A MIXED METHODS STUDY EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS REGARDING GRADE RETENTION OF KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE STUDENTS IN RURAL IDAHO DISTRICTS

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT

DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Wendy Moore, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education with a major in Educational Leadership and titled A MIXED METHODS STUDY EXPLORING THE PERCEPTION OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS REGARDING RETENTION OF KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE STUDENTS IN RURAL IDAHO DISTRICTS has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to the educators and students in rural districts. Education has always been a passion of mine and it is because of the students and staff I have had the privilege to work with and serve over the past 28 years. Students in many rural districts do not always have the resources and advantages available in larger districts, but the benefits of being a member of small community and school district can be significant. I would like to dedicate this paper to those children I have been blessed to work with, for they have made me into the educator that I am today.

ABSTRACT

Thousands of students across the United States are retained annually in their current grade level for a variety of reasons, but primarily retention is due to academic grade level performance, on local or state standardized tests. The push for higher student accountability has led states and school districts to implement intervention policies to try to bridge the gap for under achieving students. This study focuses on the perceptions of administrators in rural districts and the pros and cons of grade level retention in primary grades. Although there is no one factor able to determine the success or failure of grade level retention as a primary grade level intervention, key findings from the study identify retention is used frequently as an intervention among many rural districts.

Findings from this study indicate that there are three main reasons administrators retain students: 1) allow students time to mature, 2) academically more than two grade levels behind peers, and 3) allow students additional time to mature and catch up with peers. Administrators indicated that besides social demographics, social maturity played a large role in a student's readiness for a formal education.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Within any grade level or classroom there is typically a large range of ability in student academic achievement. In many school systems across the nation, one response or intervention for primary age students who are struggling academically or socially is retention. Retention is when struggling or at-risk students are kept in a given grade level, in hopes of providing them the "gift of time" or time to "catch up" with their peers, with the intent of increasing their readiness to understand the academic curriculum (Martin, 2011; Range, Dougan & Pijanowski, 2011; Range, Holt, Pijanowski & Young, 2012; Wu, West & Hughes, 2008). Although there is a great deal of research showing predominately negative effects regarding grade level retention in urban areas, there are relatively few studies addressing the effects on small rural districts (Marrs, Hemmert & Jansen, 2007; Roderick, 1995; Stone & Engel, 2007; Vaughn & Saul, 2013).

According to Idaho Code §33-319, Idaho defines school districts as "rural" if they are able to meet one of the following requirements: 1) district must have fewer than twenty (20) students per square mile within the boundaries of the school district, or 2) based on most recent census numbers, the county in which the district resides must have less than twenty-five thousand (25,000) residents (Idaho Department of Education, 2009). According to data listed on the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) website under Rural Education (2015), 114 of the 154 districts within Idaho qualify as "rural". Using these most recent figures from the SDE (2015), 74% of the districts in Idaho are considered "rural". Idaho's K-12 longitudinal data system "Idaho System for Educational Excellence" (ISEE), indicates Idaho had approximately 34,000 kindergarten and first grade students enrolled in small-rural school districts throughout Idaho in 2014-2015. As approximately 5-10% of American students are retained annually

according to Science Daily (2009), Idaho would have had approximately 1,700 – 3,400 kindergarten and first grade students at risk of retention.

Rural districts tend to have different characteristics than their suburban and urban counterparts which is important when looking at the overall impact of issues such as retention on student achievement (Arnold, Biscoe, Farmer, Roberson, Dylan & Shapley, 2007; Marrs et al., 2007; Stelmach, 2011). Research identifies seven different characteristics creating potential challenges to students and districts in rural areas (Jimerson, 2005b). These characteristics specifically target student achievement, student retention, and governmental policies. The seven characteristics highlighted by Jimerson (2005b) are:

1) Rural districts tend be very small in census numbers. Low student enrollment numbers make it often difficult to make reliable and valid educational decisions.
2) Rural school districts are often located in low socio-economic areas and often have large numbers of at-risk students in their districts who are likely to be considered vulnerable to the "achievement gap".
3) Rural districts often struggle with financial stability, causing it to be difficult to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, and to offer additional intervention opportunities for struggling students.
4) Location of rural districts often limits extracurricular or academic opportunities for students outside of the school day.
5) Rural districts often struggle to maintain local control over federal or state control.
6) When populations in rural areas decline there is a direct correlation in the amount of state and federal funding received by local school districts, therefore impacting educational programs and opportunities for students left behind.

7) When rural populations increase, the number of diverse demographic populations often increases.

Additional financial stress is placed on rural districts trying to offer programs for a variety of ethnic groups. Rural districts often receive little to no funds to provide services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students (Jimerson, 2005b; Marrs et al., 2007; Vaughn & Saul, 2013). There are also documented concerns about being able to retain and recruit highly qualified teachers to rural areas (Jimerson, 2005b; Marrs et al., 2007; Vaughn & Saul, 2013).

This particular study looked at various rural characteristics and their potential effects on student retention. The focus of the study was on retention rates of kindergarten and first grade students. The intent was to specifically target rural districts and collect data regarding the following: a) predictive factors of student retention, b) overall perceptions of grade retention, c) perceived pros and cons regarding grade level retention, d) alternative interventions districts utilize when working with at-risk students, and e) whether rural districts utilize board policies or procedures regarding retention and/ or social promotion. All of these factors have strong implications on the perceptions administrators have regarding academic retention.

Statement of the Problem

Legislators have been advocating for standards based reform in education for many years and continue to implement new legislation to hold educators and students accountable for meeting specific education benchmark standards (Lazarus & Ortega, 2007; Picklo & Christenson, 2005; Powell, Higgins, Aram & Freed, 2009). Legislators across the nation, including Idaho, have tied accountability to student assessments at many different grade levels as well as tying teacher accountability directly to student academic growth. With this higher level of student, teacher, system accountability, and the implementation of No Child Left Behind

(NCLB) in 2001, the focus has become even stronger on making sure students at all grade levels are academically ready to move on from one grade level to the next.

Although NCLB does not require annual standardized testing until the third grade, educators across the United States are placing emphasis on primary grade performance because it is the foundation for all learning (Goldstein & McCoach, 2012). With the increased level of academic accountability, there has been increased focus on preparation of students in primary grades. At the time of this study, only 14 of 50 states in the United States require mandatory kindergarten attendance (Workman, 2016). Idaho does not require students to attend kindergarten. Idaho Code 33-201 states students must be enrolled in some type of formal education by the age of seven, but there is no requirement for education prior to age seven or for kindergarten specifically. This lack of mandatory kindergarten creates the issue that first grade may be the first year of formal education or schooling for some primary age students (Montes, Lotyczewski, Halterman & Hightower, 2011). Although NCLB emphasized the use of data based decision making and evidence based practices to improve student achievement and increase student growth, the issue of early intervention services as a means of increasing student achievement tends to be neglected. When considering interventions for struggling and at-risk students, NCLB emphasizes retention be considered as an intervention for students who are struggling academically by third grade (Lazarus & Ortega, 2007).

Grade retention is one of the most well-known and common forms of intervention for many at-risk kindergarten and first grade students across the United States (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2008; Raffaele Mendez, Kim, Ferron & Woods, 2015; Winsler, Hutchison, De Feyter, Manfra, Bleiker, Harman & Levitt, 2012). Although retention is widely used across the United States, as well as in many other countries, there is great debate as to whether or not retention is an effective

intervention for at-risk students, especially when considering future long term academic achievement (Holmes, 2006; Huddleston, 2014; Lorence, 2006; Range et al., 2012; Välijärvi, 2008).

The chronological age of students is a significant factor for students struggling in kindergarten (Furlong & Quirk, 2011; Lorence, 2006; Range et al., 2012). Teachers often reported using a student's chronological age as a consideration when determining whether or not to retain the student. (Furlong & Quirk, 2011). Supporters of retention often tie grade level retention to a maturational theory, that if students are retained in their current level, they will become one year older and gain in maturity, therefore gaining the necessary readiness to learn and ultimately increase their academic ability (Bettencourt, Gross, & Ho, 2016; Lorence, 2006; Range et al., 2012). Some educators believe the threat of retention may cause students to become more motivated academically (Range et al., 2012). Supporters of retention also tend to recommend retention be done in early primary grades, such as kindergarten and first grade, believing the social effects of retention are minimal if retention is done in the primary grades (Malone, West, Flanagan & Park, 2006; Range et al., 2012). This push to retain students at an early age is putting increased pressure on educators, parents and building administrators to make those crucial educational decisions early in the child's academic career. (Malone et al., 2006; Range et al., 2012).

Grade retention based on age is not a decision made only by educators. Parents are also known to impose a form of retention known as "academic redshirting" or delayed kindergarten entry (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2008; Furlong & Quirk, 2011; Hatcher, Nuner, & Paulsel, 2012; Range et al., 2011). Students who have summer birthdays are often considered young for a grade level, particularly entering kindergarten or first grade. It is believed students who are "young"

often struggle with the behavior skills necessary in a formal setting as well as the necessary social skills and/or maturity level to get along appropriately with fellow peers (Bettencourt et al., 2016; Cannon & Lipscomb, 2008; Furlong & Quirk, 2011; Range et al., 2011; Yesil, Dagli & Jones, 2011). To alleviate this issue, many parents have chosen the intervention of "academic redshirting", or delayed kindergarten entry. The premise behind academic redshirting is this extra calendar year will provide the child the necessary time to become one year older and more socially and academically prepared for formal schooling (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2008; Furlong & Quirk, 2011; Hatcher et al., 2012; Range et al., 2011; Yesil Dagli & Jones, 2011).

It was estimated by Range et al., (2011) that by 1995 approximately 9% of students in first and second grade had been academically redshirted prior to entering kindergarten. Considering that approximately 9% of students were redshirted by 1995, it is likely that those numbers have continued to grow with the implementation of NCLB in 2001 and the push for higher academic standards for students in the last century. Public sentiment appears to have accepted the belief that older children show a greater level of readiness than younger children, and therefore support interventions such as academic redshirting (Furlong & Quirk, 2011).

Academic redshirting is also considered to be primarily a middle class concept. Students who are most likely to be academically redshirted are predominately Caucasian males from higher income families, who typically have had access to a quality preschool environment (Hatcher et al., 2012; Range et al., 2011). Academic redshirting is not found to be a common intervention utilized by families with a lower socio-economic status. One factor for this discrepancy in social classes is that delaying entry to school can be an additional financial burden for families who are already struggling with low socio-economic status (SES) conditions (Hatcher et al., 2012; Range et al, 2011). Sending a child to school not only guarantees the child

will receive free educational services, but for many low income or working class families, the school serves as a free daycare and meal provider.

Parents of academically redshirted students typically cite two reasons for delaying their child's entry into kindergarten: 1) the child's birthday was in summer or late in the calendar year, or 2) they believe their child to be immature when compared to his/her peers (Bettencourt et al, 2016; Range et al., 2011; Yesil Dagli & Jones, 2012). The perception of parents who redshirt their child is that delaying their child's entry into kindergarten will allow their child the time to become ready for formal education. Students will be one year older, hopefully gaining one year of maturity, as well as time for additional cognitive, social, and physical development (Bettencourt et al., 2016; Hatcher et al., 2012; Martin, 2011; Range et al., 2011; Yesil Dagli & Jones, 2012). The viewpoint of delayed entry has become fostered even more, now that districts are imposing higher grade level expectations for all students, even in kindergarten and first grade. As a means of "protecting" their children, parents have begun to support the practice of delaying entry into kindergarten whenever possible (Furlong & Quirk, 2014; Hatcher et al., 2012; Grissom, 2004).

Although there are some supporters of grade level retention, there are just as many, if not more opponents of grade retention (Malone et al., 2006; Pipkin, Winters & Diller, 2007; Wu et al., 2008). Opponents of retention support the notion that retention may actually hinder students' academic achievement unless there are other interventions that are implemented in conjunction with the regular classroom instruction (Malone et al., 2006; Pipkin et al., 2007; Wu et al., 2008).

Grade level retention has been studied for numerous years, yet many researchers believe both educators and politicians continue to ignore the findings showing grade retention by itself

does not increase student academic performance (Lazarus & Ortega, 2007; Malone et al., 2006). Although literature on grade retention is extensive, the focus of studies has primarily been on the effects of students in later grades and in large urban districts. Due to geographic isolation, many rural areas are susceptible to being overlooked when it comes to educational or student needs (Stelmach, 2011). Current research does not provide a clear view of the effects and implications of retention on students in early grades, especially in small rural districts (Warren, Hoffman & Andrew, 2014). This gap in research could be considered quite important for states such as Idaho, which classifies at least 74 % of its districts as "rural" (Idaho State Department of Education, 2014).

Current studies have shown that rural districts are likely to have a high at-risk population, and research has shown a strong correlation between students who are considered at-risk and grade level retention (Marrs et al., 2007; Jimerson, 2005a; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). This study looked at the effects and implications of retention on Idaho's at-risk students, in kindergarten and first grade where the majority of retentions are likely to occur. Student "readiness" has been frequently studied to determine if there are various factors that affect school readiness based on ethnic or racial disparities (Ari, 2014; Furlong & Quirk, 2011; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). Along with ethnic and racial concerns, early literacy skills, and preschool experiences are important variables that need to be considered when predicting students' readiness and future academic success (Ari, 2014; Buyuktaskapu, 2012; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005).

Background

High stakes testing, demands for higher accountability, school district ratings, many other state and federal requirements have led many schools, districts, and states, including Idaho to retain more students as a means of attempting to raise academic achievement (Gray, 2006; Holmes, 2006; Huddleston, 2014; Marchant, Paulson, & Shunk, 2006). It is reported approximately 12.6 million students, or 30% of all students in the United States, attend rural school districts (Jimerson, 2005a). Of these 12.6 million students, 35% live in poverty and 58% of the schools are eligible for Title One federal funding (Jimerson, 2005a). In Idaho alone, 107 out of 146 districts are considered "rural" (Idaho State Department of Education, 2009).

The implementation and timelines of NCLB were demanding and challenging for all districts, but the dynamics and characteristics of small rural districts made implementation of these requirements even more problematic (Jimerson, 2005b; Marrs et al, 2007; Rose, 2004; Powell et al., 2009; Vaughn & Saul, 2013). One of the major challenges NCLB posed to small rural districts was the misrepresentation of small rural districts. There are many different definitions of rural, and often districts were misidentified when a definition was applied that did not appropriately describe the school district, in addition when the number in a subpopulation was too low to document student growth, academic successes and challenges may be misrepresented as well (Arnold et al., 2007; Jimerson, 2005b). Other challenges of small, rural districts include:

- Under identification of schools requiring additional assistance with professional development and other services. (Stelmach, 2011)
- Ability to maintain student and staff confidentiality. (Jimerson, 2005b)

- Recruitment and retention of staff eligible to meet highly qualified requirements. (Jimerson, 2005b)
- Financial concerns when trying to implement, meet or maintain programs to meet federal requirements. (Jimerson, 2005a; Jimerson, 2005b)
- Capacity to meet the basic requirements placed on districts who receive or received some type of sanction for not meeting minimum standards required by NCLB (Jimerson, 2005b; Marrs et al, 2007; Rose, 2004)
- Perception of administrators and fellow educators that local values, local control and local decision making are not priorities when attempting to meet the demands and requirements of the federal government (Holmes, 2006; Jimerson, 2005a)

Congress recognized or acknowledged that rural districts may need additional support in meeting NCLB requirements (Arnold et al., 2007). The federal government operates and funds a program known as the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) to support rural districts. REAP initiatives provide additional federal funding to rural districts which have enrollment below 600 pupils (Stelmach, 2011). This influx of additional funding allows administrators the opportunity to prioritize how these additional funds may be used to support educational needs within their local district. Funds available from REAP are often utilized to support district initiatives, professional development or educational programs that might otherwise not be provided to staff or students due to lack of regular district or state funding.

Although NCLB moved the pendulum of education towards higher expectations and higher levels of accountability, NCLB was very prescriptive and became more of a negative than positive federal mandate for many districts faced with various hurdles and problems associated

with implementation (Dever & Carlston, 2009; Gray, 2006; Jimerson, 2005a; Jimerson, 2005b; Newbold, 2004; Powell, Higgins, Aram & Freed, 2009; & Tyler, 2012). Recognizing a need for change, the Federal Government, including the Obama administration, began working with Congress in 2010 to craft a law that would create more equality among all students. On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed into effect the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), replacing NCLB and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (United States Department of Education, 2015). With a focus on preparing students for academic success, components of the ESSA appear to allow states more autonomy and flexibility in achieving academic success. The Act also includes expansion of access to high-quality, state funded preschool programs for children from low to moderate income families, as well as wrap around support for vulnerable at-risk communities through programs called Promise Neighborhoods (United States Department of Education, 2015). Student performance and school district ratings are state driven and allow for use of multiple measures, thus hopefully alleviating the pressure of high stakes testing on students in primary grades (United States Department of Education, 2015).

Research Questions

Grade level retention can cover many facets of education, from the age of retention, at risk student demographics, and socio-emotional outcomes to post high school implications. In this study regarding grade level retention in rural school districts, various research questions helped explore the topic in detail and narrow the focus of the study. The central research questions for this study included the following:

1. Do administrators of rural districts utilize board policies or procedures when making decisions regarding retention of kindergarten and first grade students?

2. What interventions are used in rural districts prior to retention during primary school years? Are interventions provided to students who have been retained? If so, what are the interventions?
3. Are there predictive factors of students who may be identified or favored for grade level retention?

Description of Terms

Several terms are repeatedly used in the research of grade level retention. Based on the literature referenced in this study, this section will define the terms as they are used in this study.

Academic Redshirting. Parents voluntarily delay entrance into kindergarten for their child allowing them more time to grow and develop (Range et al., 2011).

At-Risk. Term used to identify students who are in jeopardy of not passing a test, course or graduating from high school. Term may also be used to classify students based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, language or ability (Kearns, 2011).

Interventions. Specific programs designed to assist children in a specific area of need (Cowan & Maxwell, 2015).

Response to Intervention (RTI). Tiered instructional approach for students who are struggling academically (Martinez & Young, 2011).

Retention. Requiring students to repeat a grade level due to lack of academic progress or mastery of the curriculum (Range et al., 2011).

Rural. All territories, populations, housing units located outside of urban areas. Fewer than 2500 people in a defined geographical area (United States Census Bureau, 2007).

Rural districts. Small schools under 500 students K-12 or elementary schools under 200 students (Idaho State Department of Education, 2009).

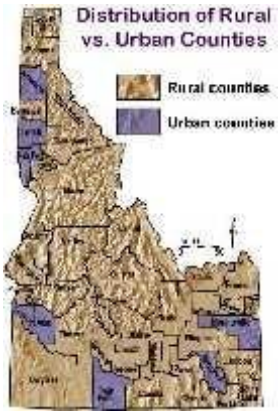
Social Promotion. Automatic promotion to the next grade each year (Martin, 2011).

Significance of the Study

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2013), public schools in rural areas enrolled 12 million students in 2011, representing 24% of total enrollment. According to the Idaho State Department of Education (2014), most recent data reports 44,707 students enrolled in kindergarten and first grade in Idaho public schools in FY 2015. With approximately 74% of Idaho students attending rural schools, it is appropriate to extrapolate that there are approximately 33,000 kindergarten and first grade students residing in small, rural districts throughout Idaho.

Figure 1.

State of Idaho – Distribution of Counties



Source: http://www.netstate.com/states/maps/id_maps.ht

As shown in Figure 1, the majority of Idaho would be considered rural. This number is substantial when considering almost ¾ of all students attending school are attending school in a rural district.

This study investigated possible strategies, tools or programs considered as alternative interventions for at-risk students attending rural school districts. In this context, a number of research questions were posed to identify the policies and procedures used in individual districts regarding retention; identifying factors that may predict which students are at risk of grade level retention and what interventions may be available in rural districts either pre or post retention to foster student success.

Along with the prior research that focuses on grade level retention and social promotion in larger suburban or urban districts, this study presents information that may be beneficial to the administrators and teachers who work with the approximately 12 million children in rural districts across the United States (NCES, 2013).

Overview of Research Methods

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to review how grade level retention potentially affects kindergarten and first grade students who attend rural districts throughout Idaho. The proposed outcome was to also identify other interventions and alternatives to retention which may be available to support students who are considered at-risk of retention.

The survey data obtained for this research study was obtained from surveys administered to participating elementary administrators in rural Idaho districts. Out of 24 rural Idaho districts asked to participate, twenty-one (21) districts agreed to participate in the research study. Participants consisted of 21 elementary principals or Superintendents who serve in a dual role.

The design of this research study included three main steps. Potential study participants were identified by data provided by rural education demographic reports located on the Idaho State Department of Education website. The list of all potential participants in rural districts was narrowed further by conducting a stratified sample of potential participants working specifically in public school districts (Creswell, 2003). Charter and private schools were not included in this study. A list of 24 potential candidates was compiled for initial contact. District superintendents of 24 potential districts were contacted to gain permission to work with elementary administrators during the study. Once permission was gained from district superintendents, elementary administrators were contacted for consent (see Appendix E).

The second step included the collection of data. Administrators who were approved for participation were contacted via email regarding the study. Administrators were interviewed via phone or given a direct link to interview questions to answer via email (see Appendix H). All administrators were given a direct link to participate in the Qualtrics survey (see Appendix K). The final step in the study was the actual data analysis of survey responses. Perceptual data was categorized for similarities and differences. Survey responses also included open-ended responses submitted by participants for consideration at the end of the survey. All active participants who wished to obtain a copy of study results were asked to provide contact information at the end of the study.

This study included mixed methods of data collection. Both qualitative and quantitative designs were used to collect information regarding number of students' retained annually, demographic information, as well as how decisions are made whether to retain or promote students. Qualitative questions were inquiry-based to obtain information as to administrators' perceptions regarding reasons for retention, as well as to gain insight into personal biases that

may affect a decision to retain. Quantitative data was obtained as to whether rural districts operated under a board policy or procedure when making decisions regarding grade level retention, and the types of possible interventions available to rural districts in lieu of grade retention including Response to Intervention (RTI), a tiered approach to instruction for struggling students; Title One, a federally funded program to help low SES students meet academic requirements; full-day kindergarten; pre-kindergarten; as well as extended day or afterschool programs.

Chapter II

The Literature Review

Introduction

No precise number of students retained annually in the United States is on record; however, significant research is available regarding grade level retention policies as well as the multiple effects of grade level retention on students in grades K-12 (Holmes, 2006; Huddleston, 2014; Martin, 2011; Norton, 2011; Stone & Engel, 2007). A large majority of the current research regarding retention focuses on the effects of retention on K-12 students who may be considered at-risk in large urban districts, yet few studies have focused solely on at-risk students coming from small rural districts (Holmes, 2006; Marrs et al., 2007). This review focused specifically on the effects of grade level retention in rural districts throughout Idaho with the primary focus on students enrolled in kindergarten and first grade.

Grade level retention is a widely used means of intervention across the entire United States for students who are struggling academically or considered at risk of academic failure. This chapter focuses specifically on: 1) grade level retention policies and procedures of rural districts, 2) predictive factors which may be considered indicators of grade level retention, 3) possible pros and cons of grade level retention in rural districts, and 4) other possible alternatives or interventions which may be used in lieu of grade level retention. The increased emphasis on grade retention as an intervention is believed to be directly related to the recent push to end social promotion (Holmes, 2006; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Range et al., 2011).

In an era emphasizing educational standards and increased accountability, a wide array of standards have emerged in the United States as academic benchmarks of whether students are proficient and if students should be promoted to the next grade level (Jimerson & Kaufman,

2003). Standardized test scores are utilized across the nation to determine levels of proficiency as well as the amount of individual student academic growth on a yearly basis. In some states, these one point in time measures are being used to determine whether students are promoted to the next grade level and whether educators are deemed proficient (Jimerson, 2005a; Kearns, 2011).

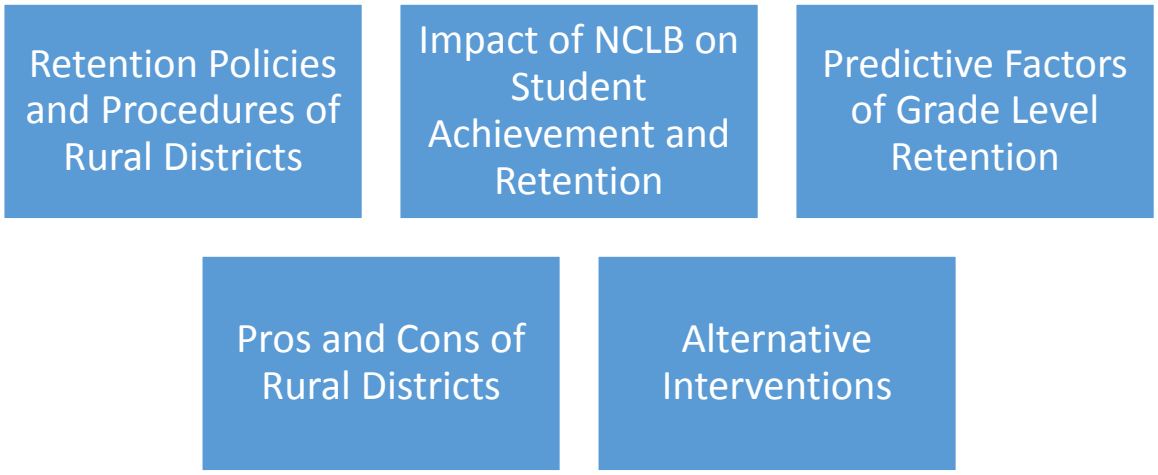
Federal legislation such as NCLB, adopted in 2001, explicitly recommended grade level retention for students in the third grade who were reading below grade level on the state standardized assessment (NCLB, 2001). By 2013, 13 states in the United States had adopted laws requiring schools to identify, intervene and possibly retain students who had failed their third-grade reading proficiency test, and many more states were considering similar policies (Layton, 2013). Although there is conflicting evidence regarding the effectiveness of retention in general, it is evident by the research there is still a strong push for grade retention to be utilized as an intervention over social promotion (Holmes, 2006; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Range et al., 2011).

Currently, momentum is growing in the United States for a higher level of accountability for students, teachers, and administrators (Kearns, 2011; Marchant et al., 2006; Rose, 2004). In the current climate of higher accountability, teachers and administrators are being held responsible to demonstrate adequate student growth or proficiency specifically in the areas of mathematics and reading to be deemed "proficient" as an educator. One concern about this push for accountability is more educators may be encouraged to retain students in primary grades, especially kindergarten through third grade (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Renaud, 2013). This push for accountability and student proficiency has also created more districts to be identified for improvement. Once identified, many districts may be forced to spend more money in areas that does not directly have any impact on student achievement (Jimerson, 2005a).

As shown in Figure 2, there are five categories addressed in the literature review. These categories highlight areas of concern or interest when looking at student retention in primary grade levels. Chapter 2 specifically reviewed other influential factors to be considered prior to determining whether a student should be retained at any grade level.

Figure 2.

Categories of Literature Review



Theoretical Framework

Understanding a child's "readiness" or cognitive ability to be successful in a formal school setting can be linked to Gesell's (1925) maturational-development theory. Gesell proposed a sequence of stages of child development based on a maturational theory. The maturational theory is based on the assumption that child development occurs over a period of time (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007). Gesell (1925) identified 10 developmental stages between the

ages of 6 months to 6 years that have an impact on how educators believe children develop readiness for school (Pickren, Dewsbury & Wertheimer, 2012).

Maturational theory is believed to be responsible for programs such as pre-kindergarten or pre-first grade where children who need an additional year to mature. Practitioners who operate from a maturational theory viewpoint also consider students with summer birthdays as less ready for formal instruction, thus encouraging interventions such as academic redshirting. The premise is they are giving the student the "gift of time" to mature and become developmentally ready to attend school (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; Hatcher et al., 2012).

Retention Policies and Procedures of Rural Districts

In 2009, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) predicted approximately 10% of students in kindergarten through the eighth grade have been or will be retained at least once prior to graduation (NCES, 2009; Range et al, 2011; Science Daily, 2009). Several studies point to NCLB as the catalyst behind increased retention rates across the United States (Holmes, 2006; Huddleston, 2014; Kearns, 2011; Roderick et al., 2005). The renewed emphasis on national standards and accountability has increased pressure on educators to increase student achievement and in response, some districts have adopted strict promotion policies or even raised the age of school entry to end or deter social promotion, believing that students who begin school a year older will have a higher level of academic readiness. (Egley & Jones, 2004).

Policymakers often see grade level retention as a popular choice of intervention for low academic readiness, low test scores, and students who have not yet demonstrated academic proficiency (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). Grade level retention sends a strong message to education stakeholders indicating student achievement is considered of great importance. Grade

retention also provides a necessary focus for reform efforts which are easily understood among stakeholders. Public opinion tends to view retention as a justifiable consequence when students lag behind their classmates academically. Parents, teachers, and policy makers often believe that retention allows students the opportunity to "catch up" with their peers (Akmal & Larsen, 2004).

District data need to be considered as an integral tool for problem solving. Data needs to be collected and reviewed to make informed and accurate decisions on what is best for individual students who are struggling academically (Range et al., 2011). For students in kindergarten, it is recommended districts collect specific information prior to making any decisions regarding grade level retention. It is recommended districts collect 1) early childhood screening scores, if available, 2) universal screening scores, 3) student's birthdate, 4) physical size in relation to students' peers, and 5) overall student demographics (Range et al., 2011). For students in first grade, it is recommended additional information be gathered. Information needs to include: a) formative and summative data in multiple subject areas, b) information from previous grade level teachers, and c) a minimum of two classroom observations to collect anecdotal information regarding student behavior and social skills. Along with this collection of formative, summative, anecdotal and demographic data, it is also recommended districts utilize all other possible resources, including referrals for special education services, prior to recommending grade level retention (Range et al., 2011).

The elimination of personal biases is also important when making decisions such as grade level retention. Previous research regarding teacher and administrator perceptions indicate the majority of the teachers surveyed were influenced more by their peers than by any of the research available (Akmal & Larsen, 2004). Teachers, more often than not, recommended retention for students of similar characteristics such as being young, male, minority status, and

having a low socio-economic status (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Stone & Engel, 2997; Vang, 2005). Administrators' views were noted to be similar to teachers however, administrators identified parental support as a key indicator of identifying which students were good candidates for retention (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). To eliminate any personal biases, it was also recommended decisions regarding grade level placement be made with the input of many different stakeholders. The recommended stakeholder group consists of an administrator, counselor, previous teachers, and parents (Akmal & Larsen, 2004).

Although many district policies may also include additional factors such as attendance, age, and behavior, this study will focus primarily on how rural districts, which may or may not have retention policies in place determine which students are retained in primary grades, what interventions may be available, and how retention may affect students who are considered academically at risk of failure in kindergarten and first grade.

Predictive Factors of Grade Retention

Reviewed literature suggests there may be various predictive factors associated with grade level retention (Lemon & Watson, 2011; Malone et al., 2006; Picklo & Christensen, 2005). Research suggests kindergartners who repeat a grade are more likely to be male, young, have a lower IQ, likely to be more transient, have parents with lower socio-economic status, and less likely to attend a preschool program due to economic constraints (Malone et al., 2006; Jimerson, 2005a). Rural districts often have families with low SES and low educational attainment compared to urban districts, which puts students in rural districts at a higher level of risk for grade level retention (Jimerson, 2005b). Families identified as having lower SES tend to have lower test scores than their grade level peers coming from a higher SES (Akmal & Larsen, 2004;

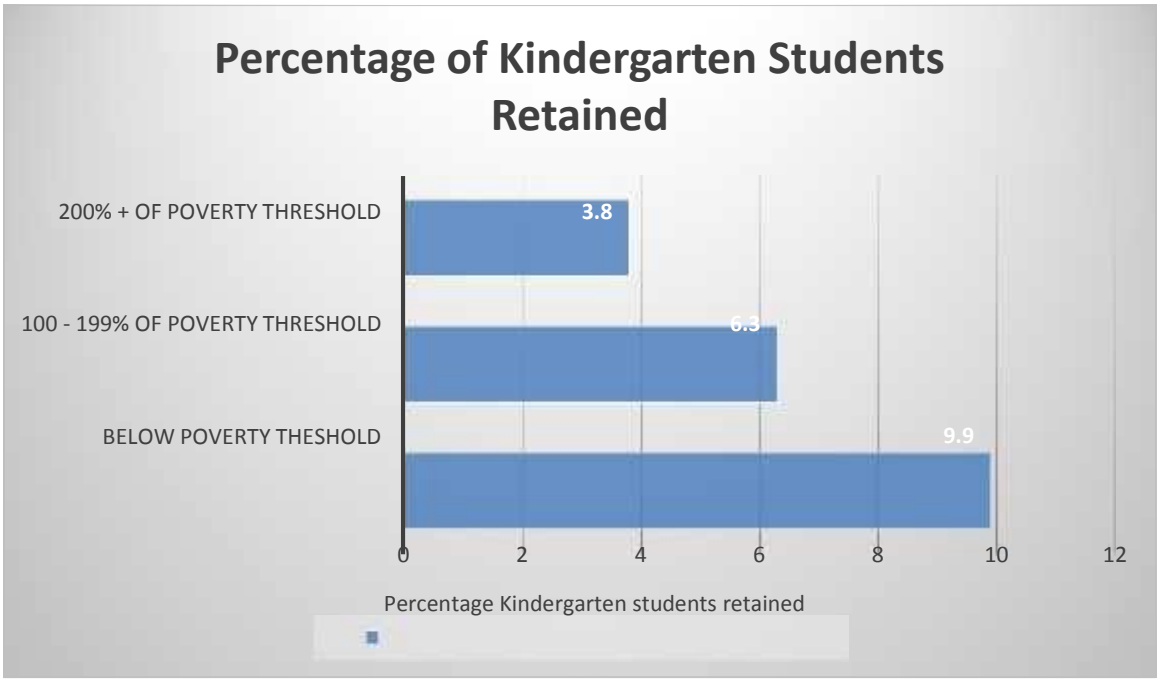
Jimerson, 2005b). When addressing standardized testing and educational outcomes, children coming from a lower SES are more likely to drop out, fail tests or fall behind their grade level peers in school. These demographic features have possible implications for educational practice, policy and theories of child and academic development (Kearns, 2011). This correlation of low SES and academic success ties directly to a high percentage of students who are poor or disadvantaged being retained annually.

The National Center for Statistics (2013) conducted an early childhood study regarding longitudinal retention data, and noted that when comparing kindergarten students based on socioeconomic conditions there was a significant correlation between the numbers of students retained and their economic condition. In the study 10.1% of the kindergarten students retained in 2010 fell in the lowest 20% regarding economic status (National Center for Statistics, 2013). The percentage of students retained dramatically decreased as the economic status of the kindergarten students' families increased. When economic status increased to the middle 60%, the percentage of kindergarten students retained decreased to 5.7%, then decreased even further to 3.2% when the economic status reached the highest 20% (National Center for Statistics, 2013). This data is consistent with the data regarding students of poverty.

Figure 3 below indicates the percentages of kindergarten students retained based on the standard poverty threshold. Kindergarten students living below the federal poverty threshold were retained at an overall percentage of 9.9%. At the 100-199% of the poverty threshold the percent retained decreased to 6.3%, and at 200%+ of the poverty threshold the percent of retention decreased to 3.8% (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Figure 3.

Retention based on Poverty Threshold



Although IQ and academic achievement is important, parents have a significant role in making the decision whether a student is retained (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). In environments where educators did not create a climate promoting intrinsic motivation for academic achievement, encouragement from parents or adult role models, and other outside sources increased the likelihood students would ultimately achieve more academic success (Akmal & Larsen, 2004).

Although parental support of academic achievement is important when considering retention or promotion, it is also important to note parents play a direct role in student's academic success in many different ways. Multiple factors including student demographics create an at-risk learning environment for students (Vang, 2005). Students are often identified

at–risk due to limited English proficiency where English is a second language, SES, race, and geographic location (Vang, 2005).

Table 1 and Table 2 below show parents have direct influence on the indicators of student retention in various ways including educational attainment, employment, and household type (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Table 1 provides percentages for each subgroup based on employment status of parents if they are in a two-parent household, single parent household, or children who are not being raised by either of their biological parents (Table 1).

Table 1.

Parents' Employment Status

Status	Early Kindergarten Entrance	On-time Kindergarten Entrance	Delayed Kindergarten Entrance	Retained Kindergartners
Parent Employment Status – Fall 2010				
Two parents	1.8%	87.3%	6.4%	4.5%
Both employed full time	1.5%	88.1%	6.8%	3.5%
One employed full time – one part time	2.4%	86.8%	3.5%	7.3%
One employed full time – one not in labor force	1.1%	86.8%	6.7%	5.4%
Other combination	1.7%	84.8%	5.8%	7.7%
Single Parent				
Employed full time	1.6%	88.4%	4.1%	5.9%
Employed part time	1.0%	87.6%	5.5%	5.8%
Looking for work	†	84.3%	6.1%	8.8%
Not in labor force	†	83.0%	5.7%	9.9%
No parents in household	†	82.2%	3.8%	12.1%

Note: † means reporting standards not met. Too few cases for reliable estimate or coefficient of variation is 50 percent or greater. Kindergarten repeaters are students who entered kindergarten at an early age and were retained for a second year.
Adapted from U.S Department of Education. National Center for Educational Statistics, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011 (ECLS-K: 2011). Preliminary Restricted-Use Data File. (This table was prepared January, 2013).

Table 2 examines the educational attainment of the students' parents as a characteristic of students considered at-risk or likely to face retention (Table 2). Table 2 specifically looks at the percentage of students retained depending on whether their parents completed high school, attended any college beyond high school, or achieved a post-secondary degree.

Table 2.

Parents' Level of Education

Parent Characteristics	Early Kindergarten Entrance	On-time Kindergarten Entrance	Delayed Kindergarten Entrance	Retained Kindergartners
Parents' Highest Level of Education				
Less than High school \6\	2%	82.7%	4.7%	10.7%
High school completion	1.1%	86.3%	4.4%	8.1%
Some College	1.0%	88.4%	4.8%	5.9%
Bachelor Degree	1.8%	85.3%	8.4%	4.5%
Any graduate degree	2.2%	87.0%	7.4%	3.4%

Note: † means reporting standards not met. Too few cases for reliable estimate or coefficient of variation is 50 percent or greater. Kindergarten repeaters are students who entered kindergarten at an early age and were retained for a second year. \6\ Parents' highest level of education is the highest level of education achieved by either of the parents or guardians in a two-parent household, by the only parent in a single-parent household, or by any guardian in a household with no parents.
Adapted from U.S Department of Education. National Center for Educational Statistics, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011 (ECLS-K: 2011). Preliminary Restricted-Use Data File. (This table was prepared January, 2013).

As shown in Table 2 the higher educational attainment of the parent, the lower the percentage of students who are retained. There is a 4.7% to 7.3% decrease in the number of retained students when comparing a parent with graduate degree to a parent who has only completed high school or has less than a high school diploma. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2013) also identifies a higher percentage of students who are delayed entry into school by parents who have a bachelor degree or higher, thus giving validity to Range's statement regarding academic redshirting or delayed entry to kindergarten as an intervention commonly used by parents of a higher SES and educational background (Hatcher et al., 2012; Range et al., 2011).

Parents' involvement in school and their attitude towards their child's education plays a significant role in determining whether a student will be retained (Ferrara, 2015; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). Research supports the importance of parent involvement as a key factor, noting that parents who are more involved in their child's education tend to be stronger advocates for their child and are less likely to agree to retention (Ferrara, 2015; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). When parents attempt to help their children learn, there appears to be a lasting effect on student achievement (Ferrara, 2015). This appears to be consistent with many studies exploring interventions having a parent involvement component (Bukuktaskapu, 2012; Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francois & Kusorgbor, 2010; Voyles, 2012)

Ethnicity is another characteristic documented as a predictive factor for grade retention (Vang, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). As shown in Table 3, the highest number of retentions occurred in Black, Hispanic, and Native American/ Native Alaskan children. When compared to the percentage of white students retained the likelihood of a child of color being retained is 3% higher. Today, English as a secondary language (ESL) learners are one of the largest and fastest growing segments of the total population in America (Vang, 2005). A large number of these students are considered at risk because their cultural and linguistic background puts them at a distince disadvantage in America's public school system (Vang, 2005).

Black and Hispanic children had the lowest percentage rates of academic redshirting (see Table 3), whereas, Whites and Asians who had the ighes percentages of delated entrance into kindergarten had the lowest percentages of students retained a second year.

Table 3.

Ethnicity and Retention

Status	Early Kindergarten Entrance	On-time Kindergarten Entrance	Delayed Kindergarten Entrance	Retained Kindergartners
Race and Ethnicity of Student				
White	1.0%	86.5%	7.4%	5.1%
Black	1.8%	85.4%	3.1%	9.7%
Hispanic	1.7%	88.3%	3.7%	6.3%
Asian	5.1%	84.0%	6.1%	4.8%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	†	90.3%	†	†
American Indian/ Native Alaskan	†	81.5%	7.9%	8.1%
Two or More	1.5%	86.4%	6.6%	5.5%

Note: † means reporting standards not met. Too few cases for reliable estimate or coefficient of variation is 50 percent or greater. Kindergarten repeaters are students who entered kindergarten at an early age and were retained for a second year.
Adapted from U.S Department of Education. National Center for Educational Statistics, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011 (ECLS-K: 2011). Preliminary Restricted-Use Data File. (This table was prepared January, 2013).

As shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3, ethnicity, SES, and parents' educational attainment are all predictive factors characteristic of students who are considered at-risk for retention.

Pros and Cons of Rural Districts

All states in the United States are concentrating efforts to meet the federal requirements of NCLB (Jimerson 2005b, Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Kearns, 2011). The implementation provisions can be quite demanding and challenging for many districts. This review will focus on the impact both positive and negatives of small rural school districts.

According to the Idaho State Department of Education (2015), 114 of Idaho's 154 school districts are considered rural, so the financial struggle of many rural districts may have a significant impact on the state as a whole (Jimerson, 2005b). Findings indicate rural districts often have a higher percentage of poor families and minority students than their urban counterparts (Jimerson, 2005b). Students coming from poor and minority ethnic groups are traditionally vulnerable to the achievement gap and therefore potentially at risk of interventions such as grade retention (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Warren et al., 2014).

Low student numbers in small rural districts likely make it difficult for administrators and educators to make reliable decisions for programs based on academic performance alone (Jimerson, 2005b). Small rural districts have much lower student counts than their urban counterparts and therefore receive less overall state and federal funding, early intervention programs, staff, curriculum and interventions (Jimerson, 2005b). This lack of funding has many implications for issues such as retention. Districts must have the funds able to provide the necessary supports and interventions to at-risk students to ensure student readiness.

Not only are small rural districts unable to compete financially with larger districts when trying to recruit teachers based on competitive salaries and benefit packages, but the ability to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers for long period of time also becomes an obstacle for many smaller districts (Arnold et al., 2007; Jimerson, 2005). Rural districts tend to have a higher percentage of at-risk students who need to have a strong support system of interventions, including teachers who are well trained in curriculum and intervention services. With high turnover of staff and inability to compete with larger districts for a large talent pool, this becomes an issue for rural districts (Arnold et al., 2007; Jimerson, 2005b).

Other obstacles of rural districts pertaining to retention deal more with the social-emotional outcomes of grade retention. Although students who reside in small rural districts may

face social outcomes associated with retention such as peer alienation and a lack of privacy there are many positives contributing to the social-emotional needs for rural students (Marrs et al., 2007). There are three types of engagement rural districts can foster: behavioral, emotional and cognitive (Marrs et al., 2007). The social structure of rural districts also tends to allow for students to form close relationships with peers and teachers (Marrs et al., 2007). The ability to build relationships builds a sense of community, and this sense of community has the potential to encourage and foster student engagement, providing opportunities for students to build a community of support for students who may otherwise be considered at-risk (Marrs et al., 2007). Although these close-knit social groups may be advantageous for some students, for others it may cause additional stress (Marrs et al., 2007). Students who are socially insecure may feel an additional level of stress with this type of close knit community, whereas students who are socially confident can cope with the dynamics of such tight knit relationships. Relationships with teachers and peers in small rural districts can be both supportive and difficult depending on the nature of the relationship and the culture of the district (Marrs et al., 2007).

Impact of Retention on School Achievement on Kindergarten & First Grade Students

There is a strong debate supporting the idea retention may likely have long term effects on students' self-esteem and attachment to school, and it may contribute to a likeliness of increasing frustration and disengagement with teachers as well as peers (Lorence, 2006; Roderick, 1995; Roderick et al., 2005). Grade retention sends a strong message to students and families indicating the child is not capable of meeting grade level expectations even with interventions, because they do not have the skills or maturity level necessary to be academically successful (Roderick, 1995; Välijärvi & Sahlberg, 2008). Students who experience grade retention often are labeled as failing, which has a strong negative impact on the student's self-esteem, level of motivation and effort to learn (Roderick, 1995; Välijärvi & Sahlberg, 2008). Although the majority of research policies remains a source of debate regarding the pros and cons, retention in kindergarten has often been viewed in a different light than older grade levels,

because the discussion of retaining kindergarten students focuses more on the developmental readiness or maturity level of the individual student.

Other researchers who have examined the effects of retention report even when there are short-term positive results, they are not sustained over time (Roderick et al., 2005; Välijärvi & Sahlberg, 2008). When looking at kindergarten and early primary grade students, the past century's research does not demonstrate academic advantages for students who are retained in their grade level when compared to their low-achieving promoted peers (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Marrs et al., 2007). Of the 54 studies reviewed by Holmes (2006) between the period of 1925 and 1999, Jimerson and Kaufman (2003) report the research consistently showed negative effects on student achievement when retained students were socially promoted. Of nine studies reporting positive short term achievement, benefits of retention were shown to diminish over time and disappear in later grades (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). In one recent meta-analysis, data indicated only 5% of the 169 analyses of academic achievement outcomes resulted in outcomes which favored retained students, while 47% resulted in outcomes favoring low achieving peers who were promoted (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). Findings indicate the low achieving promoted students consistently outperformed the retained students in core subjects such as language arts and reading (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). These findings are in direct contrast to the maturational-development theory, which would indicate student growth after students have had additional time to mature therefore developing skills necessary to be successful academically. In summary of the 700 analyses performed over the past 75 years, research has failed to verify the use of grade retention as an intervention to increase academic outcomes (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003).

Compared to the amount of studies reviewing academic achievement, fewer studies have addressed the social and behavioral outcomes of retained students. Repercussions of retention can have emotional, social, and financial implications for the student, the family, and the community as a whole (Jimerson, 2005b). Of the most recent studies, Jimerson and Kaufman

(2003) reported out of 148 analyses of socio-emotional adjustment outcomes of retained students when compared to a matched comparison group of promoted peers, 6% resulted in favoring thestudents who were retained and 9% favored the promoted peer group. The majority of the analyses indicated no significant differences between retained students and those who were socially promoted (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Range et al., 2011).

In 1995, findings from a Youth Transition study found a single year of grade level retention increases a students' risk of dropping out of school by 40-50% and two years of retention increases the risk to 90% (Roderick, 1995). Findings from 2004 indicate students enrolled in kindergarten can expect as many as 50% of those students to be retained at least once before graduation and/or dropping out of school (Akmal & Larsen, 2004). Grade retention has often been identified as the single, most powerful forecaster of students dropping out of school (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Martin, 2011; Range et al., 2011).

In addition to increasing the risk of dropping out of school, grade retention has also been identified with other long-term negative outcomes (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Martin, 2011; Range et al., 2011). Although many parents and educators believe in providing young students an additional year to mature or grow skills necessary for academic success, studies have found students who are retained and become over-age compared to their peers face additional social and emotional risks (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Roderick et al., 2005). These adverse effects include not only dropping out of school, but also include more behavior problems, higher levels of emotional issues, more substance abuse, and reckless behaviors (Lemon & Watson, 2011; Lynch, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative that educators as well as legislators to focus on intervention strategies not requiring a student to be retained.

Alternative Interventions

The most common cause for student retention is academic failure (Martin, 2011; Range et al., 2011; Norton, 2011). There are many alternative strategies which may be used in lieu of retention. High performance interventions designed to focus on preventing the cycle of failure can easily replace the intervention of retention. Alternatives to retention having been proposed or implemented over time are: accountability, clear and consistent educational standards, early intervention programs, extended learning time, increasing the number of highly qualified teachers (HQT), mentoring, multi-age classrooms, Title One, and Response to Intervention (RTI), to name a few.

Although there is a significant need for intervention strategies, one of the largest hurdles with applying alternative approaches is that many interventions currently available and recommended by authorities in education are not considered comprehensive, do not meet new state standards, and do not meet the basic needs of the whole child (Lynch, 2014). Many intervention strategies tend to have a limited scope, not taking into account the students' self-efficacy and how they perform overall academically (Lynch, 2014). Since no one strategy is the silver bullet, it is suggested districts utilize multiple interventions to improve overall academic performance and therefore strive to meet the needs of the whole child (Pipkins et al., 2007).

One of the most pressing issues for administrators, teachers, and districts today is the need to find effective research-based interventions that can be used for students at risk of failure regardless of race, ethnicity, or SES (Marrs et al., 2007). There are four strategies districts have been recommended to utilize to improve instruction and learning (Picklo & Christenson, 2005). The four strategies provided to districts are: 1) improve the quality of professional development

opportunities for teachers, which ensures teachers have the skills and resources needed to meet individual student needs; 2) identify and make organizational changes necessary to support intensive instruction; 3) utilize evidence based strategies and interventions, making them available to all struggling students at an early age; and 4) use formative and summative classroom assessments to inform teaching and instruction on a regular basis (Picklo & Christenson, 2005).

The first steps in preventing failure and retention are tied closely with early intervention services (Picklo & Christenson, 2005). Many alternatives to retention have been created and implemented over time, but the current push is to provide support and prevention services to all students at an early age regardless of ethnicity or SES. One such intervention is universal preschool or prekindergarten. Universal pre-kindergarten offers an opportunity to engage students in a culture of learning at an early age (Lazarus & Ortega, 2007). The premise behind pre-kindergarten is that it will likely increase academic readiness for kindergarten, strengthen beginning mathematics and literacy skills and in turn lead to greater academic success in later years. It was concluded preschool children who listened to storybook lessons were more successful in developing oral language skills than a control group in kindergarten and first grade (Slaby, Loucks & Stelwagon, 2005). Pre-kindergarten also allows an opportunity for primary educators to universally prescreen students to identify potential students who may be identified as at-risk in the future (Barnett & Belfield, 2006; Tyler, 2012).

As suggested by research conducted by Tyler (2012) and Voyles (2012), if early intervention such as pre-kindergarten was made available to all students, students will receive intervention services early, potentially avoiding academic failure and negative outcomes associated with retention. A significant amount of research finds early identification and

intervention are critical keys to improving student achievement, decreasing the need for later remediation or interventions such as grade retention (Slaby et al., 2005).

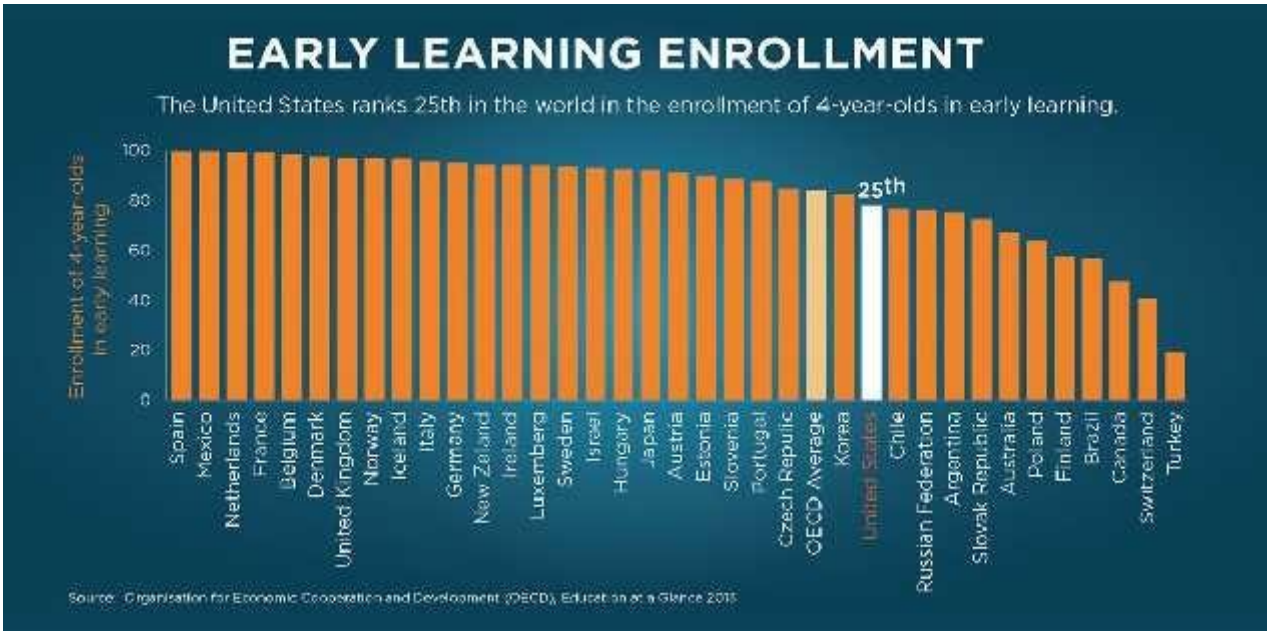
As districts consider establishing or expanding preschool opportunities for at risk students or for their communities in general, research indicates several factors needing to be addressed prior to implementation (Slaby et al., 2005). Every program funded by public dollars, no matter how successful, will be scrutinized in this era of tight finances. Allocating funding to establish or expand preschool programs means funds will ultimately have to be taken from another funding source. Taking revenue from other programs, could lead to loss of jobs, elimination of other important necessary programs, and possibly increased class sizes. All of these issues have the potential to impact the community, and concerns will need to be addressed. A rationale for creating or expanding a preschool program will need to be presented to the community, and community support garnered for this type of higher-order change to be a viable reality. Without support and a general understanding of the benefits of preschool programs, change will be difficult. Hopefully, the added value of a successful preschool will persuade opponents and skeptics. In any situation, administrators must make their needs public along with a financial commitment to support the program long term (Slaby et al., 2005). Once a commitment is made for preschool, it is critical that permanent funding be established (Slaby et al., 2005).

Research shows that the achievement gap among children of poverty may be decreased if children of low SES are provided the opportunity to attend a structured preschool providing a safe, nurturing environment with developmentally appropriate curriculum (Slaby et al. 2005). According to the United States Department of Education (2013) there is a large need for high quality, early learning programs throughout the United States. As shown in Figure 4, data from

the National Center of Statistics (2010) shows fewer than three in 10 four-year olds in the United States are currently enrolled in high-quality preschool programs. Studies, such as Barnett and Belfield (2006) have shown primary age children who have well rounded, early learning experiences are better prepared for academic success in kindergarten and beyond, yet the United States ranks 25th in the world when looking at enrollment of four-year old in early learning programs (Figure 4).

Figure 4.

Early Learning Enrollment



Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Education at a Glance, 2013

For children in the United States who do have early learning opportunities, quality can vary widely and access to high-quality programs can be even more limited to students from low-income, rural communities (Barnett & Belfield, 2006; Slaby et al., 2005). Studies have shown

small gains have been made with preschool interventions, and these small gains have been found to be sustainable over time (Slaby et al., 2005). Although not all of the negative effects have been reduced, the achievement gap can be closed for children of poverty and preschool is identified as one of the best methods to achieve this goal (Slaby et al., 2005).

Although data shows there are viable concerns with retention as a standard policy for intervention, there continues to be a disconnect between research, policy, and practice, including a great divide between the views of researchers, views of practitioners, and the public (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). The United States Department of Education (2013) estimates for every public dollar spent on preschool, the return is approximately $7 through a reduced need for spending on other services, such as remediation, grade repetition, and special education as well as increased productivity and increased earning for these children as they become adults. Doing better is more than just a moral and educational imperative; it's called "smart government" (Slaby et al., 2005).

In 2013, President Obama proposed a voluntary, federal-state partnership called "Preschool for All" (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). This program was designed to be completely voluntary and administered by the Department of Education. The program was to provide all low to moderate SES four-year olds with quality, tuition free preschool. Funded jointly by individual states and the federal government, the program would have promoted access to full-day kindergarten and encourage districts to expand high quality preschool programs to include middle class families and children under the age of four. Under the President's current proposal, Idaho is estimated to receive $19,500,000 in funding if it agrees to participate in the Preschool for All program and is willing to fund an estimated state match of $1,900,000. It is estimated "Preschool for All" would serve 2,381 Idaho children coming from low- and

moderate-income families within the first year alone. The estimate of 2,381 children comes directly from the Idaho State Department of Education website and is based on Idaho's current population of four-year-olds in families at or below the 200% federal poverty level (United States Department of Education, 2013).

The United States Department of Education (2013) estimates the price tag for this initiative over the first 10 years to be approximately $75 billion. The anticipated costs for these programs would be offset by raising federal tobacco taxes (United States Department of Education, 2013). To be eligible for these funds, states would have to demonstrate high program standards, the ability to join preschool data with current K-12 data, and adhere to early learning and development standards, with the end goal being children will leave preschool and be successful in kindergarten (United States Department. of Education, 2013).

Conclusion

The repercussions of retention can have emotional, social, and financial implications for students, families, and communities. Although some studies have found benefits to retention (Lorence, 2014; Pipkins et al., 2007), the documented gains have not been substantiated or documented long-term without additional reinforcement to support the individual student.

The National Association of School Psychologists (2003) encourages schools and parents to seek alternatives to retention focusing specifically on the needs and instruction of struggling students (NASP, 2003). One of the most pressing issues for district administrators and classroom teachers today is the need to find effective research based interventions for students at risk of failure (Marrs et al., 2007). There are many alternative strategies which may be used in lieu of retention, however many strategies or interventions may cost money and/or

require additional training which many rural districts may not have available or be able to adequately fund.

Student intervention is critical to avoid failure and retention cannot be the only intervention option districts utilize. Although the need for various strategies is significant, Lynch (2004) maintains one of the greatest hurdles when applying alternate strategies is the strategies currently available and proposed by experts in education are not necessarily all-inclusive nor well thought out. Some strategies tend to limit the scope of student's needs, and many of the strategies do not take into account the students self-efficacy and how they perform overall (Lynch, 2014). It is important to look at the use of multiple interventions to improve student's overall academic performance (Pipkins et al., 2007).

An awareness of a student's overall, comprehensive needs will then likely provide an awareness of individual student needs. A student's overall education will be more successful the more awareness there is regarding the psychosocial, physical, and financial needs of the child (Lynch, 2014). Prior to recommending retention for any student input and support must come from not only teachers and administrators but include allowance for parent input as well (Lynch, 2014). This stakeholder collaboration is very important in reducing the barriers to student success.

As shown earlier in Tables 1, 2, and 3 there are many predictive factors associated with retention districts will need to consider to obtain a full picture of the dynamics causing the student to be at risk of academic failure. Schools need to be able to address any biases regarding what type of students are most at risk and address any type of socio-economic stigma associated with retention. Districts must be able to meet students' basic needs before any interventions are likely to be successful.

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to review how grade retention affects kindergarten and first grade students who attend rural districts in Idaho. Research has demonstrated grade retention may have significant negative effects on students who have been retained or "held back" (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Martin, 2011; Range et al., 2011). This specific study was designed to look at the number of students retained annually in kindergarten and first grade in rural districts, demographic characteristics that may predict students who may be at-risk of grade level retention, policies and procedures used throughout Idaho regarding grade level retention and possible interventions that may be used in lieu of retention prior to, or following retention.

Data obtained for this study was gathered from phone interviews, written responses and surveys administered to participating building administrators in rural districts throughout Idaho. Out of 24 rural Idaho districts asked to participate, 21 district Superintendents gave permission for building administrators to participate in the study (see Appendix C). Five of the participants in the study serve in a dual role of Superintendent/ Elementary Principal. Total participation consisted of 19 elementary principals or superintendents serving in a dual role. Administrators were asked to fill out an online survey, the Principals' Perceptions Regarding Grade Retention Survey (PPRGRS) which collected the perceptions of administrators regarding student retention and social promotion as interventions for struggling students, as well as demographic data regarding the district and the participant taking the survey (see Appendix K). The purpose of the PPRGRS was to determine the various policies, perceptions, number of students retained, possible interventions, and resources available to rural districts. Participants were also asked to

participate in a telephone interview to discuss district policies and procedures regarding student retention as well as provide an opportunity for any other open-ended conversation that may occur regarding student retention (see Appendix H). Five participants chose to answer the interview questions in written text versus a phone interview.

Research Design

The design of the study used mixed methods for data collection. According to Creswell (2003) the mixed methods approach "employs strategies of inquiry involving collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problem" (p.18).

The data in this study included both quantitative and qualitative information, through the PPRGRS, and a formal elite interview or by submitting a written response to the interview questions. Elite individuals in organizations are those individuals in organization who are in positions of power. In this study, elite individuals would be the administrators of the district and would likely to have an overall view of the school district operations. Questions asked of elite participants were of both qualitative and quantitative nature (see Appendix H & Appendix I). Quantitative questions were posed regarding the number of students retained annually, whether districts operated under retention policies and procedures, and demographic data of participants, as well as years of educational experience of participants. Qualitative questions collected data regarding administrators' perceptions regarding the reasons behind student retention and or social promotion for struggling students in kindergarten and first grade.

The study was implemented in a three-step process.

Step 1: Permission was gained by Northwest Nazarene University to administer the survey to participants (see Appendix A). Rural districts were identified by data provided by the

Idaho State Department of Education website. One hundred fourteen districts, public, private and charter who were identified as "rural" by the Idaho State Department of Education. The list of districts identified as "rural" was then narrowed down to include only public school districts. Using stratified and simple random sampling of the rural public school districts in Idaho, the final list was narrowed to include 24 public school districts. Superintendents from all the rural public school districts selected in the initial sampling were contacted and permission was requested to collect data and administer surveys to elementary building administrators. Twenty-one of the 24 district superintendents gave permission for their elementary administrators to participate in the retention study. Out of the 24 principals or building administrators approved by district superintendents for participation, 20 administrators agreed to participate in the final study.

Step 2: An online survey was administered to all approved participants. Building administrators were asked to respond to 29 survey items addressing a range of questions regarding educational experience, retention, interventions, and potential outcomes (see Appendix I). Participants were also contacted via telephone or in person for a formal recorded interview to gain more qualitative information regarding district procedures, policies, and anecdotal information (see Appendix F). Five of the participants were unable to be interviewed by phone or in person and chose to answer the questions via written response. Participants who wished to have results of the study sent to them following the conclusion of the study were asked to provide contact information at the end of the survey.

Step 3: All data was compiled and analyzed by the researcher, no other party was utilized in data collection to ensure confidentiality. Pseudonyms were provided to all participants to safeguard anonymity. All identifying district information was removed from the data or

aggregated with other participating districts to ensure no individual districts could be identified. Responses were reviewed from the surveys, interviews, and written responses regarding perceptions and information gathered during the data collection process. Data was coded to identify common terms and themes. Perceptual data was categorized for similarities and differences among the rural districts and administrators surveyed with the intent of gathering information that may be considered informative or valuable for other districts to consider in the future. All data has been stored and will be kept in a locked file cabinet for a period of three years with access only to the researcher.

Participants

Elementary principals or superintendents working in rural school districts who are the primary data source for retention information of kindergarten and first grade students within districts were the subjects for this study. Invitations were sent to 24 out of the 114 rural districts in Idaho (see Appendix C).

Figure 5 identifies the seven regions across the state of Idaho. Districts were chosen to participate by a random sampling of rural districts. Ten districts in Regions I and II, 13 districts in Region III and IV and one district in Region V, VI and VII were asked to participate in the study.

Figure 5.

Regions of Idaho

Source: http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/portals/0/Images/PIO_Images/IdahoMapCities_NotExplodedPC.jpg&imgrefurl=http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/ContactUs/tabid/127/default.aspx&h=525&w=367&tbnid=hQ18PNTb4srOIM:&docid=CB9LLDTJy7G9SM&ei=bKMaVr3bNoKKoQTTu6yoAg&tbm=isch&ved=0CCEQMygBMAFqFQoTCL3BscH_usgCFQJFiAod0x0LJQ

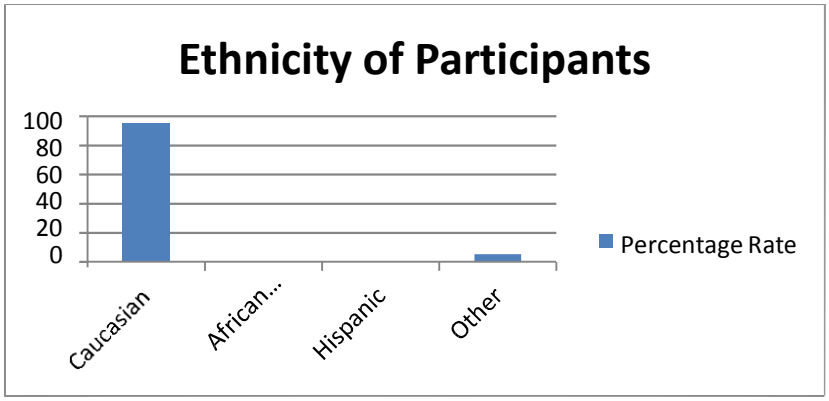
Overall, results from 20 districts from the 24 potential districts were received. Of the 24 districts asked to participate, 47.6% of the total participants came from Region I and II and gave permission to participate in the study. 52.4% from Region III and IV and 0% from Region V, VI and VII gave permission to participate in the research study. Completed surveys were received from 19 administrators and 20 interviews or word documents answering the interview questions were transcribed from participants. The participating rural public school districts represented 19.2% of the total rural schools within the state of Idaho, including private and charter districts.

Of the 20 participants who participated in the interview process, twelve (12) of the administrators were female (60.0 %) and 8 were male (40.0%). Of the 19 participants who

completed the PPRGRS survey online, eleven (11) were female (57.89%) and 8 were male (42.11%). The majority o administrators were Caucasian (94.74 %), 0% identified as African-American or Black, 0% identified Hispanic and 5.26 % identified another race or ethnicity (see Figure 6).

Figure 6.

Participant Demographics



Five of the participants served in the dual role positions of Superintendents for the districts as well as the building principal. Over 50% of the participants had less than 10 years of experience as an elementary principal, but held over 10 years of prior experience as a classroom teacher (see Figure 7a & 7b). Twelve of the 19 participants had less than 10 years' experience as an elementary principal. Four participants were within their first four years as an elementary principal. Three of the administrators had between 10 and 14 years' experience, another three had between 15-20 years, leaving only one with more than 20 years of experience. Of these same participants, two had less than five years of classroom experience, three had between five and nine years. Eight participants had between 10 and 14, three between 15 and 20, and three over 21 year's classroom experience.

Figure 7a.

Years of Experience as a Principal

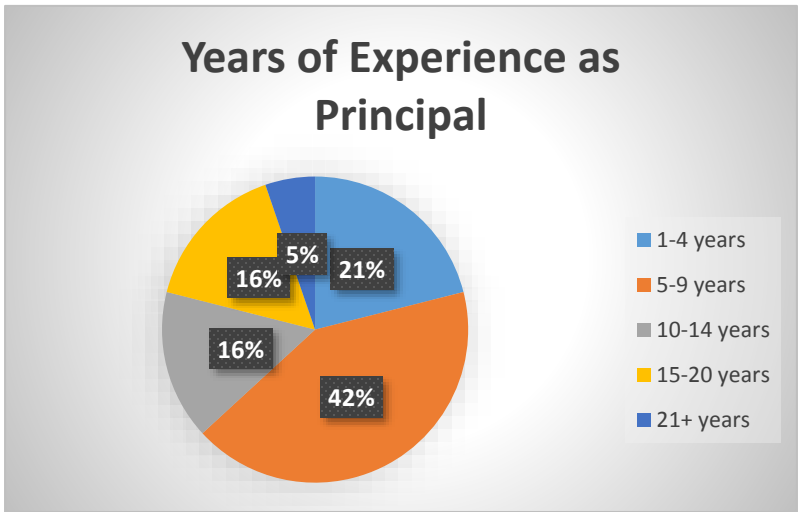


Figure 7b.

Years of Experience as a Teacher

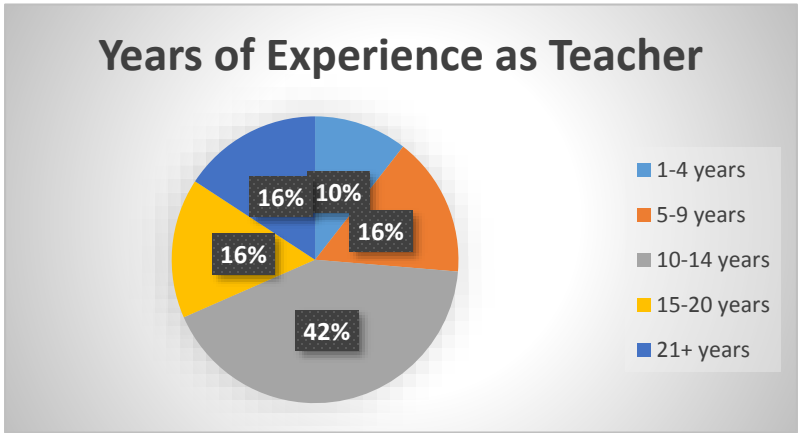
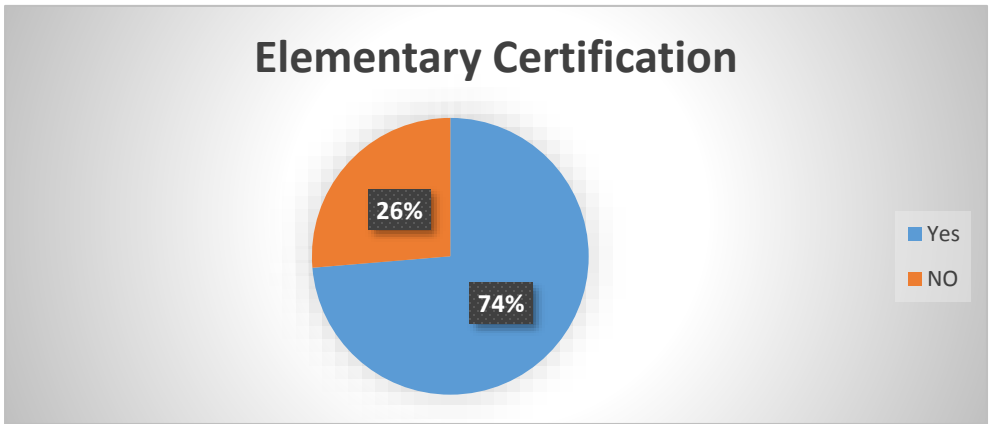


Figure 7c.

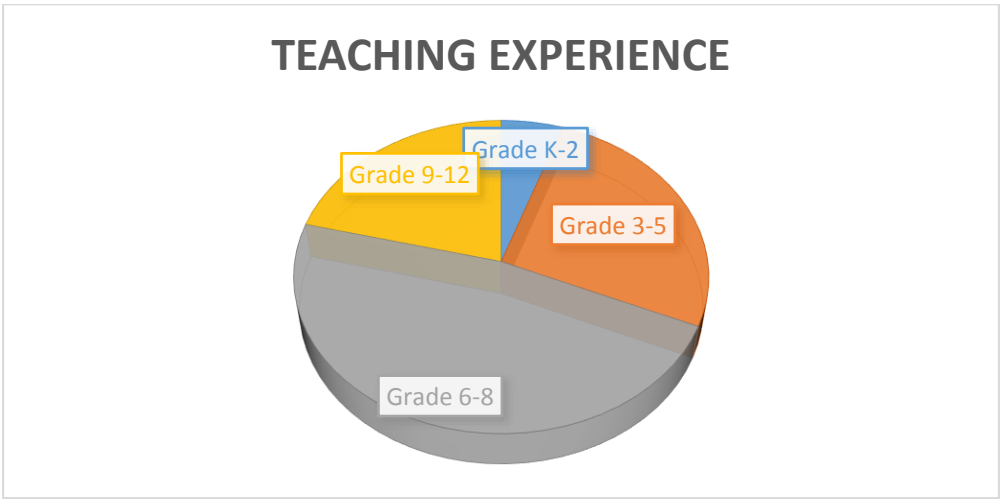
Participant Certification



Of the 19 participants who completed the survey, 73.68% were certified in Elementary Education. However, only 5.26% of the participants have experience teaching in primary grade range of K-2 (see Figure 7d).

Figure 7d.

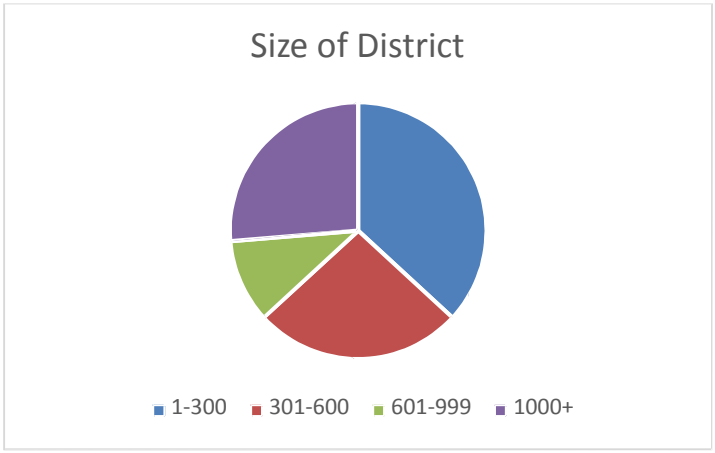
Grade Level Experience



Of the 19 participants who completed the survey, 36.84% of the districts recorded student population of 1 -300 students; 26.32% of districts had enrollment of 301 – 600 students; 10.53% of districts had 601 – 999 students; and 26.32 % of districts had 1,000+ students (see Figure 8). This confirms that the definition of rural in Idaho allows for a wide range of districts of various sizes to be considered rural.

Figure 8.

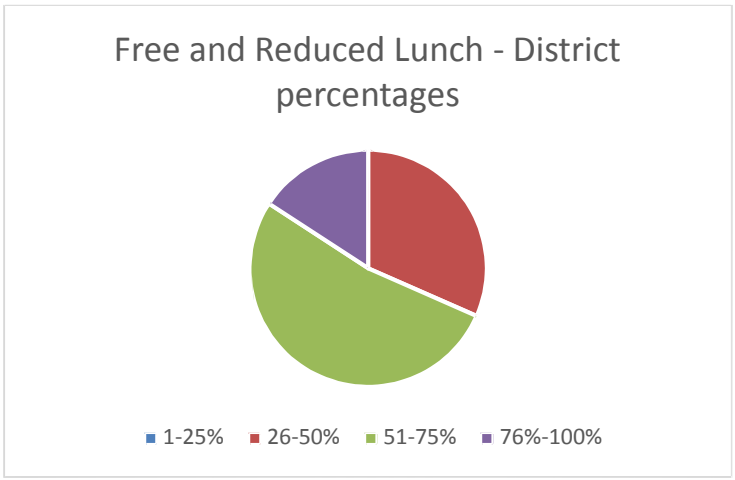
Size of Participating District



According the participant feedback, none of the participating districts identified as a district with a percentage rate below the 25% range of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Six participants fell within the 26-50% range, ten participants fell within the 51% - 75% range and three fell within the 76% range (see Figure 9). The size of the district is important to determine whether a district may be able to offer school- wide or targeted assistance to students qualifying for Title One interventions. Districts are required to have a minimum of 40% qualifying population in order to provide school-wide Title One services or interventions to at-risk students.

Figure 9.

Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free /Reduced Lunch



Data Collection

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Northwest Nazarene University Research Review HRRC (see Appendix A). Districts were identified through conducting a stratified sample of rural districts in the state of Idaho. Districts were further identified by conducting a simple random sample using a list of "rural" districts provided by the Idaho State Department of Education. Once districts were identified as possible participants, superintendents were contacted via email (see Appendix C). School superintendents were asked for permission to administer surveys to elementary administrators. Once permission was obtained to administer the study, a letter of introduction including purpose, approximate time required, data usage, contact information and link to survey was emailed to all prospective participants (see Appendix D). Links were provided for all participants to participate in the PPRGRS (see Appendix I). Paper copies were made available to any elementary principal who showed preference for paper copy (see Appendix I). Envelopes with pre-paid postage were also made available to those participants

wishing to use paper copy forms. Paper copies were mailed to participants who did not complete the online survey within two to three weeks.

Survey questions from the PPRGRS were piloted with elementary administrators throughout Idaho who were not participants in the actual study. Survey questions were provided to five elementary administrators who were not part of the study to preview questions for any bias, missing information, ethical issues, confusion or general input. The administrators were chosen other rural administrators in Region I and II who were not participating in the study. Out of the five administrators asked to pilot the survey, five administrators responded, resulting in a 100% response rate. Once input was received and modifications were made according to feedback, the PPRGRS was distributed to active study participants. The PPRGRS consisted of 33 questions (see Appendix K). Questions focused on retention policies, how decisions to retain students are made, "high stakes" testing, number of students retained annually in 2014 & 2015, and possible alternative programs and/ or intervention programs may be used pre and post retention, as well as perceptions regarding retention and the possible reasons students are retained annually.

Data was aggregated by the researcher of the study alone. By limiting access to data, any concerns or issues regarding confidentiality are eliminated. Survey data was collected over a six week period, allowing time for paper copies to be mailed to participants and allow adequate time for return of information. Phone calls were made to all participants within two weeks of the initial email with survey information (see Appendix F). Follow up phone calls were made to encourage participants to complete PPRGRS online surveys, as well as schedule a time for a formal interview. Irregularities in data were reviewed and included if found to be a factor of retention or possible intervention. If irregularities did not address one of the three main questions

of the study, the information was listed as potential information to use or consider for future studies.

Analytical Methods

In order to address the types of questions necessary in this study the researcher identified a mixed method approach as the most appropriate method. Mixed methods were chosen due to the need to collect quantitative data as well as qualitative data. Quantitative data encompasses the following information: the number of students retained annually in kindergarten and first grade, the average age, and years of experience of the participants as well as whether administrators operated under a district policy or procedures when making decisions regarding student retention. Qualitative data was collected regarding the perceptions and beliefs elementary administrators held regarding student retention, interventions, and possible alternatives for at-risk students in the primary grades. Qualitative data was transcribed, organized into categories then coded. Coding data allowed for common themes to emerge from the collected data. Qualitative data was also quantified to allow for percent distributions of responses as applicable.

Two types of scales used in the study. Nominal scales were used to record educational experience of participants. This data is important due to the likelihood that educational experience of a participant will likely change the participant's perception of whether retention has a positive or negative outcome on students who are retained. In order to score the data, numerical scores were assigned to all questions which were rated with non-numerical scores. This allowed the researcher to organize questions and responses in the study.

Demographic information was analyzed in order to describe the participants and determine socio-economic status of districts. This information allows the study to identify any

differences that may be attributed to age of participants, years of educational experiences, as well as socioeconomic differences throughout the state of Idaho.

Responses were categorized in an attempt to determine emerging themes as they related to the research topic. These themes related to the pedagogical beliefs of the participants, as well as their personal experience and practice, and serve to provide an understanding of the most significant factors in making decisions whether to retain a student or not.

Delimitations

It was found in past research studies that student retention encompasses a larger grade span such as K-6 or K-12(Akmal & Larsen, 2004; Grissom, 2004; Holmes, 2006; Huddleston, 2014; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Martin, 2011; Lemon & Watson, 2011; Lorence, 2006; & Roderick, 1995). Larger samples may provide larger data results,offer insight to other possible variables, and outcomes of student retention. This study, however, chose to specifically look at retention data in grades kindergarten and first grade. The rationale behind those two specific grades is due to the possible connection between NCLB and student grade level retention. NCLB is understood to encourage promoting retention as a possible intervention for at-risk students (Goldstein & McCoach, 2012). NCLB also has been responsible for many states' adoption of grade level retention policies, therefore encouraging students to be retained early in their academic careers. Therefore, due to the increased accountability at an early age as well as the push for interventions, such as preschool and full-day kindergarten to be implemented as a possible intervention for primary age students, the data was targeted specifically to primary grades.

Limitations

First, there are many definitions of what rural means (Arnold et al., 2007; Stelmach, 2011). Students in rural areas can be portrayed differently, depending on which definition of rural is used. Stelmach (2011) believes the term rural is "conceptually evasive" (p. 33). There is no central agreement how the term "rural" is defined, which is critical to the potential impact to educational policies, targeting resources and addressing the needs and practices of rural areas. (Stelmach, 2011). Another issue with the definition is the word rural usually involves geographical differences among regions. What may be considered rural in one part of the country may not be rural in another. Rural may be defined by population density, geographic location, and level of economic development in a specific area and other definitions may be based on a measurement or proximity to an urbanized area (Arnold et al., 2007).

Possible limitations of this study would be the limited data regarding the effects of NCLB on student retention at this point in time. Although there is much research available regarding student retention, the direct effects of NCLB are still likely to be very subjective. Limiting the participants to elementary administrators may not give an accurate reflection of all the reasons students may have been retained in kindergarten or first grade. Teachers and/or parents may have had other reasons for retaining students and other perceptions regarding the interventions available the specific reasons why students were retained. Another limiting factor of the study is the time length of the study. If the study had been a longitudinal study over a longer period of time the data might have statistical significance either supporting or nullifying the hypothesis.

Participant size may also be a limitation in this study. In a study with such a small number of possible participants there is potential for sampling error. The sample size may not reflect the general population of rural school districts throughout Idaho nor may the study be able

to be generalized and reflective of larger districts in Idaho. Therefore, additional studies may be warranted for larger districts across Idaho. Another limitation is that the study was performed only within the state of Idaho. Idaho may not be reflective of other states when considering each individual state has their own individual policies and guidelines.

Limitations and challenges when performing elite interviews include issues with difficulty obtaining access to elites due to the time constraints, busy schedules, and overall access to elite individuals. Another challenge is that elites typically are well versed in interviewing and may wish to lead the direction of the conversation. Interviewers will have to establish confidence and credibility with elites in order to maintain control of the interview process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Another limitation of qualitative studies is qualitative studies allow for perceptions of participants to be considered as a source of data (Creswell, 2003). Perceptual data can be considered subjective. Data may be subject to change over time and experience of study participants. Although student demographic data is considered in this particular study, due to the age of students (ages 5-7) being studied, students were not interviewed for feedback or input as to self-esteem or reflections on the process of retention and/or social promotion.

Other possible limitations may be found in the length of the study. The overall study was limited to two calendar years. This particular study reviewed data for the 2014-2015 and 2015-16 academic calendar years. Data is most likely available for longer periods of time, however, due to the time constraints of the study, the focus was limited to the two last academic calendar years. Due to the small collection sample and the limited years of information collected, the data may not be truly reflective of state numbers of retention on an annual basis.

Subgroups of student populations may not be addressed in this study. Special education students, ESL students, migrant students, and other demographic groups, may require different interventions than students in the general education population. Interventions noted as possible alternatives to retention for general education students, for example, may not be effective for populations such as special education students (Berry & Gravelle, 2013).

Role of Researcher

The role of researcher was that of an impartial listener, recorder, and analyzer of data. The researcher is expected to establish competence and credibility with the elite participants in order to gain quality feedback (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Interviews were designed using an outline of structured questions that were given to all elite participants. Questions were open ended to encourage respondents to provide additional information. Interviews were recorded on an electronic recording device. Transcriptions of all recordings were done by the researcher. All transcripts were focused coded to analyze the data into common themes. Verification of data analysis was done by providing a summary of themes or comments emerging from the focused coding process to all participants asking for confirmation of their interview prior to completion of the study. Once confirmation or additions, substitutions or deletions were made from qualitative data, the data was compiled for the completion of the study. Data will be archived for a period of three years.

Protection of Human Rights and Approval

In order to protect the rights of participants in this study, all districts superintendents were notified by email requesting permission to contact elementary administrators for participation in this study (see Appendix C). Letters of permission are enclosed to provide proof of permission (see Appendix L). Once permission was obtained, elementary

administrators from each approved district were then contacted via email (see Appendix D). Informed consent forms were sent to all willing participants (see Appendix E). Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, they had the right to not answer any questions that they chose not to and could withdraw from the study at any given time without repercussions. Before any data was used for the study, participants were sent a summary of emerging themes found from the completed interviews. Participants at that time were given opportunity to add additional information or comments if needed. Participants were also given an opportunity to request a summary of the entire study upon completion.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

The intent of Chapter IV is to review the results of this study including a summary of the purpose of the study, a review of the research questions, and the major findings from the interview and survey data.

With growing concerns over educator accountability regarding student achievement, there is a demand for research regarding interventions which show significant impact on student achievement. One intervention widely promoted in the 21st century was grade level retention for students who were not able to show proficiency on state mandated assessments. With growing concern about the social implications of retention on individual students, it is important to understand the perceptions of those individuals who are ultimately responsible for the decision whether or not to retain students in primary grade levels.

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors surrounding grade level retention within the primary grade levels in rural school districts throughout Idaho. Chapter IV reports the results from a mixed method analysis capturing the perceptions of 19 elementary administrators across the Idaho working in rural school districts.

As stated in Chapter III, participants were selected from a stratified and simple random sampling of public school districts identified as "rural" throughout Idaho. The Principals' Perceptions Regarding Grade Retention survey was administered electronically to participants through the use of Qualtrics software (see Appendix K). The PPRGRS was utilized to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The study analyzed data of

identified districts regarding student grade level retention in kindergarten and first grade over two consecutive school years, 2014-15 and 2015-16. Using a Likert-scale survey participants were asked to rate 20 items regarding their perceptions about grade retention for kindergarten and first grade students (see Appendix H). Likert-scale survey items were rated using a 4-point scale. The item responses were given a numerical value from one to four. The participants were asked to indicate their perceptions with a given statement using the following 4-point scale:

- 4 = Strongly Agree
- 3 = Agree
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

Percentages were calculated using the number of completed responses from participants. Data was coded so Strongly Agree was equal to four, Agree was equal to three, Disagree was equal to two, and Strongly Disagree was equal to one. Participants were intentionally not provided with a neutral choice. The purpose of this was to force participants to choose a position rather than remain neutral in their decision. When median scores were analyzed, median scores greater than three indicated the majority of respondents had agreement with the survey question. Any median score two or less indicated disagreement with the survey item.

Additional quantitative and qualitative data was collected from participants through the formal interview process. Pseudonyms were given to all participants during the data collection process.

Research Questions

To investigate the perceptions of elementary administrators regarding grade level retention on students in kindergarten and first grade, a mixed methods approached was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Data was collected and analyzed from formal interviews and the PPRGRS survey. The findings helped answer the following research questions:

1. Do administrators of rural districts utilize board policies or procedures when making decisions regarding retention of kindergarten and first grade students?
2. What interventions are used in rural districts prior to retention during primary school years? Are interventions provided to students after they have been retained? If so, what interventions are they?
3. Are there predictive factors of students who may be identified or favored for grade level retention?

Results

For this portion both qualitative and quantitative research methods were considered to be the most effective way to gain information regarding the perception of the participants about primary grade level retention. Interview and survey data was utilized to answer to research question number one, which is:

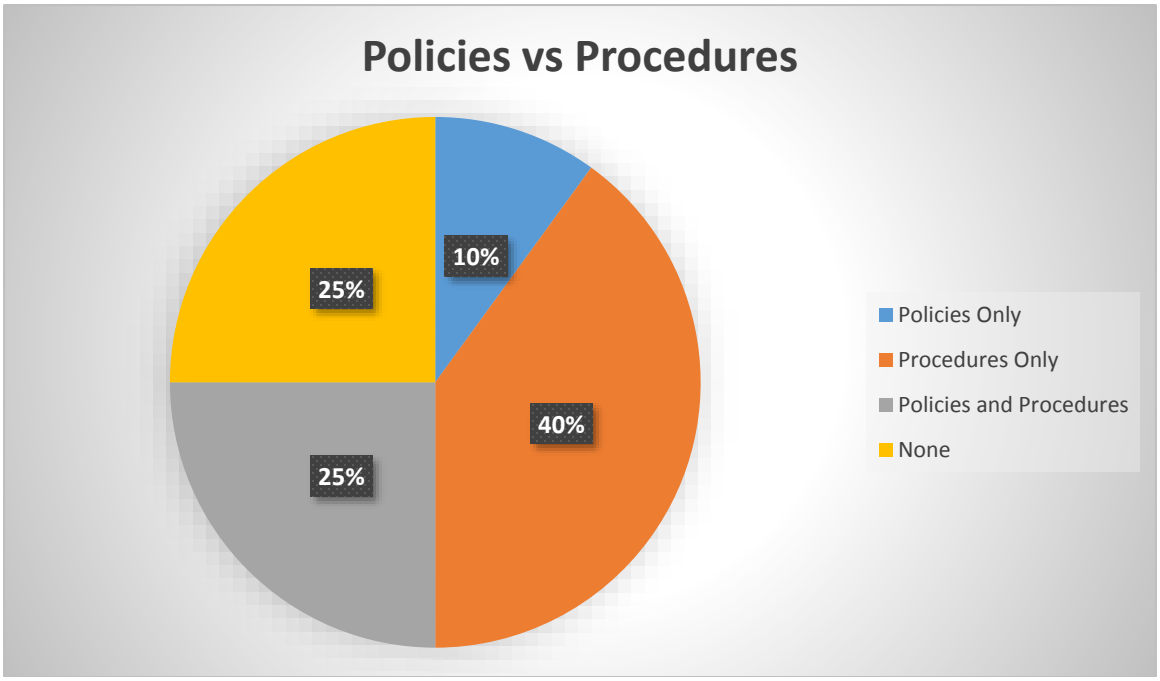
Question 1: Do administrators of rural districts utilize board policies or procedures when making decisions regarding retention of kindergarten and first grade students?

Data regarding retention policies and procedures was collected through the interview of participants. The benefit of having a policy allows the administrator to have specific guidelines

and allows for consistency in the decision making process. Seven of the 19 administrators have retention policies which have been adopted by the school board; five also have specific procedures expected to be followed when making retention decisions. Eight of the districts do not have formal board adopted policy, but utilize procedures adopted by the individual building. Five districts do not have formal procedures or policies in place and the administration has complete discretion how to handle the process.

Figure 10.

Policies vs. Procedures

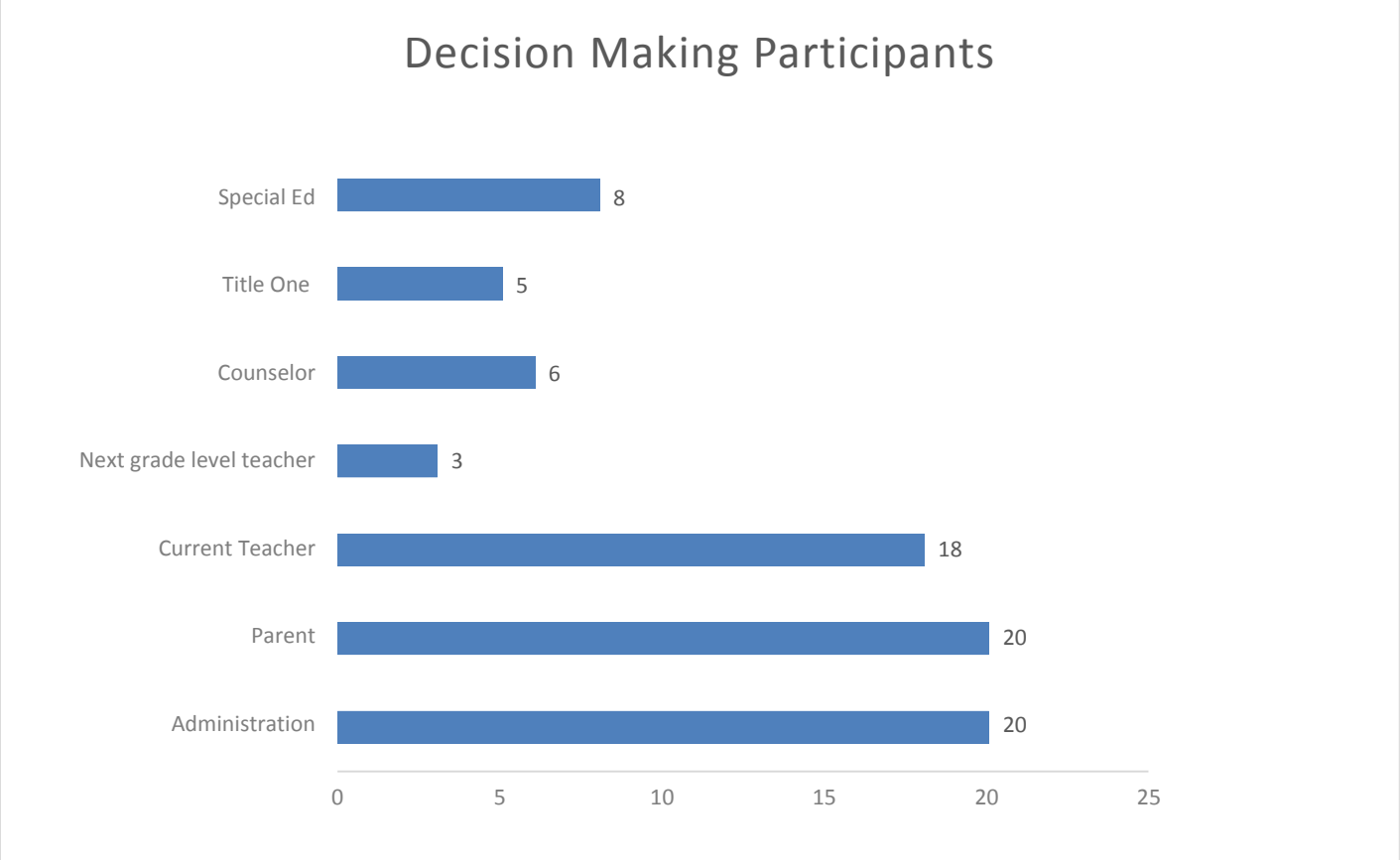


One participant identified their board policy as a promotion policy rather than a retention policy. The reason for this terminology was to eliminate the connotation of student failure, but rather to foster a discussion of what the child must do academically in order to be promoted to the next grade level.

Regardless of whether districts operated under a board derived policy or procedures, all participants identified utilizing a team in the decision making process of whether to retain an individual student. As shown in Figure 11, districts varied in the number of participants on the team as well as the types of stakeholders involved in making retention decisions. All 19 participants identified the administrator and parents as the foundation for the decision making process. The majority of districts included Administrator, the current grade level teacher, and a parent on the team. Other participants identified including various stakeholders who would potentially have input regarding possible interventions for struggling students.

Figure 11.

Decision Making Participants



Question 2: What interventions are used in rural districts prior to retention during primary school years? Are interventions provided to students who have been retained? If so, what interventions are they?

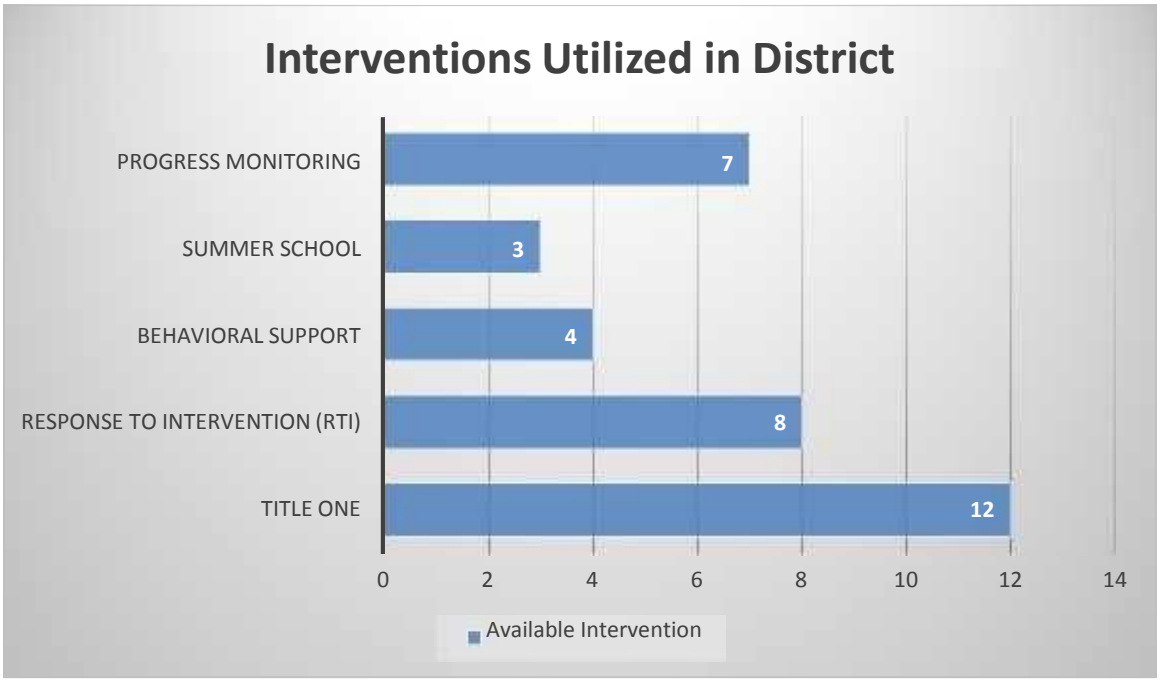
Interventions are one of the key indicators of at-risk students' academic success (Cooke, Ketlow & Helf, 2010; Lazarus & Oretega, 2007; & Martinez & Young, 2011). In order to gain data regarding interventions participants were asked what interventions are utilized in their individual district and whether interventions are provided pre- and/or post-retention to at-risk students.

When participants were asked if they were able to provide options to families whose student did not show kindergarten readiness on the screener prior to entering kindergarten, only seven of the 19 had an option available to parents, specifically preschool programs either run by the district or a local provider. Two of the districts offer full day kindergarten which they consider as an intervention since it provides more than twice the amount of instructional hours required by the State of Idaho. Kindergarten students in Idaho are required to have only 450 hours of instruction. Full day kindergarten usually will provide twice the minimum number hours required by law (Idaho State Department of Education, 2015).

Participants frequently identified federal programs, such as Title One as a key intervention for students in kindergarten and first grade (see Figure 12).

Figure 12.

District Interventions



Title One was the main intervention identified by participating districts. Title One provides federal funding to support interventions and services for at-risk services primarily in English and Mathematics, both considered foundational skills in kindergarten and first grade.

Question 3: Are there predictive factors of students who may be identified or favored for grade level retention?

When participants were asked if they believed there are predictive factors of students who may be at risk of retention, 14 of the 19 participants identified the perception that boys were more likely to be retained than girls, but they did not identify it as an issue of concern in their district. The other five participants said gender played no role in the identification of at-risk students.

A finding which was overlooked in the research questions, but was frequently brought up in the interview process was the issue of social maturity factoring into retention. Participants brought up social maturity as a factor during the kindergarten screening process, when making the decision as to whether to retain a student, and a potential concern when considering additional intervention services.

Students who struggled behaviorally were found to struggle more with traditional instruction and administrators felt students who had not yet developed those social skills would likely benefit from retention. One principal found the majority of students retained had late summer birthdays and just "weren't ready yet", and there was a benefit to retaining those younger students to allow them to close the gap with similar age peers.

Another finding was the issue of transient students. Students who attending multiple schools during a school year often had gaps in their foundational skills and therefore benefited from either retention in the grade or an array of interventions. Rural districts who struggle to provide interventions due to limited time, resources or staff, therefore may choose to retain transient students because they do not have the means to support the student adequately or haven't had adequate resources, including time to produce the gains necessary for promotion to the next grade level.

Other Findings

Participants were then asked questions regarding their support for or against retention. Figures 13, 14, and 15 show the various responses of participants regarding their support or opposition to grade level retention.

Figure 13.

Reasons to Support Retention

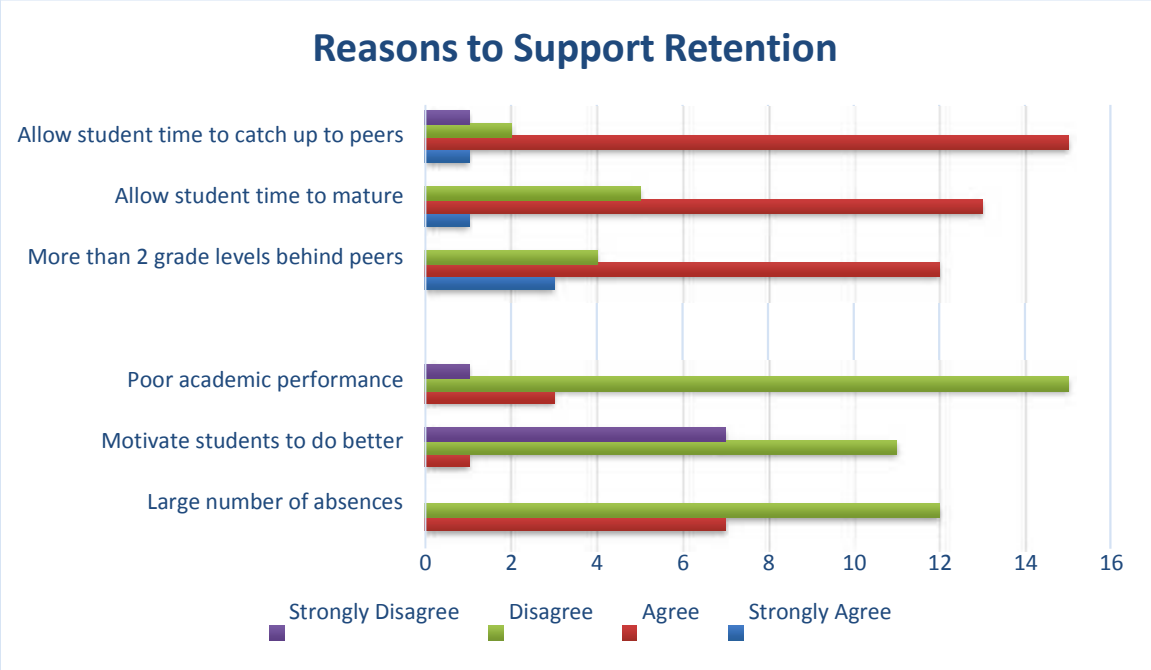


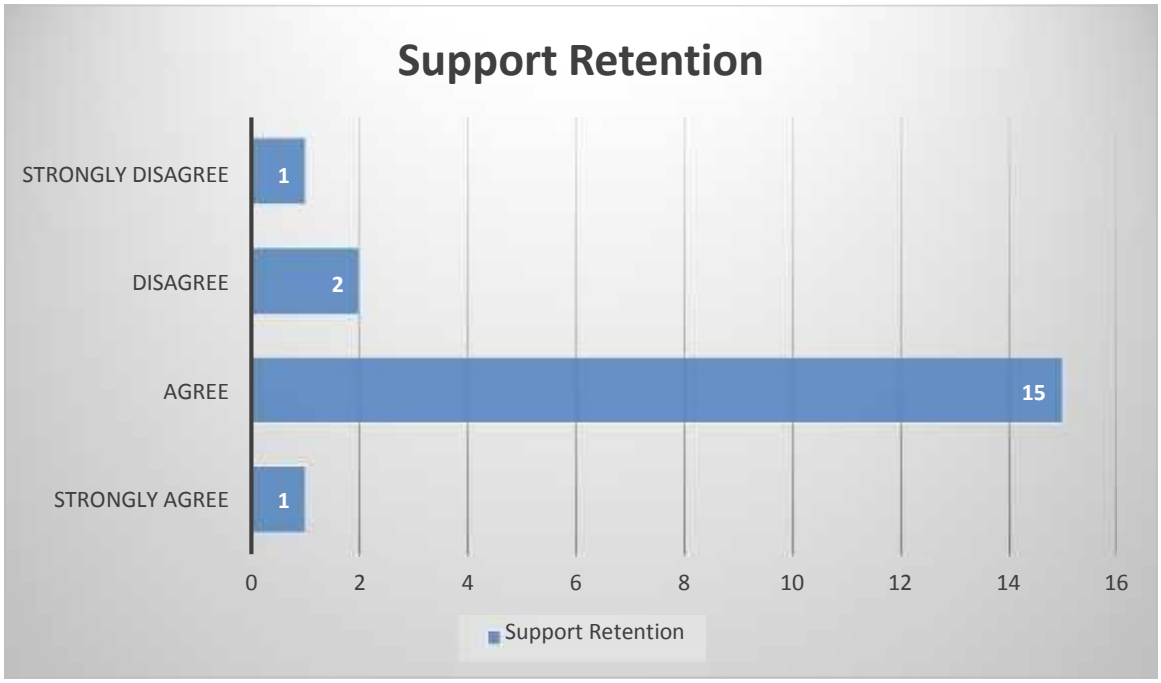
Figure 13 shows the responses to six different questions regarding how administrators felt regarding six different reasons students may be retained in kindergarten and first grade. The three main reasons administrators felt students should be retained were: 1) allow students additional time to catch up with peers, 2) allow additional time for students to mature, and 3) if students were two or more grade levels behind their peers. The three reasons which were least supported by administrators for student were retention were: 1) poor academic performance, 2) as a motivator for students to do better, and 3) a large number of absences.

The top three acceptable reasons for supporting retention data would support the idea social maturity skills being considered a predictive factor for students to be retained in kindergarten and first grade. Research has shown students who struggle with social skills may also show difficulty with the academic requirements of formal education (Aiona, 2005;

Bettencourt et al., 2016; & Pipkin, Winters & Diller, 2007). Retention for academic reasons was supported by 63% of the participants (see Figure 14).

Figure 14.

Retention Support for Academic Purposes

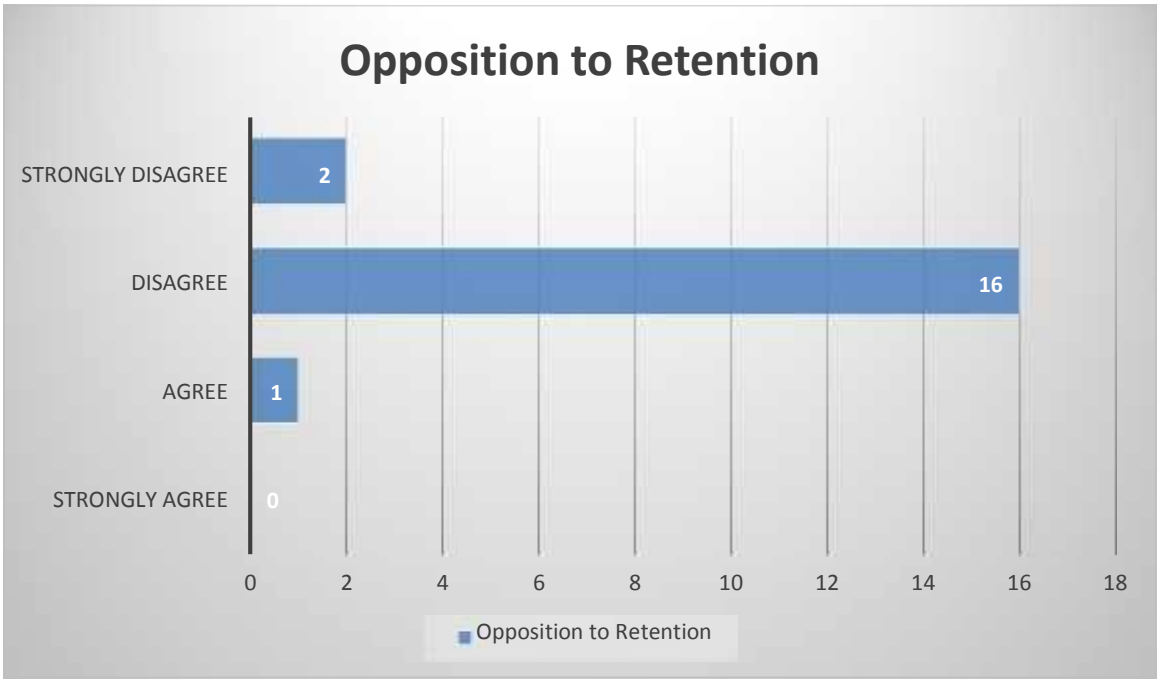


Of the 19 participants who participated in the PPRGRS survey, 84.21% of the participants felt retention is a valid practice when students fail to show mastery in the content skill areas necessary to be successful in the following grade level. .05% of the administrators strongly agreed, and 79% agreed. The remaining 20.5% of the administrators disagreed with zero administrators strongly disagreeing with the survey question. Although 20.5% disagreed with retention as a valid intervention practice when students fail to show mastery, a smaller percentage disagreed with the survey question regarding whether retention allows students who are academically behind an opportunity to catch up with peers.

Out of the 19 participants there was one sole participant who did not support retention for any reason (see Figure 15).

Figure 15.

Opposition to Retention



When participants were asked if they were against retention regardless of reason, only one participant agreed, thus supporting the need for additional questions regarding the reasons administrators felt were valid reasons for retention. The one participant opposed to retention voiced concerns about rural districts specifically stating, "the only reason I would retain a student is if something in the student's situation changes". In this study 38% of the participants identified that the student would be able to have a different teacher if retained in the same grade. Therefore, grade level retention in most rural districts means having the same teacher, same instruction, staffing, or intervention for the student the following school year. If students are being retained due to maturational or social concerns this lack of ability to change instruction

may not matter. Retention would potentially allow for the student to receive the necessary time to mature, developing the social and cognitive skills at their own rate. This maturational viewpoint supports the idea that students, if given additional time, may mature and gain the skills necessary to be academically successful.

One solution offered by three different participants was to promote a mastery based program in elementary grades. Mastery based instruction in primary grade levels would allow students to work on curriculum at their ability level and move through curriculum at their own speed. Students would work on individualized curriculum advancing when they were able to demonstrate mastery. Mastery based instruction would eliminate the need for retention policies, because students would no longer be subject to retention. Students who were under performing would continue to work on materials at their level until mastery was achieved or interventions such as remediation or special education services were identified.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the data found in the mixed method approach regarding perceptions of elementary administrators regarding retention of primary age students in rural districts throughout Idaho. Data was consistent among administrators, supporting the belief that retention may have potential for increased academic student achievement, yet no administrator was 100% certain retention was successful.

Parents were identified as the key component for retention success. Administrators were adamant about the importance of communication with parents. Early and frequent communication throughout the academic year was critical and necessary to build a positive, collaborative relationship, supportive of interventions, and fostering student success.

Chapter V provides a summary of results drawn from the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the PPRGRS survey and personal interviews. The chapter will identify significant findings which may be beneficial to other rural districts throughout Idaho as well as other states. Recommendations will also be made for future studies regarding student retention and implications for professional practices for educators.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

Although there is a substantial amount of research regarding rural education, the definition of rural varies across the nation therefore making the definition somewhat ambiguous (Jimerson, 2005a; Jimerson, 2005b; Stelmach, 2011). Although research regarding retention itself is plentiful in urban districts, there is minimal recorded research specific to rural school districts (Jimerson, 2005a; Jimerson, 2005b). With 74% of Idaho school districts identified as rural, the number of students attending rural districts is noteworthy (Idaho State Department of Education, 2015). Rural school districts tend to be smaller in size and located in more remote areas (Jimerson, 2005b). The lack of research available regarding grade level student retention in rural districts led to my primary interest in this study. The purpose of this study was to focus on the perceptions of rural administrators regarding student retention, what interventions rural districts utilize to serve at-risk students, and whether retention is considered a positive intervention for primary age students who are considered at-risk of grade level failure.

The questions posed in this study were:

1. Do administrators of rural districts utilize board policies or procedures when making decisions regarding retention of kindergarten and first grade students?
2. What interventions are used in rural districts prior to retention during primary school years? Are interventions provided to students after they have been retained? If so, what interventions are they?
3. Are there predictive factors of students who may be identified or favored for grade level retention?

Summary of Results

Chapter V explains the numerous variables administrators must face when making decisions regarding primary grade level student retention or social promotion. Results indicate the perceptions of administrators may impact the number, timeliness, and quality of interventions made available to at-risk students in primary grades. Although elite administrators in the study were chosen from a random sample of rural administrators across Idaho, the perceptions of why students should be retained or socially promoted appear consistent among all administrators.

The summary of the results identifies key findings from the mixed method study, the themes which emerged from the qualitative data analysis, limitations, and inconsistencies identified in the study. Chapter V concludes with a recommendation for current as well as future state and local policy makers, along with recommendations for additional future research.

Conclusion

This study investigated factors influencing administrative perceptions regarding student retention primarily in kindergarten and first grade. Although there are many variables affecting student success, this study used a mixed method approach to gather data regarding the operating procedures of individual districts, identification of at-risk students in primary grades, interventions made available to struggling students, and the overall perceptions of administrators regarding grade level retention.

Key Findings

Although there is no one factor able to determine the success or failure of grade level retention as a primary grade level intervention key findings from the study identify retention is used frequently as an intervention among many districts throughout Idaho. Perceptions of administrators in the study were very similar to each other. 99% of the administrators

participating in the study could agree on one reason or another to retain a student. However, the final decision whether or not to retain was ultimately left up to the parent(s). Only one administrator of those surveyed was adamant retention would not be beneficial to students regardless of the reason or identified concerns. This administrator based this rationale solely on the dynamics and demographics of the district itself. The principal opposed retention purely due to the small size of the district. If a student was retained in the same grade, the student would continue to have the same teacher, curriculum, and formal instruction. Therefore, since nothing substantial would change in the child's educational environment, the principal could not identify a reason to support retention.

Other administrators in the study who had similar demographics such as one teacher per grade level noted similar concerns, but identified a maturational viewpoint in regards to retention. The administrators who viewed immaturity as a potential risk factor indicated many students are annually retained because of their age. Administrators indicated some students underperform due to their age, maturity level, or the fact they are simply not ready for formal schooling, and believe the students are likely to benefit from having another year of instruction regardless of whether they had the same teacher the following year.

Positive relationships among students and teachers are considered a key factor for student success (Epstein, 2012; Jimerson, 2005b). Administrators voiced the potential benefits of having a student receive the same teacher the following year. The relationship between student and teacher will have already been established. The teachers would be familiar with the student's strengths and weaknesses. The students would be familiar with the classroom and teaching expectations. Instruction would be repeated again, allowing students the opportunity to build on

prior knowledge. Allowing the student another year to repeat the same grade level, may benefit the student by providing additional time to mature and show academic and behavioral readiness.

Emerging Themes

Data disaggregation from the personal interviews was coded and four overarching themes emerged from the statements of participating rural administrators.

Theme #1 – Parents Determine Success

The majority of the administrators identify parents as the most important factor in determining the potential success of grade level retention. Minor themes emerging under the parent factor are: 1) parent support, 2) parent demographics, and 3) communication. Administrators consistently identified parents as the primary factor as to whether retention had a positive or negative effect on a student's self esteem. Parents who were supportive of retention as an intervention, were more likely to talk positively with their children about repeating the grade level and to build a supportive foundation enabling retention to be a positive intervention. If parents were supportive of retention, administrators were more likely to support retention as a potentially successful intervention and students were more likely to be retained. If parents were against retention, all but one administrator said they would follow the parents' wishes and the students would be socially promoted to the next grade.

The demographics presented in Table 2 (p.26) showed the level of parents' education has a direct impact on students' academic success. Parents who tend to have higher levels of education also tend to have a higher SES and have access to higher level daycare or preschool programs. This gives their students an edge when entering formal schooling compared to students coming from families who have lower educational attainment, lower SES and fewer opportunities to participate in a quality preschool or day care environment.

Parents with low SES, tend to send children to school as soon as they possibly can relieve the family of costs of daycare. School becomes a financial necessity for parents who do not have other options, either because of availability or financial considerations. Whereas, families with higher SES can afford to have the discussion regarding whether a child is "ready" for formal education. If the child is not "ready," the parent has the option to keep the child at home another year, enroll them in day care or preschool for another year, both of which provide the so called "gift of time," allowing the child another year to mature before entering the formal educational setting.

Regardless of a student's SES, communication was listed as probably the most important factor when dealing with all parents. One hundred percent of the administrators identified communication as being essential in building relationships with families regardless of a student's success. For at-risk students communication must occur early and frequently, so parents do not feel blind-sided when difficult conversations need to take place. Administrators identified conversations regarding a student's ability or lack there-of as being one of the most sensitive or difficult conversations educators have with parents. Administrators indicated if a strong foundation or line of communication is established with parents early-on the conversations is more likely to be successful.

Parent involvement is also reinforced through federal and state programs. Federal and state government both have identified parents as a key factor to students' success and require districts receiving federal funding to involve and encourage parent communication and involvement. Title One districts are required to create and disseminate parent-student-teacher compacts as a formal agreement with parents, identifying the roles each stakeholder will take in building a foundation for student success. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the planning

of interventions such as retention, Title One services etc. All participants in the study identified the importance of having parents involved in the decision making process.

Idaho has also identified parents as a key stakeholder in evaluating individual teachers, administrators and the overall district. Parents are now being asked to provide feedback on individual teacher, administrators, and districts as a whole. Parents have been given a strong voice in their children's education and we as educators are encouraged to bring their voice to the table and work together to build a strong program for each individual child served by the district.

Theme #2 – Kindergarten Screeners or Baseline Assessments

Research indicates the most common purpose of using kindergarten entry assessments is to individualize instruction for students (Shields, Cook & Greller, 2016). Of the 19 administrators participating in this study, 100% of the participants administer some form of assessment to students entering kindergarten. A consistent theme which emerged from the data showed entry assessments were not utilized as a screener to determine whether students were ready for kindergarten, but more as a data baseline. When asked about the purpose of using a screener if not to determine whether or not students would be placed in kindergarten, the consistent response from administrators was screeners were used primarily to obtain data allowing teachers the opportunity to see what skills students had or lacked upon entering kindergarten.

When asked about other options available to students who did not show "kindergarten readiness," 58% identified their district did not have any other options for incoming kindergarten students who were not "ready" and therefore used the screener solely to provide baseline data regarding the students' needs and strengths for the receiving teacher. Collected data allows staff the opportunity to plan for early necessary or potential interventions.

A secondary theme identified by administrators as a stronger indicator for identifying student readiness was a student's maturity level. Sixty-eight percent of administrators indicated a student's social skills and maturity had a significant impact on whether or not a student showed readiness for formal kindergarten. Administrators identified the time spent with students in the spring prior to kindergarten offered a glimpse into the social maturity of individual students. Forty-two percent of administrators indicated students who were perceived as immature, lacking social or maturational skills were sometimes encouraged by administrators to wait a year prior to entering kindergarten. This was especially true if the students had a late summer birthday. Perception of 84.2% administrators in the study identified students with summer birthdays, especially male students as a cautionary flag for administrators as well as educators when enrolling students.

Forty-seven percent of administrators indicated they held discussions with parents following an initial screening if a student did not show readiness, attempting to encourage the parent to consider keeping the student out of kindergarten the following year, thus allowing them an extra year, or previously discussed in Chapter II as giving them the "gift of time." The proverbial "gift of time" is something 84.2% administrators identified as being a critical intervention for many students, especially if they did not show the social or maturational skills necessary for a formal educational setting. This perception remains consistent with authors who believe students mature at different rates (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; Bettencourt et al., 2016; Hatcher et al., 2012). By allowing students to develop at their own time and pace, students will naturally develop the skills to be successful, rather than the current educational system format which expects every student to be able to produce the same skills and abilities within a relatively

short window of time (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007; Bettencourt et al., 2016; Hatcher et al., 2012).

Theme #3 – Retention Policy or Procedures

Many states across the nation have specific retention policies regarding the promotion of students in specific grade levels. However, Idaho does not require districts to follow a specific policy or procedures. Five of the 19 administrators identified having both formal policies and procedures in place to make retention-based decisions. Two administrators have only board policies to follow, and 13 administrators operate under school-level procedures, which are not formally adopted by the district or school board and are typically set by the building administrator. One hundred percent of the administrators indicated they utilize some type of committee when making decisions regarding student retention. Committees primarily consist of the current grade level teacher, administrator and parent. If there are concerns a student might have a need for special education services in the future, the special education teacher, counselor or psychologist is often invited to the meeting as well.

Theme #4 – Interventions are Important for Student Success

Interventions come in a wide range of practices. Interventions are often described as a specific program or set of instructions designed to help at-risk students. Interventions come in many different forms. Two of the most commonly identified categories of intervention are behavioral and academic interventions. Behavioral interventions occur when students need help with self-regulation, or emotional social concerns, whereas instructional interventions provide support with academic concerns, such as reading and mathematics. Of the 19 administrators, six identified implementing behavioral interventions, such as Response to Intervention (RTI) as a possibility for students who have not developed the social skills or social maturity for formal

education. Thirteen administrators identified having instructional interventions such as reading or math interventions available to students on a regular basis.

When considering grade level retention as a form of intervention, 84.11 % of the administrators identified retention as a valid behavioral intervention for students who needed the "gift of time," allowing them additional time to develop the behavioral or maturational skills necessary to be successful in the formal classroom setting. Sixty-three percent of the administrators believe retention is a valid academic intervention for kindergarten/first grade students when they fail to show proficiency in core academic skills required in the following grade level. Regardless of whether retention was utilized for behavioral or instructional intervention, overall the administrators agreed students should only be retained once in their academic career.

All administrators identified some form of intervention formally implemented once a student had been retained. All administrators identified preschool as a key intervention and indicator for students' academic success. One hundred percent of the administrators acknowledged they felt students who had participated in some sort of preschool-type experience were often better prepared academically to begin a formal education.

Financial concerns are a secondary theme regarding interventions, specifically the costs individual districts incur to provide necessary intervention. Title One services which are supported by federal funds was identified by administrators as a key intervention. However, one participant indicated although her school was in need of Title One support and qualified for support, neither money nor Title One support was appropriated to their building, but diverted to other elementary schools within the same district. This is an administrative budgeting issue and a

valid issue for rural districts where federal funding does not fully cover the costs of interventions necessary in individual schools or districts.

Another implication of the lack of resources available to rural districts is the lack of outside interventions such as quality instructional day care or preschool programs available to at-risk students. Rural districts are often located in remote areas and do not have formal preschool programs or access to federal programs such as Head Start. Only three of the 19 administrators identified access to community-based programs within the district boundaries. For many school districts the only formal education many students receive occurs when they enter the actual school building. Without the opportunity to develop social skills prior to entering formal schooling, many students struggle with the requirements and restrictions of formal education.

Limitations & Inconsistencies

Retention data only covered a period of two academic years. In order to accurately determine the academic or social outcomes of retention on a student, the study would have to be performed over a longer period of time.

Another potential limitation is the experience of the administrators who participated in the study. In this particular study the administrators had a wide range of experience, with the majority, 68% coming from middle school or secondary classrooms. One administrator explicitly stated “elementary teachers are too emotional” when discussing involving stakeholders in the decision making process. This leads me to believe administrators who have elementary experience may be more sensitive to the issue of retention and whether there are emotional or social effects on retained students.

Recommendations for Further Research

Results from this mixed methods approach regarding administrators' perceptions of grade level retention leads to recommendations for further research on the implications rural districts face: 1) providing interventions to at-risk students, 2) communication between educators and parents, and 3) the social-emotional effects retention may have on students. Compared to research in urban areas, research concerning the effect of retention on at-risk students in rural districts is insufficient (Hill, 2014; Jimerson, 2005b; Sperry & Hill, 2015; Stelmach, 2011). Although this research study reflects outcomes similar to urban districts, more research is needed to support or negate the use of retention as an intervention for primary age students. Studies should also be conducted in areas beyond the state of Idaho. The dynamics of one state may be vastly different from the procedures or policies of other states across the nation.

Implications for Professional Practice

Administrators indicated communication with parents is essential for interventions such as retention to be successful. Administrators and teachers need to communicate early and frequently with parents regarding the needs of at risk students, allowing parents to understand the intervention process and options available to their children. As a result of this study, implications for school, district, and educational policy can be made. Given the amount of research supporting the role of parents in the educational decision making process, it would be practical for educators to focus on a way to involve parents in the discussion and decision making process (Akmal & Larsen, 2014; Kim, Coutts, Holmes, Sheridan, Ranson, Sjuts, & Rispoli, 2012). Federal programs such as Title One require districts to involve parents in the decision making process, therefore it would be logical for schools to support student-centered partnerships based on the

premise that schools, families, and communities need to work together to provide the best environment for students to be successful.

States such as Idaho also need to realize the need for policy which promotes early intervention for at-risk students. Idaho is currently one of 35 states which does not require kindergarten for students (Parker, Diffey, & Atchison, 2016). Idaho requires only 450 hours of instruction for kindergarten age students. Only seven states in the nation require fewer hours of instruction for kindergarten age students (Parker et al., 2016). Idaho currently does not financially or politically support preschool programs within or outside the school system. Preceding this change of philosophy, the climate of Idaho's educational system must undergo a significant change. Education needs to become valued at the earliest age. Communities, parents, and lawmakers need to understand education at a young age is critical before we will begin to see a significant change in student growth and our ability to compete educationally as a state and a nation. It is encouraging we are seeing federal bi-partisan support for programs such as early intervention programs which may address the needs of at-risk students.

Results of this study will be helpful to any administrator struggling with the potential effects of retention on primary age students. There is little research conducted regarding the effects of grade level retention in rural schools across the nation (Hill, 2014; Jimerson, 2005b; Sperry & Hill, 2015; Stelmach, 2011). State level policy makers and administrators need to be aware of the dynamics and needs of rural school districts to provide adequate and much-needed professional development on topics such as differentiated instruction, mastery based learning, behavioral and academic interventions, building communication among stakeholders and working with at-risk students. My hope is policy makers will consider the outcome on rural

districts as well as the outcome on urban districts when implementing ESSA and other legislation influencing education is certain to come in the future.

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Appendix A

Human Research Review Committee Approval

NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY

Wendy Moore <wmoore@nnu.edu>

RE: [Northwest Nazarene University] Submission Protocol #12032016 - A Mixed Methods Study Exploring The Perceptions of Elementary Principals Regarding Grade Retention of Kindergarten and First Grad...

Northwest Nazarene University <dmatlock@nnu.edu> Wed, Mar 30, 2016 at 10:52 AM
Reply-To: dmatlock@nnu.edu
To: Wendy Moore <wmoore@nnu.edu>

Dear Wendy,

The HRRC has reviewed your protocol: Protocol #12032016 - A Mixed Methods Study Exploring The Perceptions of Elementary Principals Regarding Grade Retention of Kindergarten and First Grade Students in Rural Idaho Districts. You received "Full Approval". Congratulations, you may begin your research. If you have any questions, let me know.

Dean Matlock
Northwest Nazarene University
HRRC Member
623 S University Blvd
Nampa, ID 83686
dmatlock@nnu.edu

You can go here to view the submission:
http://nnu.submittable.com/user/submissions/5313542

Appendix B

National Institute for Health Certificate

Certificate of Completion
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Wendy Moore successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".
Date of completion: 01/22/2015
Certification Number: 1660169

Appendix C

Email Introduction Script - Initial Contact to Superintendent

Dear (*input Superintendent's name*):

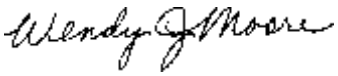
My name is Wendy Moore. I am the Superintendent of Genesee Joint School District in Genesee, Idaho. I am currently working on my doctorate through Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, ID. My dissertation is regarding grade level of kindergarten and first grade students in rural districts throughout Idaho. I am beginning the process of identifying districts who would be willing to allow me to speak with elementary principals or a building administrator who would be aware of district retention numbers and district policies regarding grade level retention. Your district was chosen through a random sampling of rural districts throughout Idaho.

I am requesting your permission to contact your elementary principal(s) or building administrator in the fall of 2016. If you would be willing to allow me to contact your administration next year regarding this study, I would greatly appreciate it.

I have attached a letter for your convenience that you may use as template for approval. I just need the letter signed and put on your district letterhead.

Thank you for your consideration. I hope to hear from you soon. If you have any questions I can be reached at wmoore@nnu.edu or 208-596-6303.

Sincerely,



Wendy J. Moore

Appendix D

Email Introduction Script - Initial Contact to Principal

Dear Administrator:

My name is Wendy Moore and I am currently a doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho. I am working on my dissertation regarding retention of primary age students in rural Idaho districts. I was hoping that you would participate in this important study. I have contacted (*insert Superintendent's name*) and received permission to contact you directly regarding my study on grade level retention.

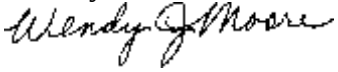
The purpose of this investigative study is to study the effects of retention on primary age students in kindergarten and first grade. I also hope to explore possible interventions available to rural districts as well as policies and/or procedures used by rural districts throughout Idaho. This study may provide future insight into interventions, policies and procedures that may benefit at-risk students, as well as educators.

I am asking for your input on this subject because you are an elementary principal and may have important input regarding this particular subject. All data received will be anonymous and by filling out the survey, you are giving me consent to use your responses in my study.

You will be sent an email link in September, followed by a phone call in October to schedule a phone interview. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and the follow-up phone interview is anticipated to take 20-30 minutes.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. I can be reached at wmoore@nnu.edu. Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this research.

Thank you,



Wendy J. Moore

Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Wendy Moore, MA in Ed, in the Department of Graduate Education at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to grade level retention of kindergarten and first grade students in rural districts. We appreciate your involvement in helping us investigate how to better serve and meet the needs of Northwest Nazarene University students.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an Elementary Principal or Superintendent of a rural district, over the age of 18.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.

2. You will answer survey questions via the Internet regarding perceptions of student retention.

3. You will answer a set of interview questions and engage in a discussion on grade level retention. This discussion will be audio taped and is expected to last approximately 30 - 45 minutes.

4. You will answer a set of demographic questions in an online survey. It should take approximately 5-10 minutes to answer these questions.

5. You will be asked to read a debriefing statement at the conclusion of the interview.

6. You will be sent a brief description of data gathered from the interviews, at that time you may ask for additional information, deny or confirm the information gathered.

These procedures will be competed at a time mutually decided upon by the participant and principal investigator and will take a total time of about 60 minutes.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. If any of the survey or interview questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation in the study at any time.

2. For this research project, the researcher will be requesting demographic information. All demographic information will be compiled into regions and enrollment size of districts. It is anticipated that districts will not be identifiable due to the sample size of districts participating in the study. The researchers will make every effort to protect your

Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (continued)

identity. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may leave them blank.

3. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes, and disks will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the office of the researcher and the key to the cabinet will be kept in a separate location. In compliance with the Federal wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

4. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

D. BENEFITS
There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. The information you provide may help educators to better understand the effects of grade level retention on primary grade students. Participants may request a copy of the final report if desired.

E. PAYMENTS
There are no payments for participating in this study.

F. QUESTIONS
If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the investigator. Wendy Moore can be contacted via email at wmoore@nnu.edu, via telephone at 208-285-1161 (W) / 208-596-6303 (C) or by writing: Wendy Moore, PO Box 98, Genesee, ID 83832. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact Dr. Mike Poe, Doctoral Committee Chair at Northwest Nazarene University, via mail at 623 S. University Drive, Nampa, Idaho 83686, or via email at empoe@nnu.edu.

G. CONSENT
You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Should you feel distressed due to participation in this, you should contact your own health care provider. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a student at Northwest Nazarene University.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for the interview and discussion to be audio taped in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent **Date**

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix F

Telephone Call Script

Hello, my name is Wendy Moore, and I am a doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University. I appreciate you taking my call today. I previously contacted you via email regarding my doctoral dissertation on kindergarten and first grade retention. I was hoping to schedule a time with you to have a phone interview. I anticipate the interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes. Is this a good time to chat about setting up a time for the first interview?

If no: "Is there a time that would be better to call again? Thank you for your time. I will call back at our appointed time".

If yes, proceed

Before we begin I would like to thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. Before I can conduct our first interview I will need you to sign the Informed Consent Form. I will e-mail you an Informed Consent Form for your signature. After you have signed the form, you can scan the form and e-mail it to me at wmoore@nnu.edu.

After I have received the Informed Consent Form, I will call you back for our interview.

Would you like to schedule a time today, or would you like me to contact you after I receive the consent form?

If call back later: "Thank you for your time and I will call you back after I receive your signed consent in order to schedule a time that is convenient for you".

If yes, - proceed to schedule day/time.

Thank you so much for your willingness to be a part of this study. I will talk to you soon. Thanks again.

Appendix G

Verbatim Instructions for Interviews

Hi _____

Thank you for participating in this study, your input is very important to the study.

Semi-Structured, Audio-Recorded Interviews
One semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews will be conducted with each participant. These interviews will be completed via phone, internet or at a public location mutually decided by the participant and interviewer. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

This process is completely voluntary and you can select to leave the study at any time. If you feel uncomfortable with any question you can select not to answer that question.

Do you have any questions for me?

Before we begin, I would like to thank you for participating in this study.
Proceed with interview questions.

Appendix H Qualitative

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the demographics of your school?
2. What is your Free/Reduced percentage rate?
3. Does your district have policies or procedures in place that you use as a guide for student retention?
4. Who is included in the decision to retain a student in your district?
5. Will you retain a student because of age, attendance policy, suspension, or is it based solely on academic achievement?
6. What other factors might you consider when retaining a student?
7. Do you feel that the child‘s self-esteem is affected because of grade retention?
8. Are you aware of any psychological effects on students due to grade retention or have you witnessed any affects due to grade retention? If so, please explain.
9. Do you assess students prior to entering kindergarten? If so, does that assessment determine whether or not a student is ready for kindergarten?
10. If a student does not show “readiness” for kindergarten, does the district provide options to parents? If so, what options are available in your district?
11. Do you think the practice of retention is a positive practice for the child involved? If so, please explain.
12. Do you think the practice of retention is a negative practice for the child involved? If so, please explain.
13. When retaining a student do the students receive a different teacher automatically the following year?
14. How do you feel about social promotion?
15. What are your thoughts about child‘s gender or race influencing the decision to retain?
16. Are interventions provided to students retained in kindergarten and/or first grade? If so, what interventions are provided?
17. Are interventions provided prior to retention? After retention? Or both? If so, what interventions are provided?
18. Is there anything else, you could add regarding student retention that I have not addressed?

Appendix I

Request to Use Grade Retention Survey

Letter requesting permission to Jill DelConte, author of Principal Grade Retention Survey, seeking permission to use her survey in this research study:

January 16, 2016

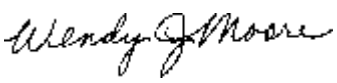
Dear Ms. Delconte,

I am currently a doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho. I am currently working on a dissertation regarding grade retention in primary grades in rural districts. I recently read your study regarding attitudes of elementary principals that influence retention decisions and was very impressed with the Grade Retention Decision-Making Survey that was given to participating principals in your study. I would like to replicate a similar survey in my study with participating elementary principals with your permission.

As you found in your dissertation, it is very difficult to find an instrument that meets the needs of the researcher regarding specific aspects of the individual study. I am hoping you would be willing to give me permission to use the survey in my research. If you would rather I did not use your survey, do you have any other suggestions for surveys that you found in your research?

If you are willing to allow me to use the survey, would you please provide a letter indicating permission to do so? I welcome any input you may have regarding the survey or the dissertation topic itself. Please feel free to respond in writing, via email at wmoore@sd282.org or by fax at 208-285-1495.
Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Wendy Moore
Superintendent
Genesee Joint School District #282

Appendix J

Permission Granted to Use Grade Retention Survey

Jill A. DelConte, Ed.D.
10 Evelyn Ave.
Williamstown, NJ 08094
jdelconte@monroetwp.k12.nj.us

February 1, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

I am granting permission for Wendy J. Moore to utilize my Grade Retention Decision-making Survey that was developed for my dissertation, published in 2011. This was done as part of my doctoral dissertation completed at Seton Hall University.

I understand Ms. Moore will be using the survey in her dissertation at Northwest Nazarene University. I hope it provides the data necessary to publish her dissertation.

Yours In Education,

Jill DelConte, Ed.D.
Principal

Appendix K

Principals' Perceptions Regarding Grade Retention Survey (PPRGRS)

1. Retention is a valid practice for kindergarten/first grade students when they fail to show mastery in skills necessary to be successful in the next grade level.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

2. Retention is harmful to a child's self-concept/self-image.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

3. Retention allows students who are academically behind peers an opportunity to catch up.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

4. Children should not be retained.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

5. Children who have large number of absences should be retained.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

6. Boys are more likely than girls to be retained?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

7. Social promotion should not be allowed.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

8. Teachers can use grade retention as a motivator for students to do well.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

9. Students who have been retained in one or more grades tend to be or cause behavior problems.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

10. Retained students normally do better the second time in the grade retained.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

11. If students fail one or more core subjects (reading, math, science, language arts, social studies) the student should be retained.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

12. Students with a documented learning disability should not be retained.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

13. Students ability to learn is consistent with the maturity level of the student.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

14. Parents should have the final decision as to whether the child is retained.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

15. Students who have a “preschool type” experience prior to kindergarten do better academically in school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

16. Students who are more than two grades behind should not be required to repeat a grade.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

17. Students should be retained only because of poor academic performance in class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

18. Students “readiness” for school is often tied to a student’s level of maturity.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

19. Retention allows students another year to mature and gain the necessary skills to be successful in school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

20. Principals should have the final say as to whether a student is retained.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree
1	2	3	4

Part II: Demographics

21. How many years have you been an elementary principal?

a. 1-4 b. 5-9 c. 10-14 d. 15-20 e. over 20

22. Are you certified in Elementary? If no, what is your certification type?

a. yes b. no _____

23. Prior to becoming a principal? What grade do you teach?

a. K-2nd b. 3rd -5th c. 6th -8th d. 9th -12th

24. What is the total number of students in your school district?

a. 1 – 300 b. 301 – 600 c. 601 – 999 d. 1000+

25. What is the percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch in your district?

a. 1% – 25% b. 26% – 50% c. 51% - 75% d. 76% +

26. How many students were retained in kindergarten in 2015/16?_____out of a total of ____kindergarten students.

27. How many students were retained in kindergarten in 2014/15?_____out of a total of ____kindergarten students.

28. How many students were retained in first grade in 2015/16?_____out of a total of ____first grade students.

29. How many students were retained in first grade in 2014/15?_____out of a total of ____first grade students.

30. Circle one of the following which apply to you.

a. White b. Black c. Hispanic d. Asian/Pacific Islander e. Other

31. What is your highest level of education?

a. Bachelor‘s b. Masters c. Education Specialist d. Doctorate

32. Would you be willing to be interviewed via telephone, internet or in person for this research study? Yes_____ No_____

If yes, please list your name and school:

Name_____ School_____

33. If you would like a summary of the completed study, please fill out the following information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Appendix L

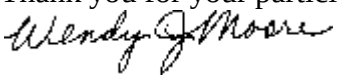
Debrief Statement for Qualitative Interviews

Thank you for participating in this study. As you know, making decisions regarding student retention is one of the toughest decisions educators must make. The goal of this study is to determine if rural districts have interventions, policies or procedures in place to support students who are at-risk and possibly decrease the number of students retained annually. Hopefully, this study can help educators make sound educational decisions regarding student retention.

After I have had a chance to analyze the data, I will e-mail you the themes and concepts that have emerged from the data and ask for feedback. The purpose of this communication is to ensure that I have captured our discussions accurately and portrayed your thoughts properly.

If you have any questions or concerns, I can be contacted at 208-596-6303 or wmoore@nnu.edu.

Thank you for your participation.



Wendy J. Moore

HRRC Application # 12032016

Appendix M

Member Checking E-mail

January, 2017

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in my dissertation study regarding student retention. I wanted to let you know some of the themes that emerged from the Qualtrics survey and interviews of the participants.

Theme #1 – Parents Determine Success

The majority of the administrators identify parents as a key factor in determining the potential success of grade level retention. Parents were considered to be the main factor as to whether or not retention had any effect on a student's self-esteem. If parents were supportive of retention as an intervention, participants were more likely to believe that retention would potentially be successful and therefore students were likely to be retained. If parents were against retention, all but one administrators said they would follow the parent's wishes and the students would be socially promoted to the next grade.

Theme #2 – Kindergarten Screeners or Baseline Assessments

Kindergarten screeners used prior to entering kindergarten were primarily used as a screener only. The majority of participants identified that their district did not have any options for incoming kindergarten students who were not "ready" for kindergarten and therefore the assessment was strictly used as a baseline assessment. The screener provided data for educators to determine what skills students would have entering kindergarten and allowed the staff the opportunity to plan for potential or necessary interventions.

Theme #3 – Retention Policy or Procedures

Five participants have both policies and procedures in place to make retention based decisions. Two participants have only board policy to follow and 13 administrators operate under school level procedures that are neither district or board policy. All participants in the study utilize some type of committee when making decisions regarding student retention. Committees primarily consist of the current grade level teacher, administrator and parent. If there were concerns that a student might have a need for special education services in the future, the special education teacher was often invited to the meeting as well.

Theme #4 – Interventions are Important for Student Success

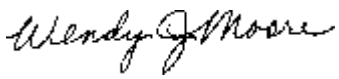
Of the 20 participants interviewed in the research study, 63% of the participants found that retention is a valid intervention for kindergarten/first grade students when they fail to show mastery in skills necessary to be successful in the following grade. 84.11% found that retention allow students who are academically behind the opportunity to catch up to their peers, however,

overall participants believed that students should only be retained once during their academic career.

All participants identified some form of intervention that was formally implemented once a student had been retained. All participants identified preschool as a key indicator for students' academic success. 100% of the participants acknowledged that they felt that students who had participated in some type of preschool type experience were better prepared academically for a formal education.

Thank you again for participating in this study. If you have any questions, suggestions or additional comments, please let me know.

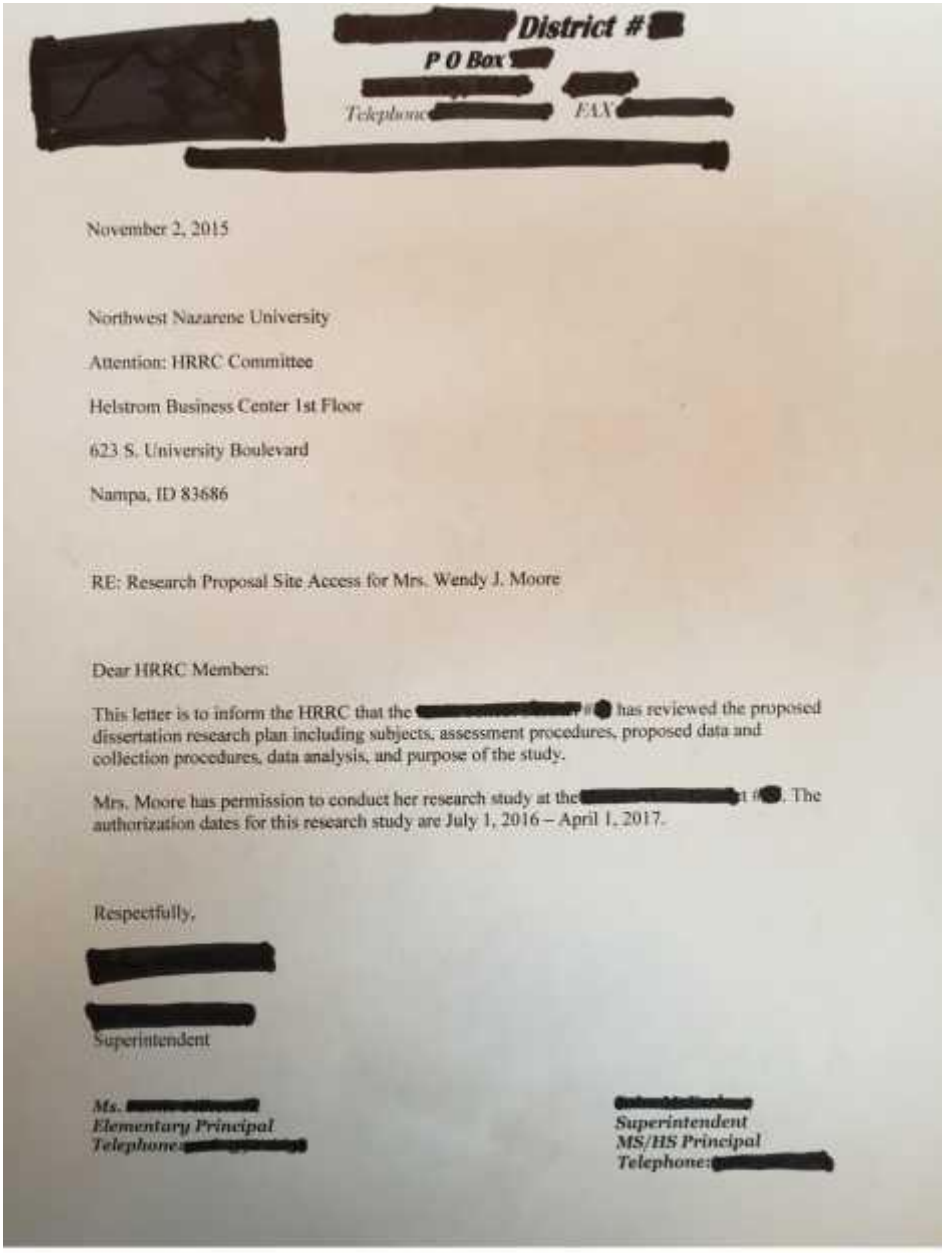
Sincerely,



Wendy J. Moore
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University
Telephone: 208-596-6303
wmoore@nnu.edu
HRRC Approval # 12032016

Appendix N

SITE APPROVAL LETTERS



[redacted] District #[redacted]
P O Box [redacted]
[redacted]
Telephone [redacted] FAX [redacted]
[redacted]

November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University

Attention: HRRC Committee

Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor

623 S. University Boulevard

Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:

This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.

Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted]. The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

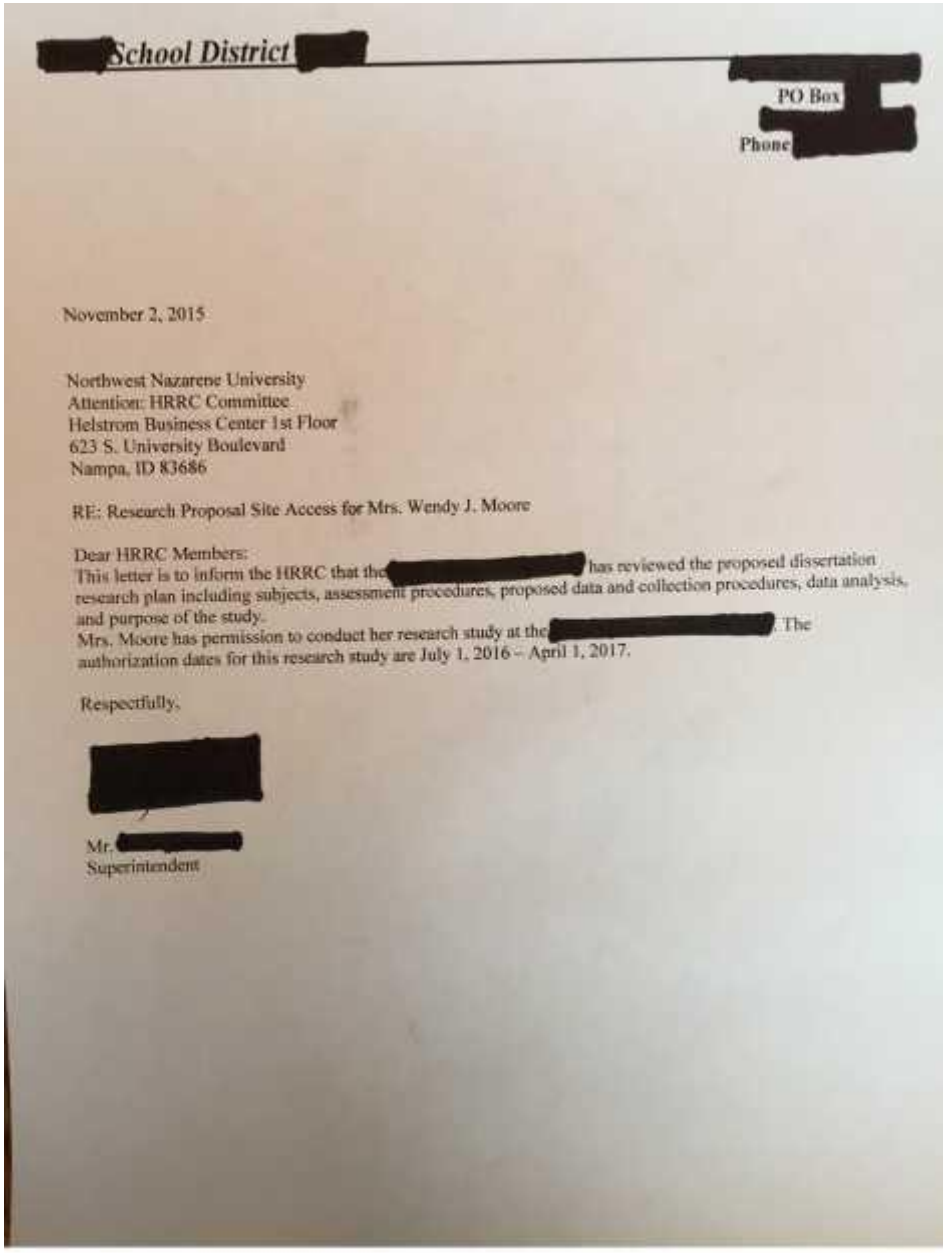
Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Superintendent

Ms. [redacted]
Elementary Principal
Telephone [redacted]

[redacted]
Superintendent
MS/HS Principal
Telephone: [redacted]



[redacted] School District [redacted]

[redacted]
PO Box [redacted]
Phone [redacted]

November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

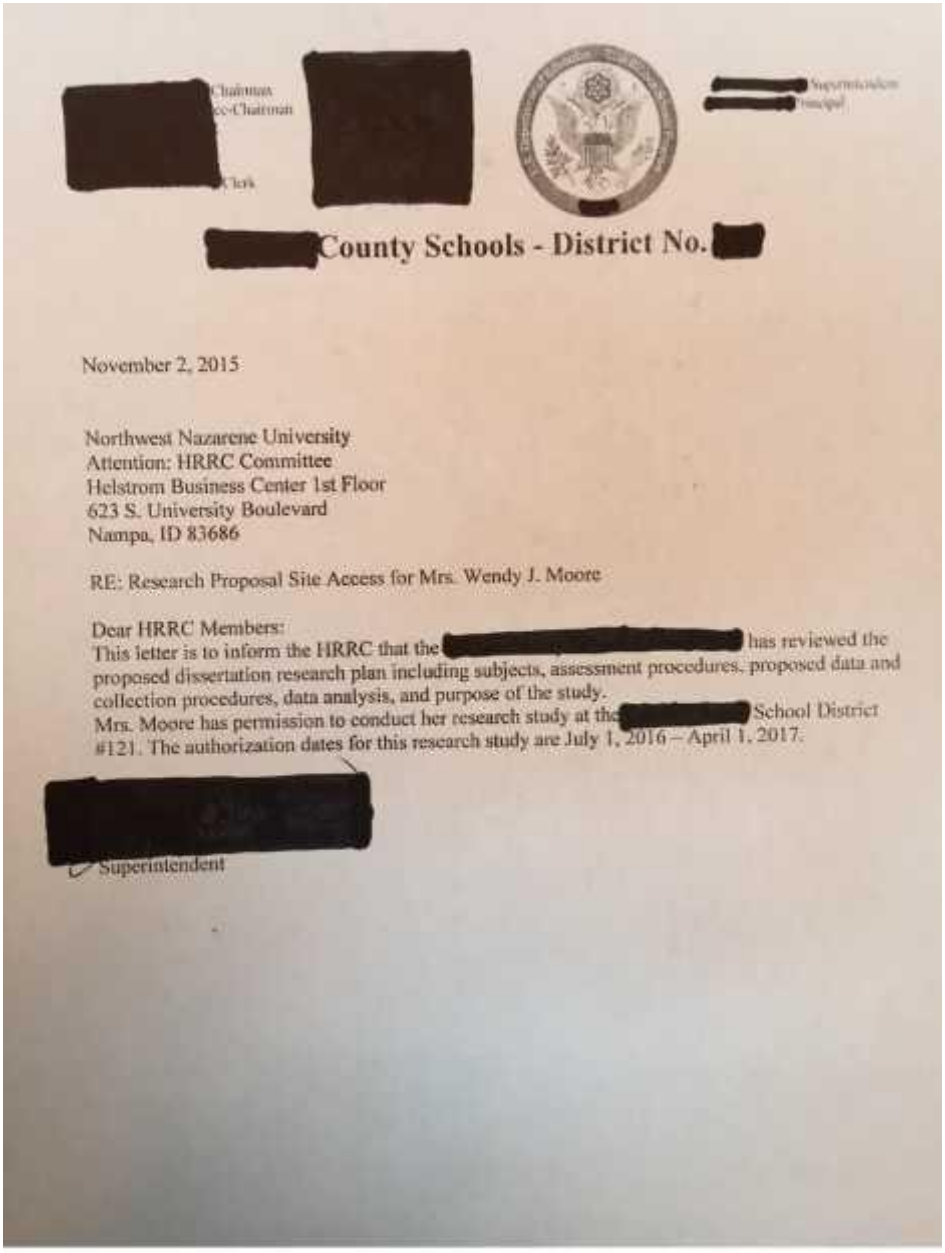
RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:
This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.
Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted]. The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

Mr. [redacted]
Superintendent



[redacted] Chairman
[redacted] Co-Chairman
[redacted] Clerk

[redacted] Superintendent

[redacted] County Schools - District No. [redacted]

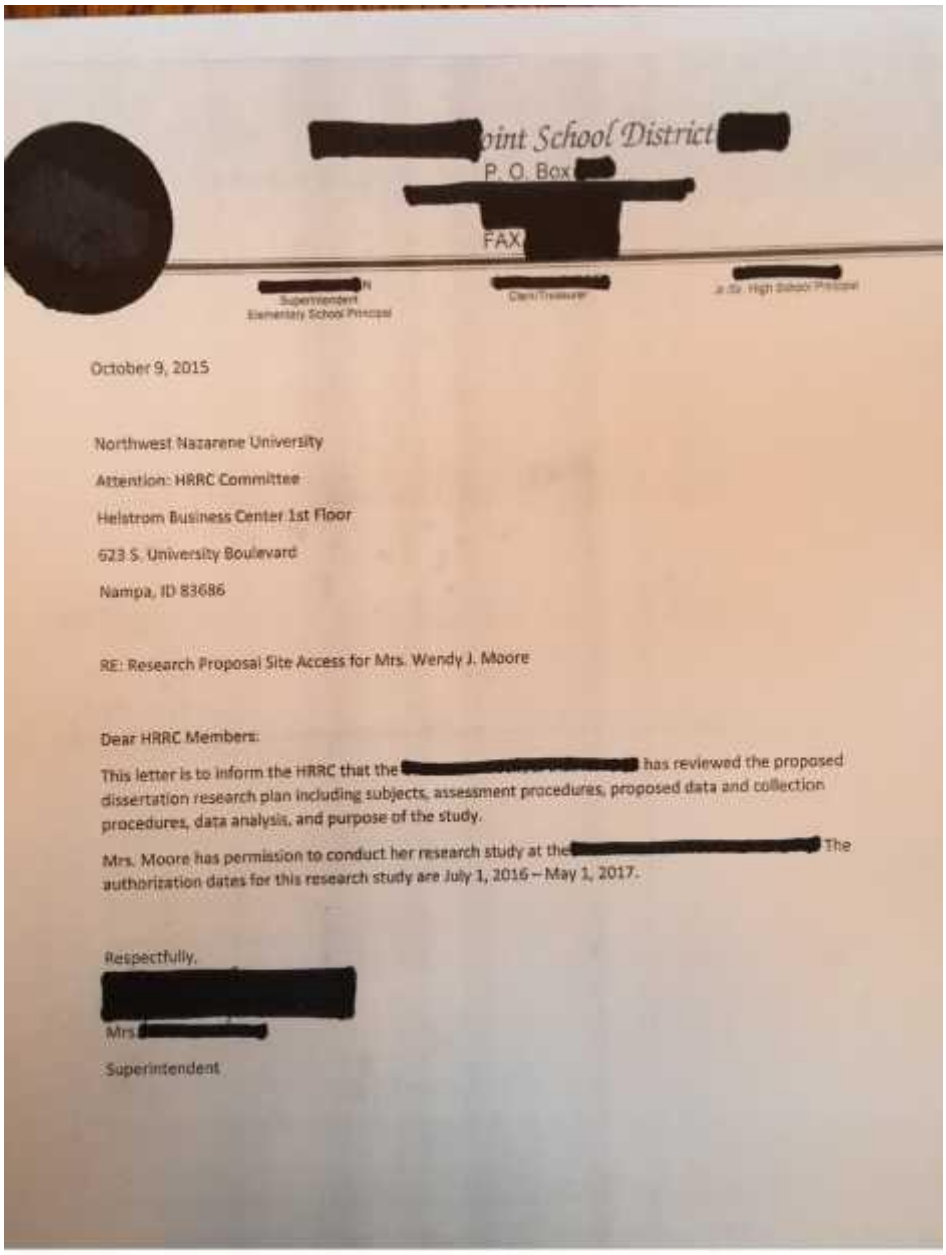
November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:
This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.
Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted] School District #121. The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

[redacted]
Superintendent



[redacted] oint School District [redacted]
P. O. Box [redacted]
[redacted]
FAX

[redacted] Superintendent
Elementary School Principal

[redacted]
Clerk/Treasurer

[redacted]
Jr./Sr. High School Principal

October 9, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University

Attention: HRRC Committee

Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor

623 S. University Boulevard

Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:

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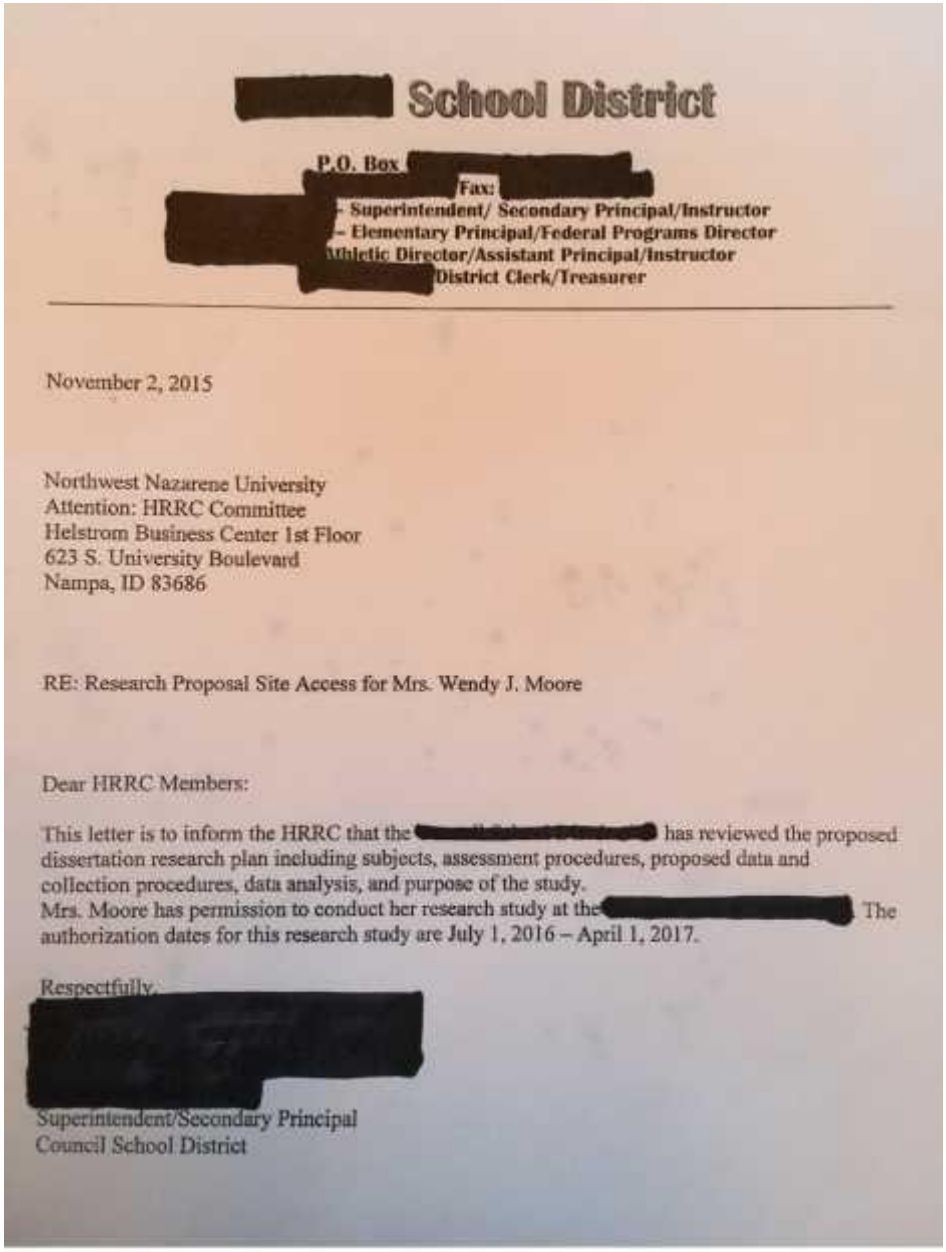
Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted] The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – May 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

Mrs. [redacted]

Superintendent



[redacted] School District

P.O. Box [redacted] Fax: [redacted]
[redacted] – Superintendent/ Secondary Principal/Instructor
– Elementary Principal/Federal Programs Director
Athletic Director/Assistant Principal/Instructor
[redacted] District Clerk/Treasurer

November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:

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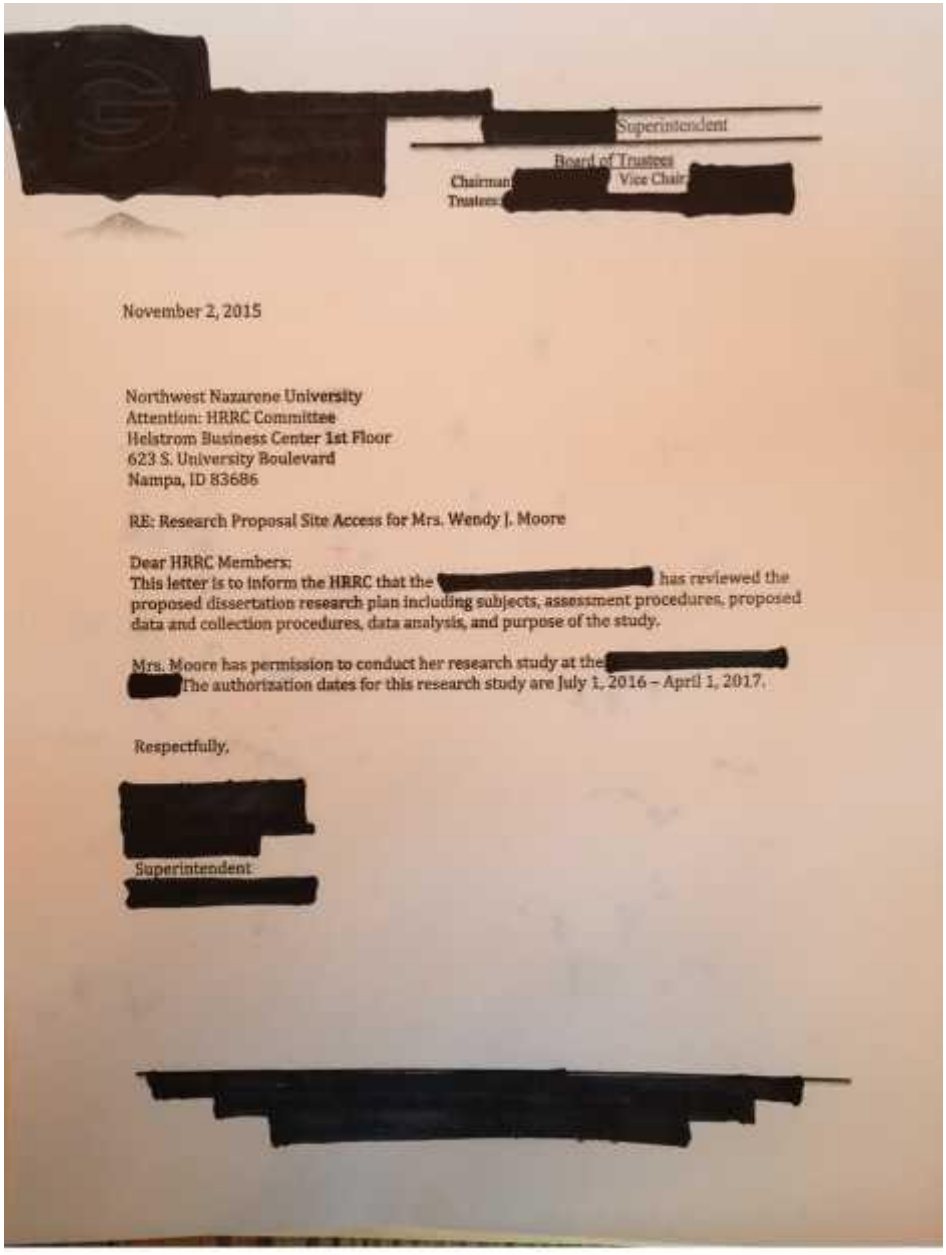
Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted] The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]
Superintendent/Secondary Principal
Council School District



[redacted] Superintendent

Board of Trustees

Chairman [redacted] Vice Chair [redacted]

Trustees [redacted]

November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:
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Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted] The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

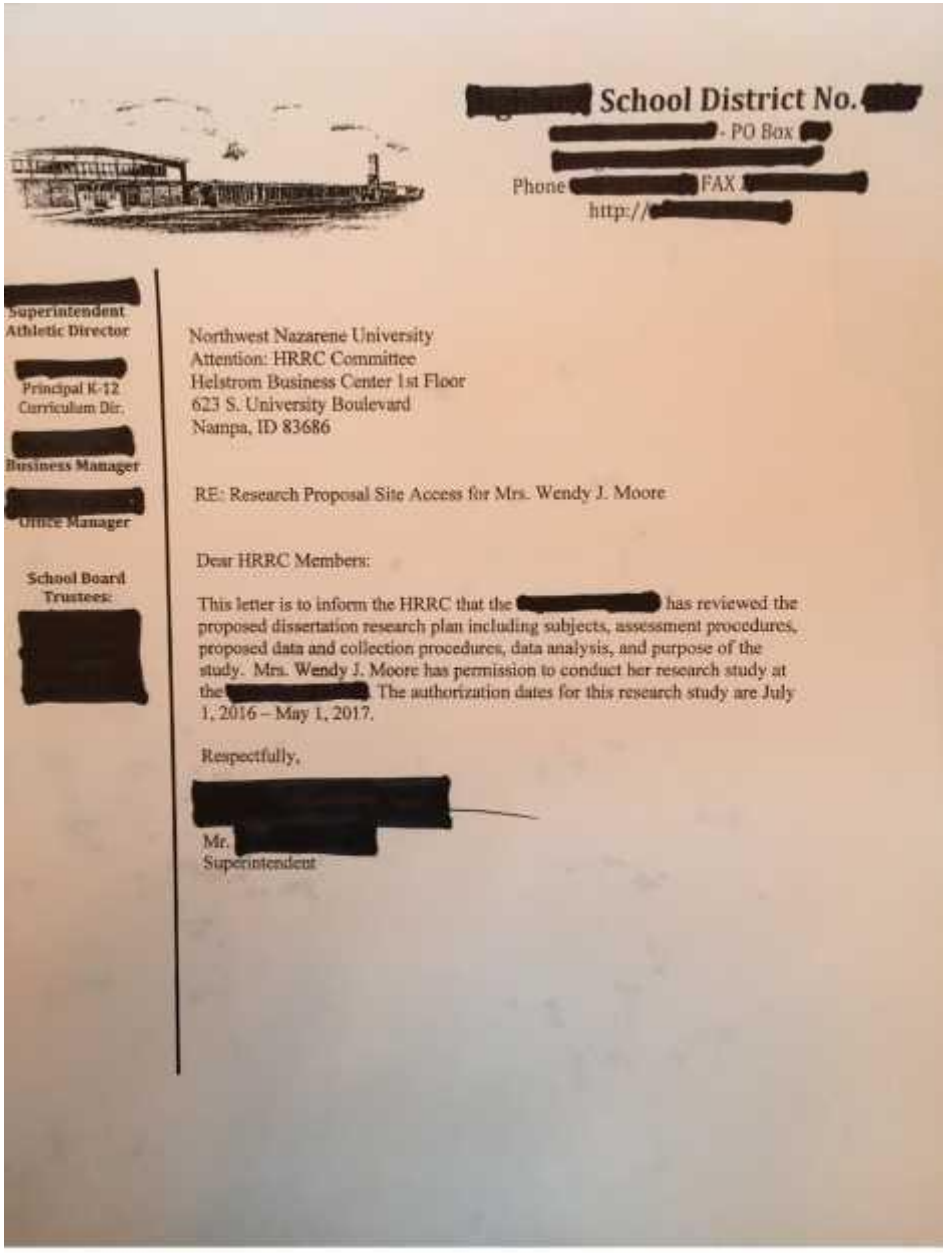
Respectfully,

[redacted]

Superintendent

[redacted]

[redacted]



[redacted] School District No. [redacted]

[redacted] - PO Box [redacted]

Phone [redacted] FAX [redacted]

http://[redacted]

[redacted]
Superintendent
Athletic Director

[redacted]
Principal K-12
Curriculum Dir.

[redacted]
Business Manager

[redacted]
Office Manager

School Board
Trustees:

[redacted]

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

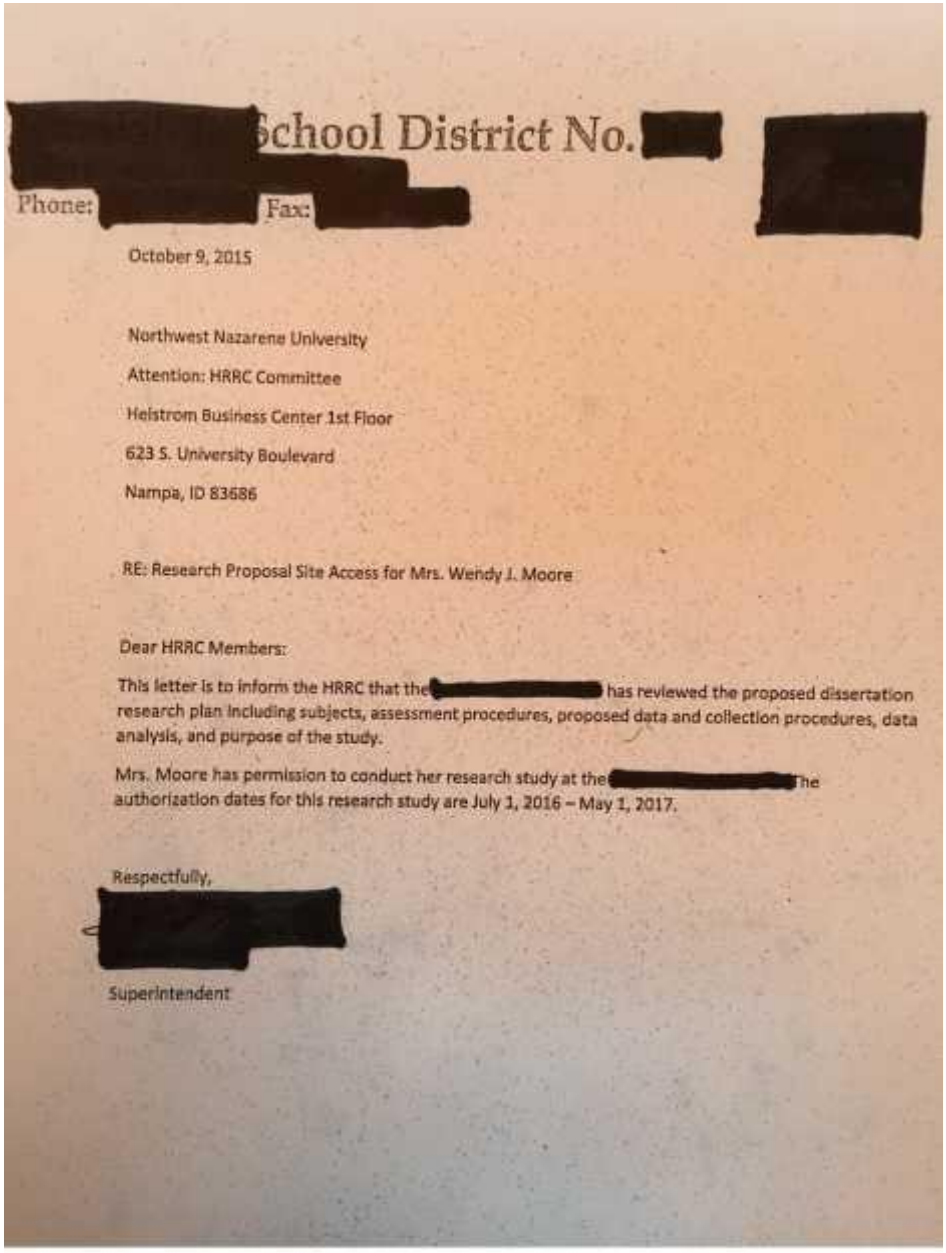
Dear HRRC Members:

This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Mrs. Wendy J. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted]. The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – May 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

Mr. [redacted]
Superintendent



[redacted] School District No. [redacted]

[redacted]

Phone: [redacted] Fax: [redacted]

October 9, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University

Attention: HRRC Committee

Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor

623 S. University Boulevard

Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:

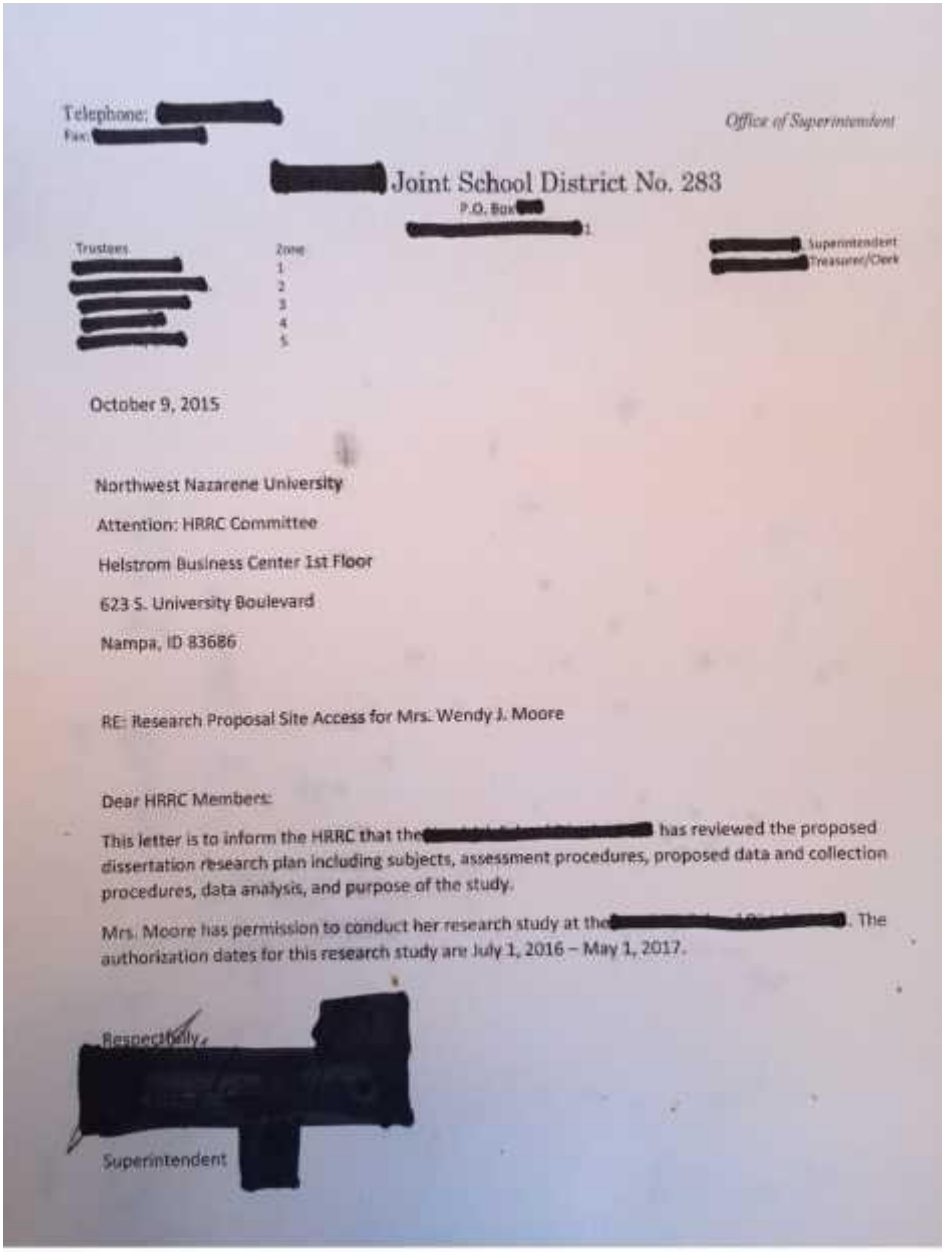
This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.

Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted]he authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – May 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

Superintendent



Telephone: [redacted]
Fax: [redacted]

Office of Superintendent

[redacted] Joint School District No. 283
P.O. Box [redacted]
[redacted]

Trustees
[redacted]

Zone
1
2
3
4
5

[redacted] Superintendent
Treasurer/Clerk

October 9, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University

Attention: HRRC Committee

Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor

623 S. University Boulevard

Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:

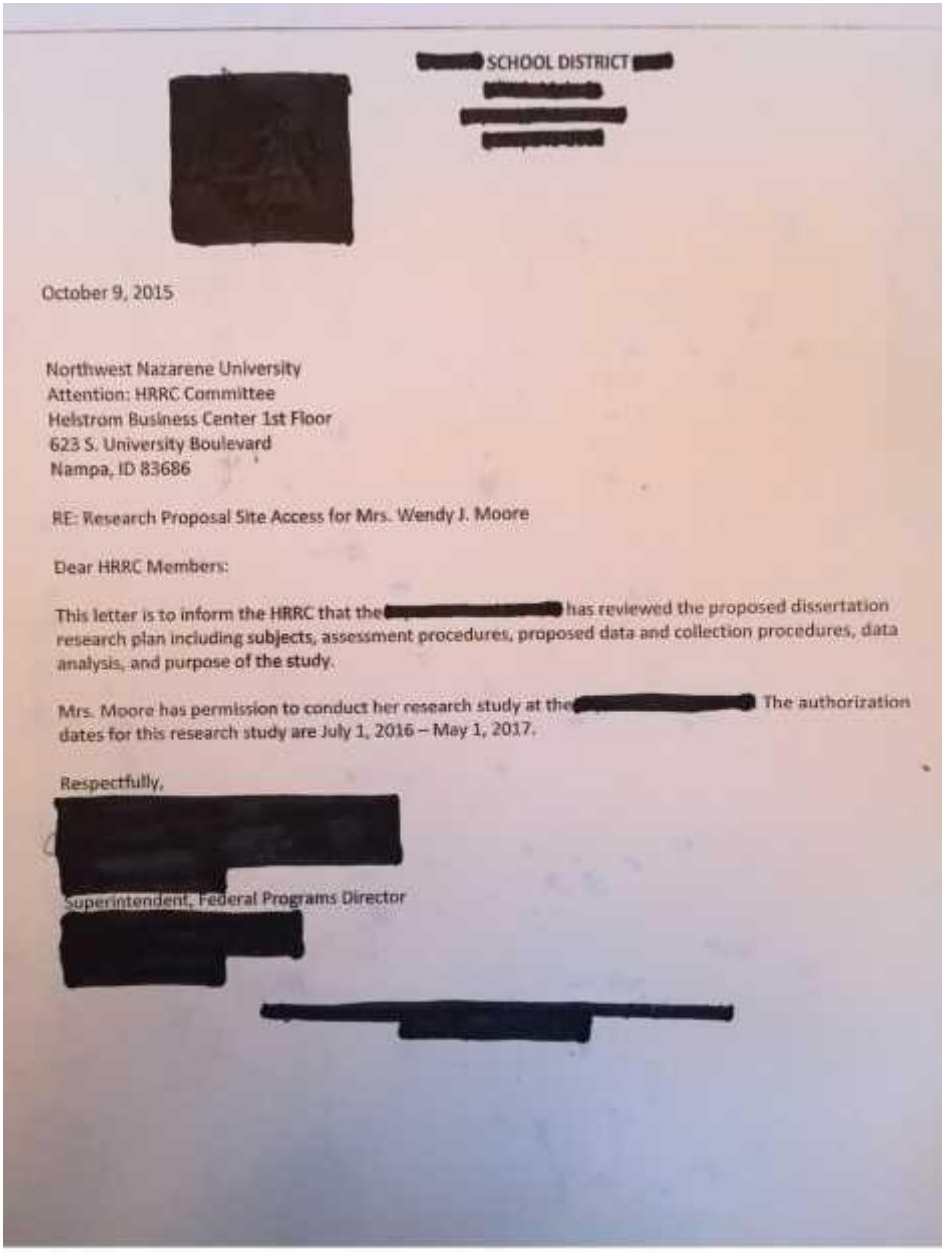
This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.

Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted]. The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – May 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

Superintendent



[redacted] SCHOOL DISTRICT [redacted]

[redacted]

October 9, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:

This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.

Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted] The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – May 1, 2017.

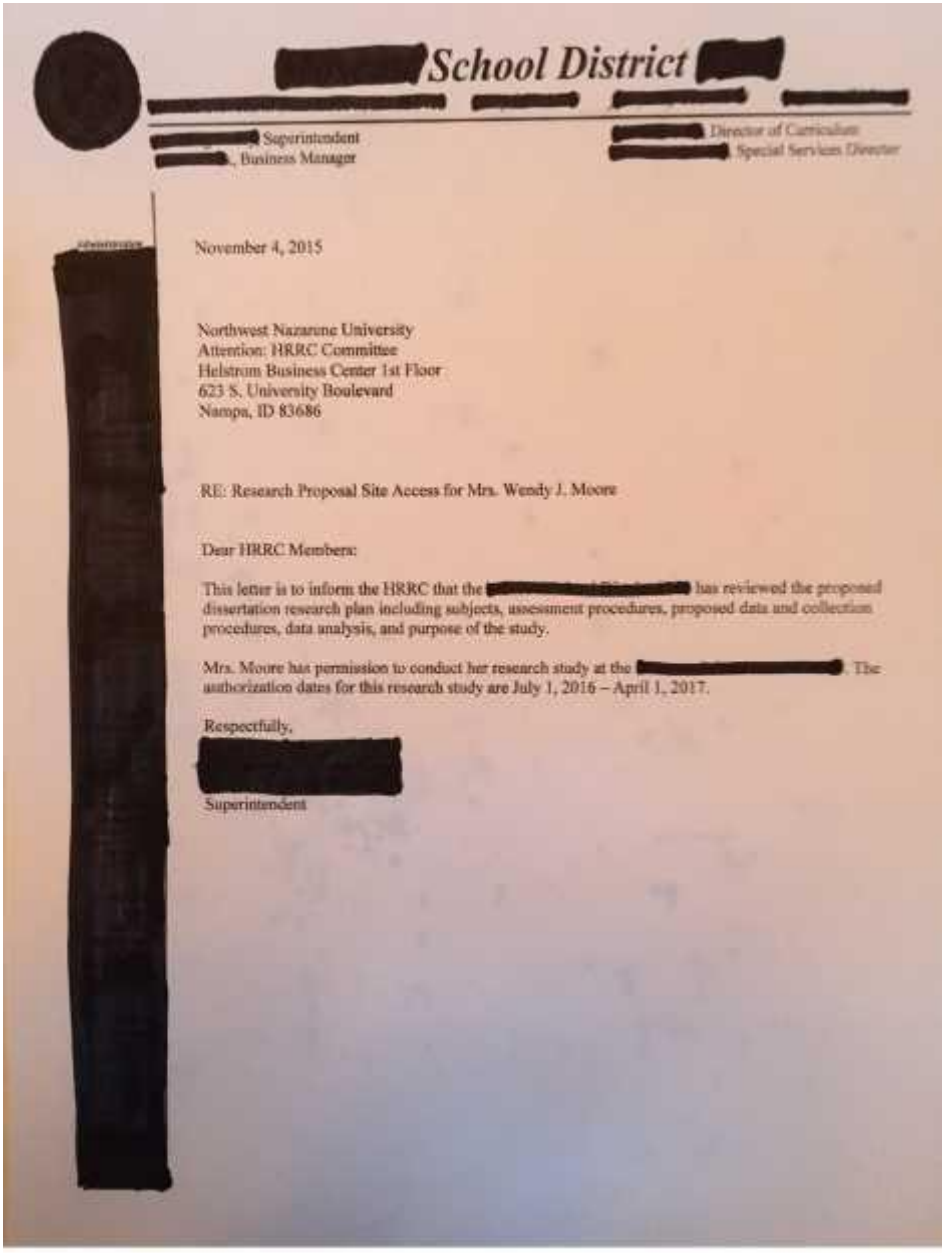
Respectfully,

[redacted]

Superintendent, Federal Programs Director

[redacted]

[redacted]



[redacted] School District [redacted]

[redacted] Superintendent
[redacted], Business Manager

[redacted] Director of Curriculum
[redacted] Special Services Director

[redacted]

November 4, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

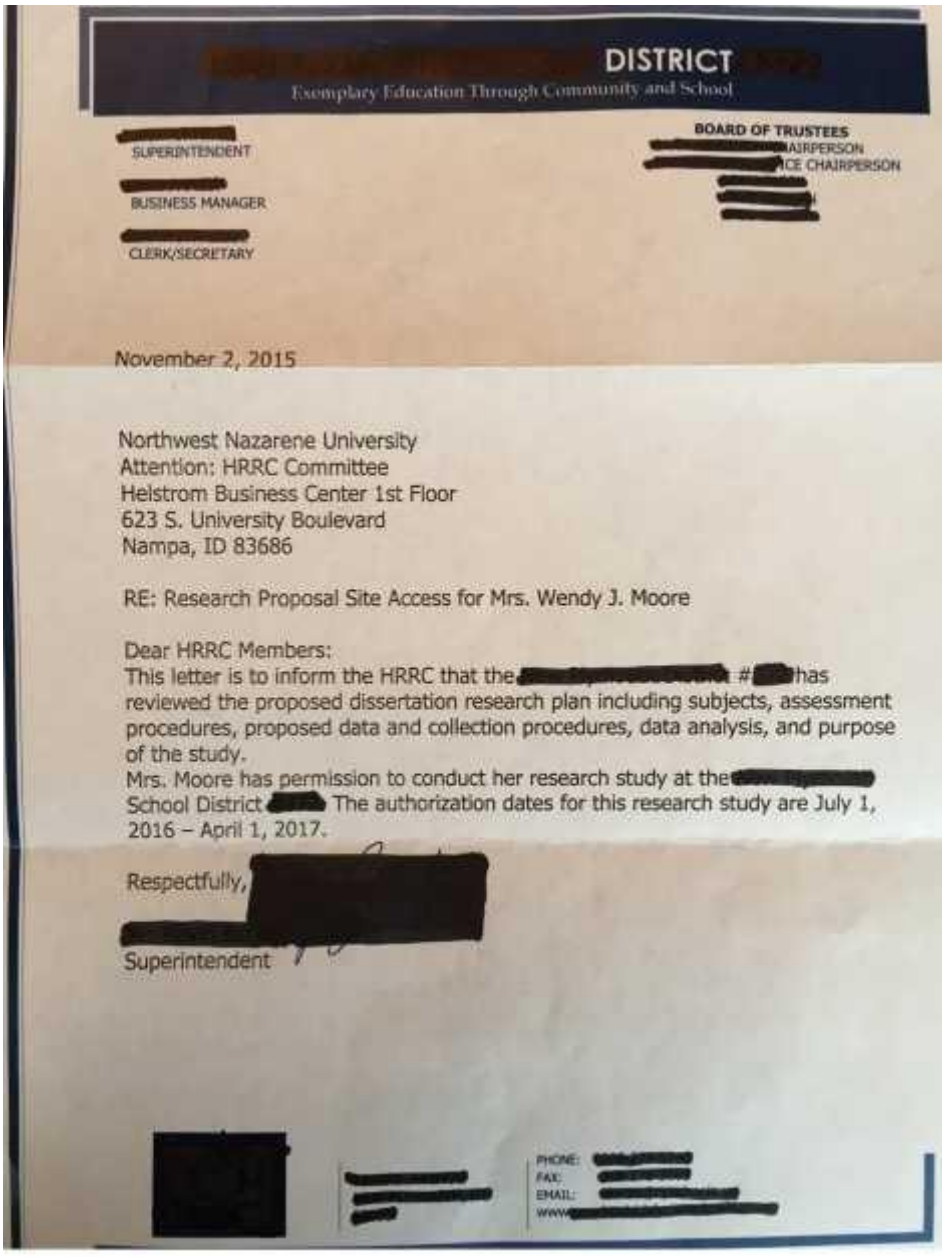
Dear HRRC Members:

This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.

Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted]. The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]
Superintendent



[redacted] DISTRICT [redacted]
Exemplary Education Through Community and School

[redacted] SUPERINTENDENT
[redacted] BUSINESS MANAGER
[redacted] CLERK/SECRETARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
[redacted] AIRPERSON
[redacted] CE CHAIRPERSON
[redacted]

November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:
This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] # [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.
Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted] School District [redacted] The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

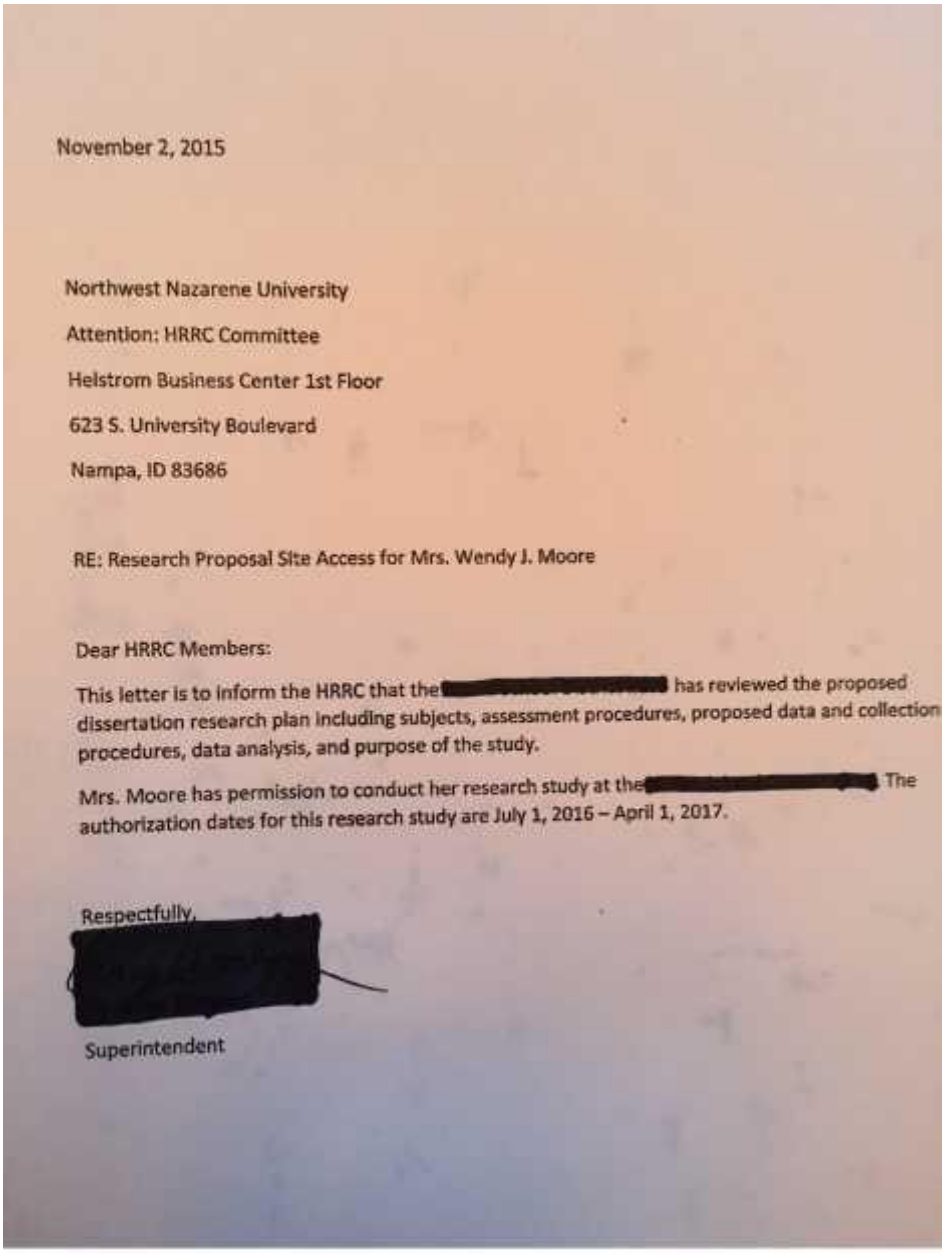
Respectfully,

[redacted]
Superintendent

[redacted]

[redacted]

PHONE: [redacted]
FAX: [redacted]
EMAIL: [redacted]
WWW [redacted]



November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University

Attention: HRRC Committee

Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor

623 S. University Boulevard

Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:

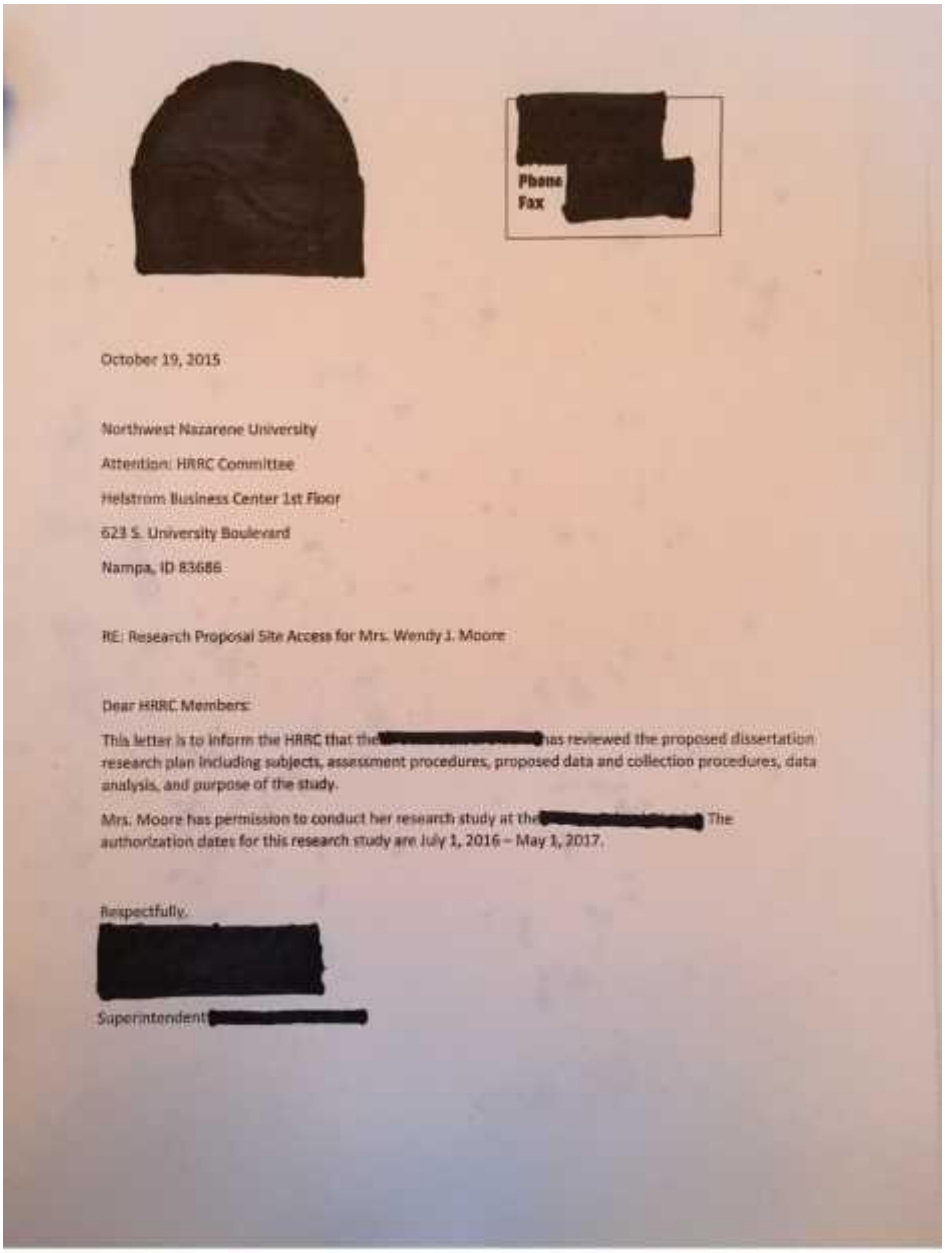
This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.

Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted]. The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

Superintendent



[redacted]

Phone
Fax [redacted]

October 19, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University

Attention: HRRC Committee

Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor

623 S. University Boulevard

Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:

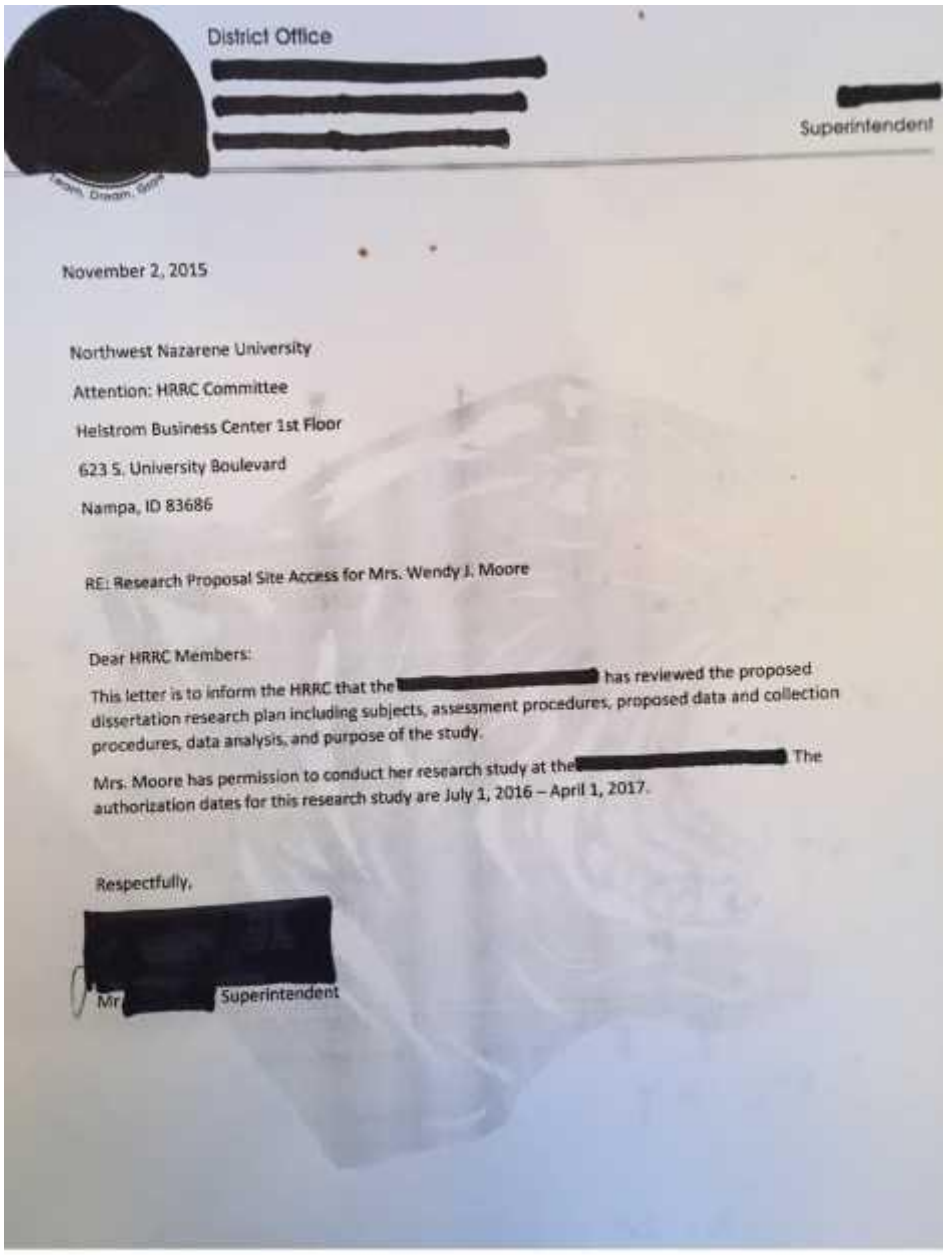
This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.

Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted] The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – May 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

Superintendent [redacted]



[redacted]

District Office

[redacted]

[redacted]

Superintendent

November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University

Attention: HRRC Committee

Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor

623 S. University Boulevard

Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:

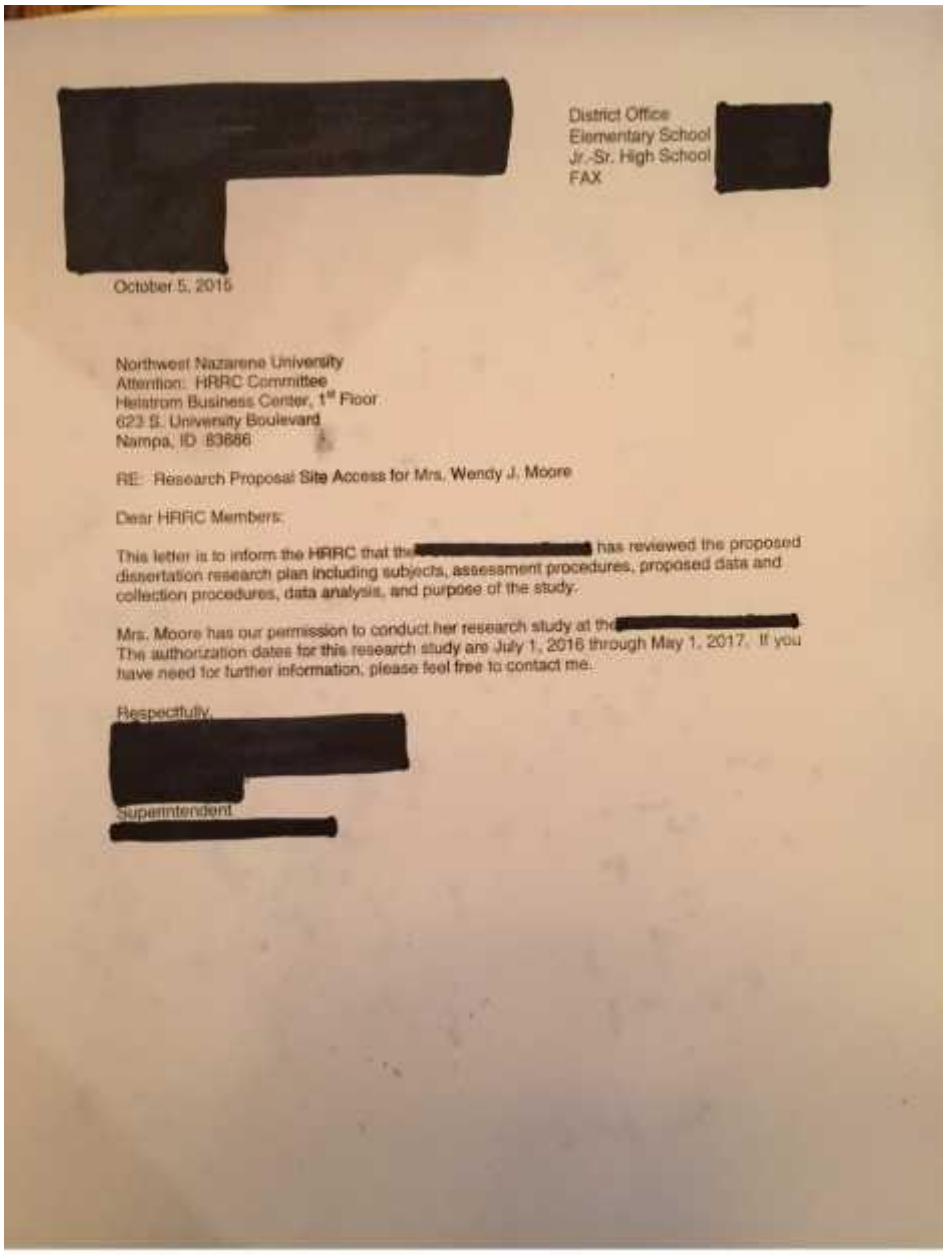
This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.

Mrs. Moore has permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted]. The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 – April 1, 2017.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

Mr [redacted] Superintendent



[redacted]

District Office
Elementary School
Jr.-Sr. High School
FAX [redacted]

October 5, 2016

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center, 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

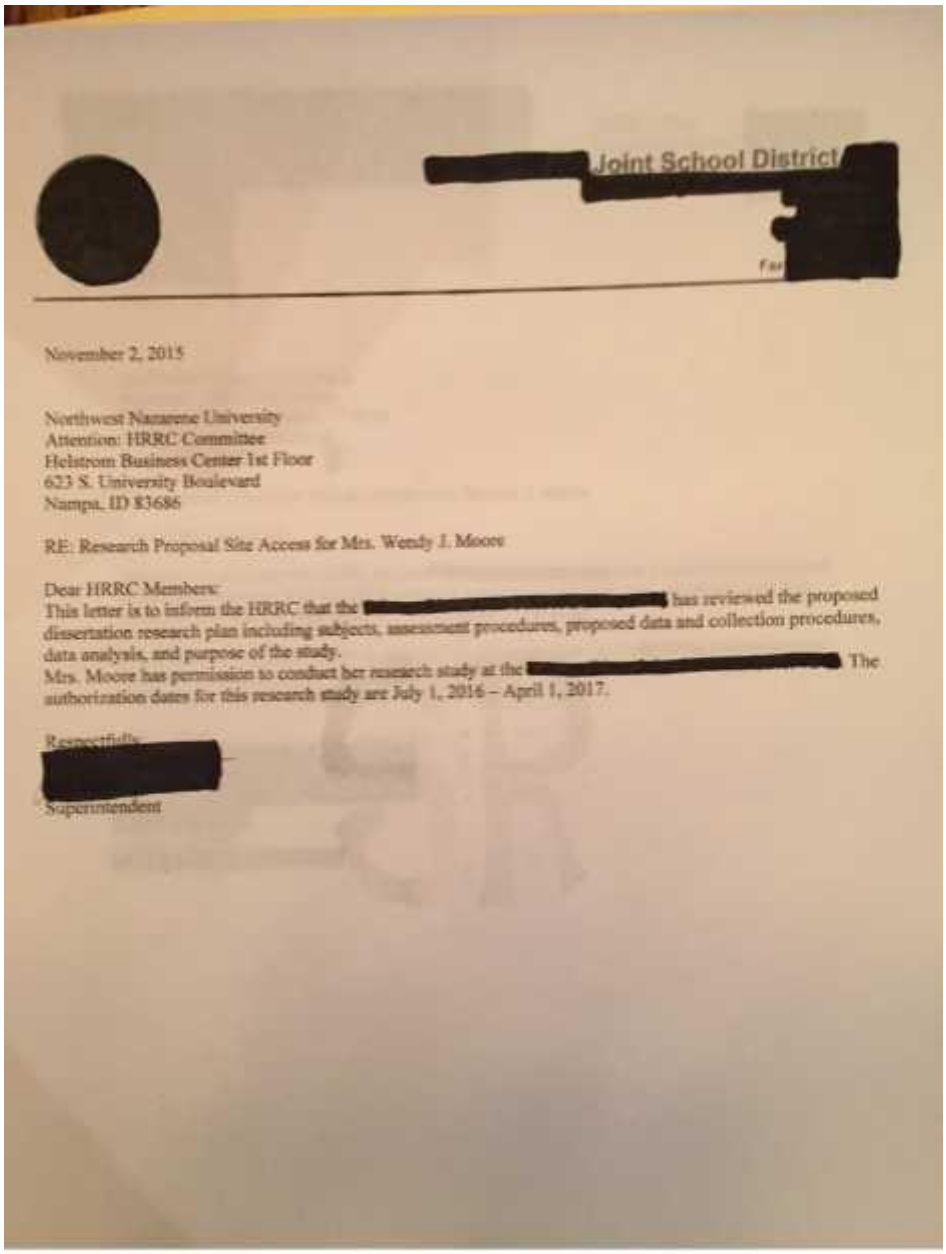
Dear HRRC Members:

This letter is to inform the HRRC that the [redacted] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study.

Mrs. Moore has our permission to conduct her research study at the [redacted]. The authorization dates for this research study are July 1, 2016 through May 1, 2017. If you have need for further information, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

[redacted]
Superintendent
[redacted]



[redacted] Joint School District

[redacted]

Fax [redacted]

November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

Dear HRRC Members:
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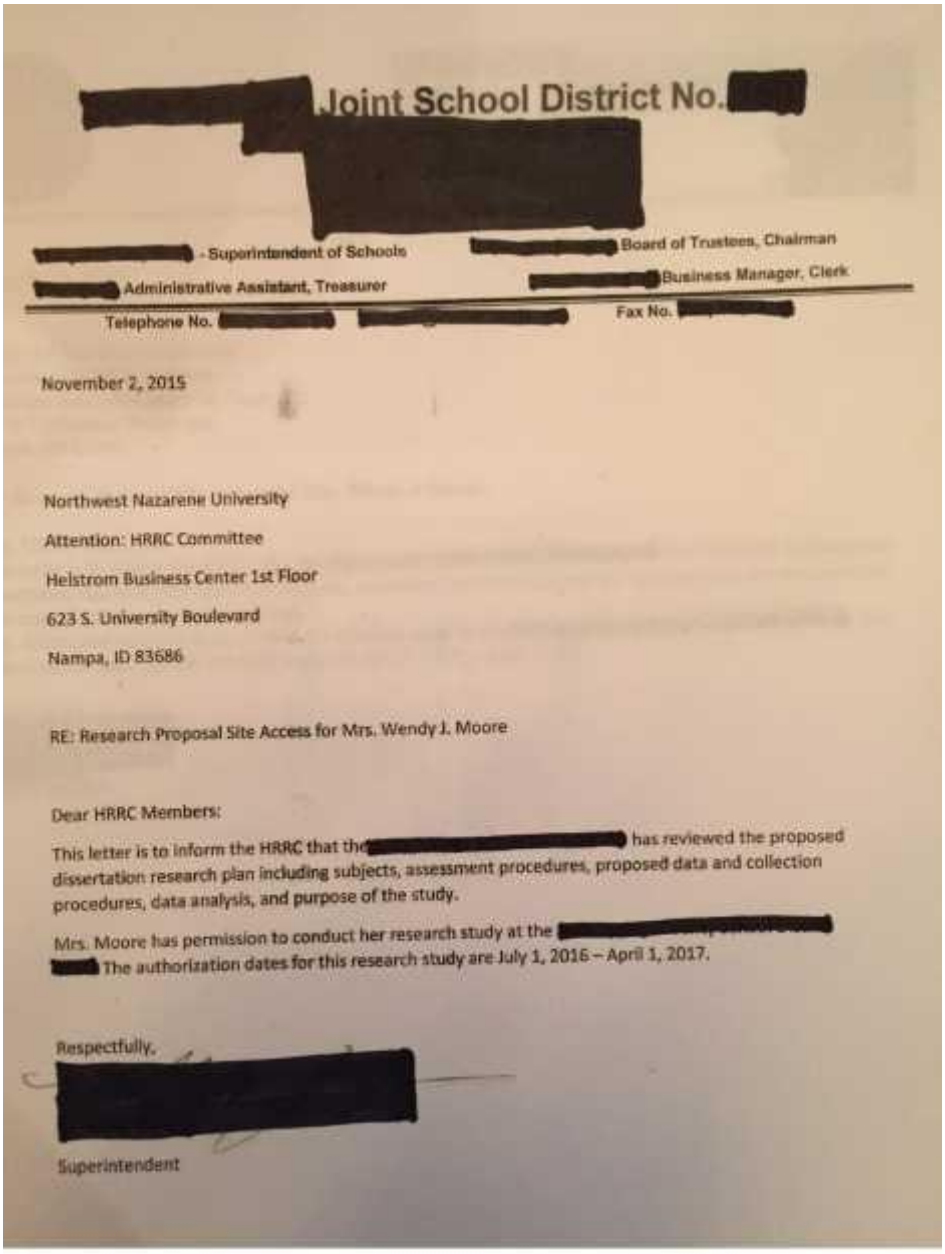
Respectfully,

[redacted]
Superintendent



[redacted] Joint School District No. [redacted]

[redacted] - Superintendent of Schools
[redacted] Board of Trustees, Chairman
[redacted] Administrative Assistant, Treasurer
[redacted] Business Manager, Clerk

Telephone No. [redacted] Fax No. [redacted]

November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University

Attention: HRRC Committee

Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor

623 S. University Boulevard

Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

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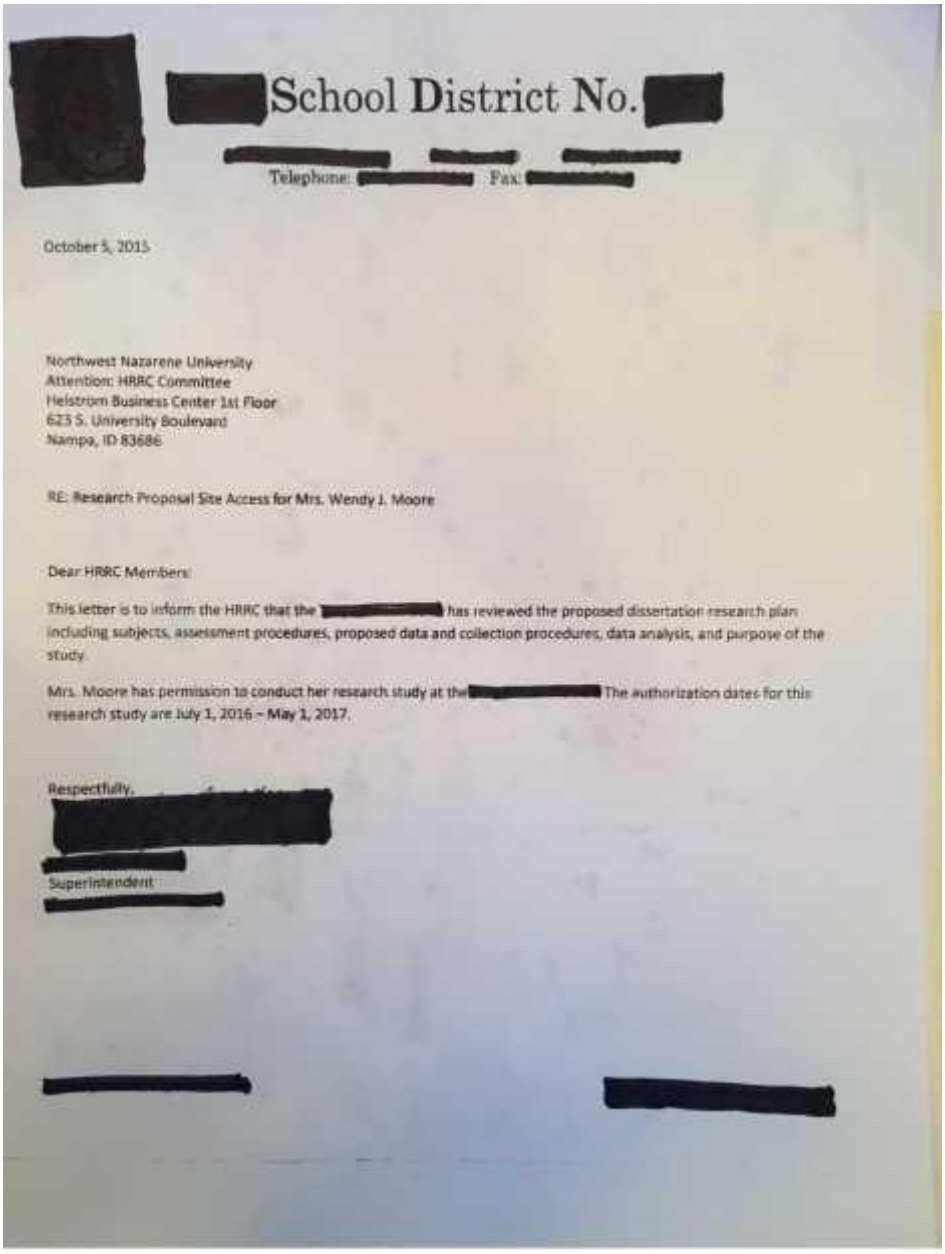
Respectfully,

[redacted]

Superintendent



[redacted] School District No. [redacted]

[redacted]

Telephone: [redacted] Fax: [redacted]

October 5, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mrs. Wendy J. Moore

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Respectfully,

[redacted]

Superintendent

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] School District No. [redacted]

[redacted]

November 2, 2015

Northwest Nazarene University

Attention: HRRC Committee

Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor

623 S. University Boulevard

Nampa, ID 83686

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[redacted]

Superintendent