Chapter 10

What Are the Relationships Between Poverty, Attendance, Teacher Evaluations, and High School Graduation Rates?

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to examine the relationships among poverty, attendance rates, the New York State’s Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) teacher evaluation system, and student achievement. The setting of this study was high schools from New York State’s Nassau and Suffolk counties, a suburban region of New York City. The results of this study showed that poverty had a strong negative correlation with graduation rates from the Regents Diploma, accounting for 31.02 percent of the variance. However, the negative impact that poverty had on the graduation rates from the Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation more than doubled. While high school student attendance rates had a weak, but statistically significant, positive correlation with Regents Diploma graduation rates, the positive correlation more than tripled with the Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation graduation rates. The New York State teacher evaluation system did not have the desired effect on student achievement.

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INTRODUCTION

The chapter deals with using public data available on the Internet as a vehicle to strategically facilitate school and/or district improvement while concomitantly supporting student achievement. A variety of public domain websites provide information about school and district achievement across the country. States have a reporting responsibility under federal education law to make public information about their schools’ achievement. Therefore, a variety of information is available to the consumer regarding performance, graduation and related factors. The New York State Education Department demonstrated its commitment to transparency by making data about its schools public and easy to use by establishing a public data site where “all interested parties can better be informed as they work to advance student achievement” (“New York State Education Department Data Site,” n.d.). The public data site provides information about 733 public and charter school districts across New York State, which includes 2,649,039 students and 207,369 educators. The information provided is categorized student data and school data. Under student data, English Language Arts and Mathematics achievement is provided for grades 3-8, while school data includes each school’s report card. The school report card provides such information as: School Profile (enrollment & free/reduced lunch), Outcomes (high school completion & post-secondary plan for completers), Additional Assessment Information (achievement in English Language Arts, Mathematics & Science including English Language Learner student information, National Assessment of Educational Progress, high school cohort data, Regents examination results, competency test results, and English as a Second Language achievement test results), and Accountability Data (elementary & middle level achievement in English Language Arts, Mathematics & Science, secondary achievement in English Language Arts and Mathematics, and graduation rate).

By providing access to information via the public data site, the New York State education governing body, the Board of Regents, believes that this broadband of information will positively raise learning standards for all students. Furthermore, the Regents contend that knowledge gained from the Report Card on a school’s or district’s strengths and weaknesses can be used to improve instruction and services to students (“New York State Education Department Data Site,” n.d.).

The objectives for this chapter are:

- To examine the use of public data provided, in particular, from the New York State Education Department.
- To evaluate the use of this data in understanding its relationship to student achievement and school improvement.
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