising finding of this study is how central online learning has become to the education system. At the centers, students complete all of their coursework online using the A+ credit recovery program. The centers do use blended learning, though, as they employ teachers and tutors to provide students with assistance and keep them on track. The use of the online credit recovery program allows the re-engagement centers to be a model of efficiency. Students can complete courses much faster than would normally be possible. This efficiency leads to the question of whether all education will eventually move in the direction of online learning. Credit recovery software has already been used to allow gifted students to progress faster through the curriculum, so the idea of more efficient online learning replacing normal classrooms at all grade levels does not seem too far-fetched.

One problem for the re-engagement centers is that although the centers implement best practices well, data show that 20% of the students served by the centers still drop out. This percentage indicates that many students are still not having their needs met by the re-engagement centers. Interviewee B suggested that perhaps the reason is that many students find the A+ program boring. Although the program is efficient, students are required to work in front of a computer screen for hours, often without any human interaction. This problem demonstrates why the improvement of curriculum variables is so important. If the curriculum aligns with students' interests, they may be less bored, more engaged, and more motivated to continue their education. Another reason may be that some students have trouble accessing the curriculum. Students at low reading levels may find it difficult to complete online work that requires higher literacy skills.

Limitations

This study looks at only one type of dropout recovery program in the school district. However, the re-engagement centers are interrelated with other programs, including an alternative school and schools-within-a-school. In addition, the researcher did not have access to administrative records regarding financial costs and student records with demographics and success rates. These records would provide a fuller picture of how the centers operate and of their effectiveness. Another limitation is that only one observation was done of each center, during which the researcher did not interact with students and staff. Further observation and interaction would provide a broader understanding of the daily functioning of students and staff at the centers.

Another limitation of this study is that it is specific to one school district in Nevada. Other school districts looking to implement this kind of program may have different demographics, sizes, resources, and needs. Although the re-engagement centers work well in this school district, this type of program may not transfer well to other school districts in different states.

Future Directions for Research

Further research in this area could use student statistics to identify what kinds of students enter the re-engagement centers, why these students dropped out, and how effective the re-engagement centers are for these students. Knowledge of general characteristics and trends with regard to students and their needs would assist the school district in improving the effectiveness of the re-engagement centers.

Further research in this area could also compare the re-engagement centers in this school district to re-engagement centers operating in school districts in other states. This research would allow for the identification of common practices as well as strategies unique to one school district or the other. Each school district could then adopt strategies their re-engagement centers are lacking to improve their effectiveness for students. School districts looking to design and implement their own re-engagement centers would also have a more researched basis for what is effective.

Another direction for future research could look at whether students are leaving the re-engagement centers with the skills needed to succeed in higher education or in the work force. Although earning a high school diploma creates many more opportunities for students, a student's goal is not simply to possess a diploma. Instead, students want to use

the skills they have learned to continue their education or to get a good job. Although the

credit recovery at the re-engagement centers is efficient, it is unclear if the centers are

preparing students for the next step after graduation.

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Appendix A: Table Indicating Percentage of Dropouts Leaving School for Push-Out, Pull-Out, and Dropout Reasons by Ethnicity, Gender, and Grade Level

Table 2a
Percentage of Dropouts Leaving School for Push-Out, Pull-Out, and Dropout Reasons by Ethnicity, Gender, and Grade Level

	Push-Out Reasons		Pull-Out Reasons		Dropout Reasons	
	Academic	Disciplinary	Employment	Family	Moving	Attendance
9th grade (N = 5,394)						
African American males	5.89	19.44	7.81	2.21	7.00	57.07
African American females	5.61	7.34	6.14	6.14	5.34	68.62
Latino males	5.65	4.84	13.71	2.42	20.16	52.42
Latina females	6.10	1.22	8.54	8.54	21.95	51.22
White males	8.07	10.76	14.49	2.14	5.98	57.79
White females	6.20	3.33	10.83	8.43	6.39	62.78
Overall	6.54	10.66	10.66	4.21	6.95	59.96
10th grade (N = 4,210)						
African American males	6.24	15.70	9.82	1.96	6.58	59.01
African American females	5.85	3.37	7.62	7.45	4.26	69.86
Latino males	4.41	10.29	14.71	2.94	13.24	54.41
Latina females	3.75	1.25	10.00	12.50	18.75	50.00
White males	8.74	8.30	18.57	1.82	5.90	55.79
White females	7.05	2.22	14.58	9.36	5.60	58.20
Overall	7.11	7.52	13.71	4.88	6.09	59.10

(continued)

Table 2a (continued)

	Push-Out Reasons		Pull-Out Reasons		Dropout Reasons	
	Academic	Disciplinary	Employment	Family	Moving	Attendance
11th grade (N = 3,274)						
African American males	7.52	11.11	12.99	0.86	4.44	63.08
African American females	7.43	2.97	11.04	10.19	6.79	60.08
Latino males	11.11	2.78	16.67	2.78	11.11	55.56
Latina females	19.35	0.00	16.13	12.90	9.68	38.71
White males	9.75	5.74	20.05	3.01	5.74	54.60
White females	6.20	1.37	16.30	9.04	5.05	59.62
Overall	8.00	4.92	15.97	5.59	5.62	58.55
12th grade (N = 1,581)						
African American males	7.64	10.18	14.55	2.91	5.82	58.91
African American females	11.16	1.40	9.30	7.91	9.30	60.47
Latino males	11.11	11.11	16.67	5.56	0.00	55.56
Latina females	7.14	14.29	7.14	14.29	14.29	42.86
White males	14.31	4.89	16.67	1.81	5.07	56.52
White females	7.51	0.86	12.66	10.09	4.72	60.73
Overall	10.44	4.30	14.10	5.57	5.69	58.51

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2000.
Note: 14,364 students in 247 schools. Numbers may not sum to 100 across rows because of the presence of other, unanalyzed dropout reasons.

Appendix B: Risk Index Charts

Grade Point Average (GPA) During the 2011-2012 School Year (by Risk Level)

Risk Level	GPA
No Risk	3.36
Low Risk	2.95
Moderate Risk	2.55
High Risk	2.03

Credits Earned During the 2011-2012 School Year (by Risk Level)

Risk Level	Credits
No Risk	6.2
Low Risk	5.9
Moderate Risk	5.4
High Risk	4.5

Total Absences During the 2011-2012 School Year (by Risk Level)

Risk Level	Absences
No Risk	6.3
Low Risk	9.6
Moderate Risk	11.9
High Risk	15.1

Percent Having Ten or More Absences During the 2011-2012 School Year (by Risk Level)

Risk Level	Percent
No Risk	18%
Low Risk	38%
Moderate Risk	44%
High Risk	54%

Percentage of HS Students Who Dropped Out of WCSD Before End of Year

Risk Level	Percent
No Risk	0.4%
Low Risk	1.1%
Moderate Risk	2.1%
High Risk	4.5%

Percentage of WCSD Students Suspended during the 2011-2012 School Year (by Risk Level)

Risk Level	Percent
No Risk	6%
Low Risk	14%
Moderate Risk	20%
High Risk	33%

Percentage Proficent in Reading the Following Spring (2011-2012 School Year) by Risk Level

Risk Level	Percent
No Risk	85%
Low Risk	68%
Moderate Risk	46%
High Risk	15%

Percentage Proficent in Math the Following Spring (2011-2012 School Year) by Risk Level

Risk Level	Percent
No Risk	92%
Low Risk	85%
Moderate Risk	67%
High Risk	31%

SOURCE: Hayes, B. (2012). Risk Index Charts. Report presented to Board of Trustees. Adapted from Balfanz, R. (2007). *What your community can do to end its drop-out crisis: Learnings from research and practice.* Baltimore, MD: Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University.

Appendix C: Interview Questionnaire

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____   Time: _____

1. Can you give a basic description of the re-engagement centers?

2. Why was the model of re-engagement centers chosen by the school district?

3. Were the re-engagement centers modeled after centers in another school district? If so, which school district? Are the two school districts similar? If not, how were the re-engagement centers designed?

4. Why were the sites of the six re-engagement centers chosen?

5. When did the centers open?

6. How many students have the centers served since opening?

7. How many students are currently being served by the centers?

8. What are the goals of the re-engagement centers?

9. How are students put in touch with the re-engagement centers? Are the centers advertised? Are students recruited based on certain criteria?

10. How many students have earned their GED with the help of the centers? How many students have earned their high school diploma with the help of the centers? How many students have dropped out of the centers before earning their GED or high school diploma?

11. What services are offered by the re-engagement centers?

12. Are credit recovery programs used? If so, which ones? Are they all online?

13. Is there any face-to-face instruction?

14. Can students work at their own pace? What choices do students have with regard to their education at the centers?

15. What types of counseling services are provided? Is career counseling provided?

16. What types of resources are students connected with through the centers?

17. What times of day and days of the week are the re-engagement centers open? Are they open during the summer?

18. Do students have a set schedule or come to the centers when they can? When and how many hours are students expected to come to the centers per week?

19. How do students get to the centers? Are they provided with any transportation by the school district?

20. How many staff members are at each site? What types of positions do they hold? What are the education and experience qualifications to work at the centers?

21. Do the staff members of the centers receive specialized training?

22. What are the rules of the centers? What are the consequences for breaking those rules?

23. How do the centers work with parents?

24. What are the demographics of the student population served?

25. Are there general characteristics of the students who come to the centers or is variability the norm?

26. What are some reasons that students come to the centers instead of attending a regular school? Are all of the students high school dropouts?

27. Where does the funding come from for the re-engagement centers?

Appendix D: Observation Log

Observer: _____

Site: _____

Date: _____   Time: _____

1. Surroundings – Other buildings nearby?

2. Accessibility – Parking lot? Bus stop?

3. Building – Age? Size? Number of floors? Shared with other agencies?

4. Site – Hours open? Number of classrooms? Lunch facilities? Library? Lockers? Noise? Lighting?

5. Educational Materials – What is available (textbooks, pencils, staplers, etc.)?

6. Technology – Number of computers? Software? Age? Other forms of technology available (iPads, projectors, etc.)?

7. Services/Resources – What is available (counseling, child care, assistance with search for employment or further education, fliers for other agencies, etc.)?

8. Staff – Number? Gender? Race/ethnicity? Positions? What are they doing?

9. Students – Number? Gender? Race/ethnicity? What are they doing? Interacting with staff? Interacting with other students?