Abstract of the Dissertation

School-Based Accountability Indicators as Predictors of Academic

Performance and Adequate Yearly Progress

This study is focused on the aspect of the No Child Left Behind Act that requires

states to include a secondary academic indicator in the accountability systems related to

measures of Adequate Yearly Progress. 369 public schools in North Carolina were used

for the study.

Both hierarchical simple and multiple regression were used to assess the

relationships between four predictor variables - attendance rate, teacher certification,

classes taught by highly qualified teachers, and class size. Of these four indicators,

attendance rate is generally considered a student-based variable, while the other three are

considered school-based. Academic performance in reading and mathematics were used

as criterion variables. This study focused on school-based performance variables as a

viable secondary academic indicator based on the fact that they are within the purview of

schools and school districts and, therefore, can be rigorously monitored and controlled.

The results of F tests show that all four predictor variables have unique predictive

utilities with academic performance in reading and mathematics while the values of R^2

change and the Pearson regression coefficients indicate that teacher certification has the

most predictive relationship with academic performance. The study also found that

attendance rate has a predictive relationship with academic performance while controlling

for any of the other three predictor variables, thereby indicating that it is not dispensable

in any education accountability mix that includes one of the other three predictor

variables. Consequently, and particularly in the light of theoretical and practical underpinnings, teacher certification will make the most significant positive contribution to student achievement and should, therefore, be the most valuable secondary indicator even though attendance rate should remain an essential requirement of a state's accountability system.

The unique position of teacher certification as a viable secondary academic indicator has both research and policy implications – particularly in the area of capacity building - in an era when making Adequate Yearly Progress and meeting the No Child Left Behind requirement for "highly qualified" teachers have risen to the forefront as critical indices for closing the achievement gap.