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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who has given me unconditional love and support throughout this long journey. It is because of you that this day has come!

To my mother and father, words cannot express what you mean to me and how much I appreciate what you've been to me. I can't count the ways in which you've helped me to overcome the many obstacles that have arisen overtime, and how you've both always found a way to encourage me and lift when things got tough. You are truly the best parents on earth and I thank God every day for allowing me to be so lucky!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this historical case study was to gain an understanding of dropout recovery programs from an interpretive historical perspective. Dropout Recovery is an Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education initiative that provides high school dropouts an opportunity to re-enroll in school, gain academic credit, and participate in career-specific training. This study begins by providing a historical perspective of the dropout problem in the United States and reviews the literature on the approaches and solutions utilized throughout career technology education to address the high school dropout problem.

Because career and technology education programs designed to serve at-risk youth typically fall within the scope of alternative education, the study highlighted the history of modern alternative education and examined the types of alternative education programs designed for youth who have been unsuccessful in traditional educational settings. While examining the history of dropout recovery programs, the study was primarily focused on the relationship between four central investigative themes (purpose, political, social, and economic) that influenced the development of dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma. The study was also focused on describing what programmatic purposes, if any, have emerged that are different from the original intent of dropout recovery programs within the State.

Additionally, the study provides a descriptive analysis of demographic characteristics that give insight into the types of students served in dropout recovery programs over time. Lastly, this study describes how successful or

unsuccessful dropout recovery programs have been, historically, through an analysis of past and current program evaluations. Both explanative and descriptive themes were developed from acquired data, and multiple data sources were compared and contrasted in order to accurately render a credible and confirmable history of dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma.

This study incorporated the use of both qualitative and quantitative data that were converged to answer the primary research question, and the sub questions that guided the study. Data were acquired through qualitative-naturalistic inquiry based from in-depth interviews and through the collection of several types of physical evidence including documents, archival records, and print copies of internet-based information sources. Data triangulation was utilized during the data analysis stage of the study in order to corroborate facts about dropout recovery history within the state of Oklahoma. Findings indicated that the original purpose of DOR Programs was rooted in crime prevention, alternative education, and career specific training. Additionally, findings indicated that DOR Programs have been successful serving at-risk youth, but the evaluation system used to determine their effectiveness may need improvement. The study also provides suggestions for future research on the concept of dropout recovery programs both within the state and beyond.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

As early as 1823, two years after the opening of the first publically supported high school in America, it was recognized that students dropping out of school was going to become a problem in our educational system (Mertens, Seitz, &Cox, 1982). In this year, 76 of the entering class of 176 had dropped out of the Boston English High School. This high attrition rate was due in part to the focused attempt to educate young men during a time when their work and labor were more of a necessity. Schoolmen in the mid-nineteenth century factory towns frequently worried about fluctuating enrollments and truancy while being concerned that schools were being irrelevant to the economy and failing to teach the skills needed for occupational mobility. Furthermore, by 1900 there were only six percent of students who graduated from high school. Research by Woodring (1989) shows that in the 1920's, only half of the school aged youth attended high school and half of them did not complete four years. Between the years of 1900 and 1950, the annual number of high school dropouts across the nation averaged around 600,000 (Dentler &Warshauer, 1965), but only a handful of educators wrote about student attrition. Over time, it was found that students dropping out of high school not only brought implications for them, but brought implications for society as a whole. These implications will be explored further.

Although it was recognized early on that students leaving school without graduating was going to be a problem in the United States, the category dropout did not exist until about forty or fifty years ago. In the early 1960s, dozens of people

wrote articles and books about why dropping out of high school was a problem, who dropped out, and what could be done about it. "Dropout", "student elimination", "withdrawal", and "early school leaver" were interchangeable terms in the first half of the twentieth century, whereas "dropout" dominated captions, titles, and epithets in the 1960s (Foley & Pang, 2006). Daniel Schreiber, one of the primary crusaders of dropout literature in the 1960s, proclaimed that the dropout problem was significant for several reasons. First, the population expansion of the 1950's increased the absolute numbers of dropouts, even if the proportion of students graduating from high school stayed constant or increased slightly. Second, technological improvements were rapidly making unskilled work obsolete, a common occupational position for the "dropout". As unskilled work disappeared, workers would have to know more to get a job, a fact confirmed by the companies who required a high school diploma for employment (Schreiber, 1964). Although the proportion of students graduating from high school had increased dramatically in the first 150 years of secondary schooling, dropping out was becoming more of a problem. Schreiber explained, "Because we live in a viable, dynamic, and fecund country, the increasing proportion of dropouts is becoming a larger dilemma" (Schreiber, 1964, pp. 235-36).

High school dropout literature from the 1960s and the 1970s consisted primarily of simple descriptions of specific background characteristics of students who did not complete school (Huffman, 1999). During this time when a student failed to finish high school, there was no major interest or concern for the student. Our nation could afford to lose large numbers of students before graduation

because high school dropouts could still land well-paying jobs and support their families in relatively unskilled work (Amos & Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Contrary to today, youth could drop out of school and find work immediately. Also important to note is that in this era, schools were not held accountable for students not completing school. The responsibility for dropping out of school was placed on the student or the student's family rather than on the institution (e.g., Finn, 1989; Weis, Farrar, & Petrie, 1989).

In the late twentieth century, there was a strong focus on the characteristics of dropouts, and on generating theories on why those characteristics were factors that contributed to students dropping out of school. During this time, literature on dropouts and the effective school movement (Edmonds, 1977) began to overlap as researchers questioned the effects of certain school-based practices such as tracking, overcrowding, mislabeling minority students as special education, and high expulsion rates—on dropout rates. Different philosophies began to emerge on determining who was most responsible for student's dropping out of school. Contrary to the 1960s and 1970s, philosophers and researchers began to agree that the institution and not the student should be held responsible for failing in school and/or ultimately withdrawing before graduating (Maeroff, 1982) attributed the inflexibility of the graded school structure as one of the primary factors for student failure in school. Cuban also contended that the school, not the child, should be responsible for change. Grossnickle (1986), in support, expressed his concern by reminding everyone that the American ideal of a free education for all was being

neglected. His feelings were captured in the following quote by the former president of Harvard University, James B. Conant:

> The comprehensive high school is responsible for educating the bright and not so bright students with different vocational and professional ambitions and with various motivations. It is responsible, in the sum, for providing good and appropriate education, both academic and vocational, for all young people within a democratic environment (Grossnickle, 1986).

Most recently in the United States, literature repeatedly warns that the high school dropout problem has reached a catastrophic level. Each year, hundreds of thousands of young adults leave school without successfully completing a high school program (Schargel & Smink 2001). Every day, 7,000 students drop out of high school (ACTE, 2007). Unless high schools find more effective ways to keep students in school, more than 12 million students will drop out during the course of the next decade (ACTE, 2007). The long term result will be a loss to the nation of $3 trillion in lost revenue (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007), and as can be imagined, even more dramatic is the loss in terms of the quality of life for those individuals who dropout. Most commonly today, the dropout problem is discussed in terms of its economic and social impact to individuals and society. Tax revenues, welfare expenditures, standard of living, unemployment, and crime are all relational focal points that are discussed and measured in light of dropout figures. Duncan (2007) noted that dropouts may disappear from the educational arena, but they do not disappear from society. This speaks to the fact that individuals who fail to earn a high school diploma are at a great disadvantage with the rest of the world,

and often experience negative outcomes as it relates to the social aspects of their lives. High school dropouts are also less healthy and die earlier, are more likely to become parents when they are very young, are more at risk of engaging in criminal acts, and are more likely to be dependent on government assistance. Even more disheartening, is the fact that their children are more likely to become dropouts as well, as are their children's children, and so on, in a possibly endless cycle of poverty (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006b).

Within the past 50 years, high school dropouts have dramatically altered the world's political, economic, and social landscape. Educators, politicians, economist, and business sector all agree that innovative and effective programs in education have never been more critical for public school systems. The United States has reached a pinnacle of world power and influence through the rise of abundant natural resources, a robust economy, and a strong democratic system of government, but the foundation of our nation's prosperity and freedom is the public education program initiated more than 200 years ago. But this observation also presents a problem. Throughout those 200 years, the landscape of our country has changed dramatically, but our educational system has been slow to change (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). If we wish to sustain these remarkable achievements, we must improve the existing school system to accommodate a new reality (Schargel, Thacker, & Bell, 2007). The new reality is that staggering numbers of students are not completing school.

Economic Implications of High School Dropouts

The cost of dropouts to society has been measured at various times over the last forty years and each time are found to have cost the federal government billions of dollars per year in expenditures and lost revenue. In the 1970s, the dropout problem was estimated to have a price of $71 billion a year in tax revenues, $3 billion a year in welfare expenditures, and $3 billion a year in crimes related to inadequate education (Cinal, 1982). By the early 1990s, the dropout problem had a cost estimated at over $200 billion a year (Jimerson et al., 2000), a significant increase from the 1970s and 1980s. If the nation's likely dropouts from the Class of 2006 had graduated, the nation could have saved more than $17 billion in Medicaid and expenditures for uninsured health care over the course of young people's lifetimes. In 2008 it was estimated that if all students graduated, the nation's economy would have benefited from an additional $319 billion in income over that generation's lifetime. Because of these aforementioned statistics, the significance of the economic impacts has brought a major focus to the dropout problem in the United States.

It is obvious that students dropping out of school have an enormous impact on our economy, but the most severe impact is to the individual. In the report *Career and Technical Educations Role in Dropout Prevention and Recovery*, those who fail to complete high school are far less likely to be employed and earn less than those that earn a diploma. The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2004 was $16,485, and the average annual income for a high school graduate was $26,156, an increase of $9,671. Over the course of a career, this

results in a loss of $260,000 in earnings for an individual who fails to complete high school (Henry, 2005). Even more dramatic, the combined loss of income and revenue to the U.S. economy from dropouts from a single year is about $192 billion. One measure puts the cost of society for each dropout who later moves into a life of crime and drugs as somewhere between $1.7 and $2.3 million (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison 2006).

Several studies have concluded that there is a dramatic increase in unemployment rates as the dropout rate increases (Alspaugh 1998). In 2003, 2.4 million young people ages 16-24 who didn't finish high school were jobless, up 9 percent from 2001 (USA Today, 2004). These young adults are now competing with adults who have already received their high school diploma for the same positions. A high school diploma appears to be a societal pre-requisite for employment (Lagana, 2004). Unlike the 1960s, a good job in that generation allowed unionized workers without an education to earn a family wage and achieve economic security. That reality is largely gone (Orfield, 2004). From a technological perspective, young people who drop out of high school are unlikely to have the minimum skills and credentials necessary to function in today's increasingly complex technological workplace (Child Trends Data Bank, 2010). The growing use of automated teller machines, self-checkouts, and robotics for example, has eliminated low-level clerical and assembly jobs.

Top level politicians and administrators have looked for ways to help prevent dropout rates from increasing because they realize that the higher the dropout rate, the weaker the economy becomes (Duncan, 2007). Since high school

dropouts earn less, they generate fewer tax receipts and are more likely recipients of welfare and unemployment payments (US Department of Education, 1996). This increased reliance on public assistance is likely due, at least in part, to the fact that young adults who drop out of school are more likely to have children at younger ages and more likely to be single parents than high school graduates (National Center for Education Statistics 2004).

The economic impact has also exposed the United States globally. Herbert (2008) writes that a U.S. student drops out of high school every 26 seconds. This means big trouble for United States' economy. As students drop out, the United States is quickly losing its competitive edge with other countries. Allan Golston, the President of U.S. programs for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, noted that the performance of American students, when compared with their peers in other countries, tends to grow increasingly dismal as they move through the higher grades (Herbert, 2008). No longer is the United States the world leader in graduating students from high school and college. In the fall of 2008, more than 4 million students across the country entered the ninth grade. Over the next three years, a third of these students dropped out before attaining a high school diploma; another third graduated without having gained the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in work or in post-secondary education. In fact, for every one hundred ninth grade students, only forty enrolled in college immediately after high school, only twenty-seven were still enrolled in their sophomore year, and only eighteen graduate from two-year colleges within three years or four years colleges within six (Amos, 2008).

Social Implications of High School Dropouts

Although previous research on the predictors of dropouts has focused on demographic factors, school related influences, and individual characteristics, recent studies focusing on demographic factors have indicated that dropouts are more likely to be from families of low socioeconomic status (Rumberger 1983; Pallas, 1987; TEA, 1995; Wehlage et al., 1986). Of all the characteristics, low socioeconomic status has been shown to bear the strongest relationship to student's tendency to dropout (Staresina, 2004). The correlation between low income and school dropout is especially important to note, because the number of children growing up in families who live below the poverty line is increasing (U.S. General Accounting Office [GAO], 1994).

Poverty has been a factor that has continued to gain attention as it relates to the effect it has on students graduating from high school. Although poverty is now on the forefront of talks related to dropout characteristics, years ago President Lyndon B. Johnson saw this as an issue. In 1964, 34 years ago, President Johnson addressed the nation in order to bring attention to the number of children from poverty-level home environments. President Lyndon B. Johnson's speech indicating a War on Poverty declared that:

> The young man or woman who grows up without a decent education in a broken home, in a hostile squalid environment in ill health, or in the face of racial injustice, that a young man or woman is trapped in a life of poverty. He does not have the skill demand by a complex society. He does not know

> how to acquire those skills. He faces a mounting sense of despair, which drains initiative, ambition, and energy. (The War on Poverty, 2012, p.2)

Nelson (1992) also states that poverty is closely related to undesirable outcomes in education. In 1995, the poverty rate for children living with parents who dropped out of high school was 57 percent, compared to 4 percent for children with one parent with a college degree. According to APS (1998), the schools with the highest percentage of children living in poverty had the highest dropout rate. Slipping into poverty is about three times higher for high school dropouts (Edwards, 2000). Information obtained from the United States Department of Education (1996) states that dropout rates are higher for minority students and students with disadvantaged backgrounds.

High School Dropouts and Crime

The cost of high school dropouts is deeply felt in all aspects of life, but the most expensive cost and social implication is that of incarcerating convicted criminals. Moretti (2005) states that a ten percent increase in the male graduation rate would reduce murder and assault arrest rates by 20 percent, motor vehicle theft by 13 percent, and arson by 8 percent. Alliance for Excellent Education (2009) found that increasing the graduation rate and college matriculation of male students in the United States by just 5 percent could lead to combined savings and revenue of almost $8 billion each year by reducing crime related costs. Although the number of dropouts has declined since the 1980s, the numbers are still alarming. The impact of individuals dropping out of school is usually progressive, resembling a domino effect that results in more opportunities for negative behaviors.

According to a report issued by the Alliance for Education in 2006, high school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than high school graduates. In this report, it was also found that 75 percent of the U.S. state prison inmates, almost 59 percent of federal inmates, and 69 percent of jail inmates did not complete high school. These data speak clearly toward the fact that when our high school students drop out, they are increasingly engaging in criminal activities. School dropouts are at highest risk for crime and drug abuse.

In a 1997 study that looked at state prisoners' education levels it showed that male inmates were about twice as likely as their counterparts in the general population to not have completed high school or its equivalent, and four times as many males in the general population had attended some college or other postsecondary classes than those in prison (Harlow, 2003). Amos (2008) provided four theories as to why people with more education commit less crime. Those theories include: 1) Someone with a high school diploma or better earns higher wages through legitimate work, thus reducing the individuals perceived need to commit a crime or raising the potential cost of crime – getting caught and being incarcerated – to unacceptable levels; 2) The stigma of a criminal conviction may be greater for professional workers, who tend to have higher levels of education, than for those in lower paying, lower skilled jobs; 3) More time spent in the classroom may play a role in instilling values that are opposed to criminal actions; and 4) Criminal behavior that begins during youth continues into adulthood. By keeping adolescents in the classroom and off the streets, later criminal activity may be avoided.

There is a clear relationship between high school dropouts and crime. According to Strausberg (2000), the U.S. Government should spend its money on education, not on building prisons; it takes $15,000 per year to incarcerate a prisoner, while it just costs $6,000 per year to educate a child (Strausberg, 2000). The average annual cost of maintaining a prisoner is at least three times higher than the annual dollars expended to educate a school-aged youth.

Political Implications of High School Dropouts

In modern literature on the dropout problem, there have been several federal legislative actions that have been influenced by dropout rates. Due to the many concerns over high dropout rates and other issues in U.S. educational arena, Congress passed and President William (Bill) J. Clinton signed into law in 1993the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Goals 2000 looked to move the nation toward a system that was based on high standards that all students could meet –a system that would provide both equity and excellence for all of the students in this country. One of the main goals of the act called for a high school graduation rate of 90 percent for all schools. Other goals included: All children in America would start school ready to learn; all students would leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, the arts, history, and geography, and every school in America would ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy; United States students would be first in the world in mathematics and

science achievement; every adult American would be literate and would possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; every school in the United States would be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning; the nation's teaching force would have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century; and every school would promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1998).

Unfortunately, Goals 2000 was seen as a professionals' and politicians' reform and not as a popular one (Cohen, 1995). Another problem with the act was that to be effective, Goals 2000 would have had to become useful to educational improvement, but this was not easy because standards-based school improvement was limited everywhere in American education. According to Cohen (1995), the adoption and achievement of much more ambitious standards could never succeed without a great deal of education for all adults involved, whether they were teachers, local citizens, or government officials. Goals 2000 did not address the needs of every district, and schools states and localities found it difficult to implement because of the complexity of the program.

In his 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush made education reform a high domestic priority. He presented the state of Texas education reforms, also

known as the “Texas Miracle” as a model for excellence in educational achievement for the new No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. To lead this new reform, President Bush appointed Rod Paige, the Superintendent of Houston Public Schools, as his Secretary of Education to champion this “miracle.” The NCLB Act was signed by President Bush and made into law in January 2002. With the final language of President George Bush's NCLB Act came the withdrawal of all authorization for Goals 2000. On December 21, 2001, Congress passed the Fiscal Year 2002 Education Appropriations Conference Committee report which eliminated spending on Goals 2000. Goals 2000, which was no longer authorized and no longer funded, died.

Today the NCLB Act (the reauthorized *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965,* see Pub.L. 89–10, 79 Stat. 27, 20 U.S.C. ch. 70) still exists and supports standards-based education reform, which is based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. The Act requires states to develop assessments in core academic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states are to receive federal funding for schools. The Act does not assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state. A 2008 study by researchers at Rice University and the University of Texas-Austin found that Texas' public school accountability system, the model for the national NCLB Act, directly contributes to lower graduation rates. Each year Texas public high schools lose at least 135,000 youth prior to graduation – a disproportionate number of who are African-American, Latino and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students. The

study shows a strong relationship between the increasing number of dropouts and school's rising accountability ratings, finding that losses of low-achieving students help raise school ratings under the accountability system; the accountability system allows principals to hold back students who are deemed at risk of reducing the school's scores; many students retained this way end up dropping out; the test scores grouped by race single out the low-achieving students in these subgroups as potential liabilities to the school ratings, increasing incentives for school administrators to allow those students to quietly exit the system; and the accountability system's zero tolerance rules for attendance and behavior, which put youth into the court system for minor offenses and absences, alienate students and increase the likelihood they will drop out.

Ethnic and Gender Breakdown of Dropouts

It is virtually impossible to predict who will eventually dropout of school, but there are many trends and statistics to determine who is of greatest risk (Backer, 2003). When an entire racial, ethnic, or gender group experiences consistently high dropout rates, these problems can deeply damage a community, its families, its social structure, and its institutions (Orfield, 2004). For instance, if high schools and colleges were able to raise the graduation rates of Hispanic, African-American, and Native American students to the level of white students by 2020, the potential increase in personal income across the nation would add, conservatively, more than $310 billion to the U.S. economy (Alliance for Education, 2010).

When breaking down the race of dropouts, for minority males, the rates dip below the 50 percent mark. In predominantly minority urban districts, these figures

descend to even lower levels (Edley, 2004). The rates do not get any better for girls of color. Nationwide, 37 percent of girl dropouts are Hispanic, 40 percent of girl dropouts are Black, and 50 percent of Native American/Alaskan Native female students failed to graduate in four years in 2004. Today, Hispanics are continually described as having the greatest number of dropouts (Gausted, 1991; Howley &Haung, 1991; Penberthy, 1997; Pallas, 1987;, Gruskin, Campbell, Paulu, & OERIUSN, 1987; Vail, 1998; Vaznaugh, 1995). Heiser (2003) reports that in 2000, the dropout rate for Hispanics was 28% compared with 13% for blacks and 7% for whites.

When breaking down the gender of dropouts, the quality of life for both boys and girls are lowered tremendously. In 2005, 11 percent of males ages 16 to 24 were high school dropouts, compared with 8 percent of females. On a national level, the high school dropout crisis has received significant attention, but its effects have been emphasized and addressed more often as a problem for boys. It has been widely reported that one in three boys, and nearly 50 percent or more of some racial and ethnic groups of boys, will fail to graduate from high school with a diploma in four years (Mason, 2008).

The results of girls dropping out are just as alarming. In the article, *When Girls Don't Graduate, We All Fail: A Call to Improve High School Graduation Rates for Girls*, the National Women's Law Center (2007) finds that American girls are dropping out of high school at nearly the same rate as boys, and at even greater economic costs. They earn significantly lower wages than male dropouts, are at greater risk of unemployment, and are more likely to rely on public support

programs. Female high school dropouts earn only 63 percent of male earnings – or about $9,100 less annually – than male high school dropouts. Put another way, female high school dropouts earn 63 cents for every $1 earned by male high school dropouts. Close to half of the estimated dropouts from the Class of 2007 were female students, or over 520,000 of the overall 1.2 million high school dropouts (National Women's Law Center, 2007). Overall, an estimated one in four female students will not graduate with a regular high school diploma in the standard, four-year time period. When breaking this number down by race, one in two Native American female students, four in ten Black female students, and nearly four in ten Hispanic female students fail to graduate with a diploma each year (National Women's Law Center, 2007).

Operationalizing High School Dropouts

The first step to understanding and resolving the nation's dropout problem is to define and operationalize the nature of the problem. This means defining who drops out, why they drop out, and even the number of dropouts. It can mean anyone who leaves high school without a diploma, (Sebald, 1992), or it may be understood to mean someone who is found not to have finished high school. Most Americans think that if you add the number of dropouts to the number of graduates, you get 100% of the students in a school. If you didn't drop out, then you must have graduated. This is almost never true in official statistics. In fact, no one knows exactly how many students drop out of U.S. high schools because the vast majority of states do not follow individual students over time, but merely report annual enrollments (Orfield, 2004). Unfortunately, the more definitions, the more difficult

it is to define who drops out in our cities, states, and essentially our nation. There are various criteria in which dropout rates are measured. Because there have been so many variables found associated with students dropping out, defining and establishing criteria for dropouts is complex and at times very confusing. There have been recent studies that dropout calculations may be grossly underestimated due to some states not reporting students that receive their GED, become incarcerated, or exist in transient living conditions (The Business Roundtable, 2003). The Business Roundtable (2003) study also shows that the nation's high school dropout rate may be as high as 30 percent, almost three times higher than the government estimates. Our nation's ability to measure the dropout problem can be described as marginal at best. It is evident in literature and in the media that our nation has recognized the problem, but our educational system has been unsuccessful in determining the magnitude of the problem from district to district, state to state, and even at the national level.

The Importance of Dropout Rates

It seems that researchers with non-educational backgrounds frequently fail to see the importance of dropout rates. However, dropouts play a critical role in shaping U.S. society. It is obvious that understanding the true nature of the dropout problem is critical in determining and diagnosing the economic, social, and political impact that it will have on our nation. Unfortunately, researchers frequently fail to emphasize the importance of dropout rate calculations and the effect of calculation inconsistencies. If literature and research severely underestimate the problem, then the nation may fail to provide the necessary

resources that could help alleviate the problem. However, if the problem is overestimated, then the nation will likely have a tendency to exaggerate the necessary resources, therefore not giving credit to programs and concepts that may truly be effective in keeping young people in school. For this reason, it is critical that researchers not only understand the individual consequences that may occur from young people dropping out of school, but the implications that may occur for a society as a whole.

Dropout Data Sources

One source for dropout rates is nationally collected data. For over 50 years, information about educational attainment has been available through the Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted by that U.S. Census Bureau. The CPS includes a series of questions on school enrollment, college attendance, and high school graduation that can be used to calculate an overall dropout rate for the country. One commonly used dropout rate based on this data is the percentages of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and who have not earned high school credentials. These data cannot be reliably disaggregated below the regional level on an annual basis and there is no way to connect the rates to the schools that the respondents attended. For many years, the CPS was the primary source for calculating dropout rates. Recently a series of papers (e.g. Swanson 2003, Greene and Forster 2003) were published claiming that the CPS-based measures greatly understate the true dropout rate, especially for Blacks and Hispanics.

Since the late 1960s, data have also been collected through the State Non-fiscal Survey from the Common Core of Data (CCD), administered by the U.S.

Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The CCD collects data from all public elementary and secondary schools and school districts in the country. This data yields a remarkably different picture of both the level and trend of high school completion than does a CPS data source. Miller, Rothstein, and Rouse (2007) provided these hypotheses to explain the discrepancy: 1) The CPS does not include people who are institutionalized. As inmates are disproportionately composed of high school dropouts and are disproportionately black, their exclusion from the CPS could inflate the measured high school completion rate, particularly for blacks; 2) The CPS surveys one "proxy respondent" in each household. This respondent may inflate other household members' educational attainment; 3) CPS respondents themselves may overstate their graduation status; 4) The CPS counts people who have attended some college as high school graduates. Some of these may not have diplomas; 5) The CCD includes only regular diploma recipients, while in the CPS some GED recipients may be classified as high school graduates; 6) The CCD does not include private school graduates. In the CPS, it is impossible to distinguish between adults who earned diplomas in public and private high schools; 7) Response rates in the CPS are not perfect, and non-responders may be disproportionately likely to be high school dropouts; 8) The CCD does not count diplomas awarded abroad to people who later immigrate to the US, but it does count diplomas awarded in the US to people who later emigrate. A CPS-based measure, by contrast, is measured over all current residents, so will include some who immigrated after high school and will exclude anyone who emigrated before the survey date; 9) The CCD measures do

not properly account for grade retention; and 10) The CCD takes information reported by the states without standardizing definitions or data collection practices.

How States Operationalize Dropouts

The problem in trying to interpret these results is that there are many different definitions of “drop-out” and these definitions differ, not only among states, but also districts within the same state (Fossey, 1996; Hammack, 1986; Hess &Greer, 1986; Kolstad &Owings, 1986; Mann, 1987; Pallas, 1987). Despite the abundance of literature on school dropouts, there has not been a standard method for calculation of dropout rates from state to state which would allow accurate national comparisons (Weis, 1989). For example, the dropout rate in the state of Vermont is the percentage of the total high school population (grades 9-12) who withdrew from school during the previous summer and during the school year (Vermont Department of Education, 2009). The Colorado Department of Education calculates it dropout rate by, “dividing the number of dropouts in grade 7 or above by all pupils in grade 7 or above who have enrolled in the district at any time during the school year” (Penberthy, 1997, p. 1). Texas defines dropout rate, “by dividing the number of drop-outs by cumulative enrollment in grades 7 – 12” (Texas Education Agency, 1995, p. 2). Oklahoma State Department of Education defines dropout rate as “Any student who is under the age of nineteen (19) and has not graduated from high school and is not attending any public or private school or is otherwise receiving an education pursuant to law for the full term the schools of the school district in which he (she) resides are in session. The fact that Colorado students may be counted multiple times if they move between schools, while Texas

students are only counted once gives us a glimpse of why it is a challenge to accurately account for dropouts nationally.

There have been past efforts to systematically collect dropout data among states. In 1994, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) initiated the development of a national database of public school district dropout rates as a component of the Common Core of Data (CCD) universe collection. During this time, forty-five states and the District of Columbia were submitting dropout data to CCD, but only seventeen of those states, and the District of Columbia, submit data that meet the quality and comparability levels required to publish state estimates and dropout rates.

In relationship to literature and research, both have failed to come to an agreement on a nationally recognized definition of the term dropout. A lack of common definition not only leaves room for different interpretations, but it also has hampered the ability to conduct systematic research and compare data on dropouts (Weiss, 1989).

Types of Dropout Rates

Although there are many inconsistencies in how dropouts are calculated from state to state, there are three major types of dropout calculations currently recognized in the U.S.: event dropout rates, status dropout rates and cohort dropout rates. Event, also recognized as "annual" dropout rates, indicate the percentage of students who dropped out of high school over a relatively short period of time (Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2001). For example, the number of students that dropped out during the 2009-2010 school year would be classified as the event

dropout rate. This calculation only captures the percentage of students that left during this particular time frame. Event dropout rates are useful for studying the possible effects of particular variables on the propensity to drop out (Kaufman, et al., 2001). This report presents a national event dropout rate for students attending both public and private schools using the Current Population Survey (CPS), and state event rates for public high school students using the Common Core of Data (CCD). Event dropout rates can be used to track annual changes in the dropout behavior of students in the U.S. school system.

The second major type of dropout rate is called the status dropout rate. Status dropout rates measure the percentage of individuals who are not enrolled in high school and who lack a high school credential, regardless of when they dropped out. Unlike event dropout rates, status dropout rates intend to capture all dropouts at a given time regardless of when they dropped out. For example, the number of students that dropped out during the 2009-2010 school year would be the measure of every person who dropped out of high school irrespective of when they dropped out. Status dropout rates are better suited to study more general questions of educational attainment, such as showing how many U.S. schoolchildren lack a basic high school education (Kaufman, et al., 2001). Status rates are also calculated using CPS data.

The last major type of dropout rate is called the cohort dropout rate. According to the 2009 Graduation Counts survey, 22 states calculate and publicly report a dropout rate, with most using the cohort dropout rate. Because it is based on longitudinal data, the cohort rate is the most accurate means of characterizing

the dropout problem. Unfortunately, many states cannot report a cohort rate because they do not yet have adequate longitudinal data systems.

While some may agree that obtaining a GED should not imply high school graduation (Cameron & Heckman, 1993), the student may be considered a "GED certificate recipient" rather than a dropout if the student passes all five portions of the GED test by the end of the school year. This formula, known as the "status completion rate", can cause a significant variance in the calculation of high school completers, and eventually can skew the overall perception of who is dropping out. For example, in 2008, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2008) found that 84.7 percent of the 18- through 24 year old population held some form of high school credential, with 5.2 percent holding a GED and 79.5 percent holding a regular high school diploma or other alternative credential. Although 5.2 percent may not look like a significant variation, it equates to millions of youth who did not finish high school.

Why Are Kids Dropping Out?

Several factors have been linked to increasing the likelihood of kids dropping out. According to the Silent Epidemic report conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the top five factors include: 1) Classes were not interesting; 2) Missed too many days and could not catch up; 3) Spent time with people who were not interested in school; 4) Had too much freedom and not enough rules in their lives; and 5) Was failing in school. Other factors include: 1) Lack of parental support; 2) Educational programs were not of interest to the student; 3)

School personnel did not encourage them to continue; 4) Need to work full-time; and 5) Decided to drop out and take the GED.

Another common factor linked to students leaving school early is poor academic performance (Hammack, 1986; Kolstad &Owings, 1986; Mann, 1987; Gruskin, Campbell, Paulu, & OERIUSN, 1987; Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis [OSEDA], 1996; Pallas, 1987; TEA, 1995; Wehlage, 1986).

There is no single factor that causes students to drop out. The majority of these factors have been categorized into issues that relate to the individual student, their family, and their community. These common issues are rooted in real life events, lack of personal motivation, and external sources of motivation and guidance. The strongest indicator related to the dropout rate is that of the socio-economic status of the student (Cairns, Cairns, & Neckerman 1989; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock 1986; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986; Finn, 1989).

Researchers at Johns Hopkins (Balfanz, 2008) identified four main reasons why students dropout. Each of these typically requires different responses as it relates to prevention and intervention. The first reason, *life events*, are related to students who dropout because of something that happens outside of school; they become pregnant, get arrested, or go to work to support members of their family. The second reason is because students fade out. *Fade outs* are related to students who have generally been promoted on time from grade to grade and may even have above grade level skills, but at some point become frustrated or bored and stop coming to school. Once they reach the legal dropout age, they leave, convinced that they can find their way without a high school diploma or that a GED will serve

them just well. The third reason is because students become *push outs*. There are parents and advocates who believe that some students, especially students who are (or are perceived to be) difficult, dangerous or detrimental to the success of the school, are subtly (or not so subtly) encouraged to withdraw from the school, transfer to another school or are simply dropped from the rolls if they fail too many courses or miss to many days of school and are past the legal dropout age. The fourth reason is due to students *failing to succeed* in schools that fail to provide them with the environment and supports they need. For some, initial failure is the result of poor academic preparation; for others, it is rooted in unmet social and/or emotional needs. Few students drop out after their initial experiences with school failure. In fact, most persist for years, only dropping out after they fall so far behind that success seems impossible or they are worn down by repeated failure. *Life events*, through the public eye, are the most common reasons for dropping out, but most evidence points to failing to succeed as the main source of dropouts.

There are five major variables connected to dropout rates and their relationship to school success. Those variables consist of: ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, Limited English Proficiency, and students enrolled in Special Education. These factors are considered major determinants of school success because these variables are beyond the control of the school (Gewirtz, 1998). Although two of the variables are typically used as control group comparisons and do not directly affect dropout rates (ethnicity and gender), the remaining variables have a widely agreed upon effect on whether a student drops out of school (Duncan, 2007).

State Testing and Its Impact on Dropout Rates

Although the aforementioned factors that contribute to students dropping out appear to be clear, one that is sometimes less obvious is the effect of state mandated testing on the dropout rate. This was seen as early as 1989 as a study indicated that 5 out of 58 students said that testing played a role in their dropping out of school and that they were unable to keep up with basic school requirements (Catterall, 1989). This study was conducted after nine states had implemented state graduation or exit achievement tests that required students to pass before the awarding of a diploma. The federal NCLB Act of 2001 expanded the federal role in U.S. education, and by doing so altered the distribution of power among the federal government, states, and local districts (Mason, 2008). NCLB created a paradigm shift for how educators used testing. According to Phillips (2007), tests are not just tests anymore. In some states they are used to determine which students get their diploma, and which teachers get their bonuses. Other literature criticizing high stakes testing fear that standardized tests may be less a measurement of student learning, but rather measure dominant culture and language forms (Phillips, 2007; Glenn, 2006; Walden & Kritsonis, 2008). It has also been suggested that the tests may be biased toward the White culture mainstream. A large number of minorities are failing standardized tests in disproportionate numbers. The most likely reason for this disparity is:

> a lack of understanding of the complex English language; culture and environment; a culture's attitude towards schooling along with the parent's ability and effort to foster student progress; some cultures hold testing and

academic performance to a high esteem while others are more focused on family and personal values, and tracking – that is labeling students by their test scores. (Phillips, 2006, pp. 52-53)

Neill (1998) has expressed opposition to national tests. He believes the United States students are the most tested in the world and more tests will not help. National tests will allow us to compare states against states, not student achievement (Kelly, 1995; Neill, 1998). Neill is very clear when he says, "reject the fake idea that we can test our way to better schools" (p.46). Hammack (1986) contends that while the law requires that we educate our youth, many at-risk teens choose to leave school early. It has been believed that the increase of state standardized tests has had a negative effect on at-risk students. Catterall (1985) warns that the states' efforts to raise the academic standards of the nation's schools will increase the dropout rate if schools are not accompanied by other organizational and instructional changes. This is made clear by Petrocelli (1992) when he indicates that the public mandate for increased graduation requirements and a higher emphasis on academics (accompanied by a high-stakes testing regime) may be driving a greater number of at-risk students out of school.

There have been conflicting views on the effectiveness of national tests. Smith, et al. (1998) suggests the use of national tests as a way to improve student achievement. Individual states are responsible for their own education programs and they view this as a way to have uniform expectations nationwide.

In 2005, Senate Bill (SB) 982 known as the "Achieving Classroom Excellence Act" (ACE) changed the curriculum, testing and graduation

requirements for students in all Oklahoma public schools. This legislation was created in response to concerns regarding instructional rigor and the preparedness of students for continued study in postsecondary settings and employment. Unfortunately, the plan endorses a cookie cutter approach that could possibly backfire and have negative effects on the state's dropout rate. To prevent this type of negative impact from occurring, it will be imperative that the state be creative, flexible, and financially supportive in all remediation processes. It will also be important that the state of Oklahoma guarantee every student the opportunity to live a meaningful and productive life, one that is predicated on having a sound foundation of knowledge and skills so that they can enter college or workforce training programs ready to learn. Remediation will be critical to this process, and will play an important role in decreasing the number of high school dropouts. Remediation is potentially the most significant, but costly and least developed component in ACE legislation. A partial explanation of this premature and underfunded portion of legislation can be associated with an account given in a book titled *Why School?*. In this book, Rose (2011) explains that a complaint often leveled at remediation by legislators is that they are paying twice for instruction in material that should have been learned earlier. This way of thinking poses as a continual threat to an important dropout prevention strategy, and unfortunately the effect of remediation will remain marginal if adequate resources are not provided throughout the process. Additionally, those remediation strategies that are considered effective may need more rigorous evaluation methodologies. Rose (2011) also explains that until recently, there hasn't been very good evaluation of

remedial courses and programs, but is optimistic about the rigorous research that is emerging.

Amrein and Berliner (2002) examined whether states that adopted exit exams have seen increased dropout rates, decreased graduation rates, or increased percentages of students pursuing a GED instead of a high school diploma. They found that 66% of states that implemented high school exit exams were negatively impacted by the tests. David and Amy Shriberg (2006) also made note of a possible correlation between high stakes testing policies birthed from NCLB and dropout rates. This could possibly be a trend that the state of Oklahoma will face if alternative sources of testing and remediation are not explored.

Operationalizing the Term "At-Risk"

Although the terms "dropouts" and "at-risk" are used often within the same context, they do have their distinct differences. The term "at-risk" came into use after the 1983 article "A Nation at Risk," was published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The article described our society as being economically and socially endangered (Placier, 1993). At-risk students are those students who have been labeled, either officially or unofficially, as being in danger of academic failure. The term "at-risk youth" is now commonplace among researchers, policy makers and educators. These young people are at risk not only of getting a diploma, but also of graduating with inadequate academic competencies, of not pursuing additional educational experiences, of not becoming successfully employed and of not making a successful transition to adulthood and becoming productive members of society (Dougherty, 1987). "Students at risk" has

been operationalized using several variables. Although certain social, economic, ethnic or racial characteristics increase the statistical likelihood that students will dropout, nobody can predict with any degree of certainty that particular students who have these characteristics will dropout (Schargel & Smink, 2001). In one 1988 study, the U.S. Department of Education examined information on six commonly used indicators of "at risk" students. These factors included: 1) Single-parent family, 2) Family income of less than $15,000, 3) Home alone more than three hours a day, 4) Parents have no high school diploma, 5) Sibling dropped out, and 6) Limited English proficiency.

At the beginning of every school year, teachers are provided a list of those students who have been identified by state guidelines as at risk or in need of special services. In most cases, these students are categorized by specific learning problems, such as physical or behavioral limitations. Also, there are those identified because of truancy, absenteeism, or court orders. Others receive special help or accommodations from one or more specialists in the school. And lastly, there are those who are wards of the court and have regular school visits from their probation officers.

Throughout the last decade, over 25% of all students have fell into the category of at-risk and dropout prior to graduation (Brough, Bergmann, & Holt, 2006). Brough, Bergmann, & Holt (2006) attribute this problem to the lack of early intervention. According to them, many large school districts ask fourth and fifth grade teachers to identify those students who may be at risk of dropping out of school. Criteria most used to operationalize these students include poor grades

overall (D average or lower), low reading scores, failure in an earlier grade, lack of participation in extracurricular activities, prior attendance in more than four schools, lack of acceptance by peers, frequent tardiness or absenteeism, truancy more than three times in a semester, rebellion against authority, and poor handling of structured activities.

According to Wells (1990), every aspect of children's lives affects their ability to learn and succeed in school. He identified a variety of circumstances that often place students at risk. He listed individual related, family related, school related, and community related factors. When students respond inadequately or negatively to the mismatch between the process of schooling and their life necessities, they are labeled at-risk (Entwishle, Alexander, and Olson, 2004) While any one factor, or even several factors, do not necessarily place students at risk, combinations of circumstances identify the potential to drop out (Frymier & Gansneder, 1989).

School related factors used to operationalize at-risk students include: conflict between, home/school culture, ineffective discipline systems, lack of adequate counseling, negative school climate, lack of relevant curriculum, passive instructional strategies, inappropriate use of technology, disregard of student learning styles, retentions/suspensions, low expectations, and lack of language instruction. Student related factors include: poor school attitude, low ability level, attendance/truancy, discipline problems, pregnancy, drug abuse, poor peer relationships, nonparticipation, friends have dropped out, illness/disability, and low self-esteem/self-efficacy. Community related factors include: lack of community

services or response, lack of community support for schools, high incidences of criminal activity, and lack of school/community linkages. Family related factors include: low socioeconomic status, dysfunctional home life, no parental involvement, low parental expectations, non-English-speaking home, ineffective parenting, and high mobility.

In the book titled, "*Teach Me, I Dare You*", students at risk is defined as those who may or may not come to school but are unattached to family, friends, and the school. From a clinical standpoint, Magid & McKelvey (1989) agree that these students seem to lack a conscience and suffer from a range of antisocial personality disorder thinking and behavior. They also conclude that psychopathic tendencies can run the gamut from mildly impaired to criminal. When looking at possible root causes, Magid & McKelvey (1989) propose that at-risk children never bonded or became attached to their mother or adult caregivers as infants. Even more disturbing is that this lack of positive relationship between the child and a caring adult has been correlated to a rise in high school shootings. Magid & McKelvey (1989) warn us that high level at risk students may play the game of school, but plan, while there, to cause harm to others. Brough, Bergmann, & Holt (2006) suggest that this level is rare in most classrooms, but needs recognition because of the antisocial acts committed by these students in school. They also note that the shooting at schools in the 1990s brought recognition to high-risk students and the need for early intervention with them. These issues are manifest in our very current circumstances as well.

Strategies Addressing the Dropout Problem

Since 1983, when the report *A Nation at Risk* called for action to raise student achievement levels and high school graduation rates across the United States, many different federal and state agencies have initiated school reforms and social service programs targeted to children and families in at-risk situations. Within the last decade, many states have designed their own initiatives to help low-performing schools increase achievement levels and reduce dropout rates. Each state has taken its own approach in solving the problem and has targeted different student groups, parents, or professional educators. Some examples include the state of Texas, which introduced district accountability ratings and have based it on an analysis of attendance rates, dropout rates, and student group performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TASS); the state of North Carolina, which implemented its Early Start Program; the states of Florida and Washington which have offered full-service schools; the state of Maryland which has integrated service learning into the schools; and the state of Oklahoma which has implemented dropout recovery programs.

At the local level, educators must decide which of the multitude of reform models, curriculum initiatives, administrative structures, or the improvement practices are the very best for their local needs. Schargel & Smink (2001) have provided 4 categories which incorporate 15 strategies that can help solve the dropout problem. They include: 1) *Early Interventions*, which incorporates family involvement, early childhood education, and reading and writing programs; 2) The *Basic Core Strategies*, which incorporates mentoring/tutoring, service learning,

alternative schooling, and out-of school enhancement; 3) *Making the Most of Instruction*, which incorporates professional development, openness to diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences, instructional technologies, and individualized learning; and 4) *Making the Most of the Wider Community*, which incorporates systemic renewal, community agency and grassroots collaboration, extended, full-service schooling models, career education, workforce readiness, conflict resolution, and violence prevention.

The Urban Superintendents' Network (1987) asserts that the following six major strategies are needed. They include 1) Early Intervention; 2) Positive School Climate; 3) High Standards and Expectations; 4) Strong Staffing; 5) Broad Range of Instructional Programs; and 6) Collaboration. With similar philosophies and a few additional characteristics, Wehlage's (1989) study of pull-out programming identified a number of characteristics of effectiveness: 1) Small class size, which allowed for attention to the individual needs of the whole student; 2) professional accountability for program success compelling teachers to demonstrate optimism and confidence in the program; 3) a positive atmosphere in which constructive criticism may occur; and 4) experimental learning. In classroom-based studies designed to identify techniques used by schools which are working successfully with all students, including potential dropouts, Edmonds (1979) found similar characteristics: 1) strong administrative leadership; 2) a climate of high expectations and high commitment to a challenging curriculum by all; 3) an orderly atmosphere which includes tough, but fair discipline; 4) an attitude that student

learning is the most important issue; 5) frequent monitoring of student progress; 6) and the ability to reorganize resources to some degree of autonomy.

With a perspective entailing a different focus, Streeter and Franklin (1991) support the idea of integrating other agencies such as mental health and social services, to assist the student in dealing with problems that went beyond the scope of the educational system and, if not dealt with, depleted the opportunity for academic and societal success. Fortune et al. (1991) disagree with an aspect of the aforementioned philosophy and believe that the intervention of social workers do not produce a significant effect on the dropout rate; however, they do conclude that this type of intervention decreases student absenteeism. However, they did observe that reading and math gains were evident as a result of social work services.

When considering organizational partnerships and working with outside entities, businesses have also played a role in dropout prevention. Lezar (1992) reported that these types of partnerships increased more than threefold between 1983 and 1988. Businesses embraced these partnerships to break the log jam in the funding of public education and to provide schools experience in making choices from a variety of educational experiences offered by corporate partners.

Overall, early intervention is one of the most critical strategies. If more time could be invested on the front end of a student's life rather than when a child's education has reached a crisis level, more of these programs would be successful. These days, children are identified as at-risk as early as their primary years or before. A student's decision to dropout is often the result of a long series of negative school experiences (Brough, Bergmann, & Holt, 2006). Dropout

prevention strategies must be targeted at the middle school grades. Other literature suggests that these interventions should start even earlier. Petrocelli (1992) would agree that preschool and/or early intervention programs should be in place to provide intervention measures when at-risk characteristics in the individual first become apparent.

A staggering number of students are dropping out of school before graduating and many of these students never return to the educational system. Dropouts are of major concern to families, educators, and policy makers for a variety of reasons. The consequences dropouts will face are harsh, including the high likelihood of suffering from economic and social disadvantages throughout their entire lives. These consequences are related to other outcomes as well including crime, imprisonment, and potential death. For the nation as a whole, the costs of the dropout problem are reflected in higher welfare expenditures, lost tax revenues, and increased crime and crime prevention costs (Catterall, 1985). The intangible costs to the individual and society is substantial.

According to the Social Security Administration, it is estimated that Americans older than 65 years of age will constitute 20% of the total population by 2030 – up from 13% in 1998. What does this mean? Well, it means that more retirees will be drawing benefits and that there will be fewer workers paying taxes. When 76 million baby boomers leave the work force, it will be the students of today that will have to problem solve and lead our nation. To maintain U.S. world leadership status and continue to progress in this information and knowledge age, we must equip today's students with the skills and competencies to be

knowledgeable and productive citizens. An educated workforce will earn more, increase the tax base, and carry more responsibility, improving our society and economy. But in order for all of this to happen, we must continue to incorporate and develop effective strategic programming that will keep our young people in school until they earn a high school diploma.

A New Focus on Dropout Recovery

Today, a great amount of attention has been placed on those strategies that aim to alleviate the nation's dropout problem. One of those strategies called "dropout recovery" has increasingly gained popularity among the states, non-profit groups, for-profit ventures, school districts, and some jurisdictions have created or ramped up dropout recovery programs to reengage youth back into the school system (EdWeek, 2013). New data and technologies of today offer greater opportunity to find and reconnect out of school youth than ever before. For example, Alaska's Chugach School District *Voyage to Excellence Program* in Anchorage provides online and summer credit recovery and support, as well as civics education, for returning students in its 22,000 square-mile boundary. In California, the staff at the *LearningWorks Charter School* in Pasedena includes "runners", a group of trained former dropouts who identify, recruit, and mentor students who have left school. Runners are also required to continue their own education, sponsored by the school through the local colleges. In Connecticut, the Hartford-based community group *Our Piece of the Pie* provides an individual learning plan focused on postsecondary education and a mentor to urban dropouts ages 14 to 24. The group focuses on teaching students to see high school graduation

as part of a longer-term college and career plan. Many other states including Texas, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington have adopted a variety of strategies and initiatives that address high school dropouts. These new programs have been designed to attract, enroll, and help these students finish school (Sparks, 2013). Similarly, the state of Oklahoma has adopted Dropout Recovery (DOR) Programs through career and technology education, but unlike the previous strategies mentioned in other states, DOR Programs have yet to be recognized as a viable strategy in current literature.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this historical case study was to gain an understanding, from a historical perspective, the development dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma. There have been some very informative books highlighting vocational education in America (Gordon, 2003) and discussing the history of career and technology education in Oklahoma (Goble, 2004), but that research has failed to provide an accurate and detailed rendering of the history of dropout recovery programs in Oklahoma; an Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education initiative that provides high school dropouts an opportunity to gain academic credit and participate in career-specific training in order to attain their high school diploma. I am a strong advocate for career and technology education, and hope to provide this explanation for the next generation of writers and researchers who intend to explore the history and nature of CTE and its innovative programs. This explanation will be significant for future implementation of dropout

recovery models across the state of Oklahoma and may provide historical insights that can be used to launch similar programmatic offerings nationally. Additionally, rendering this history will provide new knowledge within the field of educational leadership and policy studies.

Statement of Problem

When schools are not organized to meet the needs of their students, they foster academic failure, increase dropout rates, and place stress upon communities (Bhanpuri & Reynolds, 2003; May & Copeland, 1998). Furthermore, dropout rates illustrate that efforts to make a monolithic public school system work for everybody have been and will be unsuccessful. Fantini (1976) wrote:

> We tried to make a monolithic public school system work for everybody. We were preoccupied with improving a single model of education. We updated courses of study, such as new math and new physics; we introduced a new technology and devices, such as program learning, team teaching, and nongradeness; and for those who were the most obvious casualties of the schools, we mounted compensatory programs of remediation. In short, we spent our fiscal and human resources attempting to improve a uniform 19th century institution. The result is, at best, an improved outdated institution. (Fantini, 1976, p.67)

Fantini's (1976) observation speaks to the point that a 'one size fits all' solution does not work for today's students who are at risk of academic failure. In many cases, the traditional alternative high schools, or as Raywid (1994) defines as Type II schools, are often the only viable option for those students ignored by the

traditional high school system. These schools represent the second, and at times, the last chance students have to obtain their high school diploma. Unfortunately, these programs are monolithic in design and are focused only on correcting student behavioral issues. They also lack the ability to provide a holistic approach that strategizes on the individual needs of the student. This usually results in repeated failures and students leaving school early without earning their high school diploma. There is a need for more special programs that are designed based on the academic, social, and physical needs of students. Without these programs, students will continue to fall through the cracks, and the U.S. economy and civil society will continue to deteriorate one dropout at a time.

The state of Oklahoma’s educational system does not work for all students either. Public schools systems in states like Oklahoma are faced with the challenge of meeting the needs of diverse student populations. In 2003-2004, 8 out of 13 Oklahoma County school districts had dropout rates lower than the state average (United Way of Central Oklahoma, 2005). In 2007, more than 20 Oklahoma schools were on the national list of so-called dropout factories. Because of this, the state may be experiencing a rise in government assistance program costs and the state’s incarceration rate. A national study (Price, 2007) determined that if the high school dropouts of Oklahoma's class of 2006 had earned their diplomas, the state's economy could have benefited from an additional $3.8 billion in wages over their lifetimes.

In the Oklahoma City metropolitan area, an estimated 4,800 students dropped out from the Class of 2008 at great costs not only to themselves but also to

their communities (Price 2007). Reducing the number of dropouts by 50 percent for this single high school class would have resulted in tremendous economic benefits to the Oklahoma City region. According to Alliance for Education (2010), 2,400 new graduates would make great contributions to the regional economy. In looking at income, this single class of new graduates would likely earn as much as $24 million in combined earnings in the average year compared to their likely earnings without a diploma. From a consumer spending and investing perspective, increased earnings would likely allow the new graduates an additional $17 million in consumption and an additional $5 million in investing during the average year. Increased home and auto sales would see an increase as well. By the midpoint of their careers, these new graduates would likely purchase homes totaling a value of as much as $32 million more than what they otherwise would have spent without a diploma. In addition, they would likely spend up to an additional $2 million on vehicle purchases each year. This additional spending and investment would likely be enough to support 200 new jobs and increase the gross regional product by as much as $29 million by the time these new graduates reach the midpoint of their careers. As a result of increased wages and higher levels of spending, state and local tax revenue within this region would likely grow by as much as $3 million during the average year. When looking at human capital, 55% of these new graduates would likely continue on to pursue some type of postsecondary education.

The impact that dropouts have on Oklahoma's economy is significant. It is important that Oklahoma's educational system continue to find ways to be student

focused, learning centered, innovative in instructional delivery, dedicated to continuous quality improvement, and have a willing to do “whatever it takes” mode of operation. The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE) has provided a model that addresses the dropout problem called “Dropout Recovery Programs”, but a detailed account of this specific state-wide educational programming does not exist as it relates to the historical purpose, and economic, social, and political implications that led to its development and operation. Without this historical rendering, the initiatives and undocumented successes and challenges of Dropout Recovery Programs will continue to be anecdotal, leaving their existence and further development in jeopardy.

Research Questions

This historical case study was guided by an overarching/main research question:

What is the history of Dropout Recovery Programs in the state of Oklahoma? Subsequently, four specific questions will serve as the investigative lens to explore and understand the factors that influenced and shaped Dropout Recovery Programs in Oklahoma.

a. In review of the macro and micro environment of Oklahoma:
    i. What were the political, social, and economic implications that influenced the development of these programs?
b. In review of the original purpose of Dropout Recovery Programs and how their original purpose has been sustained over time:

ii. What was the original purpose of Dropout Recovery Programs in the state of Oklahoma?

iii. Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light the original purpose?

c. In review of the demographic characteristics of Dropout Recovery Programs in the state of Oklahoma:

iv. Demographically, how have career and technology-based Dropout Recovery Programs looked over time and what can be discerned from such changes?

d. In review of the evaluative characteristics of Dropout Recovery Programs in the state of Oklahoma:

v. How have Dropout Recovery Programs been evaluated, and historically, how have these programs been successful and what opportunities for improvement exist within the programs serving at-risk youth?

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions are made regarding this study:

1. Purposefully sampled interview participants responded to survey and interview questions honestly.
2. The institutional documents, archival records, newspaper reports and print copies of internet-based information sources were both credible and accurate.

Summary of Methods

The methodological design of this research is a historical case study based on the principles of triangulation, that is, the use of multiple data sources to enhance the validity of research findings. This research explores why and how Dropout Recovery Programs came into existence within the state of Oklahoma by describing how economic, social, and political forces, at that time, influenced program development. Additionally, as a result of the existence and longevity of Dropout Recovery Programs, implications will be drawn from comparing the very same conditions that gave rise to the programming's existence within the State to conditions that currently exist.

Data were acquired through qualitative-naturalistic inquiry based on in-depth interviews with key participants and through the collection of print data including, government archival documents, print-based internet sources, public records such as district profiles and board minutes, and physical evidence such as brochures (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995). Data triangulation will be incorporated to corroborate facts about the purpose of Dropout Recovery Programs and the political, social, and economic influences exhibited during the development of these programs. This study utilized the analytical strategy of *relying on theoretical propositions*, as described by Yin (2003), to shape the data collection plan. This analytic strategy allowed for the researcher to focus on the chronological relationship between four primary themes (purpose, political, social, and economic) that influenced the development of Dropout Recovery Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Data were analyzed through a time-series analysis technique of

chronology while intentionally focusing on purpose, political, social, and economic themes.

Limitations of Study

There has been limited research on the concept of Dropout Recovery Programs. Although this does present great opportunities for phenomena to emerge and be identified within this study, especially pertaining to serving at-risk youth, prior research on Dropout Recovery Programs do not lend themselves as a benefit or fundamental contribution to this study. As a historical case study of a specific institutional programmatic initiative, geographically bounded within a particular state, the evidence and findings presented in this study are to inform scholarship and practice of an educational practice that may or may not have potential in different social, economic, and political contexts.

Population

The population of this study consisted of Oklahoma Department of Career Technology Education administrators, Oklahoma technology center administrators, former Oklahoma State Department of Education administrators, and former Dropout Recovery Program students. I used purposive sampling in this case study. Informants were selected who were able to answer central research questions through protocol-driven interviews. Participants who consented to be interviewed were fully informed of IRB participant protection criteria. Invitations to participate in this study were extended personally by the researcher. Participant recruitment consisted of telephone calls, personal face-to-face visits, and emails. Participants also received confirmation letters informing them of their rights and protections

established by National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The recruitment letter explained the purpose of the study, the procedures, reporting guidelines, and the confidentiality of their responses.

Definition of Terms

The following list of terms contains names and references used in this study. Some terms have been defined at length in this chapter as they were important to operationalize in advance. Additional terms may need clarification for the reader and are as follows:

Average Daily Membership (ADM) - is a count of students that is taken at different times of the year to satisfy local, state and federal data collection needs and also to ensure that school districts are adequately funded, according to student population.

Career and Technology Education (CTE) – organized educational activities that provide technical skill proficiency, industry-recognized credentials, a certificate, or an associate degree. (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)

Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Act (Perkins Act) - The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act was first authorized by the federal government in 1984 and reauthorized in 1998. Named for Carl D. Perkins, the act aims to increase the quality of technical education within the United States in order to help the economy. (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

Full Service Community School (FSCS) – The Full-Service Community Schools program, which is funded under FIE (Fund for the Improvement of Education), encourages coordination of academic, social, and health services through

partnerships among1) public elementary and secondary schools; 2) the schools' local educational agencies (LEAs); and 3) community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other public or private entities. (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE) - provides leadership, resources, and assures standards of excellence for a comprehensive statewide system of career and technology education. That system offers programs and services in 29 technology center districts operating on 57 campuses, 398 comprehensive school districts, and 16 Skill Center campuses that include three juvenile facilities. (Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, 2011)

Technology Center – Oklahoma's technology centers develop skilled workers, provide customized training for existing and new businesses, encourage innovation in programs and services, and prepare secondary students for high-skill, high-wage jobs and continuing education. In addition to being an integral part of our state's education system, the technology centers play an important role in Oklahoma's economic development and workforce development. They maintain ongoing partnerships at the local level with colleges, chambers of commerce, and workforce development boards. Through the Training for Industry Program (TIP), technology centers provide training for new and expanding industries in the state. Along with other parts of the Oklahoma Career and Technology system, Oklahoma's technology centers prepare Oklahomans to succeed in the workplace, in education, and in life. Oklahoma's technology center system is comprised of 29 districts with

57 campuses located throughout the state ("Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, 2011). Technology centers are funded and are able to exist through three (3) different funding mechanisms. They include local funding, which comes from ad valorem tax on property, tuition, and other local sources; state funding, which comes from state funds allocated by the Oklahoma Department of Education to the technology centers; and federal funding, which is provided in the form of grants, including Carl Perkins and Pell Grants.

Vocational Education – Vocational education or vocational education and training prepares trainees for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, and entirely related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation. It is sometimes referred to as technical education as the trainee directly develops expertise in a particular group of techniques or technology. In 2006, the language vocational education was updated to career technical education. (Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, 2011)

Organization of Study

Chapter Two provides a review of salient literature on the approaches and solutions used throughout alternative education and career technology education to address the high school dropout problem. An existing theoretical or empirical literature on dropout recovery programming is sparse.

Chapter Three presents the study's methodology and research design. The study's conceptual model, data collection, data management, and data analysis methods are presented.

Chapter Four presents the data analysis, discussing answers for each of the guiding research questions, followed by the identification of major concepts and themes deduced from the findings.

Chapter Five discusses the findings, implications, and provides recommendations of the study for future research and practice. The study concludes with relevant references and appendices.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Introduction

This review of literature examines the role that Career and Technology Education (CTE) has played in educating “at-risk students” in the past 40 years. This review highlights the educational programs and strategies CTE has utilized to keep youth in school and reduce dropout rates. Because CTE programs designed to serve at-risk youth typically fall within the scope of alternative education, it is especially important to highlight the history of modern alternative education and examine the types of alternative education programs designed for youth who have been unsuccessful in traditional educational settings. This review will discuss how these types of programs are unique in their purpose, educational settings, and methods of delivery. Additionally, the concept of experiential learning has been a key principle utilized in CTE’s role serving at-risk youth, and this study reviews the literature on why this form of learning is considered an effective approach for engaging “at-risk” students.

Alternative Education in the United States

Alternative education represents one of the most important educational movements ever to occur in the United States. For a concept that has had such a revolutionary impact on our educational system, the idea of alternative education and public schools of choice is quite simple. It involves the diversification of traditional education by creating distinctive educational programs designed to meet the many needs and interest of specific groups of students and providing these programs to parents, students, and teachers through voluntary choice. Alternative

pathways to educational success are needed at every step of the formal and informal educational process, ranging from essential early intervention and prevention strategies in the early years, to a multiplicity of high-quality alternative options within mainstream K-12 systems at the middle and high school levels, and finally to opportunities outside the mainstream for those who have been unable to learn and thrive in the general education system.

Historically, the concept of alternative education as we see it today represents only a small portion of the U.S. educational history timeline (Lang & Sletten, 2002). Prior to our modern educational system, the philosophy on who is owed the opportunity to learn has been more associated with people who were considered to be capable of learning under "normal" circumstances and through traditional educational practices. However, those that were considered to be different and less capable of learning were essentially left behind, and education became an unrealistic reality (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This philosophy has changed tremendously over time. Today, literature continuously provides that all students deserve learning that is conducive to their individualized learning abilities, whether the environment is centered on their academic, social, or psychological needs (McDonnell, 1995). As a result, the philosophy of alternative education has risen to become a significant piece of the modern U.S. educational system, and a diverse range of programmatic strategies have been linked to specific social, political, and economic periods in U.S. history.

History of Modern Alternative Education

The modern alternative education movement is generally considered to be from the 1960s to the present. It was during the 1960's that alternative education grew into a widespread social movement. Timothy Young (1990), in his description of the history of alternative schools, asserts that alternatives in public education have existed since the very birth of U.S. education. He describes educational opportunities that differed based on race, gender and social class that set the stage for the constantly evolving nature of the educational system in America. In the turbulent cultural climate of the late 1960s, the radical educational critique inspired thousands of young people, parents, and educators to make bold, unconventional efforts to create new kinds of schools (Miller, 2010). Despite their origins in the earliest days of our country, alternatives, as we know them in the most modern sense, find their roots in the civil rights movement. In the period between 1967 and 1972, especially, was a time of crisis for public education. During this time, student demonstrations, teacher strikes, and a deep questioning of traditional assumptions shook the system to its core. In these few years alone, over 500 "free schools", nonpublic schools based on countercultural if not revolutionary ideas were founded. Open classrooms and magnet schools (public schools of choice) were introduced (Miller 2010). For the most part, public alternative schools of the 1960s and 1970s were generally a phenomenon of secondary education.

In the 1970s, a wide range of philosophies and teaching methods began to enter the mainstream of alternative education; some having strong political, scholarly, or philosophical orientations, while others were simply created for

teachers and students dissatisfied with some aspect of the traditional education system (Weinstein, 1986). In this decade, many programs that were non-academic were implemented as well. For example, in the 1970s, as the breakup of the U.S. family accelerated, nationally-implemented programs such as special education, that was mandated by the federal government; drug and alcohol abuse education, which helped students deal with issues such as drug and alcohol addiction; Head Start, which assisted children who came from backgrounds where money, parenting, and health were lacking with familiarizing on the routine of school at a young age; and parent education, which helped to correct and improve students' and students' parents parenting skills all attest to the dramatic shift in the purpose and intent of schooling. The demand for educational support for students that was social in nature grew tremendously during this time. Because of this trend in the 1970s, many educational establishments with non-traditional curriculum and instruction were founded in the United States. These establishments became known as alternative schools. These alternative schools came in two forms; public and non-public. By the mid-1970s, the term "free schools" was replaced by "alternative schools," even among the remaining group of small, fiercely independent schools. The new term was less suggestive of countercultural lifestyles or radical politics and was adopted by innovators in public education. Although alternative schools find their roots in the free school movement and continued to provide havens for various cultural and political dissidents, they are not distinctly oppositional as were the free schools in the 1960s (Miller, 2000).

In the 1980s, education brought new teaching and learning strategies nationwide including, open classrooms, whole language, mainstreaming of Special Education students, independent study, and classroom inclusion of values, character and sex education programs. The definition of alternative schools began to narrow in scope. Young (1990) notes that throughout the 1980s, a growing number of alternatives were geared toward students who were disruptive or failing in their home school and the variety of options were greatly shaped by this change. Alternative schools for students with behavioral problems have existed since the 1980s, when student violence on public school campuses reached epidemic proportions, according to Beken, Williams, Combs, and Slate (2010). Politically, a focus on recapturing the "at-risk" student was viewed as critical (Orange County Department of Education, 2005). It was during this time that the landmark publication titled *A Nation At Risk* was publicized by a conservatively elected federal government and the alarms were sounded about the quality of the nation's schools.

With the beginning of the 21st century, many teaching practices developed in alternative schools, such as student-centered pedagogy, independent learning, project-based learning, cooperative learning, as well as authentic assessment. These practices seem to have gone mainstream by influencing the institutional culture of public education (Sliwka, 2008). Today, alternative education comes in many forms. These forms include alternative classrooms, school-within-a-school programming, separate alternative schools, and second or last-chance schools for disruptive students. Just as there are many types and settings for alternative

schools, there are many delivery models based on the programs' philosophy and the needs of the students they serve. Some, like the Community in Schools or extended Full-Service Community School (FSCS) model, use community partnerships and emphasizes community collaboration in instruction and support services (Milliken, 2007). Others may combine academics with a career and technical intervention that focuses on making school meaningful while preparing students for work. Still others employ a behavioral intervention model.

There have been many arguments about the causes and decline of alternative education movements. Prominent in this research has been the work of Deal and Nolan (1978), Cuban and Tyack (1995), Zilversmit (1993), and Semel and Sadovnik (1999). These researchers have emphasized the reformers as the reason for both the emergence and decline of the free school and alternative school movements. Emery (2000) finds that these studies are misleading and argues that it was the existence or absence of structural or institutional support dependent upon a larger historical context that accounted for the growth and decline of the number of alternative schools during this period.

The number of alternative school movements has also been debated in the literature. Although this review focuses on the history of modern alternative education (1960s to present), historians have recognized two periods that revolutionized our educational system. These periods are 1) The Progressive Movement (1890-1940), and 2) The Free School Movement (1960-1975). Emery (2000) finds it misleading to characterize alternative school movements as appearing only at two moments in U.S. history. Alternative schools have existed as

long as the public school has. One is the cause of another. Unlike previous historians, the researcher argues that there have been four periods of alternative school movements. They include: 1) The Progressive Movement (1890-1940); 2) The Intercultural Education Movement (1940-1960); 3) The Free School Movement (1960-1975); and 4) The Alternative Education Movement (mid 1970s to present).

Types of Alternative Education Schools

Alternative education is a term that covers all types of educational activities that fall outside the traditional K-12 school system. Unfortunately, many of these schools are considered to be second class, or perceived to lack some measure of quality than traditional educational settings. This perception is often misconstrued because alternative education programs are often associated with students who were unsuccessful in the past and because typically the schools are charged to motivate and educate disengaged students. Deal and Nolan (1978) acknowledge that the non-public alternative schools which proliferated during the 1970s succeeded in providing “options”, when there was an “impetus for many reforms in the traditional schools” and consequently “out-performed” traditional schools on vandalism, absenteeism and dropout rates” (p. 5). They faulted many of the schools, however, for either lacking “a systematic guiding philosophy” or for being “ahistorical” (p. 7).

Although it is true that many alternative educational programs dealt with what was viewed at the time as “an unfavorable group of students” who lacked the luster and appearance of students who are typically considered to be successful in

school, conversely it is also true that many of these programs pursued equitable learning environments through a diverse range of systematic guiding philosophies. The argument remained that alternative programs were more effective in educating our youth than those of traditional school settings. Because alternative education is so complex and the fact that it is so challenging to motivate students who have not been successful, it has been argued that these very same challenges give cause for alternative-type programs to be more creative and innovative than many other traditional educational settings (Aron, 2003).

Raywid (1994) has identified "three pure types" of alternative programs that exist today. They include, Type I, Type II, and Type III programs. Type I programs seek to make school challenging and fulfilling for all involved. These alternative schools are attended by choice and provide full-time education options for any student. These schools also offer full-time multi-year, education options for students of all kinds, including those in need of individualization, those who seek innovative and challenging curriculum, or students who have dropped out of high school and wish to earn their high school diplomas. Models of these types of schools range from schools-within-schools models to charter schools, magnet schools, Dropout Recovery Programs, and schools in untraditional settings like shopping malls and museums. These schools can be private, public, or a combination of both. Type II programs are those to which students are "sentenced" – usually as one last chance prior to expulsion. These types of programs carry the connotation of discipline, which aims to segregate, contain, and reform disruptive students.

Type II program students typically do not choose to attend, but are sent to these programs for a specified period of time or until behavior requirements are met. In most cases, placement is short-term, and the curriculum is limited to a few basic, required courses or is entirely supplied by the ‘home school’ as a list of assignments. Examples of these schools include boot camps and fully resourced, longer-term in-school suspension arrangements. This type of program is important for dealing with disruptive students, but unfortunately is the model that most people are familiar with and the model that is visualized when alternative education programs are discussed. This framing of alternative education can probably be linked back to the alternative education movement in the 1980s when a growing number of alternative programs were developed for students who were disruptive at their home school and when student violence on public school campuses reached epidemic proportions as mentioned earlier in this review.

Type III are for those students who are presumed to need remediation or rehabilitation – academic, social/emotional, or both. This type of alternative school provides short-term therapeutic services such as counseling, access to social services, academic remediation, credit recovery, etc. These alternatives, which include charter schools, alternative schools, independent schools, and home-based (bound) learning vary widely, but often emphasize the value of small class size, close relationships between students and teachers, and a sense of community.

In writing a synthesis of research for educational leadership, Raywid (1994) provides another descriptive listing of popular alternative schools. The three types she describes are: 1) *Schools of Choice*, offering different specialized learning

opportunities for students usually in a magnet school; 2) *Last-Chance Schools*, designed to provide continued education program options for disruptive students; and 3) *Remedial Schools*, having a focus on the student's need for academic remediation or social rehabilitation. Raywid's (1994) program identification along with other research suggests that the first groups of programs, also considered the true educational alternatives, are the most successful. On the other hand, alternative discipline programs are much less likely to lead to substantial gains. Rigorous evaluation studies are still very necessary, but anecdotal evidence suggests that outcomes for therapeutic programs are more mixed, with students often making progress while enrolled but regressing when they return to a more traditional school. So are these programs only short-term fixes? Are short-term programs such as Type II & Type III or Last-Chance and Remedial programs built for failure? Raywid (1994) suggests that providing high quality individualized therapeutic supports along with educational instruction over a long period of time (e.g., two years or more) may indeed lead to better outcomes. While this assertion seems reasonable, it is proposed that short-term success may well be achieved through carefully thought out and strategic individualized planning and support.

Numerous models and concepts of alternative schools have been developed to serve local needs and are operating with varied degrees of success. Hefner-Packer (1991) has studied these models and has described five models of alternative schools: 1) *The Alternative Classroom*, designed as a self-contained classroom within a traditional school, simply offering varied programs in a different environment; 2) *The School-Within-a-School*, housed within a traditional

school, but having semiautonomous or specialized educational programs; 3) *The Separate Alternative School*, separated from regular school and having different academic and social adjustment programs; 4) *The Continuation School*, developed for students no longer attending traditional schools, such as street academies for job-related training or parenting centers; and 5) *The Magnet School*, a self-contained program offering an intensified curriculum in one or more subject areas such as math or science.

Another interesting perspective proposed by Melissa Roderick (2003), argues the importance of putting the students' educational needs at front and center. Unlike Raywid's (1994) or Hefner-Packers' (1991) viewpoints that focus on program characteristics, her vantage focuses on the educational problems or challenges that students present. Roderick has identified several distinct groups: 1) Students who have fallen 'off track' because they have gotten into trouble and need short-term systems of recovery to route them back into high schools. The goal of getting them back into regular high schools is both appropriate and realistic for this group; 2) Students who have prematurely transitioned into adulthood either because they are (about to become) parents, or have home situations that do not allow them to attend school regularly (e.g., immigrant children taking care of siblings while their parents work, those coming out of the juvenile justice system with many demands on their time, etc.); 3) Students who have fallen substantially off track educationally, but are older and are returning to obtain the credits they need to transition into community colleges (or other programs) very rapidly. These include , for example, older individuals who are just a few credits away from graduation

(many of whom dropped out at age 16 or 17), or are transitioning out of the jail system, or have had a pregnancy and are now ready to complete their secondary schooling. Roderick (2003) notes that these types of students are currently populating most alternative education programs in large urban areas and that they are a very diverse group and tend to be well served by the existing alternative school system; and 4) Students who have fallen substantially behind educationally. These students have significant problems, very low reading-levels, and are often over aged for their grade. Many of these students have been held back repeatedly and a number of them have come out of special education. They include 17 or 18 year-olds with third and fourth grade reading levels who never graduated from 8th grade (or who have gone to high school for a few years but have never actually accumulated any credits). This is another large group of youth and unfortunately, most school systems do not have any programs that can meet their needs.

Virtual Schooling Strategies for Serving At-Risk Youth

As a result of enormous advances in communication and computer technology, there is increased opportunity for the application of technology in today's classrooms. The foundation of modern education has been fundamentally altered by computer technology designed for educational purposes. It is this technological change in modern education that some districts are employing to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in their schools (Migliorino & Maiden, 2004).The fact that many school districts are facing enormous pressure to raise graduation rates and better serve students at risk of failing school or dropping out, a growing number of districts are turning to online courses as a means of helping

them meet academic credit requirements. Half the school districts in the country offer at least one online course (Dessoff, 2009). While some districts rely on additional face-to-face interaction between teachers and students, many are adopting online solutions offered by commercial vendors, and others are implementing programs that blend face-to face-and online instruction. Virtual Schooling is what this strategy is recognized to be, and it has become quite a debatable topic in relationship to the strategies used to help students complete school.

Today, the bulk of virtual schooling can be classified into two categories; credit recovery and full-time virtual or cyber schools. However this strategy is categorized, all districts carry the same objective: to give students who have failed courses because of poor grades or absenteeism, or who have dropped out of school, a chance to recover the credits that they have lost so that they can move on to the next grade and ultimately to graduation.

Credit recovery is a strategy used for students who have previously failed or have been unsuccessful and earning credit toward graduation. In most cases, students using this option have already satisfied seat time requirements for the course in which they were successful, and are focused on earning credit based on competency. These programs, in general, use online instruction as a primary method of delivery and focus on helping students stay in high school and graduate on time. Although online instruction is fundamental to both credit recovery and virtual schools, they do differ in approach. One of the primary differences is that of the teacher. Students involved in credit recovery are often quite familiar to their

teachers, who know what they need, what to expect from them, and just what supervision is in their best interests. This strategy usually offers a blended approach combining face-to-face delivery with online instruction.

Full-time virtual schools or cyber schools are the latest trends in online schooling strategies. According to Bogden (2003), virtual schools, regardless of the model, usually function in a similar way. Unlike conventional “brick and mortar” schools, students attending full-time virtual schools usually meet with their classmates and teachers online.

Stepping into a virtual learning environment can help struggling students interact with curricula in a new way, begin learning with a clean slate, and provide more flexibility to accommodate work or family obligations. For some struggling students, being in an online classroom may be the first time they are able to form a positive relationship with their teachers. Berge and Clark (2005) identified four benefits as relates to virtual schooling: expanding educational access, providing high-quality learning opportunities, improving student outcomes and skills, and allowing for educational choice. Cavanaugh (2001) described the major benefit of virtual education for K-12 schools as allowing rural and small schools to offer courses that they would otherwise be unable to teach (e.g., high level mathematics and science courses). From an administrative standpoint, Keeler (2003) describes the benefits of virtual learning as decreasing the amount of time spent on discipline issues, flexibility in scheduling, (both of students and teachers), and time saved on administrative tasks associated with registration, attendance, and grading. The advantages of credit recovery and virtual school programs seem endless. In most

cases, students involved in these types of programs can learn at any time, at any place, and most any subject.

There have been an abundance of authors who have challenged the effectiveness of virtual schooling strategies. Objections both political and philosophical surround the topic of virtual schools. Claims and counterclaims swirl around issues of funding, credit, certification, and even whether or not the whole idea of learning without the teacher and student being in the same room is socially desirable or morally acceptable (Roblyer, 2006). As with other instructional delivery methods, student success occurs when motivation, engagement in interactive content, and teacher preparation are all in harmony. These three elements are prevalent in the arguments being made about the practicality of this method when serving at risk youth. For example, Ash (2011), while addressing at-risk students' virtual challenges, noted that none of the advantages that virtual schooling can provide matters if the student is not willing to work hard for their credits. Roblyer (2006) provided three observations on why some virtual schools fail and are increasingly prone to high dropout rates. The first reason for high dropout rates in virtual schools is the fact that most statewide programs serve large, diverse populations. In these programs, most students (usually about 70% to 80%) are advanced or highly motivated students or have a need for course credit recovery. It is not surprising that programs that enroll a high percentage of at risk students are much more likely to have high dropout and failure rates. A second factor that affects virtual school dropout rates is how and when these rates are calculated. Like regular high schools across the country, methods of calculating the

dropout rates vary. For example, some virtual programs include in the dropout figures any student who signs up for a virtual course but never completes it. Many of the more successful programs offer a drop period from two to five weeks and count only students who drop out after that period. A third reason for high dropout rates in virtual schools is more complicated and reflects the challenge of creating effective learning environments, virtual or otherwise. Some virtual schools have substantial start up resources to design, implement, and sustain the strategies that make for successful programs, while others do not. Some programs are grant funded, have temporary or insufficient numbers of staff, or have little technical support for students when things go wrong as they invariably do when computers are involved. Of course, this situation parallels that of many traditional schools, which often lack the resources they need in order to do what works well for their students.

As with distance courses in higher education, students tend to fail or drop out of virtual courses at a much higher rate than they do in face-to-face settings. Dropout and failure rates for virtual programs are reported to be as high as 60% to 70% in some locations (Roblyer, 2006). These often reported dropout figures have confirmed the misgivings of the skeptics, who feel that, despite the theoretical advantages and optimism, virtual schooling seldom results in real learning for significant numbers of students.

As noted earlier in this review, one of the family related factors associated with operationalizing students at-risk is that of low socioeconomic status and poverty. This presents a fundamental challenge in relationship to at-risk students

seeking virtual schooling. Some families may not be able to afford the virtual schools' cost of a computer, modem, Internet provider, and tuition. While students are able to access the Internet at 99% of public schools in the United States, the percentage of students who have access to the Internet at home is much lower. According to DeBell and Chapman (2003) approximately 70% of White and Asian children had computers in the home; however, this level decreases to approximately 33% for Black and Hispanic children. Less than a third of children from homes with an annual income of less than $20,000 had a computer. Approximately 25% of children with parents who did not complete high school had computers in the home.

End of Instruction Exams Required to Graduate

Although the aforementioned alternative education strategies (alternative schools, virtual schools, credit recovery, etc.) merit strong consideration, none of them mean anything if the students are not prepared to pass the end-of-instruction (EOI) examinations required to receive a high school diploma. When passing a test is tied to an important outcome, like high school graduation, these tests are often referred to as *high-stakes tests* (Johnson & Thurlow, 2003). Today, many states require that high-stakes tests or some form of exit exams be passed prior to graduation. In 2010, 28 states had high school exit exams (Dietz & Center on Education Policy, 2010). Proponents of these exams argue that the exams can increase student performance through both internal and external influences (Dietz & Center on Education Policy, 2010). Some proponents feel high school exit exams internally influence student achievement because they provide an incentive for

students to study when diplomas are withheld based on student performance on these exams (Jacob, 2001). Opponents of these exams fear they narrow the scope of the curriculum and/or increase dropout rates, particularly for typically under-served student populations (Dietz & Center on Education Policy, 2010).

One of the most challenging issues regarding the use of exit exams has been how to best include students at risk of school failure, or those students who have identified learning disabilities. Today, nineteen of states offer students who have difficulty passing exit exams an alternative option to allow them to graduate. In the state of Oklahoma, for example, students who do not meet the exit exam requirement may receive a high school diploma by demonstrating mastery of state academic content standards through alternate methods approved by the state board of education. These alternate methods include alternate tests and end-of-course projects approved by the Oklahoma State Board of Education. One of the alternatives includes utilizing scores from the WorkKeys Assessment. Through these assessments, students earn Career Readiness Certificates that determine proficiency in three areas; *Applied Mathematics*, *Reading for Information*, and *Business Writing*. Students must achieve a minimum score in either of these areas in order to substitute the WorkKeys Assessment for an EOI exam. For example, WorkKeys applied mathematics can serve as an alternate EOI for Algebra I, Geometry, and/or Algebra II. A minimum score of 5 must be made on the assessment in order for this substitution to occur.

The Emergence of Full-Service Community Schools as a Strategy

As early as the 1800s, it was understood that many youth needed assistance beyond the classroom in order to succeed and thrive. In 1853, Charles Loring Brace established the Orphan Train Movement in response to an epidemic of homeless children. This movement, which later evolved into the Children's Aid Society, has been given credit for sparking the beginning of the "community school" model in the U.S. (Children's Aid Society, 2013). The Children's Aid Society became the forefront of youth services by introducing the first free lunch program, the first industrial school for poor children, the first daycare program for working mothers and the first visiting nurse service. This approach, in time, gained national attention and was seen as a viable strategy for at-risk youth. Other similar models have followed, and have been designed to provide a holistic educational experience to at-risk youth. Today, this community school movement is promoted through the Coalition for Community Schools, which is an alliance of national, state and local organizations in education K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and human services, government and philanthropy, as well as national, state and local community school networks.

Another pioneer, Bill Milliken, has also been given credit for founding the "Communities in Schools" model. The story of Communities in Schools began in the 1970s, when Founder Bill Milliken, then a youth advocate in New York City, came up with the idea of bringing community resources inside public schools. He had a vision that these resources not only be accessible, but coordinated and accountable as well. Focused on fighting the dropout epidemic, the Communities in

Schools model positions site coordinators inside schools to assess students' needs and provide resources to help them succeed in the classroom and in life. These resources are provided through partnerships with local businesses, social service agencies, health care providers and volunteers. The Communities in Schools network is also recognized as the nation's largest dropout prevention organization.

More recently, a newer model has emerged call the "Full-Service Community School". This model's existence is rooted in legislation. The Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE), which is authorized by section 5411 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), supports nationally significant programs to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education at the state and local levels in order to help all children meet challenging academic content and academic standards. One of those significant programs, the Full-Service Community Schools Program, which is funded under FIE, encourages coordination of academic, social, and health services through partnerships among 1) public elementary and secondary schools; 2) the schools' local educational agencies (LEAs); and 3) community based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other public or private entities.

The concept of extended, full-service community schools comes from Florida's innovative legislation in 1991 that called for integration of educational, medical, and social and/or human services in a manner designed to meet the needs of children, youth, and their families on school grounds or in easily accessible location (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002). This innovative school model was expected to provide "the types of prevention, treatment, and support services children and

families needed to succeed…service built on interagency partnerships which would evolve from cooperative adventures to intensive collaborative arrangements among state and local and public and private entities" (Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, 1991).

The full service community school model incorporates a variety of strategies to reduce many barriers that cause at-risk students not to be successful. Dryfoos and Maguire (2002) discuss some areas in which full-service schools can have an effect on students.

The areas of purported and substantiated effect of community schools include: 1) *Readiness to Learn* – which recognizes that some children come to school lacking the necessary readiness to sit in the classroom and participate in the learning process. Through the Readiness to Learn strategy, early childhood education and Head Start preschool programs have had a proven positive effect on long-term learning outcomes; 2) *Supportive Adults* – which recognizes that youth development is strongly associated with access to caring, supportive adults. The full service community school model can ensure that such relationships are established, and through creative partnerships, can supply the large amount of individual attention that many of today's student's need in and beyond responsive classrooms; 3) *Extended Learning Opportunities* – which recognizes that there is not enough time in the school day for many children to acquire all the skill's that they need to succeed in today's educational system. Within this strategy, after school programs are provided to help children gain social skills and cultural experiences that lead to strong youth development; 4) *Parent Involvement* – which

recognizes that parents need avenues for involvement so that they can learn how to monitor their children's performance and homework and therefore feel better equipped to provide support and help. Unfortunately, many parents are turned off by their children's schools and often feel rejected by the teachers and do not know how to communicate with them. The parent involvement strategy removes this barrier by inviting parents to serve on planning and advisory boards, encouraging them to volunteer in the school, and hiring them as teacher aides and outreach workers; 5) *Lifelong Learning* – which recognizes that children are not the only ones who need access to extended learning opportunities. This strategy understands that adults can improve their family's status by taking courses to advance their careers or enhance their lives intellectually. The full service community school model supports this strategy by staying open evenings and weekends, and making it convenient for adults to participate in credit and noncredit courses. In many cases, child care is provided as well; 6) *Opportunity to Perform Community Service* – which recognizes that when children are given a chance to serve the community through volunteer placements in day care centers, senior citizen homes, or community gardening projects, children feel much better about their lives. It is believed that the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 brought into focus the importance of developing community and of teaching children to actively participate in the process of building democratic institutions; 7) *Access to Health Care* – which recognizes that children who are troubled with physical or psychosocial problems cannot perform well in school. Full service community school models, in many cases, provide on-site primary health and mental health

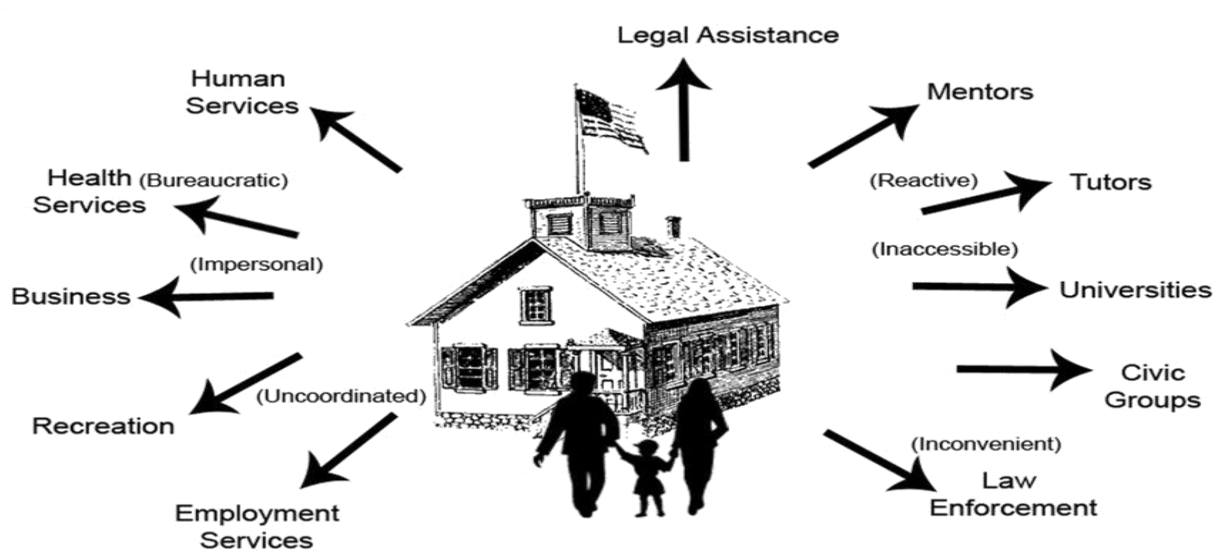
clinics staffed with trained professionals from community agencies. For example, these agencies, through collaborative partnerships, can offer sex education, drug prevention, and conflict resolution classes. As a result, teachers are freed to concentrate on their classroom work with students; 8) Integration of Services – which recognizes that many families are discouraged from using community services and resources because they are fragmented and loaded with bureaucratic regulations. A well-organized full service community school can draw these disparate programs together into an integrated package at one site with centralized records and community policies; 9) *Safe Communities* – which recognizes that of 28 million school-age children whose parents work, an estimated 7 million children aged 5 to 13 return to empty homes after school. Full service community schools can provide safe and supervised havens from early morning to late in the evening; 10) *Positive School Environment* – which recognizes that simply kicking students out of school does not solve the problem. Full-service community schools can create service networks that address student behavioral problems on site, limiting suspensions and expulsions; 11) *Changing Demographics* – which recognizes that throughout the country, schools are experiencing dramatic changes in the makeup of their populations. Because partners in full service community schools are often community-based, culturally indigenous organizations, they can create multicultural environments that celebrate differences and encourage all students to succeed; 12) *Basic Needs* – which recognizes that unfortunately, many children come to school hungry. They may also lack clothing and housing. Through full service community school programs, schools can institute breakfast, snack, and

dinner programs as well as the usual lunch. Community partners can take on the responsibility of making sure that children have warm and suitable clothing and help parents find adequate housing; and 13) *Quality Education* – which recognizes that too many students are failing in school. Many students are left back, and some drop out never completing their high school education. Full service community schools work to create a more effective school environment, encouraging small classes with well trained teachers and high standards. With partners from community agencies to address health, behavioral, and social issues, teachers can concentrate on teaching.

In the book titled *The Last Dropout*, Bill Milliken provides an excellent schematic on the idea behind community schools. Figure 1 below depicts the typical flow of resources while students are in school.

Figure 1

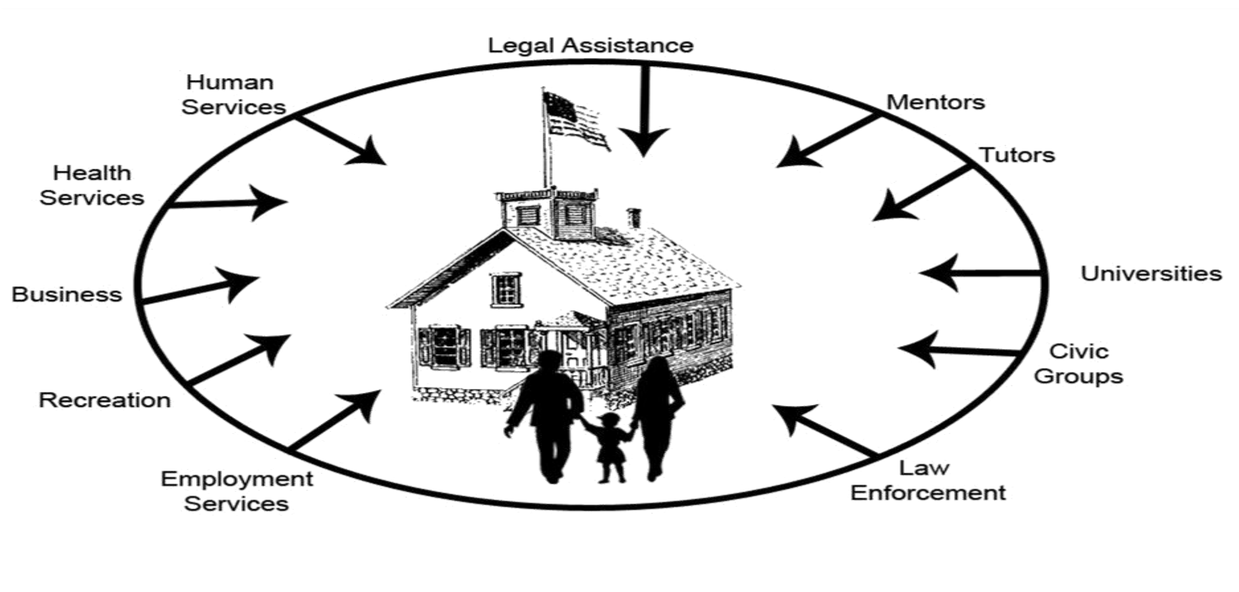
Typical or traditional flow of energy when students need assistance



This first schematic represents the typical or traditional flow of energy when students need assistance. The resources are in place, but are in the wrong place. When resources are scattered and isolated like this, an already faulty system starts to experience even more strains and dysfunctions (Milliken, 2007). Now imagine if the schematic looked like this.

Figure 2

Flow of energy with the full-service community school model



Once you reverse the directions of the arrows, the various outside agencies are bringing their services to the school rather than waiting on students and parents to come to them. The school now becomes the delivery point, and as a result, families are able to find the help they need and agencies are also able to find their customers.

One important thing to remember about the full service community school model is that no two full service community schools look alike. In other words, the

design of these programs should not employ a cookie cutter approach, but be designed based on the needs of the students and their community. It is unknown exactly how many full service community schools there are in this country, but it is known that thousands of schools have implemented program models that have instituted relevant pieces, such as extended hours, primary health care centers, or family resource centers. Many of them have evolved into fully implemented full service community school models as the pieces are integrated into a comprehensive model. Unfortunately, out of 99,000 public schools in the United States, nearly 22,000 of them have student populations in which more than half the children are very poor and are in need for a coordinated schooling model such as the full-service community schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

It has been questioned if full-service community schools can realistically live up to their expectations. Dryfoos (2005) states that "further development" is the real challenge to both youth development workers and educators. At the moment, the constituent components of community schools are ensconced in their own domains or silos. For example, educators come out of schools of education with little knowledge of youth development and behavioral psychology. Social workers come out of schools of social work with virtually no exposure to what goes on in classrooms. Yet for contemporary youth to be served, each domain has to be entered and mastered by the other. Although it may seem hard to disagree that it is not enough for schools to simply focus on delivering an academic curriculum to their students in ordinary classrooms and in the course of a standard day, others have found that the effectiveness of full-service community schools have yet to be

determined. Wilkin (2003) points out that there is little systematic and rigorous evaluation of the concept and its implementation. This is likely because full-service community school approaches are so self-evidently the right thing to do that searching for robust evidence is almost unnecessary (Cummings, Dyson, & Todd, 2011). Keyes and Gregg (2001) allude to this issue of evaluation and accountability with these comments:

> It seems intuitively obvious that creating a context that interweaves home, school, and community, and that makes students valued and contributing members should have a powerful effect on student learning. But attempts to connect community collaborations and student test scores have been few and contradictory (p. 40).

This argument can be attenuated by observing research results provided by the Coalition for Community Schools, the Communities in Schools Network, and the Full-Service Community School Program.

The Coalition for Community Schools, for example, provides that in Tulsa, Oklahoma, school and community leaders have created the Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative (TACSI). This collaborative leadership structure was built to share responsibility for getting results. Recent research shows that students in high-implementing community schools outperformed non-community schools in math by 32 points and reading by 19 points (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013).

The Communities in Schools Network confirms a positive and supporting relationship between community schools and academics (Communities In Schools, 2012) as well. In the 2011 annual report title *Unlocking Potential*, Community In

Schools provides that 81 percent of their schools met their academic achievement goals. Additionally, affiliated schools also met goals related to attendance, high risk behavior reduction, attitude and commitment, and suspension reduction.

The Full-Service Community School Program (FSCS) also connects the community school model with increased academic achievement. The Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation (2005) showed that those who participate in FSCS after-school programs improve their math grades in school more than those who do not participate; all else equal, those who participate in FSCS programs improve by more than one full half grade (0.7) over those who do not participate.

Career and Technology Education's Role in Serving At-Risk Youth

Career and Technology Education (CTE) has long been thought to have a role in reducing the dropout rate among high school students (Smink & Schargel, 2001). As early as 1823, in response to the dropout rate two years after the opening of the first publicly supported high school in the U.S., the School Committee of the City of Boston, recommended that the most useful and practical subjects should be offered in the first year. This marked the beginning of the use of occupationally relevant instruction. Unfortunately, how well this instructional change was implemented, or if the change helped to keep students in school, was never documented (Mertens, Seitz, & Cox, 1982). Until recently, the data to support this contention has been relatively sparse. Research on the relationship between participation in CTE and dropping out of high school has yielded mixed results. Most recently, two critical analyses of the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 –NELS:88 (Laird, Chen, Levesque, National Center for Education

Statistics (ED), & MPR Associates, 2006) came to two different conclusions. The National Assessment of Vocational Education (Silverberg, Warner, Goodwin, & Fong, 2004) found there was no relationship between students classified as CTE concentrators and a reduced probability of dropping out of high school. Bishop (1988) found that youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who take vocational courses are more likely to graduate, are less likely to be unemployed, and more likely to obtain better paying jobs. In his study, he found that taking one vocational course each year during the four years of high school raises the graduation rate of at-risk youth by 6 percentage points, and raises expected earnings by about 2 percent. Mertens, Seitz, and Cox (1982) attest that there are many characteristics associated with taking vocational courses that are also associated with the decision not to complete high school.

Literature certainly advocates for CTE to be utilized as a strategy for serving at-risk youth. According to Bishop (1988), youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who take vocational courses are more likely to graduate, are less likely to be unemployed and more likely to obtain better paying jobs. Mertens, Seitz and Cox, (1982) also found that taking and passing a vocational course in the 9th grade significantly lowered the dropout rate of dropout prone youngsters during 10th grade from about 9 percent to 6 percent. Another study conducted in 1998 by the University of Michigan found that high-risk students are eight to 10 times less likely to drop out in the 11th and 12th grades if they enroll in a career and technical program instead of a general program (Kulik, 1998). The same study also reported that a quality CTE program can reduce a school's dropout rate by as much as 6

percent, and that CTE students are less likely than general-track students to fail a course or to be absent. In a most recent study(Bridgeland, Balfanz, Moore, Friant, & Civic, 2010), many students, parents, and teachers strongly asserted that high school should be made more relevant for students by offering more vocational and technology courses that demonstrate explicitly the link to student's future careers. Strachan (2008) suggests that CTE has been successful with at-risk students because it engages many students who might otherwise drop out of school, and that it has a definite part to play in eliminating the achievement gap. Another initiative that promotes this same kind of philosophy and is associated with CTE is Technology Centers That Work (TCTW). With its origins from the Southern Regional Education Board's High Schools That Work initiative that focuses on making a practical and relevant link to all students' future orientations, TCTW aims at helping technology centers implement student readiness strategies that prepare them for college and careers. This initiative has presented viable strategies in intervening with youth at risk of dropping out of school.

In examining the literature on CTE's role in serving at-risk youth, it is important that it is examined on the basis of its early model programs, national priorities including political events that have influenced CTE's role, strategies used within CTE to effectively serve at-risk populations, and the new emerging concept of Dropout Recovery Programs. These topics will be examined in detail in the following portion of this review of literature.

Early Model Vocational Education Programs Serving At-Risk Youth

As early as the 1970s, vocational education, including career guidance and counseling, experienced-based career education, and career-related classroom activities had been shown to support several goals related to retention (New Educational Directions, 1977). Career tech education in the past was also found to increase basic skills achievement, particularly in the application and long-term retention of skills. Students with low motivation to attend school have shown improvement in school attendance and retention after participating in career education experiences (Flaxman, 1987). Results of several studies support the importance of vocational education in dropout prevention (Mertens, Seitz, & Cox, 1982; Weber, 1986). Findings suggest that vocational education and work experience are powerful in supporting school retention but that they are most effective when combined with other program features.

In summer 1989, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education awarded demonstration grants to 10 organizations that proposed to implement dropout prevention or reentry projects that included vocational education as the key intervention strategy (Hayward, 1992). One of the school models that career tech has implemented for at risk youth is Business Technology Academies. Some of the key components of these academies include: 1) Block scheduling for core academics; 2) Integration of academic courses with business technology curriculum; and 3) Paid work experience in a job related to the vocational curriculum; students were also promised jobs as rewards for acceptable school performance.

Another of the earlier models was Project Coffee (Cooperative Federation for Educational Experiences). This program was an abbreviated-day alternative school that integrated academic and vocational instruction to increase the likelihood that participants would complete school and be ready to enter the labor force in good entry-level jobs. Key components of Project Coffee included: 1) location in a separate facility away from any of the district's high schools; 2) low student-teacher ratios; teachers who volunteered for the assignment and were selected based on their sensitivity to the problems and needs of highly at risk youth (the director and at least one teacher are special education certified); 3) individualized instruction in basic skills and credits needed for graduation; 4) an occupational component comprising an entrepreneurial business that constructs and markets picnic furniture along with career guidance and employability development activities; 5) a psycho/social counseling component; 6) clear and consistently enforced behavioral components; and 7) provision of recreational physical activities rather than traditional physical education.

National Priorities and Policies for CTE

Within the last 20 years, several events of national significance have brought career and technical education to center stage in public education reform – passage by Congress of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and applied Technology Education Act (Perkins Act) Amendments of 1990 (Jennings, 1991; Wilcox, 1991; Wirt, 1991); publication of *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!*; the report of the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990); adoption of *America 2000: An*

Education Strategy (U.S. Department of Education, 1991) by President Bush and a select group of state governors; publication of *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991) by the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills; and the publication of *Career and Technical Education's Role in Dropout Prevention and Recovery* (2007). The Perkins Act Amendments mandated some critical changes for CTE, while *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!*, *America 2000: An Education Strategy*, the *SCANS Report*, and the *Career and Technical Education's Role in Dropout Recovery and Prevention* publications reinforce these changes, projects economic impacts of said changes, and puts Career Tech's role in the context of a national schooling vision for the 21st century.

The provisions of the Perkins Act Amendments have been particularly relevant to the kind of enhanced CTE programs the U.S. needs for at risk youth and for students who have dropped out of high school. The provisions include: 1) Calling for integration of academic and vocational education in an effort to link thought with action; 2) Requiring that federal funds be directed to districts with the highest concentrations of poor families and where the needs for restructuring and improvement are the greatest; 3) Emphasizing outcome measures as the basis of funding; and 4) Mandating more local authority in program decision making.

Some recommendations made in the publication *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages* are particularly relevant to the development of an enhanced CTE program. These recommendations include: 1) a new educational performance standard should be set for all students, to be met by age 16. (This standard should

be established nationally and benchmarked to the highest in the world.); 2) the states should take responsibility for assuring that virtually all students achieve the Certificate of Initial Mastery. (Through local employment and training boards, states with federal assistance should create and fund alternative learning environments for those who cannot attain the Certificate of Initial Mastery in regular schools. The Boards should organize and oversee the new school-to-work transition programs and training systems.); and 3) a comprehensive system of Technical and Professional Certificates and associate degrees should be created for the majority of our students who do not pursue a baccalaureate degree. One example of the impact of America's Choice was Oregon's Educational Act for the 21st Century passed in 1991. This legislation called for a Certificate of Initial Mastery and learning centers to help dropouts earn these certificates as well as for other innovative concepts to improve the education and productivity of the future workforce.

Four of the educational goals set forth in *America 2000: An Education Strategy*, provided challenges and guidance to an enhanced CTE program. It projected that by the year 2000: 1) The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent; 2) American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment in our modern economy; 3) U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics

achievement; and 4) Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

The *SCANS Report* built upon the goals of *America 2000: An Education Strategy*, but was more specific about what students should know and be able to do upon graduation from high school. It proposes that all students master the following five competencies necessary for "workplace know-how" in any field or career: 1) Identifying, organizing, planning, and allocating resources; 2) Working with others; 3) Acquiring and using information; 4) Understanding complex interrelationships; and 5) Working with a variety of technologies. (p. xvii)

These competencies are complemented and supported by the following three-part foundation: 1) Basic Skills – Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens, and speaks; 2) Thinking Skills – Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn, and reasons; 3) Personal Qualities – Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity and honesty.

Strategies Utilized Within CTE Serving At-Risk Youth

It has been found that, among students of all ages, learning is most effectively accomplished when new information is connected to and built upon a student's prior knowledge and real-life experiences (Spigner-Littles & Anderson, 1999). This same philosophy applies to why CTE has been successful with at-risk youth. Through CTE's curricula, based upon David A. Kolb's theory of experiential learning, knowledge is created through the transformation of

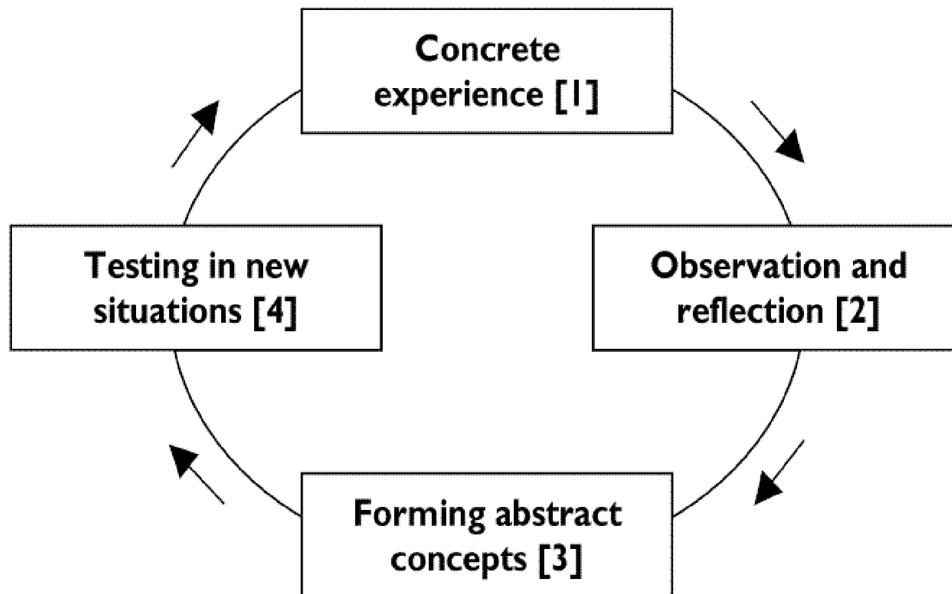
experiences (Kolb, 1984). Since their birth, CTE programs have embraced experiential learning as a true learning methodology for students to obtain occupational skills valued by employers. These programs have integrated classroom instruction with laboratory experiences to provide students a significant opportunity to learn. Kolb (1984) theorized that students learn better in a "hands-on" applied academic environment compared to a strictly academic environment.

> Learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from a combination of grasping experience and transforming it. (p.41).

For example, a student who is learning how to be a cosmetologist inside a salon compared to learning how to become a cosmetologist inside a classroom is much different. The following diagram of David A Kolb's model of experiential learning (Figure 3) illustrates a proposed contemporary framework that supports the idea of CTE pedagogy.

Figure 3

David A. Kolb, 1975 experiential learning cycle.



Kolb proposes that experiential learning has six main characteristics: 1)Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes; 2)Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience; 3) Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world (learning is by its very nature full of tension); 4) Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world; 5) Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment; and 6) Learning is the process of creating knowledge that is the result of the transaction between social knowledge and personal knowledge.

Experiential learning has been a major component of CTE for many years; however, implementation of experiential learning in CTE often differs from the research-based theoretical framework of true experiential learning. Additionally,

some career and technical teaching education programs often invoke the term experiential learning in working with students in teacher preparation programs when research models of experiential learning may not completely guide their pedagogy (Clark, Threeton, & Ewing, 2010). Knobloch (2003) points out that many CTE educators are familiar with "hands-on" learning, but questioned this approach to teaching as actually constituting the principles of experiential learning. The term experiential learning is a broad term, generally used by educators to describe a series of pragmatic activities sequenced in such a way that is thought to enhance the educational experience for the student learner. Literature related to this topic has revealed that scholars in the field of experiential learning have used this term in two dichotomous but significantly related contexts (Smith, 2001; Brookfield, 1983). In order to fully understand the concept of experiential learning, it is important to examine both contexts.

The first context of experiential learning, according to Smith (2001), is described as learning undertaken by students who are given a chance to acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and feelings in a relevant setting. It is more aligned with the CTE model today that prepares students for advanced level occupations in the workforce and postsecondary education through an apprenticeship form of pedagogy and learning. This context involves the direct experiential encounter with learning events rather than simply a thought process associated with the learning (Borzak, 1981).

The second context of experiential learning describes experimental learning as education that occurs as a direct participation in the events of life (Houle, 1980).

In this sense, learning is generated from real life experiences opposed to an academic environment (Haick, 2008). Smith (2001) notes that this form of experiential learning is not sponsored by formal educational institutions, but by people themselves. It represents new things based on the innate variations of life experiences one attains each day (Clark, Threeton, & Ewing, 2010).

Overall, CTE has utilized the both experiential learning contexts to provide a holistic model of the learning process and a multi-linear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how people learn, grow, and develop. This type of learning is fundamental to CTE and naturally serves as a strategy to serve at-risk students.

Two other strategies linked to the success of at-risk students participating in CTE programs are small enrollment programs and small class sizes. Foley and Pang (2006) and Tissington (2006) found in their research that the majority of successful alternative programs were smaller in size than traditional school classrooms. These smaller classroom sizes allow teachers to spend more time with each student, and in turn, improve the student's engagement and commitment to the program and school. Smaller class sizes are also better for students with emotional, social or behavior problems (Tobin & Sprague, 1999). Small class sizes allow for informal interactions to occur between teachers and students. These interactions establish an environment where the students feel more comfortable and secure. Research shows that successful programs offer supportive environments that strengthen relationships among peers and between teachers and students (Foley & Pang, 2006). This classroom-level phenomena is also conceptualized as enhanced

transactional social processes involving positive interactions and communication patterns between teacher and students and students with their peers (Tseng & Seidman, 2007)

Challenges with CTE Strategies Serving At-Risk Youth

Although CTE has been historically recognized for providing at-risk students with opportunities to gain marketable skills to use after graduation, CTE has yet to be identified, or at least through professional literature, as a viable strategy in providing students opportunities to gain academic credit. According to Daggett (2002), it is more essential than ever for career and technical education to be able to prove that it contributes not just to the applied workplace competency demands of business, but also to the academic proficiencies of served student populations on state academic tests — if CTE is to remain a viable program in our secondary schools. Career and technical educators have worked hard to modify and enrich the academic base of their programs. Unfortunately, despite all the efforts put forth by the CTE leadership, despite the name change and wide array of initiatives, CTE is still widely perceived as vocational education, a great program "for somebody else's child, because *my* child is going to college." (p.3)

While the workplace has brought increasingly rigorous academic and technology-related skill requirements as criteria for career success, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has also exhibited enormous pressures from within the test-driven education system to raise the proficiency standards for all students. The NCLB legislation totaled more than 1,400 pages. The salient points, however, were fairly straightforward. By 2004-05, all students were to reach a specified proficiency

level in reading, writing, and mathematics and soon thereafter in science. Beginning in 2002-03, schools were to have identified subgroups (students with disabilities, LEP, by gender, ethnic minorities, low socioeconomic status, etc.) where all students were at that time and then demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) for each subgroup for over the next 12 years until they all achieve 100 percent proficiency. Proficiency was to be measured in large part by satisfactory performance – including demonstrable improvement – on state tests in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. Any school that did not achieve AYP for all students two years in a row would face serious consequences from both state and federal authorities; this dramatically raised the anxiety level of most administrators.

CTE has attempted to respond to this call for higher academic standards in a number of ways over the past 20 years. Tech Prep emphasized academics in such areas as applied communications and contextual mathematics and physics. High Schools That Work focused on eliminating the "general" track and the need to document students' academic success in these programs. School-to-work and school-to-career attempted to create a better understanding of the growing sophistication of the U.S. workplace and the need to connect education and work. Vocational education changed its name and, in many cases, its program direction, from low-skill "occupational training" to career and technical education with transferable skills that are applicable to many occupations and anchored in strong academics (Daggett, 2002).

Indeed, most agree that more academic rigor may be an essential condition to CTE's survival. But that is only part of the challenge. According to Kazis

(2005), CTE also needs to build a career-focused curriculum that can motivate students to stay in school and aspire to higher education(the goals of NCLB), expose students to career options that will offer opportunities for economic success, and provide the quality of instruction that builds skills and makes coursework an important learning experience. Historically, educators have thought of high school career-focused education as an option for those who do not intend to pursue higher education. That viewpoint represents the earlier model of vocational education, when its purpose was to prepare students for entry-level jobs in occupations that did not require advanced training. The purpose has now evolved, and the CTE system recognizes that preparation for post-secondary education is an essential part for preparing students for today's increasingly competitive society. When students today leave school—high school or postsecondary—they must cope with a vastly different economy than that of the inception of vocational education. From the federal government's point of view, to meet these new demands on students, high schools should focus on delivering a strong academic foundation. By the same logic, this may mean reducing the role of high schools in career-focused education and shifting the real occupational training function to the postsecondary level (Kazis, 2005).

Dropout Recovery Programs: A New CTE Based Strategy

Dropout Recovery (DOR) programs are designed to break the stereotypical mold in which CTE has been recognized. As one of the newest strategies in CTE to serve at-risk youth, DOR Programs have been adopted in the state of Oklahoma and have been implemented by nine separate technology centers throughout the

state. Through the utilization of several previously discussed strategies, DOR Programs seek to change the way CTE has traditionally served youth at risk of academic failure. One of the unique features of this school model is that students are given the opportunity to gain academic credit and participate in career-specific training. Typically, students are re-enrolled at the high school, but attend all classes at the Technology Center campus. These programs utilize a variety of strategies to serve at-risk students including: experiential learning, which is embedded in career and technology related training; academic credit recovery, which is typically facilitated through virtual learning; smaller teacher/student ratios to generate and sustain community; and life skills development. Partnerships between technology centers and their local common schools have helped to make this service delivery system a viable strategy for meeting the needs of at-risk youth.

Currently, there is no documented history on the existence of this program model, and I believe that a viable CTE strategy to serve at-risk youth has been overlooked. This study utilizes the conceptual framework of *history as a catalyst for advocacy*. Any subject of study needs justification: its advocates must explain why it is worth attention. Most widely accepted subjects—and history is certainly one of them—attract some people who simply like the information and modes of thought involved. But audiences less spontaneously drawn to the subject and more doubtful about why to bother need to know what the purpose is (Stearns, 1993).

Historical Analysis as a Methodologically-Based Conceptual Perspective

According to Stearns (1993), any subject of study needs justification and it is important that its advocates explain why it is worth attention. In past literature

(Gottschalk, 1963; Fiorino, 1978; Sack, 2006; Vandenbroeck, Coussee, & Bradt, 2010), research objects such as programs, events, and people have been explained and advocated through historical analysis. Additionally, each of these objects are likely to be intricately connected to social, economic, and political issues, providing a wide range of possibilities for questions and adding complexity to the study. For this reason, historical analysis will be used as a methodologically-based conceptual perspective for this study. To gain a critical understanding of history requires, above all, knowledge of the social, political, economic and intellectual circumstances that allowed particular ideas to emerge. Historical analysis will also be used because future researchers need to be aware and understand the work that has been produced in the past if they want to make significant contributions to this field of study in the future. Since history can be about what causes the next event or action, people can clearly understand how happenings of the past are related to one another. History is used for two primary reasons: 1) history helps us understand people and societies; and 2) history helps us to understand change and how the society we live in came to be.

In the first reason, history offers a storehouse of information about how people and societies behave. Understanding the operations of people and societies is difficult, though a number of disciplines make the attempt. An exclusive reliance on current data would needlessly handicap our efforts. How can we evaluate war if the nation is at peace—unless we rely on history? How can we understand genius, the influence of technological innovation, or the role that beliefs play in shaping family life, if we don't use what we know about experiences in the past (Stearns,

1993)? In other words, we must know where we've come from before we know where we're going. Some social scientists attempt to formulate laws or theories about human behavior. But even these recourses depend on historical information, except for in limited, often artificial cases in which experiments can be devised to determine how people act. Major aspects of societal implications, like the dropout problem, crime rates, or standard of living for a particular race or gender, cannot be set up as precise experiments. Consequently, history must serve, however imperfectly, as our laboratory, and data from the past must serve as our most vital evidence in the unavoidable quest to figure out why our complex species behaves as it does in societal settings. This, fundamentally, is why we cannot stay away from history, as it offers the only extensive evidential base for the contemplation and analysis of how societies function, and people need to have some sense of how societies function simply to run their own lives.

The second reason why history is inescapable as a subject of serious study follows closely on the first. The past causes the present, and so the future. Any time we try to know why something happened—whether it is a major spike in governmental assistance program expenditures, or a major change in the teenage crime and juvenile delinquency rates, or a shift in political party dominance in the U.S. Congress—we have to look for factors that took shape earlier. As with this proposed historical case study, sometimes fairly recent history will suffice to explain a major development, but often we need to look further back to identify the causes of change. Only through studying history can we grasp how things change; only through history can we begin to comprehend the factors that cause change;

and only through history can we understand what elements of an institution or a society persist despite change (Stearns, 1993).

According to Gottschalk (1963), the study of history is both descriptive and theoretical, and takes the form of both scientific and art methodology. As a descriptive study, the researcher provides an account of an event or situation. Through the theoretical approach, the researcher finds the topic being studied a basis for comparison that deals with individuals and social events. From a scientific approach, history is based on fact from materials that are capable of scrutiny, categorization, and generalization, and through art, the study of history involves the creative process of reconstructing an event.

The guiding theoretical proposition this study relies upon is that the history of educational programs can be rendered by examining the political, social, and economic implications that influenced the development of those particular programs. I note that while examining the history of the dropout problem, history was primarily rendered through three themes; through its political, social, and economic impact to the nation.

One example of how history of an educational program can be rendered through a political, social, and economic context is that of Vandenbroeck, Coussee, & Bradt (2010) in a study that analyzed two foundational social problems regarding early childhood education. The two social problems, infant mortality and the prevention of school failure, were analyzed in their historicity. The study took into account the social, political, economic, and scientific implications of the problems, and found that early childhood education could contribute to the individualisation

and decontextualisation of social problems such as infant mortality and school failure. Freire (1970) argued that these types of pedagogical problems are to be considered as translations of political and social phenomena and consequently it is how the problems are posed that needs to be researched, before pedagogy can even begin to consider solutions to the alleged problems. Vandenbroeck, Coussee, & Bradt (2010) also found that political targets, including economic policies (e.g. women's labor participation); social policies (e.g. the elimination of poverty); immigration policies (e.g. the management of ethnic diversity); and education policies (e.g. bridging the educational gap) not only meet, but also intersect with the intimacy of early childhood education and family life.

With the purpose of gaining an understanding of the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) and the history of its development, Sack (2006) described the IAI policy, explained the social, political, and economic influences involved in transfer operations, and discovered how the IAI initiative reflected the community college role in higher education. This particular study was used to *describe* IAI policy, both as a product and as a process. Specifically, the individual's issues and interest associated with the early phase of IAI was identified to *explain*, from the value of hindsight, the social, political, and economic forces that influenced the resultant transfer and articulation policy.

Another study that connected these three themes with educational history is Fiorino's (1978) overview of the economic, social, political and educational influences that shaped contemporary education in Canada. In tracing the structural history of the educational system, the author demonstrated that public opinion

played an increasing role in decision-making. The historical development of educational programs and curricula revealed a progressive trend through the 1970s and correlated trends to economic, social, and political implications.

As discussed earlier, high school dropouts have dramatically altered the world's political, economic, and social landscape; just as the world's political, economic, and social landscape has changed the issue of the high school dropout. Because of this, the United States educational system has been faced with the challenge of incorporating new strategies to serve youth at risk of failing school. It is important that researchers and experts in the area of dropout prevention/recovery continue to provide future researchers with historical perspectives on the dropout problem, and provide insights on the strategies that have been utilize in this particular area of education. This study intends to do just that, and contribute to acknowledge base for researchers in education concerned about dropout prevention, the work of CTE, and the development of educational leadership and policy studies. The following portion of this study will expand upon the knowledge of DOR Programs, and render the history of their development through political, social, and economic lenses.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Restatement of Research Purpose

Since the inception of DOR Programs, a scholarly literature has not existed to provide an in-depth explanation of the history and purpose of the state initiative. Research has often defined CTE's role in educating at-risk youth as vocational at best, and has not recognized it as being a viable option for providing both academics and occupational training. There have been some very informative books highlighting vocational education in the U.S. (Gordon, 2003) and discussing the history of CTE in Oklahoma (Goble, 2004), but both have failed to explain or even advocate for the necessity of DOR Programs. This is likely due to the fact that both books were developed prior to the emergence of the DOR CTE-based model. I hope the explanation offered in this dissertation will be significant for future implementation of DOR models across the state of Oklahoma and the nation. Additionally, rendering this historical case study will provide new knowledge within the field of educational leadership and policy studies.

Research Questions

This historical case study was guided by an overarching/main research question:

What is the history of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma? Subsequently, four specific question foci/areas will serve as the investigative lens to explore and understand the factors that influenced and shaped the DOR Programs in Oklahoma.

a. In review of the macro and micro environment of Oklahoma:

i. What were the political, social, and economic implications that influenced the development of these programs?

b. In review of the original purpose of DOR Programs and how their original purpose has been sustained over time:

ii. What was the original purpose of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma?

iii. Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light the original purpose?

c. In review of the demographic characteristics of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma:

iv. Demographically, how have career and technology-based DOR Programs looked over time and what can be discerned from such changes?

d. In review of the evaluative characteristics of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma:

v. How have DOR Programs been evaluated, and historically, how have these programs been successful serving at-risk youth and what opportunities for improvement exist within these programs?

Design of Study

This study utilized a qualitative research design to render history about DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Qualitative research searches to

understand the meaning people have constructed from their experiences in a particular social context and their interactions with others in that context (Merriam, 1998).

An important part of this study was selecting an appropriate research design. Selection of a particular research design, such as a case study, entails not only being cognizant of its appropriateness for answering the research questions but an awareness of particular research strategies to achieve the study's objectives (Gutierrez, 2006). The specific qualitative design that was utilized in this investigation is the case study. According to Creswell (2007), the case study approach allows the researcher to delve deeply into the phenomenon under study within a selected context. It is a comprehensive research strategy of inquiry within the qualitative research paradigm which allows for data to be collected from multiple sources such as documents, archival records, and physical artifacts (Babbie, 2007). The case study approach was appropriate for this research because it focuses on developing an in-depth description and analysis of a specific state-wide program bounded by a particular point in time and place. When this type of holistic, in-depth investigation is needed, case study is an ideal methodology (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). This was especially true for this study as it intends to capture multiple realties that are not easily quantifiable.

This case study was conducted using a historical systematic methodology. This approach allowed me to utilize several sources of data to systematically investigate the history of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. The historical systematic methodology was used to locate and analyze as much evidence that

could be identified as pertinent to the case. This study was designed to *explain* and *describe* the history of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma.

This historical case study incorporated principles of triangulation, that is, the use of multiple data sources to enhance the credibility of research findings. In this study, both qualitative and quantitative data were converged to answer the primary research question and the sub questions that follow.

Yin (2003) suggests there are at least five different applications for case study research. The most important application is to *explain* the presumed causal links in real life interventions that are too complex for survey or experimental strategies. The second application is to *describe* an intervention and the real life context in which it occurred. The third application is that of illustration. Case studies can *illustrate* certain topics within an evaluation of a particular social phenomenon. Fourth, it is typical that a case study is used for exploration purposes. It may be used to *explore* those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. The fifth application, known as the *meta-evaluation*, is a study of an evaluation study.

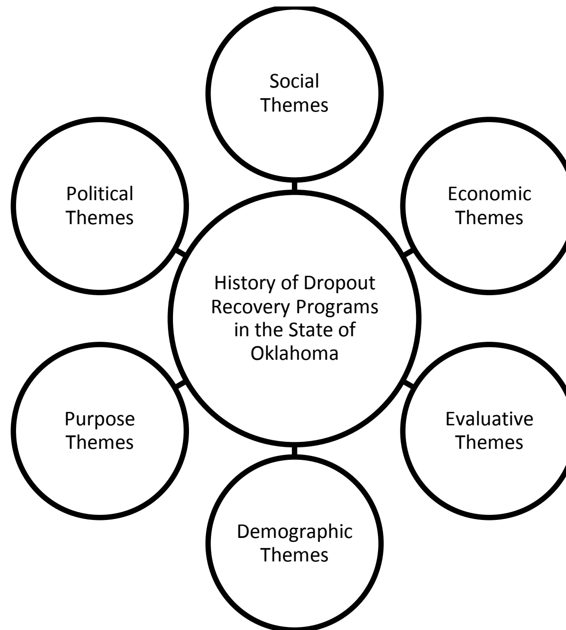
Both explanative and descriptive applications were used in this study. When using both explanative and descriptive applications, it is important to note that the applications did have their specific purposes in this study. The word *explain* is used to incorporate details, or to give reasons for why social phenomenon is what it is or does what it does. It is intended to provide more complete information. This study intended to *explain* the purpose in which DOR Programs were created. However, the word *describe* indicates the elucidation of features, or gives some characteristic

of the program defined. This study will describe the political, social, and economic events that influenced the creation of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Additionally, this study intended to *describe*, demographically, how DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma have looked over time. Lastly, this study intends to *explain* and *describe* how successful DOR Programs have been, historically, through an analysis of past and current program evaluations. Both explanative and descriptive themes are derived from the research questions, and corroborated to render the history of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma.

This study utilized the analytical strategy of *relying on theoretical propositions*, as described by Yin (2003), to shape the data collection plan therefore giving priorities to relevant themes and concepts. Clearly, a focus on proposition helps to focus attention on certain data and to ignore other data. Yin (2003) provides a good test in determining theoretical propositions by challenging the researcher to decide what data to cite if he or she had only five minutes to defend a proposition in their case study. For this study, I focused only on the relationship between four explanative themes (purpose, political, social, and economic) and two descriptive themes (demographics and individual program evaluations) to render history. Figure 4 depicts the organizing framework of the study.

Figure 4:

Organizing Framework of Study



IRB and Confidentiality

The University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board granted approval for the research in February 2012. This was a necessary step in justifying the research methodology so that rights of human participants would be protected and known risks would be minimized (Creswell, 2003). Confidentiality and anonymity of participants was a necessary and ethical component of this investigation. Participants' names and identities were masked throughout the study, however identification of participants by position, personal and social characteristics and institutional-type affiliations were necessary and important data in this research (Creswell, 2003).

Participants in this study are not identifiable by a reader, but participants who have requested data and findings may be able to identify other participants depending on their knowledge of identifying features of position, social characteristics, and institutional-type affiliation. This identification is unlikely. All participants were given an informed consent form, authorized by the Office of Research Protections, clarifying confidentiality issues and explaining that no information would identify the participant. However, it was important to give general information in relationship to the type of institution participants worked in (state department, technology center, legislature etc.) to provide credibility to the findings. This was explained in the consent form as well.

Data Collection Methods and Sources

One of the major advantages of case study data collection is the opportunity to use various sources of evidence (Merriam, 1998). Multiple sources of evidence provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Tellis, 1997). Four sources of data collection were used based on the studies of Stake (1985) and Yin (1994): documentation, archival records, interviews and the internet. Specific examples of each of these sources will be given later in this chapter.

Interviews

The central source of data for this study was acquired through interviews. Frick (2006) highlighted this point by using a statement made by Seidman:

> A researcher can approach the experience of people in contemporary organizations through examining personal and institutional documents, through observation, through exploring history, through experimentation,

> through questionnaires and surveys, and through the review of existing literature. If the researcher's goal, however, is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience, then interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient avenue of inquiry. (1998, p.4)

Yin (1994) suggests that interviews are one of the most important sources in a case study because interviews provide participants an opportunity to comment specifically on the topic of inquiry. Yin (1994) identified a focused interview as one

> in which a respondent is interviewed for a short period of time—an hour, for example. In such cases, the interviews may still remain open-ended and assume a conversational manner, but you are more likely to be following a certain set of questions derived from the case study protocol. (pp.84-85)

In this study, a focused interview style was used. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and followed a semi-structured protocol. I utilized a specific interview strategy while preparing for and conducting work with participants. This study used strategy steps as outlined by Moyer's (1993) step-by-step guide to conducting oral histories. These guidelines and suggestions are intended to make the process of interviewing for histories simpler and more effective. The steps are outlined in Appendix C of this study.

Documents, Archival Records, and the Internet

Documentary evidence from a variety of sources was relevant to this study. Documents, archival records, and the internet proved to be valuable data sources

because they contained systematic information relevant to the case. According to Garn (1998), documents in these types of studies are an incomplete source by themselves, but complement the other data sources well. In this study, the collection of documents, archival records, and internet-based evidence were important for three primary reasons. First, they were relatively easy to obtain and they provide background for the interviews. Second, the documents provided concrete evidence about the specific time of certain events, allowing for chronological themes to emerge. Third, the documents were used to strengthen data from other sources (Yin, 1994), as a confirmatory source after interviews are conducted.

The specific types of documentation, archival records, and internet evidence used in this case and categorized following the recommendations of Yin (2003) and Hancock and Algozzine (2006) include: *Documentation* – DOR Reports and ODCTE Program Evaluations; *Archival Records* – Oklahoma House Bill 2640; and the *Internet* – a range of program-specific web-pages.

The accuracy and usefulness of these records were also reviewed before using them. Clark (1967) suggested asking the following questions regarding documents used in a case study: 1) Where has the document been and what is its history? 2) How did the document become available (public domain, special considerations)? 3) What guarantee exists that the document is appropriate, accurate, and timely? 4) Is the integrity of the document without concern? 5) Has the document been changed in any way? 6) Is the document representative under the conditions and for the purposes it was produced? 7) Who created the document

and with what intention (potential bias)? 8) What were the sources of information (original source, secondary data, other) used to create this document? 9) Do other sources exist that can be used to confirm the information in the document? These questions were asked and answered for each document used in the study. The form can be found in Appendix E of this study.

Yin (1994) reminds the researcher that a document's worth relies not only on its accuracy and lack of bias but on its ability to corroborate or contradict, with this statement:

> The usefulness of documents is not based on their necessary accuracy or lack of bias. For case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. If the documentary evidence is contradictory rather than corroboratory, the case-study investigator has specific reason to inquire further. (p. 81)

While the data for each category were being compiled, the researcher engaged in the process of verification, validation, and interpretation of the documents gathered before formulating the qualitative narrative (Creswell, 2007). As explained by Howard and Prevenier (2001), a historical interpretation should be formulated after a careful examination of available sources. Table 1 provides a summary of the evidence which were integral to this study.

Table 1

Summary of database based on Howell & Prevenier's (2001) points of critical textual analysis.

Types of Evidence	# of Pieces of Evidence	Genealogy	Historical Period	Source Authority	Trustworthiness
Documentation *Reports & Evaluations*	7	Copies of originals	1999-2012	ODCTE	Evidence was verified through process recorded in Appendix E
Archival Records *House Bills*	1	Copy of original	1997	Oklahoma Legislature	
Internet *Program-specific web pages, online newspaper articles, electronic brochures*	6	Printed from Internet	2001-2012	Internet	
Interviews *Technology Center Superintendent interview responses - transcriptions*	12	Compiled by researcher	2008-2012	Researcher	
Interviews *ODCTE Administrators interview responses - transcriptions*	32	Compiled by researcher	2008-2012	Researcher	
Interviews *Technology Center Instructional Leaders interview responses - transcriptions*	21	Compiled by researcher	2008-2012	Researcher	
Interviews *Former SDE Administrator interview responses - transcriptions*	8	Compiled by researcher	2008-2012	Researcher	
Focus Group *Compilations of focus group responses - summaries*	18	Compiled by researcher	2012	Researcher	
Total/Range	**105**		**1997-2012**		

The first category in Table 1 identifies the type of evidence found in the database. Column two sums the number of evidence used within each category. Column three identifies the genealogy of each document. Column four shows he dates associated with each category of evidence. Column five summarizes the source of the evidence. Column six identifies each form of evidence as having undergone extensive accuracy and usefulness review through the protocol used in Appendix E of this study.

Data Management

Proper data management was essential for effective and efficient analysis. Data consisted of participants' words through formal interviewing, DOR reports, and additional documentation including newspaper reports, archival records, and DOR program evaluations. Voice data recordings from the interviews were downloaded from an audio recorder to a personal computer with identifying information from each participant masked with an alphanumeric tag. Digital audio recordings were subsequently transcribed using *Dragon Dictation*©. Data were cleansed by listening to audio files while reading the corresponding transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the documented conversations. For this study, Microsoft Excel was used to assist with data management, coding, indexing, retrieval, and to support content analysis.

Triangulation, Trustworthiness, and Credibility

This historical case study design incorporates the principles of triangulation, that is, the use of multiple data sources to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of research findings. Denzin (1978) used the term "triangulation" as

a navigational and military metaphor to illustrate how a researcher can use various sources of information to determine the “truth”, or credibility, about an interpretation of social phenomenon the same way military strategists use multiple reference points to find an intended location. Denzin (1978) also outlined four types of triangulation: 1) *data triangulation*, which involves time, space, materials and persons; 2) *investigator triangulation*, when several investigators examine the same phenomenon; 3) *theory triangulation*, when investigators from various theoretical fields interpret the same results, and 4) *methodological triangulation*, when one approach is followed by another to increase the confidence in an interpretation, for example, when direct observation is followed by review of documents and archival records (Tellis, 1997). This study incorporates the use of *data triangulation*, and involves the use of multiple sources of data to identify facts and produce reasoned interpretive answers to each research question.

A triangulated case study design emerged from two main assumptions: 1) triangulation can neutralize or cancel out existing bias in data sources, investigators, and methods by the inclusion of various sources of data; and 2) triangulation results in the convergence upon the truth (Denzin, 1978; Stake, 1995). As with most philosophies of research methodology, these assumptions are not shared by all supporters of triangulation (Jick, 1983; Mathison, 1988). Other researchers who support triangulation strategies find other reasons to support the methodology (Greene et al., 1985; Jick, 1983; Mathison, 1988; Patton, 1990). Mathison (1988) argues that triangulation as a strategy provides the researcher with evidence to make sense of a phenomenon, but the strategy itself does not

accomplish it. She then provides three outcomes of triangulation: 1) *convergence*: when data from different sources or methods agree; 2) *inconsistency*: when data may be inconsistent—not confirming but not contradictory, and 3) *contradiction*: when the data are not only inconsistent, but also contradictory. This research will be based on Mathison's assumption that the value of triangulation is the production of evidence—whether convergent, inconsistent, or contradictory—that the researcher could use to construct valid explanations of the social phenomena being studied (Mathison, 1988).

Both Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) have developed protocols that contribute to the credibility and veracity of case study research. Stake (1995) states that the strategies used to ensure accuracy and alternative explanations in case study research are called triangulation. The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm and be accurate about what is being investigated. According to Stake (1995), a mixed method approach (different from case study, *per se*, but employing principles of triangulation) is designed to allow for: both predetermined and emerging methods, open and closed-ended questions, multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities, and statistical and text analysis.

Data Analysis

Overall, data analysis comprised two broad categories: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative methods were used to obtain answers that help *describe* the purpose and history of DOR Programs. These methods were used first for narrative portions of the study findings. The content analysis of interviews was based on an inductive approach focused on identifying concepts in the data with the

use of coding. Qualitative methods were used for content found within documents, archival records, and the internet. Documents, archival records, and the internet were all used to supplement evidence found within interviews. Like that of interviews, the content analysis of documents, archival records, and the internet was based on an inductive approach focused on identifying concepts in the data with the use of coding. The qualitative content analysis of documents and archival records focused on explaining trends, themes, concepts, and patterns within the history of DOR Programs.

Quantitative methods were used to obtain answers that helped *explain* historical characteristics of DOR Programs. Specifically, these methods utilized documents and archival records to generate descriptive statistics about demographics, and were used to characterize how DOR Programs have looked throughout their history.

According to Hancock and Algozzine (2006), charts can provide a means of checking the adequacy of a researcher's thinking throughout the research process. Therefore, I created the following chart to help me focus on the type of data needed to answer each research question.

Table 2

How data and evidence was used to support research questions.

Main Research Question	**Interviews**	**Documents**	**Archival Records**	**Internet**
What is the history of Dropout Recovery Programs in the state of Oklahoma?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sub Questions	**Interviews**	**Documents**	**Archival Records**	**Internet**
What were the political, social, and economical implications that influenced the development of these programs?	Yes	No	Yes	No
What was the original purpose of Dropout Recovery Programs?	Yes	No	Yes	No
Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light of the original purpose?	Yes	No	No	Yes
Demographically, how have Dropout Recovery Programs looked over time and what can be discerned from such changes?	No	Yes	No	No
How have Dropout Recovery Programs been evaluated, and historically, how have these programs been successful serving at-risk youth and what opportunities for improvement exist within these programs?	Yes	Yes	No	No

Summarizing and interpreting information can be a very tedious process if qualitative analysis is not clearly thought out. Hancock and Algozzine (2006) recognize this in their statement about the investigative process:

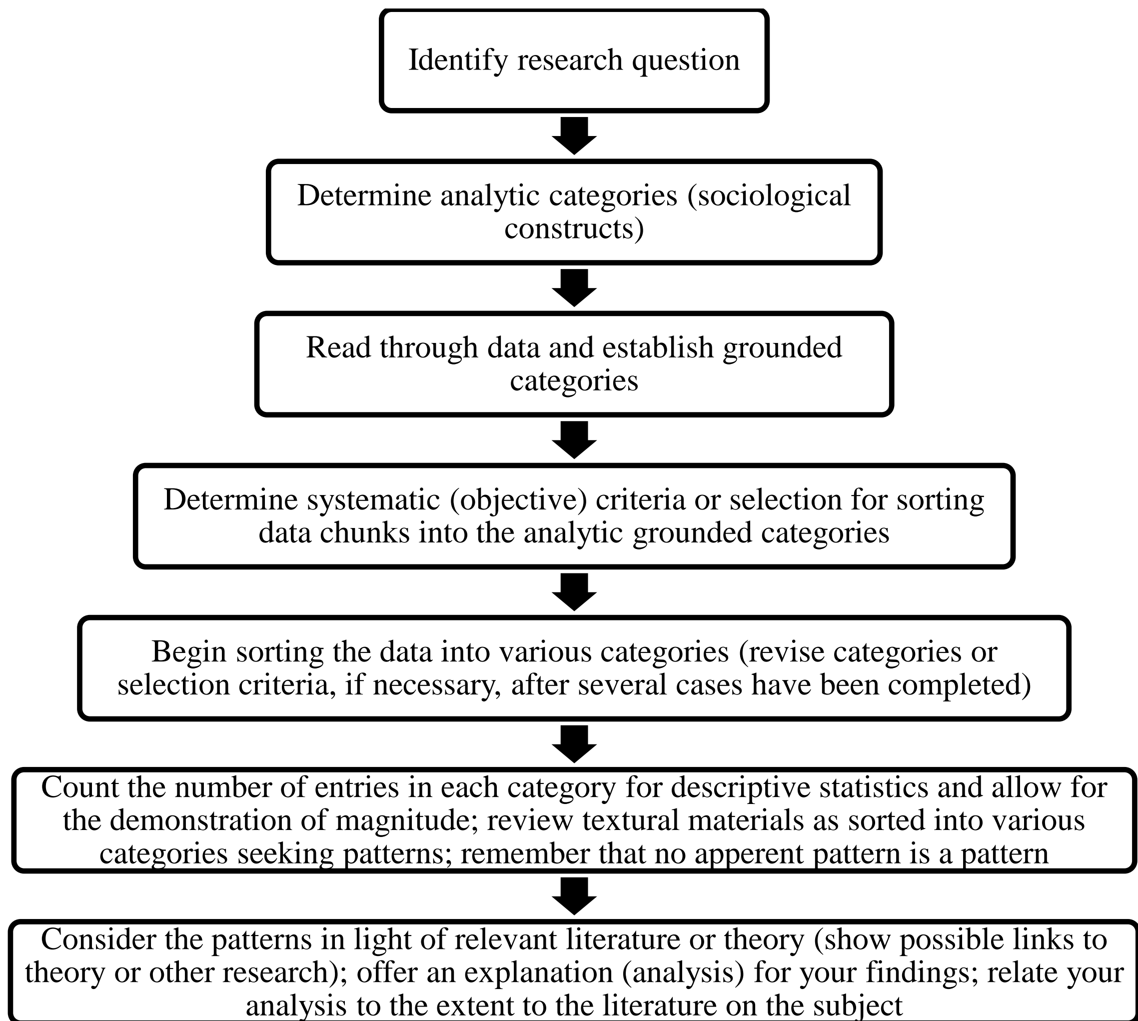
> In case study research, making sense of information collected from multiple sources is a recursive process in which the researcher interacts with the information throughout the investigative process. In other words, unlike

> some forms of research in which the data are examined only at the end of the information collection period, case study research involves ongoing examination and interpretation of the data in order to reach tentative conclusions and to refine the research questions. Case study researchers adhere to several guidelines as they simultaneously summarize and interpret information gathered when doing case study research. (p. 56)

It will be important that the study utilize a qualitative content analysis model that incorporates guidelines in relationship to conducting case study research. Hancock and Algozzine (2006) recommend the researcher use a systematic procedure to make analysis of field notes and other forms of data more manageable. This study utilized the following stage model of qualitative analysis (Figure 5) as presented by Berg (2004) to process information.

Figure 5

Stage Model of Qualitative Content Analysis



The task of classifying and interpreting large amounts of information typically available in data that are gathered as part of intensive case study research can be made more manageable by quantifying different components of different information. According to Berg (2004), the following elements can be counted in most written messages: *Words*, which are the smallest element used in content analysis. The uses are generally associated with frequency of specified words or

terms; *Themes*, which are more useful than words to count. In its most basic form, a theme is a simple sentence, a string of words with a subject and a predicate. A researcher may well be served to count every time a theme is provided or he or she may simply point one out in a paragraph or section analysis; *Characters,* which classifies people. The number of times a person or persons are mentioned can be very helpful to a particular analysis; *Paragraphs,* which are rarely used, because many paragraphs are often not synonymous and are hard to quantify as patterns or threads of common research; *Items*, which may represent a letter, a speech, a section, a diary entry, or even an in-depth interview; *Concepts*, which is a more sophisticated type of word counting. For example, the concept of deviance may have word clusters that are associated with it, such as crime, delinquency, and fraud; and *Semantics*, when the researcher is interested in more than the type of word being used; rather, a focus in semantic counting often shifts to the strength or weakness of a word.

This study will utilize a range of elements, but will primarily focus on *themes*. I used this content analysis method to count clusters of words associated with the original purpose of DOR Programs, and the political, social, and economic implications that influenced their existence. The following chart shows how themes were broken down and what type of word clusters were sought to categorize evidence.

Table 3

Theme Chart for Content Analysis

Theme	Content of Words or Word Clusters Sought
Purpose	• That *explain* why Dropout Recovery Programs were created Examples include content pertaining to goals, strategies, objectives, rationales, etc.
Political	• That *explain* any political implications that influenced the creation of Dropout Recovery Programs Examples include content pertaining to legislation, agendas, government interests, federalism, public affairs, etc.
Social	• That *explain* any social implications that influenced the creation of Dropout Recovery Programs Examples include characteristics of people or the society such as crime, education, welfare, teen pregnancy, drugs, etc.
Economic	• That *explain* any economic implications that influenced the creation of Dropout Recovery Programs Examples include content pertaining to money, funding, tax revenue, costs associated with social implications, etc.

Interview Analysis

Interviews were carried out with a semi-structured approach to expand the depth of gathering text-based information and to increase the number of sources of data from informed participants (Yin, 1994). I conducted interviews according to the interviewees' schedules and availability as suggested by Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991). Respondents were asked to provide and corroborate information and evidence from other sources and to provide insight into a range of events and issues.

This study incorporated purposeful sampling by predetermining and selecting participants to be interviewed. This judgment was used based on my prior knowledge about the selected participants' experiences and knowledge of DOR Programs. Other participants were interviewed based upon referrals from initial participants who could be characterized as information rich informants. Interviews were conducted with nine (9) people who represented the following groups:

1. Individuals from the Oklahoma Department of CTE, which included:
    - Three (3) ODCTE administrators.
2. Individuals from technology centers in the state of Oklahoma, which included:
    - Two (2) instructional leaders from a technology center in the southwest region of Oklahoma.
    - Two (2) instructional leaders from a technology center in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.
    - One (1) superintendent from a technology center in the southwestern region of Oklahoma.
3. Additional person identified as information rich informant, which included:
    - One (1) former administrator from the Oklahoma State Department of education.

Interviews with members from each of the three groups were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol which used targeted questions that centered on the central themes of the study. However, the protocol was open-ended

enough that the respondents were able to discuss issues they felt were particularly relevant to the history of DOR Programs (see Appendix C). The protocol provided "flexibility…to probe, to clarify, and to create new questions based on what has already been heard" (Westbrook, 1994, p.244). The participants in groups one, two, and three were interviewed in order to get an understanding of the original purpose of DOR Programs and their perspectives on the political, social, and economic implications that influenced the development of these programs. Additionally, participants in each of these groups were interviewed in order to get an understanding of how successful DOR Programs have been in serving at-risk youth and what opportunities for improvements exist within these programs. The interview protocol for groups one, two, and three can be found in Appendix B of this study.

Collectively, the information obtained from the interviews conducted was used to answer all five of the sub-questions related to the study. Specifically, the interviews were used to answer the following questions:

1. What were the political, social, and economic implications that influenced the development of these programs?
2. What was the original purpose of Dropout Recovery Programs?
3. Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light the original purpose?
4. Demographically, how have Dropout Recovery Programs looked over time and what can be discerned from such changes?

5. How have Dropout Recovery Programs been evaluated, and historically, how have these programs been successful and what opportunities for improvement exist within these programs serving at-risk youth?

For sub-questions one, two, three, and five the interview data were coded into themes. This coding method identified word clusters associated with the location of political, social, and economic implications and influences on the development of DOR Programs. For sub-question two, the interview data were coded into themes. This coding method identified word clusters associated with the location of meanings pertaining to the original purpose of DOR Programs.

As stated earlier, this study will utilize the content analysis method of counting frequencies of themes that emerge from the interviews. The themes that emerge most frequently will be considered strong indicators of evidence, as it pertains to answering each research question.

Focus Group Analysis

A focus group with three former students of dropout recovery programs was used to obtain information explaining why DOR Programs have been successful in serving at-risk youth and what opportunities for improvement exist within these programs. Specifically, the interviews were used to answer part of sub-question five:

1. How have these programs been successful serving at-risk youth and what opportunities for improvement exist within these programs?

According to Krueger & Casey (2000), a focus group is a carefully planned discussion to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-

threatening environment. The focus group was conducted at Metro Technology Centers in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on Friday, November 12, 2002, from 11:00am to 1:00pm. The group included two males and one female. Ages were 20, 21, and 23. These individuals were enrolled and dropout recovery programs during three separate periods and all were successful graduates of a dropout recovery program.

Student one attended a dropout recovery program from 2007 two 2010. She didn't choose to attend a dropout recovery program, but was forced to because of her mother. She had gotten into some trouble in her previous high school. A big part of the decision for her to attend a dropout recovery program was in regards to her safety.

Student two attend it a dropout recovery program from 2006 to 2008. He was headed into some trouble and needed a safety net. He had gotten behind in school, as his original graduation date was supposed to be in 2004. He was already approaching 20 years of age prior to enrolling in the dropout recovery program.

Student three attended a dropout recovery program from 2009 to 2010. He got behind in grades and had a lot of personal problems. Being out-of-state, he got further behind instantly because his credits didn't match up with Oklahoma requirements.

Because most of the focus group responses were fragmented, I found it more beneficial to simply provide and utilize a summary of the responses rather than a verbatim narrative. Specific interview questions can be found in Appendix C of this study.

Document, Archival Record, and Internet Analysis

Documents, archival records, and the internet will be used to obtain data relevant to answering all five sub questions related to the study. Specifically, these forms of evidence were used to answer the same five questions that applied to interviews.

Like the interviews, documents, archival records, and internet sources were used to gain an understanding of the original purpose of DOR Programs, and how political, social, and economic implications influenced the creation of these programs. Data analyzed from these sources of evidence were used to support the historical perspective derived from the interview analysis.

The first sets of documents that were analyzed were DOR reports (DOR) from 1999 to 2010, which provided descriptive information in relationship to demographics, which is pertinent to the study. The documents were specifically used to address sub question five which seeks to identify how DOR Programs have looked demographically over time. I used Microsoft Excel to organize descriptive statistics on the overall demographics of DOR Programs from 1999 to 2010. Specifically, the study provided overall percentages on ethnicity and gender demographic characteristics amongst all DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. The study also provided an overall yearly average on the following demographical characteristics:1) Pregnant Females Enrolled, 2) Homeless Students Enrolled, 3) Parenting Students Enrolled 4) Students receiving, or dependent on a family receiving Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), 5) Students known to be adjudicated (any

student who has gone before the court and been found guilty of a defense), and 6) Students identified as having a disability or on an IEP.

The second sets of documents that were analyzed were ODCTE DOR Evaluations which provided descriptive information in relationship to the 11 standards that all DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma are evaluated on. This document will be specifically used to address sub-question six which seeks to describe how DOR Programs have been evaluated, and historically, how these programs have performed in relationship to the 11 evaluative standards over time. I identified themes that emerged from these reports over a 10 year period (1999 to 2011) that helped determine how successful or unsuccessful these programs were in achieving the 11 program evaluation standards related to quality program operations. The 11 standards include: 1) High School Credentialing; 2) Career Strategies; 3) Coordination Activities; 4) Enrollment and Student Teacher Ratio; 5) Instructional Materials Utilization; 6) Qualified Instructional Personnel; 7) Credentialing Plan; 8) Program Goals and Objectives; 9) Program Advisory Committee; 10) Counseling Services; and 11) Student Accounting and Reports.

Another document that was analyzed was the DOR Results Report that was conducted in 2007 and never published. Conducted by a state university college professor and the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology staff, the purposes of this study were to:1) identify the impact educational programs and services offered to students in the six programs had on enrolled students, 2) to use the results to influence and change public policies about programs and their populations, 3) document continuing needs of former students for use in making

decisions about reforms in DOR school curricula and practices, and 4) enable legislators, parents and other advocates to make decisions based on information reflecting the needs and successes of student participants. Data for this study were gathered as part of a follow-up research project designed to explore three major components of effect of DOR Programs in Oklahoma. The first component included a 20 question survey on a four point Likert scale. Five questions were asked about each of the four areas of concern including Program Activities, Program Quality, Meaningful Outcomes, and Student Satisfaction. After obtaining the names and addresses of all students who had been enrolled in Oklahoma's six funded DOR Programs from 2001 to 2006, a survey was mailed to a random sampling of 1240 students (approximately 210 students from each program).

The second component of the DOR Results Report included a Focus Group conducted at each of the six Technology Centers with faculty, staff, former students, administrators, advisory members, parents, and sending school faculty. Each group was asked the same four questions: 1) What were the strengths of the program? 2) What were the weaknesses of the program? 3) What activities should be added to improve the quality of the program? , and 4) What social or academic skills should be added to the program? Focus Groups at each of the six locations were led by Project Investigators asking the questions to maintain consistency.

The third component of the DOR Results Report was to gather data from the Oklahoma Employment Security office to determine the number of students who had participated in any of the DOR Programs since 2001 who are currently employed. Data for this component was gathered by the Superintendent of the

Skills Centers School System within the Oklahoma Department of Career Technology by providing the Employment Security office with the social security numbers of all former students so they could check their system to determine the number of students who were employed in Oklahoma at the time of the study. Results from this study will be used to help determine the overall effectiveness of DOR Programs.

The only archival record that will be analyzed in this study is House Bill 2640, the Oklahoma Juvenile Justice Act. This document will be specifically used to address sub questions one, two, and three. I believe this document will provide an important source of background information in relationship to the political, social, and purpose concepts of this study. I focused on concepts within the document that could support evidence found during the interview analysis.

Data obtained from the internet was used to address sub question four that seeks to explain any new programmatic directions that have emerged and are different from the original purpose of DOR Programs. Specifically, web-pages and/or electronic brochures from each DOR program were analyzed. I searched for themes related to each DOR program's purpose, missions, goals, and services, and compared that data with the data obtained from other documents and interview analyses. The difference between data pertaining to the original purpose of DOR Programs and promotional or program-specific data obtained from the internet analysis served as a basis to determine if the original purpose of DOR has been sustained or has evolved over time.

Data Triangulation

All forms of evidence found through the analysis of interviews, documents, archival records, and the internet were corroborated and used to support facts that emerged about trends, themes, concepts, and patterns found within the history of DOR Programs. However, there are specific questions that utilized the data triangulation strategy. Table 2 of this study shows the relationship between the research questions and the sources of evidence utilized in the investigation process of those questions. This table was important in providing a framework for how evidence was used as a result of gathering facts relevant to specific research questions. With the information provided in Table 2, Table 4 below was created to indicate what specific questions utilized data triangulation and what type of evidence was used during the investigative process.

Table 4

Questions utilizing data triangulation to corroborate facts found from evidence sources.

Questions Utilizing Data Triangulation	Types of Evidence Triangulated
What were the political, social, and economic implications that influenced the development of these programs?	Interviews and Archival Records
What was the original purpose of Dropout Recovery Programs?	Interviews and Archival Records
Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light of the original purpose?	Interviews and the Internet

After evidence pertaining to the research questions in Table 4 were triangulated, I used three outcomes of triangulation, as described by Mathison (1988), to determine if evidence presented from all sources 1) converge with one

another, or that the data agree; 2) are inconsistent with one another, or that the data were not confirming nor contradictory; or 3) are contradictory to one another, or that the data were not only inconsistent, but also contradictory. Whether the data were convergent, inconsistent, or contradictory, I utilized a data triangulation strategy to construct valid explanations about the overarching research question and sub-questions.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

A variety of forms of evidence were used to obtain data relevant to rendering the history of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Although data from interviews, documents, archival records, and focus groups, were used throughout the data analysis, each research question utilized specific forms of evidence. Specifically, all forms of evidence were not used to answer each research question. For example, narrative evidence from the focus groups, which included former DOR Program students, were not used to seek answers that explain what were the political, social, and economic implications that influenced the development of DOR Programs. Below, an analysis of data obtained for each research question will be offered. Please refer to Table 2 for an illustration on how evidence sources were organized and utilized to answer each research question.

Research Sub-Question 1:

What were the political, social, and economic implications that influenced the development of these [DOR] programs?

Types of Evidence Utilized to Answer Research Question 1

There were two forms of evidence used to answer research question 1, which included 1) interviews from current ODCTE administrators, technology center instructional leaders, and one former Oklahoma State Department of Education administrator and; 2) one archival record which included a copy of Oklahoma House Bill 2640 of 1994. Additionally, these two forms of evidence were triangulated to corroborate facts around explaining what political, social, and

economic implications influenced the development of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma.

Interview Analysis

Nine interviews were conducted with current ODCTE administrators, technology center instructional leaders, and a former administrator from the Oklahoma State Department of Education. These individuals were believed to have had knowledge about the political, social, and economic implications that influenced the development of these programs.

When reviewing evidence that explained what political implications influenced the creation of DOR Programs, narrative data from interviews indicated that at least ten words or words clusters were used to explain what political implications influenced the creation of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Of these ten words/word clusters observed, five coded themes were derived. Of the six themes, crime and incarceration of juveniles was the most significant political implication, appearing in 30% (3 out of 10 responses) of the total interview narrative words/word clusters observed. As an illustration, one participant, and a technology center Superintendent in the southwestern region of the State indicated that a Lloyd Benson, Speaker of the House during that time was "tuned in to the huge costs of incarcerating juveniles and it was one of those pay me now or pay me later deals. We could invest in keeping kids out of jail or we were going to spend way more later on." This participant also stated that Lloyd Benson was "involved with the juvenile justice center, and knew what that cost." Similarly, this recollection corresponds with Price (2007), as he determined that if the high school

dropouts of Oklahoma's class of 2006 had earned their diplomas, the state's economy could have benefited from an additional $3.8 billion in wages over their lifetimes. Another participant, and administrator at the ODCTE, confirmed the significance of this implication by stating that the legislators participating in the 1994 legislative session conducted an "interim study related to the number of high school dropouts, and then somebody said let's look at how many of those are in prison." Other factors observed included, the high school dropout problem and the 1994 Oklahoma House Bill 2640 (Juvenile Justice Reform Act), both appearing in 20% (2 out of 10 responses) of the words/word clusters observed, and student discipline reform/corporal punishment, the Ten-Day Rule School Law, and the End of Instruction (EOI) legislation, all appearing in 10% (1 out of 10 responses) of the total narrative words/word clusters observed to describe what political implications influenced the creation of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma.

When reviewing evidence that explain what social implications influenced the creation of DOR Programs, narrative data from interviews indicated that at least nineteen words or words clusters were used to describe what social implications influenced the creation of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Of these nineteen words/word clusters observed, seven coded themes were derived. Of the seven themes, the disengagement of youth/high school dropout problem was the most significant social implication, appearing in 32% (6 out of 19 responses) of the total interview narrative words/word clusters observed. As an illustration, one participant, an administrator for the ODCTE, indicated that socially, "students were just bored, or they had circumstances they just couldn't get beyond." This

statement is also related to an existing literature on reasons why high students drop out of school. As indicated previously, Balfanz (2008) identified four main reasons students dropout. One of these reasons he classified as *Fade outs*, or students who have generally been promoted on time from grade to grade and may even have above grade level skills, but at some point become frustrated or bored and stop coming to school.

Another significant social implication was the issues of drugs, crime, and juvenile incarceration, which appeared in 26% (5 out of 19 responses) of the total interview narrative words/word clusters observed. As an illustration, one participant, an administrator for the ODCTE, indicated that "we had a big drug problem in Oklahoma that was contributing to the number of juvenile offenders and adult offenders". Additionally, another participant from ODCTE indicated that "What we had learned in our state was that a significant amount of juvenile driven crime was occurring during the day time when these little baggers were out of schools, and they were wreaking havoc in our neighborhoods". Similarly, Alliance for Education (2004) found this implication to be significant as well, as it was identified that dropouts are 3.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than high school graduates. Other implications observed included, the state's recognition of wasted human capital (11%), rising teen pregnancy rates (11%), the state's recognition of alternative education programs as being effective strategies (11%), poverty (5%), and inadequate services provided to minority populations (5%).

When reviewing evidence that explained what economic implications influenced the creation of DOR Programs, narrative data from interviews indicated

that at least eight words or words clusters were used to explain what economic implications influenced the creation of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Of these eight words/word clusters observed, four coded themes were derived. Of the four themes, the economic cost to high school dropouts was the most significant economic implication, appearing in 33% (3 out of 8) of the total interview narrative words/word clusters observed. As an illustration, one participant, and an instructional leader at a technology center in southwestern Oklahoma, indicated that "we tried to make taxpayers or potential taxpayers out of persons who could potentially be dependent on government assistance". Additionally, another participant and administrator for ODCTE indicated that "lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue" were issues related to Oklahoma's economy that made DOR Programs a viable strategy to support economic development throughout the state. When looking even further back and examining root cause, several participants indicated that the decline in the oil field industry had an impact on the need for DOR Programs in the state. This implication appeared in 25% of the responses, and as an illustration of this, one participant and an instructional leader at a technology center in southwestern Oklahoma, indicated that "it was the oil bust in the early 1980s" that had an indirect role in the development of DOR Programs in the state. Similarly, another participant and administrator for the ODCTE indicated that "we had just finished the oil boom and we just recovered partially from the downturn". Other implications observed included, a struggling economy (25%) and a shortage in workforce (13%).

Archival Record Analysis

When analyzing archival record evidence relevant to research sub question one, Oklahoma House Bill 2640 of 1994 was used in the data analysis. This legislation, which is at least 293 pages long, addresses numerous areas which include: the protection of the public from juvenile offenders; the prevention of juvenile delinquency; accountability and rehabilitation of the juvenile through implementation of a continuum of interventions; and community involvement in the creating and implementing of solutions to juvenile delinquency and establishing individual accountability.

When looking at what political and social implications were prevalent throughout House Bill 2640, it was very obvious that the legislation was primarily focused on the issues of juvenile delinquency, juvenile justice, and education/training programs.

When looking at what economic implications were prevalent throughout house Bill 2640, the analysis did not provide any language that associated the legislation to any economic factors that influenced the development of DOR Programs.

Data Triangulation

The analysis of evidence used to answer sub question one found the data to be *convergent* and *inconsistent*, several forms of data agreed with one another, while other evidence was not confirming but not contradictory either. Specifically, the data triangulation corroborated the following facts:

1. There was a consistency between interview evidence and archival record evidence related to the political implications that influenced the development of DOR Programs. Specifically, interview evidence found that crime and incarceration of juveniles, the high school dropout problem, and House Bill 2640 of 1994 were the most significant political implications. Similarly, archival record evidence found that the most significant implication was that of juvenile delinquency, which involves the activities of crime and incarceration.
2. There was a consistency between interview evidence and archival record evidence related to the social implications that influenced the development of DOR Programs. Specifically, interview evidence found that the disengagement of youth and the high school dropout problem were the most significant social implications. Similarly, archival records evidence found that the most significant social implication was that of juvenile delinquency, which also involves any antisocial behavior that may be out the control of parents. Truancy is considered a form of juvenile delinquency, and is associated with disengagement and the high school dropout problem.
3. There was an inconsistency between interview evidence and archival record evidence related to the economic implications that influenced the development of DOR Programs. Although a struggling national and state economy and the decline of the oil field industry were significant economic implications provided in the interview evidence, there was no linkage to

these economic implications in the archival record evidence. Table 5 illustrates the triangulation of evidence.

Table 5:

Triangulation of Evidence Related to Research Question (1).

Sub Questions (1)	Types of Evidence to be Triangulated	Interview Facts	Document Facts	Archival Record Facts	Internet Facts	Outcome of Triangulation
What were the political, social, and economical implications that influenced the development of these programs?	Interviews and Archival Records	Political implications included crime and incarceration of juveniles, the high school dropout problem, and HB 2640 of 1994. Social implications included disengagement of youth/high school dropout problem, drugs, crime, and juvenile incarceration, and wasted human capital Economic implications included the economic costs to high dropouts, struggling economy, and the decline in the oil field industry	N/A	Most significant political and social implications were juvenile delinquency, juvenile justice, and education/training programs.	N/A	Evidence used to answer sub question (1) is found to be both *convergent* and *inconsistent*, as several forms of data agreed with one another while other evidence was not confirming, but not contradictory either.

Interpretation of Findings

DOR Programs emerged on the educational scene in Oklahoma as a result of State legislative action. With the passage of House Bill 2640 of 1994 a legal framework was set in motion for primarily addressing the social issues of juvenile delinquency, corrections, and education/training. This social issue appears to be the primary and driving force for the establishment of DOR Programs within the State; although other State-wide issues at that time appear to have played a supporting

role for solidifying the desire for addressing issues related to high school dropouts. During the mid- to late-1990s the general sentiment of professional educators, lawmakers, the general public, and possibly to a lesser extent, business and industry, was that with a stagnating oil field economy and a possible workforce shortage in other employment sectors, a viable political solution was programming that reasonably assured for fewer high school dropouts.

This perspective at the time needs to be counterbalanced against the apparent inability of some public school systems to address discipline and truancy issues in proactive and meaningful ways, whether a result of policy and reform issues or the general intransience of the institution itself. There clearly was a confluence of forces – a larger dropout population (5.8% dropout rate in Oklahoma in 1994), more juvenile criminal activity (massive increase in imprisonment in Oklahoma from 1991-1999), a tenuous State economy (negative impact of Oklahoma's oil boom bust), and a political solution that was required in order to keep young Oklahomans working rather than seeking public assistance.

A more fundamental question can be raised by examining the influences accounting for the development of DOR Programs. Why and under what conditions were Career and Technology Centers the institution ultimately identified as the home of DOR programming? Was it simply because the law said so? Why were Career and Technology Centers the agencies of choice rather than another governmental body? There seems to be questions remaining as to the relationship between a political and legislative response to address socially problematic juvenile behavior and the proactive programmatic measures to be found in specialty

schooling. Was a deal made – more public funds flowing to Career and Technology Centers for more programming; or was this arrangement simply the most common sense way to address the perceived or real troubling social milieu at the time?

Research Sub-Question 2:

What was the original purpose of dropout recovery programs?

Types of Evidence Utilized to Answer Research Question 2

There were two forms of evidence used to answer research question 2, which included 1) interviews from current ODCTE administrators, technology center instructional leaders, and one former Oklahoma State Department of Education administrator and; 2) one archival record which included a copy of Oklahoma House Bill 2640 of 1994. Additionally, these two forms of evidence were triangulated to corroborate facts around explaining the original purpose of DOR Programs.

Interview Analysis

When analyzing evidence relevant to research sub question two, nine interviews were conducted with current ODCTE administrators, technology center administrators, and a former administrator from the Oklahoma State Department of Education. These individuals were believed to have had knowledge about the original purpose of DOR Programs.

When reviewing evidence that explain what was the original purpose of DOR Programs, narrative data from interviews indicated that at least eighteen words or words clusters were used to explain the original purpose of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Of these eighteen words/word clusters

observed, three coded themes were derived. Of the three themes, providing an alternative learning environment that is supportive for students who had not been successful in school was the most significant purpose, appearing in 72% (13 out of 18 responses) of the total interview narrative words/word clusters observed for explaining the original purpose of DOR Programs. As an illustration, one participant, a former administrator at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, stated that “the original purpose was to serve students in grades six through twelve who were in danger of not completing a satisfactory education and graduating from high school”. Additionally, another participant, a current instructional leader for a DOR program in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area, stated that “the purpose was to capture some of the students who were failing out of traditional high school programs and deliver an alternative pathway to obtaining a high school diploma and transitioning them into forms of training and higher education when applicable”. The other purposes identified by participants included to be used as a crime prevention strategy, appearing in 17% (3 out of 18 responses) and to be used as a workforce development strategy, appearing in 11% (2 out of 18 responses) of the total interview narrative words/word clusters observed.

Archival Record Analysis

When analyzing archival record evidence relevant to research sub-question two, Oklahoma House Bill 2640 of 1994 was used in the data analysis. This legislation, which is at least 293 pages long, addresses numerous areas which include: the protection of the public from juvenile offenders; the prevention of juvenile delinquency; accountability and rehabilitation of the juvenile through

implementation of a continuum of interventions; and community involvement in the creating and implementing of solutions to juvenile delinquency and establishing individual accountability. Although DOR Programs are not mentioned in the bill, their original purpose and conceptual design are derived from the language set forth in section 184 of House Bill 2640. Specifically, section 184 states that,

> The legislature recognizes that protecting the safety of students is one of the highest priorities for schools. Only a safe environment can provide students with an optimal learning opportunity. But suspension or expulsion policies designed to ensure safety in schools may put the local community at risk, and propel the student toward juvenile crime. In an effort to stem the increasing risk, alternative education programs can provide a preventative and remedial option for students who have become or are at risk of becoming disengaged from the learning process (Oklahoma House Bill 2640, 1994).

From this language, several original purpose themes were derived. The archival record analysis found that:

The first theme, which can be found in the third sentence and reads, "But suspension or expulsion policies designed to ensure safety in schools may put the local community at risk, and propel the student toward juvenile crime" indicates a purpose to protect the public from juvenile offenders.

The second theme, which can be found in the fourth sentence and reads, "In an effort to stem the increasing risk, alternative education programs can provide a preventative and remedial option for students who have become or are at risk of

becoming disengaged from the learning process" indicates a purpose to provide preventative and remedial options for students who have become disengaged in school.

The analysis also provided that the words alternative education, vocational/technical education, and social support were prevalent throughout the document and associated with the establishment of educational related interventions.

In summary, the archival record analysis conducted with Oklahoma House Bill 2640 of 1994 provided several purpose themes that can be associated with explaining the original purpose of DOR Programs. Results from analysis provided that the original purpose of DOR Programs was to 1) protect the public from juvenile offenders; 2) provide preventative and remedial options for students who have become disengaged in school; 3) provide an alternative education setting for students who have not been successful in school; 4) use vocational/technical education as an intervention strategy; and 5) provide social support to at-risk youth.

Data Triangulation

The analysis of evidence used to answer sub question two found the data to be *convergent*, as all forms of data agreed with one another. Specifically, the data triangulation corroborated the following facts:

There was a consistency between interview evidence and archival record evidence related to explaining the original purpose of DOR Programs. The following themes were considered related in the evidence observed:

1. There was a consistency between the interview evidence and archival record evidence in that both forms of evidence provided that one of the original purposes of establishing DOR Programs was to provide an alternative education setting for students who had not been successful in school.
2. There was a consistency between the interview evidence that explained the original purpose (to provide social and emotional support to students) and archival record evidence that explained the original purpose (to provide social support at risk youth). Both findings indicate a need to support youth socially as one of the original purposes of the development of DOR Programs.
3. There was a consistency between the interview evidence that explained the original purpose (to provide contextual and academic strategies to at-risk youth) and the archival record evidence that explained the original purpose (to use vocational/technical education as an intervention strategy). Both findings indicated a need for educational strategies that were more practical and experiential in nature.
4. There was a consistency between the interview evidence that explained the original purpose (to engage Oklahoma juvenile authority referrals back in school) and the archival record evidence that explained the original purpose (to provide preventative and remedial options for students who have become disengaged from school). Both findings indicated a need to reengage youth back in school through preventative and remedial options.

5. There was a consistency between the interview evidence that explained the original purpose (crime prevention strategy) and the archival record evidence that explained the original purpose (to protect the public from juvenile offenders). Both findings indicated a need to prevent crime and protect citizens. Table 6 illustrates the triangulation of evidence.

Table 6

Triangulation of Evidence Related to Research Question (2)

Sub Questions (2)	**Types of Evidence to be Triangulated**	**Interview Facts**	**Document Facts**	**Archival Record Facts**	**Internet Facts**	**Outcome of Triangulation**
What was the original purpose of dropout recovery programs?	Interviews and Archival Records	To provide an alternative learning environment that is supportive for students who have not been successful in school. To be used as a crime prevention strategy. To be used as a workforce development strategy	N/A	To protect the public from juvenile offenders To provide preventative and remedial options for students who have become disengaged from school To provide an alternative education setting for students who have not been successful in school To use vocational/technical education as an intervention strategy To provide social support to at-risk youth	N/A	Evidence used to answer sub question (2) is found to be *convergent*, as all forms of data agreed with one another.

Interpretation of Findings

Historically, the original purpose of DOR Programs was rooted within the confines of Oklahoma's juvenile justice system. According to the research findings, several fundamental purposes existed that provided the framework of expectations in which DOR Programs existed. The primary purpose of DOR Programs was that they provided intervention to youth who had dropped out of school. At its core,

House Bill 2640 of 1994 was specifically put into law to address juvenile incarceration in Oklahoma, and the high school dropout problem was correlated to the rise in drugs, crime, and juvenile delinquency throughout the state. The original purpose of DOR Programs can be justified and linked to literature previously reviewed. For example, Moretti (2005) indicated that a ten percent increase in the male graduation rate would reduce murder and assault arrest rates by twenty percent, motor vehicle theft by thirteen percent and arson by eight percent. Similarly, the Alliance for Education (2009) found that increasing the graduation rate and college matriculation of male students in the United States by just five percent could lead to combined savings and revenue of almost $8 billion each year by reducing crime related costs. The understanding and realization of these types of statistics made DOR Programs a viable strategy to preventing high school dropouts and essentially decreasing the amount of youth who would become incarcerated.

Another purpose realized appears to be rooted in workforce development. As a result of the oil boom bust in the mid-1980s, Oklahoma experienced a sharp decrease of jobs in the extraction of oil and gas by fifty percent. The failure of 24 banks, home mortgage foreclosures, and mounting distress amongst the state's farmers added to Oklahoma's financial woes. When oil prices plummeted in 1986, the effects went far beyond the energy industry, shaking the economic, academic, cultural and social foundations of the state of Oklahoma. Consequently, many Oklahomans lost their jobs, lost their hope, and succumbed to taking desperate measures to live and provide for their families. For many high school aged youth,

this resulted in dropping out of school, and by the mid-1990s, those dropouts lacked the education and skills necessary to compete in Oklahoma's workforce.

The last purpose, and maybe the most overlooked, is that DOR Programs existed to provide contextual and academic strategies to at-risk youth through vocational/technical education. According to the literature, learning is most effectively accomplished when new information is connected to and built upon a student's prior knowledge and real-life experiences (Spigner-Littles & Anderson, 1999). This pedagogical philosophy and theory of learning has always been fundamental to CTE, and can be rooted in David A. Kolb's theory of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Naturally, DORs were purposed to provide this educational strategy, and it was believed that a successful DOR program could alleviate many problems associated with juvenile delinquency, including crime and the high school dropout problem.

These purposes, collectively, provided the original framework in which DOR Programs were to exist, and in 1994 as a result of HB 2640, the first DOR program in the state of Oklahoma was established at Great Plains Technology Center in Lawton, Oklahoma. But would these programs continue to focus primarily on those associated with juvenile delinquency, or would it be recognized that DOR Programs were more dynamic in nature and their impact could extend "beyond the walls" of Oklahoma's juvenile justice system?

Research Sub-Question 3:

Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light the original purpose? If not, why not; if so, why?

Types of Evidence Utilized to Answer Research Question 3

There were two forms of evidence used to answer research question 3, which included 1) interviews from current ODCTE administrators, technology center instructional leaders, and one former Oklahoma State Department of Education administrator and; 2) Internet information, which included program-specific web pages. Additionally, these two forms of evidence were triangulated to corroborate facts around explaining if the original purpose has been sustained over time or if there have been modifications and changes that evolved in light of the original purpose.

Interview Analysis

When analyzing evidence relevant to research sub question three, nine interviews were conducted with current ODCTE administrators, technology center administrators, and a former administrator from the Oklahoma State Department of Education. These individuals were believed to have had knowledge about how the original purpose of DOR Programs and why or why not the original purpose has been sustained or modified over time.

When reviewing the original purpose of DOR Programs, narrative data from interviews indicated that at least seven words or word clusters were used to explain the original purpose of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Of these seven

words/word clusters observed, two coded themes were derived. Of the two themes, the notion that DOR Programs had evolved from the original purpose was the most prevalent answer, appearing in 71% (5 out of 7 responses) of the total interview narrative words/word clusters observed. As an illustration, one participant, an administrator at the ODCTE, stated that “We’ve implemented best practices within the schools so that we can better meet the students’ needs”. When looking at why the original purpose has evolved, evidence suggested that DOR Programs developed as a result of continuous improvement. As an illustration of this, another participant and an administrator for a technology center in southwestern Oklahoma stated that “people have been very good to look and see what worked, what didn’t work, and why it didn’t work and change what didn’t work to make it where it would.” Additionally, the theme suggesting that the original purpose has been sustained was realized as well, appearing in 29% (2 out of 7 responses) of the total narrative words/word clusters observed. When looking at why the original purpose has been sustained, evidence suggested the basis of DOR existence is still relevant today. As an illustration of this, one participant, and a superintendent for a technology center in southwestern Oklahoma, stated that “I think the purpose has sustained and it’s even more critical at this juncture than it was back then”.

Internet Information Analysis

When reviewing evidence that described the current purposes of DOR Programs, descriptions of contemporary DOR Programs obtained from seven technology center websites were analyzed.

When reviewing how the original purpose of DOR Programs has been sustained or modified over time, data from the most recent technology center web pages were used to determine the current purpose, collectively, of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. These web pages indicated that at least 30 words or word clusters were used to describe the current purpose of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Of these 30 words/word clusters observed, eight coded themes were derived. Of the eight themes, providing students with a combination of career training and academics, was the most prominently articulated purpose, appearing in 30% of the total technology center web pages with words/word clusters observed. Other important purpose factors identified included, being available for high school dropout or for students at risk of dropping out (20%), providing an opportunity for students to obtain a high school diploma or GED (20%), life skill preparation (13%), providing students with an alternative education setting (7%), and counseling services (7%). Purpose factors that were mentioned, but not as frequently, included work-based learning experiences (3%) and mentoring (3%).

Data Triangulation

The analysis of evidence used to answer sub question three found the data to be both *convergent* and *inconsistent*, several forms of data agreed with one another, while other data were not confirming or contradictory either. Specifically, the data triangulation corroborated the following facts:

1. There was a consistency between the interview evidence (to provide an alternative education setting for students who had not been successful in school) and the archival record evidence (to provide an alternative

education setting for students who had not been successful in school) as part of the explanation pertaining to whether the original purpose of DOR has been sustained or modified over time. Both sources indicated a need for alternative education settings that serve at risk youth.

2. There was a consistency between the interview evidence that explained if the original purpose of DOR had been sustained or modified over time (to provide social and emotional support to students) and the archival record evidence that explained if the original purpose of DOR had been sustained or modified over time (to provide counseling services for students). Both findings indicated the sustaining of a need to provide social service support to at risk youth.
3. There was an inconsistency between the interview evidence that if the original purpose of DOR had been sustained or modified over time. Although providing contextual and practical academic strategies, engaging with Oklahoma juvenile authority referrals, and supporting crime prevention were indicators of the original purpose having been sustained, these factors were not observed in internet evidence.
4. There was inconsistency between the archival record evidence and internet evidence explaining if the original purpose of DOR had been sustained or modified over time. Although providing an opportunity for students to obtain a high school diploma or GED and providing life skill preparation to students were archival record indicators of the original purpose, these aspects of programming were not observed in internet evidence. This

inconsistency is can probably be attributed to the fact that the internet data used in the analysis are in part promotional pages, material, and information that would be designed to attract customers and promote a service. Information about practical academic strategies, coordinating with juvenile authorities, and curtailing crime prevention may not be as attractive to a potential student seeking information about a program. Table 7 illustrates the triangulation of evidence.

Table 7

Triangulation of Evidence Related to Research Question (3)

Sub Questions (3)	Types of Evidence to be Triangulated	Interview Facts	Document Facts	Archival Record Facts	Internet Facts	Outcome of Triangulation
Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light of the original purpose?	Interviews and Internet	Has been sustained due to the growing number of high school dropouts. Has evolved To provide contextual and practical academic strategies To engage Oklahoma juvenile authority referrals back in school Crime prevention	N/A	N/A	To provide an alternative education setting for students who have not been successful in school. To provide an opportunity for students to obtain a high school diploma or GED. To provide life skills preparation for students To provide counseling services for students	Evidence used to answer sub question (3) is found to be both *convergent* and *inconsistent*, as several forms of data agreed with one another while other evidence was not confirming, but not contradictory either.

Interpretation of Research Findings

Although CTE has been historically recognized for providing at-risk students with opportunities to gain marketable skills to use after graduation, CTE has yet to be identified, or at least through professional literature, as a viable strategy in providing students opportunities to gain academic credit. According to

Daggett (2002), it is more essential than ever for career and technical education to be able to prove that it contributes not just to the applied workplace competency demands of business, but also to the academic proficiencies of served student populations on state academic tests — if CTE is to remain a viable program in our secondary schools. Career and technical educators have worked hard to modify and enrich the academic base of their programs. Unfortunately, despite all the efforts put forth by the CTE leadership, despite the name change and wide array of initiatives, CTE is still widely perceived as vocational education, a great program "for somebody else's child, because *my* child is going to college." (p.3) Today, CTE offers a wide variety of services including career training, business and industry services, as well as services provided for special populations including those receiving temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) benefits, prison populations, and at-risk youth. This can be attributed to CTE's ability to adapt to the needs of the ever-changing demands of the economy, whether the demands are on a state, national, or international level.

Although the original purposes of DOR Programs have been sustained, many DOR Programs have evolved to meet the demands of their local communities. For example, at DOR's inception, a student obtaining a GED was considered one of the ultimate outcomes of the program. As the labor market value of GEDs decreased over the years (Cameron & Heckman, 1993), many DOR Programs began offering high school diplomas as a result. Another example of how DOR Programs have evolved is how they have incorporated credit recovery and virtual learning strategies. As the social landscape has changed dramatically

over the years, issues such as teen pregnancy and the fact that youth are entering adulthood at much earlier ages, DOR Programs have been redesigned to offer more flexible learning environments. Lastly, dropout recovery programs have evolved to offer a more holistic educational approach to at-risk youth. Utilizing strategies such as communities in schools and full-service community schools, DOR Programs have recognized the importance of youth being ready to learn, having supportive adults, providing extended learning opportunities, parental involvement, lifelong learning, opportunities to perform community service, access to healthcare, safe communities, a positive school environment, changing demographics, basic needs, and offering a quality education (Dryfoos & Mcguire, 2002). Additionally, a holistic approach has helped many students of DOR Programs improve academically, and meet goals related to attendance, high risk behavior reduction, increased positive attitude and school commitment, and suspension reduction (Communities in Schools, 2012).

Research Sub-Question 4:

Demographically, how have dropout recovery programs looked over time and what can be discerned from such changes?

Types of Evidence Utilized to Answer Research Question 4

Printed documents of annual DOR reports from 1999 to 2008 were the only forms of evidence used to answer research question 4. These annual reports provided demographic enrollment information about each of the DOR Programs observed. Because printed documentation was the only source of evidence utilized, triangulation was not used to corroborate facts around explaining how

demographically DOR Programs have looked over time and what can be discerned from such changes.

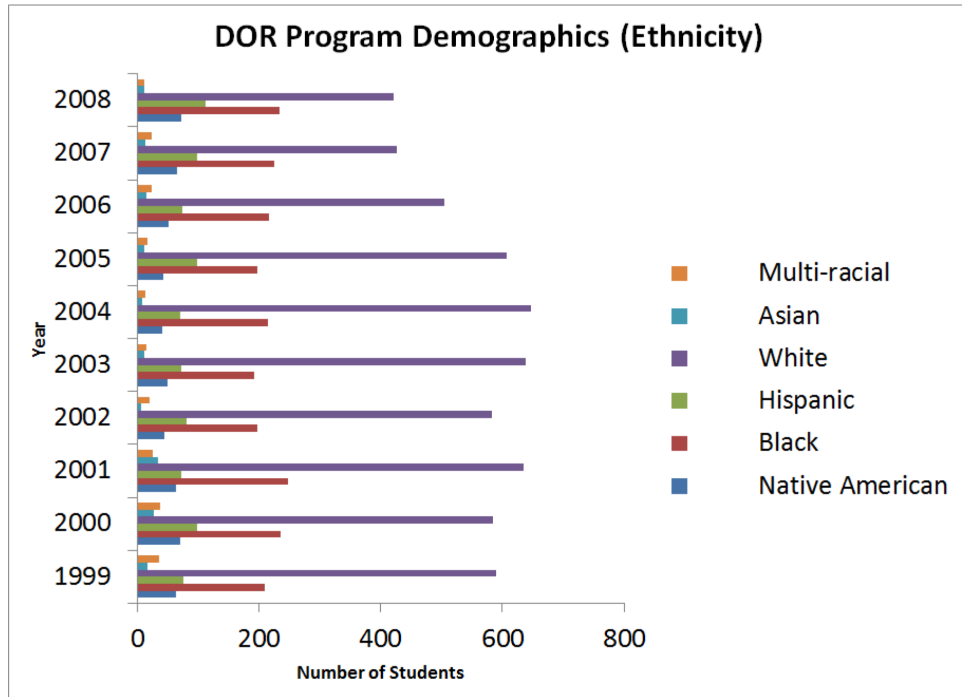
Document Analysis

The populations identified in this study were students enrolled in DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma from 1999 to 2008. The data were obtained from DOR reports provided by the ODCTE, and included demographic data from seven DOR Programs within the state of Oklahoma. Data from these reports were also converted into charts throughout the document analysis to provide graphical representations of demographics as constructed by the researcher.

From 1999 to 2008, the state of Oklahoma has served 9,611 students in DOR Programs. More than half of the students (58%) were white. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of these students were African-American. Slightly less than one-tenth (9%) of these students were Hispanic. Six percent of these students were Native Americans and only four percent of these students were either Asian or multiracial. Figure 6 illustrates the ethnicity demographics for all DOR Programs from 1999 to 2008.

Figure 6

DOR Program Demographics from 1999 to 2008 (Ethnicity)



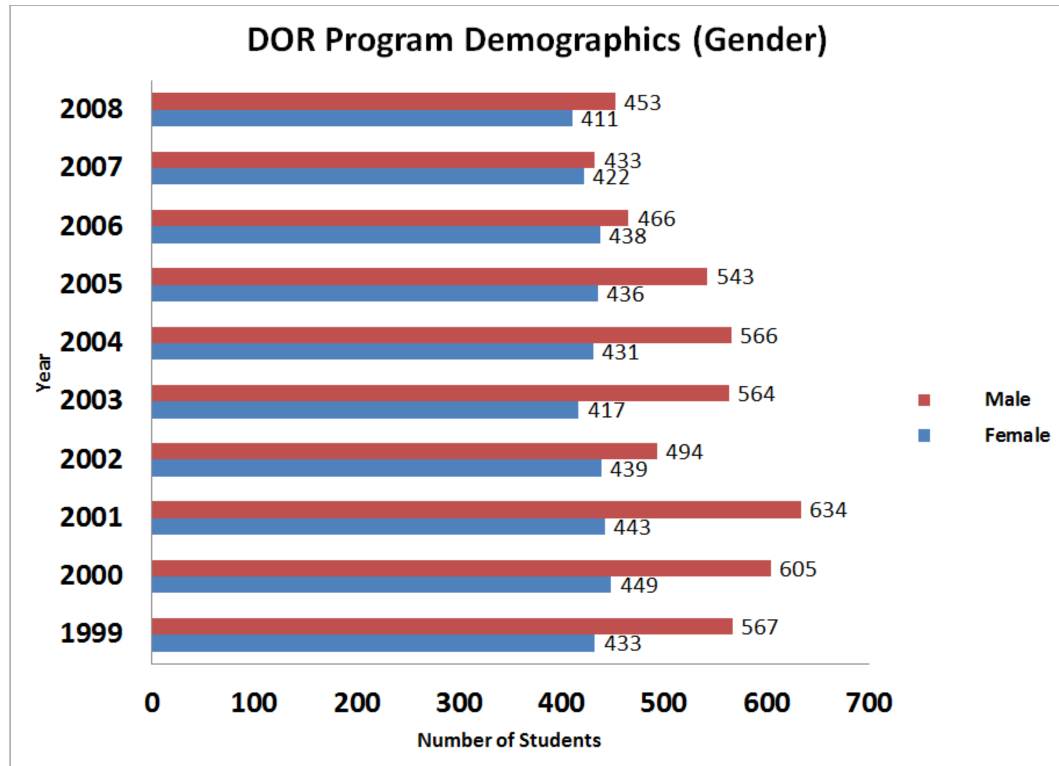
About 1,000 students are enrolled a year in DOR Programs. From 1999 to 2008, about 9,611 students were enrolled in DOR Programs. Of these students, slightly less than half (45%) were female, and over half (55%) of those enrolled were male.

Additionally, over half (53%) were enrolled under special demographic characteristics. These characteristics included: teen pregnancy, homelessness, teen parenting, government assistance, adjudication, and special education. Of these special characteristics, nearly one-fifth (19%) were on government assistance. One tenth (10%) of students were parents. One tenth (10%) of students had been adjudicated. Eight percent of students needed special education services. When looking at the total number of females enrolled in DOR Programs, five percent

enrolled during pregnancy. Lastly, only one percent of all students were homeless at the time of enrollment. Figure 7 illustrates the gender demographics for all DOR Programs from 1999 to 2008.

Figure 7

DOR Program Demographics from 1999 to 2008 (Gender)

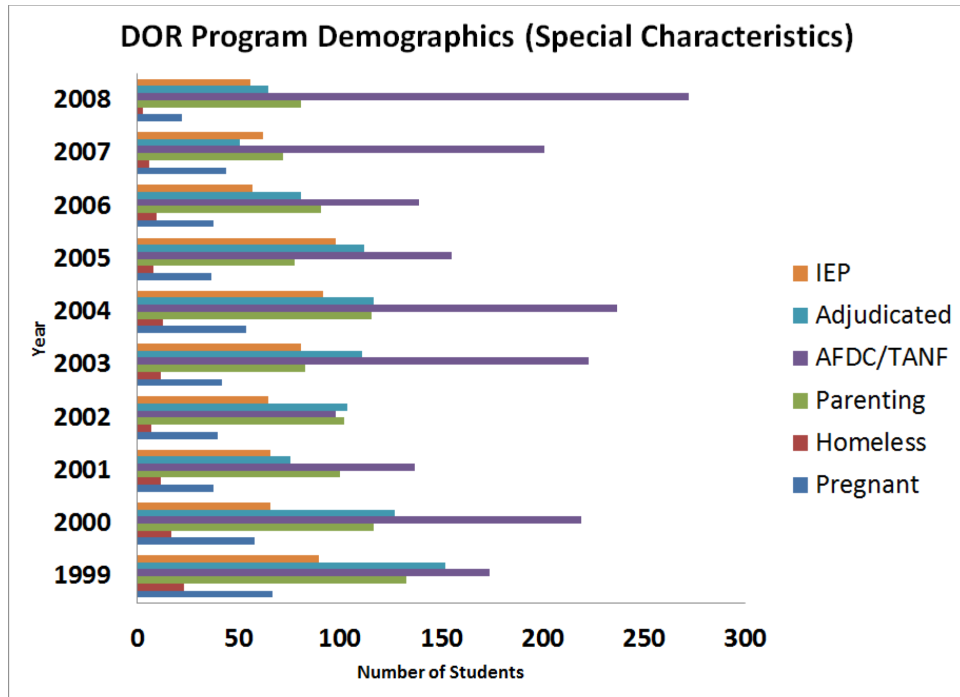


When comparing DOR ethnicity demographic data between all DOR Programs and all technology centers statewide, data indicated the following results: From 1999 to 2008, the most prevalent special demographic characteristic of DOR program students enrolled was that of students who were receiving or were dependents of a families receiving Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). This special demographic characteristic attributed to about nineteen percent of the total number

of students enrolled in DOR Programs during the 10 year period. Figure 8 illustrates the special demographic characteristics for all students enrolled in DOR Programs from 1999 to 2008.

Figure 8

DOR Program Demographics (Special Characteristics) from 1999 to 2008

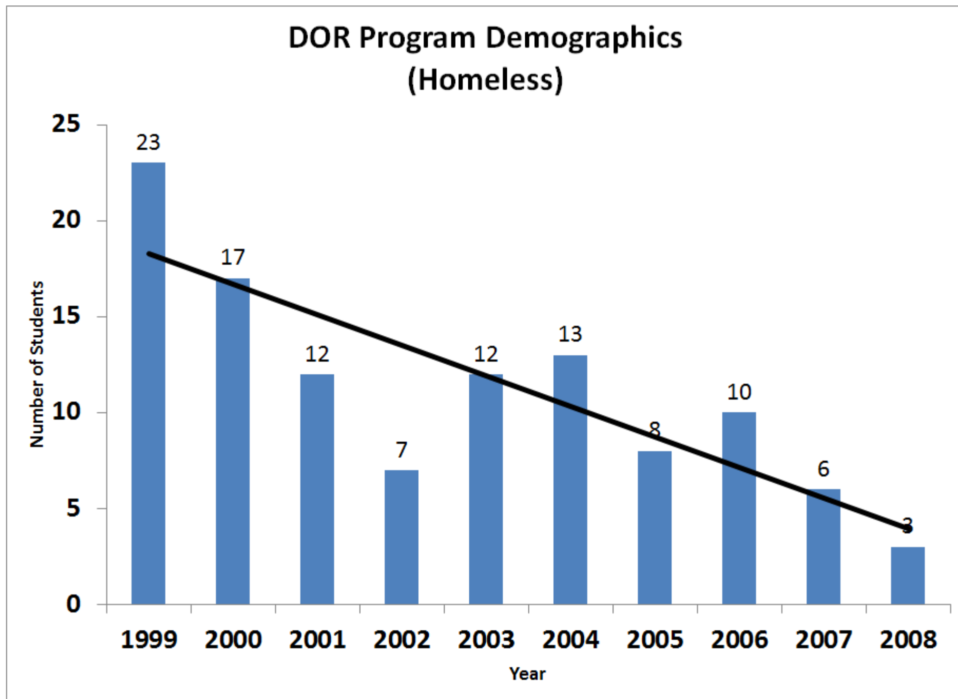


From 1999 to 2008, the least prevalent special demographic characteristic of DOR program students enrolled was that of students who were homeless. This special demographic characteristic attributed to only about one percent of the total number of students enrolled in DOR Programs between the years 1999 and 2008. In this ten year period, those students who were enrolled while adjudicated decreased from an average of 14 students per year from 1999 through 2003 to about 8 students per year from 2004 through 2008. This was about a forty-three percent decrease overall during the ten year period. Figure 9 illustrates the

demographics for homeless students enrolled in all DOR Programs from 1999 to 2008.

Figure 9

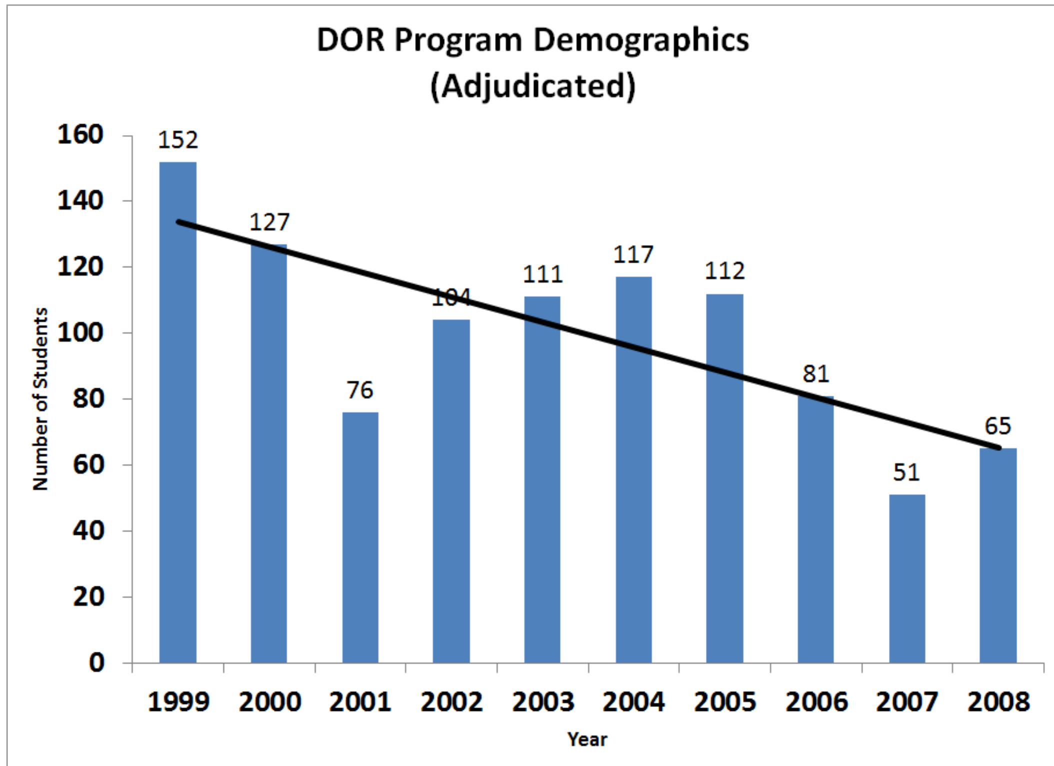
DOR Program Demographics (Homeless) from 1999 to 2008



From 1999 to 2008, the special demographic characteristic that saw the biggest decrease were those students who were adjudicated. In this ten year period span, those students who were enrolled while adjudicated decreased from an average of 114 students per year from 1999 through 2003 to about 85 students per year from 2004 through 2008. Overall, this was about a twenty-five percent decrease during the ten year period. Figure 10 illustrates the demographics for adjudicated students enrolled in all DOR Programs from 1999 to 2008.

Figure 10

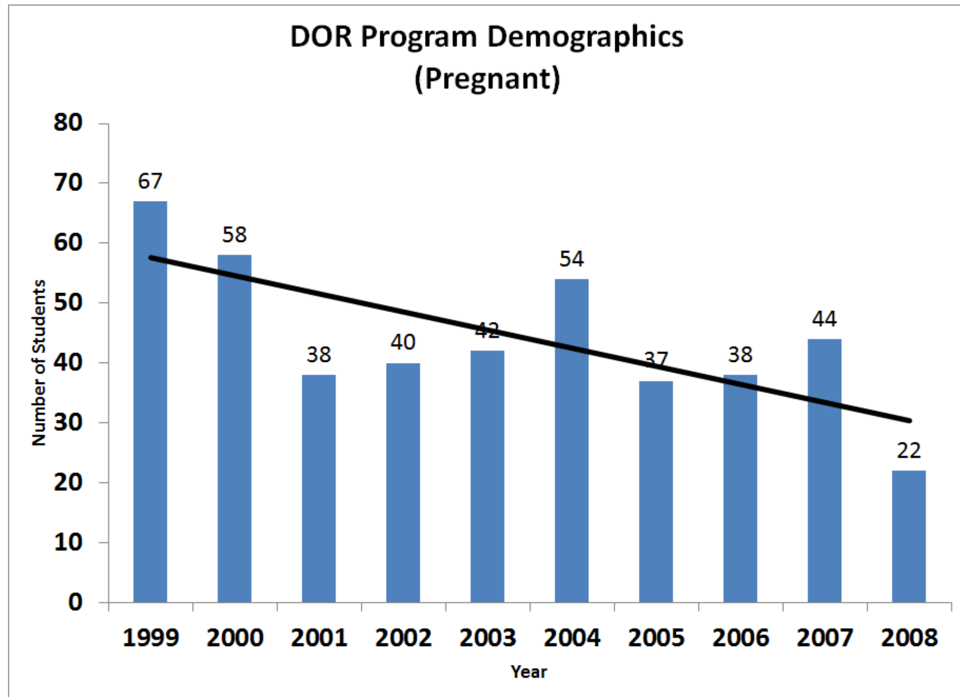
DOR Program Demographics (Adjudicated) from 1999 to 2008



From 1999 to 2008, those students who were enrolled while being pregnant decreased from an average of 49 students per year between the years 1999 and 2003 to about 39 students per year between the years 2004 and 2008. Overall, this was about a twenty percent decrease during the ten year period.

Figure 11

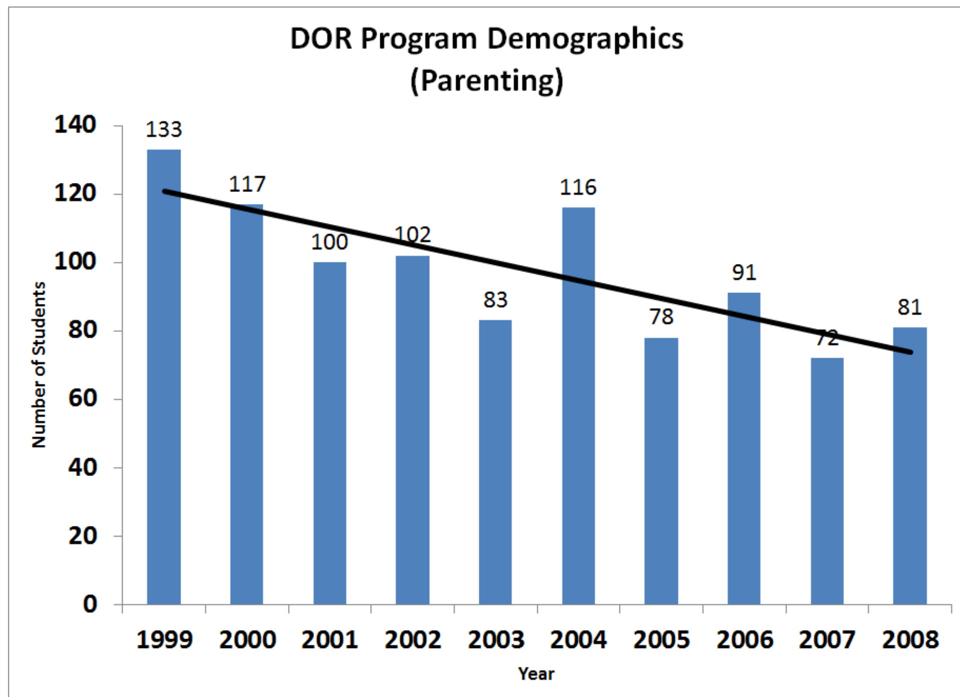
DOR Program Demographics (Pregnant) from 1999 to 2008



From 1999 to 2008, those students who were enrolled while being parents decreased from an average of 107 students per year between the years 1999 and 2003 to about 87 students per year between the years 2004 and 2008. Overall, this was about a nineteen percent decrease during the ten year period.

Figure 12

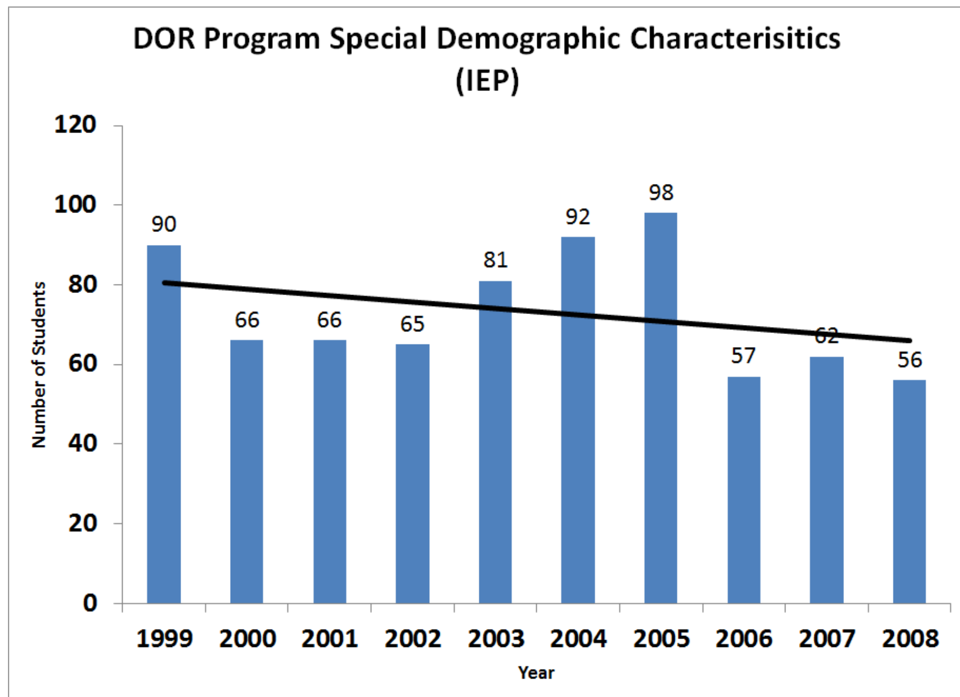
DOR Program Demographics (Parenting) from 1999 to 2008



From 1999 to 2008, those students who were enrolled while being on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) decreased slightly from an average of 74 students per year between the years 1999 and 2003 to about 73 students per year between the years 2004 and 2008. Overall, the number of students enrolled under this special demographic characteristic has not increased or decreased substantially during the ten year period.

Figure 13

DOR Program Demographics (IEP) from 1999 to 2008



Interpretation of Research Findings

Since inception in 1996, DOR Programs have provided refuge and support to a variety of youth, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, or enrollment under special demographic circumstances.

When an entire racial, ethnic, or gender group experiences consistently high dropout rates, these problems can deeply damage a community, its families, its social structure, and its institutions (Orfield, 2004). Unfortunately, this perspective is probably a reality for young white males in Oklahoma. From 1999 to 2008, more than half of the near 10,000 students enrolled in DOR Programs were white.

Overall, demographic data indicated that DOR Programs have seen a decline of enrollments over the years. This indication could mean several things.

First, the decline of enrollments could indicate that fewer youth are dropping out of school. On a national level, the number of U.S. high school dropout factories declined from 2002 to 2008. According to Strauss (2010), the number of dropout factory high schools fell by 261, from a high 2,007 in 2002 to 1,746 in 2008, a decline of 13 percent. From a state perspective, Oklahoma's dropout rate hit record lows in the early 2000s. In the 2002-2003 school year, the dropout rate declined to 3.6 percent from 4.1 percent the previous year (Amarillo Globe New, 2004). Secondly, the decline of enrollments could mean that DOR Programs are not seen as a viable option for serving at-risk youth. Although the numbers of dropouts have declined over the years (The Jhu Gazette, 2010), there is still a need for programs that cater to the needs of students at-risk of school failure.

Research Sub-Question 5:

How have dropout recovery programs been evaluated, and historically, how have these programs been successful and what opportunities for improvement exist within the programs serving at-risk youth?

Types of Evidence Utilized to Answer Research Question 5

There were three forms of evidence used to answer research question 5, which included 1) printed documents of DOR Program evaluations from 2008 to 2011 which provided narrative summaries of commendations, strengths, and specific recommendations for improvements; 2) interviews from current ODCTE administrators, technology center instructional leaders, and one former Oklahoma State Department of Education administrator and; 3) a focus group, which included a group interview with three former DOR Program students. Lastly, these three

forms of evidence were not triangulated to corroborate facts around explaining if the original purpose has been sustained over time or if there have been modifications and changes that evolved in light of the original purpose.

Document Analysis

When looking at how DOR Programs have been evaluated, I found that eleven standards were utilized to determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of DOR Programs. These standards include: 1) High School Credentialing, 2) Career Strategies, 3) Coordination Activities, (4 Enrollment and Student/Teacher Ratio, (5 Instructional Materials Utilization, (6 Qualified Instructional Personnel, (7 Credentialing Plan, (8 Program Goals and Objectives, (9 Program Advisory Committee, (10 Counseling Services, and (11 Student Accounting and Reports. The standards are established by the State Board and are designed to promote the quality of vocational training institutions and programs. Each evaluation standard describes a qualitative principle and the provisions to be made to ensure the maintenance of the standard. All DOR Programs are expected to incorporate these standards into their working operations.

Each of these standards also utilized specific questions that seek evidence of the standard being met. Through the investigation, it appeared that these questions were developed as a result of collaborative meetings between DOR program administrators and instructional leaders in 2005. These questions are typically answered orally and/or through presentation of documented evidence. As an illustration, Standard 9, which looks at program advisory integration, seeks to find if the DOR program utilizes an advisory board to assist in planning for student

success. An example of evidence sought includes; a list of board members and meeting times, minutes of meetings, and proof of interactions between advisory members, instructors, and students.

When looking at when and how the evaluation is conducted, I found that each DOR program is evaluated on a three-year cycle. On-site evaluations are conducted by evaluation teams that consists of individuals considered to have expertise in the programs including visiting teachers, program administrators, instructional leaders, and representatives from relevant divisions of ODCTE. The responsibility of the team is to review the program's self-study, complete the appropriate evaluation instruments, and write a narrative summary of the evaluation findings and conclusions. This narrative summation includes the commendations and strengths of the programs, specific recommendations for improvement for any standards that were not met, and general suggestions for improvement as related to the program minimum standards. An oral report of the evaluation team's findings is presented to the institution's administrative staff, with time allowed for discussion of the findings.

When investigating how successful DOR Programs have been, it appeared that six DOR Programs were evaluated at least once between the years 2008 and 2011. Prior to these years, it appeared that there are minimal records of past evaluations. To ensure that all avenues were exhausted to collect a more complete account of past evaluations, I consulted with relevant ODCTE administrators to confirm that I had received all evaluations that were available to date. As a result I was only able to account for three years of past evaluations. However, these results

did indicate that six DOR Programs met all eleven DOR evaluative program standards between 2008 and 2011. When analyzing indicators that explain how DOR Programs have been successful at serving at-risk youth, data from DOR evaluation reports indicated that at least 68 words or words clusters were used to explain how these programs have been successful in serving at-risk youth. Of these 68 words/word clusters observed, 17 coded themes were derived. Of the 17 themes, both learning strategies and support strategies were the most important categories, both appearing in 10% (20% combined) of the total DOR evaluation words/word clusters observed for explaining how DOR Programs have been successful in serving at-risk youth. The second most important category observed included, quality of instructors, curriculum design, and gathering data. These three factors appeared almost 9% of the time each, and collectively attributed to about 27% of the total words/word clusters observed. Other categories observed included, career readiness/preparation (7%), career education (7%), academics (7%), counseling (6%), community involvement (6%), class size (4%), life skills training (4%), and holistic approach (4%). Factors that were less significant included program strategies (3%), parenting strategies (1%), and mentoring (1%).

Additionally, when looking at the 11 evaluation standards that relate to the words/word clusters observed, Standard 10 (Counseling Services) was the most prevalent standard in explaining how successful DOR Programs have been in serving at risk youth. It appeared in 45% of the total words/word clusters observed for explaining how DOR Programs have been successful in serving at-risk youth. Standard 5 (Instructional Materials Utilization) was also an important standard,

appearing in 36% of the total words/word clusters observed. Other standards that appeared multiple times included Standard 2 (Career Strategies) (27%) and Standard 9 (Program Advisory Committee) (18%). Those standards appearing infrequently included Standard 3 (Coordination Activities) (9%), Standard 4 (Enrollment and Student/Teacher Ratio) (9%) and Standard 6 (Qualified Instructional Personnel) (9%). Lastly, those standards not considered to contribute to the success of DOR Programs include, Standard 1 (High School Credentialing) 0%, Standard 7 (Credentialing Plan) 0%, Standard 8 (Program Goals and Objectives) 0%, and Standard 11 (Student Accounting and Reports) 0%.

When reviewing indicators that explained what opportunities for improvement exists within DOR Programs, data from DOR Evaluation reports indicated that at least 10 words or words clusters were used to explain the areas in which DOR Programs can improve in serving at-risk youth. Of these 10 words/word clusters observed, 10 coded themes were derived. Of the 10 themes, both high school credentialing, career strategies, and credentialing planning were the most important factors, all appearing in 20% (60% combined) of the total DOR evaluation words/word clusters observed for explaining areas in which DOR Programs could improve. The other important program characteristics observed included, coordination activities, qualified instructional personnel, program advisory committee, and counseling services. These program characteristics each appeared 10% of the time, and collectively attributed to about 40% of the total words/word clusters identified in the evaluation report documents.

Additionally when looking at the 11 evaluation standards that relate to the words/word clusters observed, Standard 1 (High School Credentialing), Standard 2 (Career Strategies), and Standard 7 (Credentialing Plan) were the most prevalent standards in explaining areas in which DOR Programs could improve in serving at-risk youth. These standards appeared in 18% (54% combined) of the total words/word clusters observed. Standards that were observed, but only appeared once included Standard 3 (Coordination Activities) 9%, Standard 6 (Qualified Instructional Personnel) 9%, Standard 9 (Program Advisory Committee, and Standard 10 (Counseling Services). Lastly, those standards not considered to contribute to the unsuccessfulness of DOR Programs include, Standard 4 (Enrollment and Student/Teacher Ratio) 0%, Standard 5 (Instruction Materials Utilization) 0%, and Standard 11 (Student Accounting and Reports) 0%.

A 2007 DOR results report was also used to ascertain how effective DOR Programs have been over the years. The purposes of the results report study were to 1) identify the impact educational programs and services in the six programs had on enrolled students, 2) to use the results to influence and change public policies about programs and their populations, 3) document continuing needs of former students for use in making decisions about reforms in DOR school curricula and practices, and 4) enable legislators, parents and other advocates to make decisions based on information reflecting the needs and successes of student participants. Data for the results report study were gathered as part of a follow-up research project designed to explore three major components effecting of DOR Programs in Oklahoma. The first component included a 20 question survey on a four point

Likert scale. Five questions were asked about each of the four areas of concern including Program Activities, Program Quality, Meaningful Outcomes, and Student Satisfaction.

When respondents were asked questions regarding the quality of programs, 94% responded that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the overall quality of the program was excellent. Ninety-one percent of respondents reported that the variety of options to study made this a good opportunity for them, and 93 percent reported that faculty and staff in the project encouraged them to continue on to complete the DOR program. Oklahoma's Technology Centers are known for their excellent equipment, and 85% of the former students reported that the excellent equipment convinced them to complete the program. Finally, 89% reported that the program was better than others because students were able to choose the career they wanted to study. Overall results of these questions indicated that Oklahoma's DOR projects appear to have excellent program quality.

Students surveyed were asked five questions regarding meaningful outcomes as a result of participating in the DOR program. Of those who responded, only 46% indicated that as a result of the DOR program, they were employed in a career they studied; while 54% indicated they were not employed in a career they studied. These results may be due to employment trends as well as many other factors, but may also indicate that career training and assistance obtaining and keeping jobs may need to be increased in the programs. Only 68% of the respondents indicated that as a result of the program, they had received a high school diploma, while only 18% indicated they had received a GED as a result of

participating in this project. These percentages indicate that only 75% of the responding students had earned either a diploma or GED. While this 75% successful completion rate clearly supports the concept of recovery for the majority of students who had dropped out of school, the remaining 25% who did not earn either a diploma or a GED is a higher percentage than is found in the majority of Oklahoma high schools. Eighty-seven percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that because of their participation in the project, they were prepared to find jobs. This is an important factor as it indicates that the majority of students in the DOR programming are acquiring skills for finding jobs. However, coupled with the other data, it may be necessary to help students obtain and keep jobs as well as complete either a high school diploma or a GED. Former students were also asked about the positive results of participating in the DOR program. Only 23% of respondents indicated they had seen many positive results after their participation in the program, with 44% strongly disagreeing that they had seen many positive results after participation in the program. A definition of "positive results" was not given on the survey, and may be open to interpretation. However, generally speaking, those who responded did not believe they had seen many positive results, and if one of the major foci of the DOR programming is to identify meaningful outcomes, more efforts may be needed to ensure that students find meaningful work and complete their high school diploma or GED requirements to meet this goal. In addition, it may be important to help students prepare and apply for college or work that would provide a meaningful outcome based on their interests and needs. Strengthening the transition from school to work or

postsecondary education efforts may need to be enhanced to improve positive outcomes for many of these students.

The final five questions on the survey related to student satisfaction. Nearly 57% of the students reported strongly agreeing with the fact that they were happy with the education and training received in the program along with another 38% reporting being happy. This is a clear indication that 95% of the students who responded believed the project provided them with good education and training. Eighty-three percent of respondents reported that the amount of support they received from project staff to find a job was very helpful. A high vote of confidence on this issue implies that the majority of Oklahoma's DOR Programs are providing adequate support for students to find jobs.

Many students who dropped out of high school reported that attendance policies were too strict. In the DOR results study, 84% of former students reported that the attendance policy was quite fair. Focus group discussions, as part of the DOR results study, students frequently reported that the attendance policies in some schools were not fair and actually commented on the need to change attendance policies. Some students believed the attendance policies for some DOR Programs were quite fair and were a major reason why they stayed in the program. It is important to note that each DOR program had different attendance policies. Some programs had very strict attendance requirements, while others allowed students to work from home for part of their program. Many students commented that they liked the attendance policy because it let them study one course at a time as opposed to having to attend the same class as others in the program. Some

programs were available during the day, while some were only available in the evening. Some students commented that they believed the End of Instruction (EOI) testing should be online so they could take the tests at the Technology Centers within the required time frame. Only 6% of the respondents reported that they believed the work to be too difficult and left the program because they were failing. Ninety-four percent of the responses clearly indicated that the work was not too difficult. Students were not surveyed about the work being too easy, but it may be important to determine if the work was challenging enough for some of the students. Comments made during focus groups indicated that some students wanted more coursework to prepare for college including foreign languages, psychology, and intramural sports. Finally students reported that 90% of them believed that students were treated with respect from faculty and staff. Respect is often a concern of adolescents, and according to the responses from this study, Oklahoma's DOR Projects provided respect for the majority of students. Overall, student satisfaction was very high.

Interview Analysis

When analyzing interview evidence relevant to research sub question five, nine interviews were conducted with individuals who were past Oklahoma Department of CTE administrators and technology center instructional leaders. These individuals were believed to have knowledge about how successful or unsuccessful DOR Programs have been at serving at-risk youth. Additionally, a focus group was conducted with former students and graduates of DOR Programs.

These students were believed to have had personal experiences in relationship to how successful or unsuccessful DOR Programs have been in serving at risk youth.

When looking at how successful DOR Programs have been and what areas could be improved, narrative data from ODCTE administrator and technology center instructional leader interviews indicated that at least 11 words or words clusters were used to explain how successful DOR Programs have been serving at-risk youth. Of these 11 words/word clusters observed, 6 coded themes were derived. Of the 6 themes, the notion of DOR Programs being successful was the most important aspect, appearing in all interview responses in 36% of the total words/word clusters observed for explaining DOR Programs. The success of DOR Programs was also attributed to their economic benefit. As an illustration, one respondent, who is a former administrator for the OSDE, stated that,

> The median cost per program was $32,763. The median cost per student was $1,349 with a range from $53 to $7,377. Multiplying the estimated savings ($200,000) to taxpayers for recovered dropouts who had positive exits (678), in the year 2009-2010, that savings was $135,000,000. When applied to all students who graduated from alternative education programs- approximately 1/3 of the total number of students served in 2009-1010, the analysis resulted in a benefit to government: $661,800,000.

Others have also found that reducing the amount of dropouts brings great economic benefit to society (Alliance for Education, 2010; Price, 2007; Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006; and Henry, 2005). Ironically, DOR's economic benefit was not one of the more important aspects of its overall success. The most important

themes observed included, learning strategies (27%) and number of students served/graduated (18%). Other less frequent aspects of programming included, program designed based on community needs (9%) and money saved/contributed to the community (9%).

Overall, CTE/SDE administrators and instructional leaders did not feel that there were significant challenges or opportunities for improvement within their DOR Programs or the DOR system as a whole. Ironically, only one of the technology center instructional leaders reported a concern related to the effectiveness of DOR Programs. As an illustration, the instructional leader was asked if the DOR system was effective in serving at-risk youth, he responded by stating,

> If it is to graduate students, in a sense it has, but the quality of the education and the expectations surrounding that education has me wondering how effective the system really may be. The student dropout and credit recovery issue has increased which means that traditional education has not figured out how to temper the issue.

Although this was the only response observed related to the ineffectiveness of DOR Programs, it was evident that several administrators realized that there were some external threats to the system as a whole. For example, several respondents indicated a need for DOR Programs to be funded more adequately to meet the needs of today's youth. As an illustration, an instructional leader from a technology center in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan area indicated that, "The ability to provide consistent and equal services would be so costly. I do not feel that

the state is ready to address those needs." Another respondent, a former administrator for the Oklahoma State Department of Education, indicated that, "Oklahoma education is in the midst of reform. Testing and the millions of dollars to support that effort leaves little for student centered program."

Focus Group Analysis

When looking at areas in which DOR Programs have been successful, narrative data from the former student focus group indicated that at least 26 words or words clusters were used to explain how successful DOR Programs have served at-risk youth. Of these 26 words/word clusters observed, 11 coded themes were used. Of the 11 themes, career strategies, enrollment and student/teacher ratio, and instructional materials utilization were the most important aspects contributing to the success of DOR Programs, all appearing in 19% each (57% combined) of the total words/word clusters observed for describing how DOR Programs have been successful in serving at-risk youth. As an illustration, one former student believed that "the most significant thing was the small class sizes and the teachers were very interactive." This strategy was recognized as an effective one several decades ago as the Urban Superintendents Network (1987) asserted that small class size, which allows for attention to the individual needs of the student, are one of the major strategies needed to serve at-risk youth. Additionally, smaller class sizes allow for informal interactions to occur between teachers and students. This type of setting is characteristic of Type III schools (Raywid, 1994), and can be linked to the success of at-risk students participating in CTE programs (Foley & Pang, 2006). Another program characteristic that the former students felt was a contributor to the success

of DOR Programs included qualified instructional personnel, which appeared in fifteen percent (15%) of the responses and counseling services (8%). One former student felt that "the academic teachers were very qualified in their fields. Anytime that I needed help, they would do a great job in helping me." Another theme observed, but less frequently included, high school credentialing (4%).

When observing the areas in which former students believed DOR Programs were unsuccessful, four qualities appeared only once. They included high school credentialing, career strategies, coordination activities, and instructional materials utilization.

Chapter 5:

Discussion, Implications, Recommendations and Conclusion

Discussion

This historical case study examined DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma. Evidence from multiple data sources including interviews, documents, archival records, and the internet were used to answer each research question guiding this study. An historical account is offered about DOR programming in the state of Oklahoma. In this chapter, I will address the research questions posed in this study pertaining to DOR in Oklahoma with provisional answers and interpretations based upon findings in the data. The introduction, review of literature, and data analysis will also be used to support, enhance, and draw out significant subtleties about the history of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma.

What were the Political, Social, and Economic Implications that Influenced the Development of DOR Programs?

As early as 1982, the Oklahoma State Department of Education began to pilot programs to address the growing concern for the number of high school students leave in Oklahoma schools without a diploma (Storm and Storm, 2004). Influenced by trends in Oklahoma's political, social, and economic climate, the organization of study programs addressing juvenile delinquents changed significantly in Oklahoma during the mid-1990s (Oklahoma Senate, 2000). Before 1995, these programs were under the purview of the Department of Human Services (Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 2011). A separate agency, the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA), was created in 1995 to establish independent

management of the juvenile justice system, a move designed to improve services and hold juveniles more accountable for their actions (Oklahoma Senate, 2000). During this time, crime and the incarceration of juveniles was a notable implication to Oklahoma's political climate (Piquero & Steinberg, 2008). From a social perspective, it also became obvious that Oklahoma youth were leaving school prematurely at an alarming rate (Storm & Storm, 2004). Issues such as drugs, crime, juvenile incarceration, poverty and teen pregnancy were contributors to this "epidemic" (Balfanz, 2008; Milliken, 2007; Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006). When a student dropped out of school both the dropout and the society incurred costs. From an economic perspective, these costs were estimated in terms of lost lifetime income, income assistance, lost tax earnings, higher health costs and higher probability of unemployment, crime, and incarceration (Duncan, 2007; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006b). In Oklahoma, this equated to dropouts earning thousands of dollars less per year than high school graduates (Price, 2007). For the country, a high dropout rate meant lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue over $200 billion for each year's class of dropouts (Catterall, 1985).

In the early 1990s, public concerns over the increased severity of juvenile offenses had pushed juvenile justice reform to the top of the Oklahoma's legislative agenda (Zimring, 1998). In 1994, majority floor leader Lloyd Benson took on this issue during the legislative session. Working with colleagues knowledgeable about the issues involved, including House staff and other stakeholder groups such as the Oklahoma Department of Career Technology Education, he introduced House Bill 2640 which ultimately overhauled the state's juvenile statutes (Office of Juvenile

Affairs, 2013). This overhaul divided juvenile offenders into two groups; those who needed some state intervention and the more difficult offenders who would needed to be placed under jurisdiction of the youthful offender system. The Office of Juvenile Affairs was created to administer this system.

Although House Bill 2640 revamped and hardened punishments for a variety of severe youthful offender crimes, the Bill also created an educational platform to deal with those students who had been unsuccessful in traditional educational settings (Oklahoma House Bill 2640, 1994). Specifically, Benson took the lead in legislation to create a variety of community- and school-based programs designed to deter young people from dropping out of school and to prevent young people from engaging in crime (Oklahoma House Bill 2640, 1994). This legislation committed the state to reforms designed for students who, for whatever reason, were not successful in a traditional educational environment.

Based on criteria specified by the Oklahoma State Board of Education, $2 million in grants were awarded to counties with a high number of dropouts and a high number of referrals to the juvenile justice system. In 1995, an additional $1.65 million was added to continue the eight pilot programs and to increase the number of sites to include nineteen rural models for alternative education. This support by the state legislature continued to increase to an unprecedented $19.7 million until a state funding crisis in FY2001 when funds for alternative education programs, as well as for the funding for general education, were reduced 25 percent. All but 76 of Oklahoma’s 544 school districts have been incorporated into the statewide alternative program. Those unfunded were all K-8 or elementary districts.

Beginning with the 1996-97 school year, House Bill 2640 created a statewide system of alternative education programs whereby each public school district that served students in grades seven through twelve would provide an alternative education program for those children most at risk of not completing a high school education. This alternative education system did not include the area vocational technical school districts, but did establish the opportunity for the state career tech system to provide DOR Programs as a viable option (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2013). As a result, in 1996 DOR Programs were established through partnerships between local comprehensive and technology center school districts. Specifically, technology center school districts began to provide alternative education options for comprehensive schools, utilizing part of their average daily membership (ADM) funding given to schools for students. Two of the original six DOR Programs were located at Great Plains Technology Center (SCORE) in Lawton and at Mid-Del Technology Center (SWAPS) in Midwest City. Later, programs at Southern Technology Center (PASS) in Ardmore; Pioneer Technology Center (SHARE) in Ponca City; Metro Technology Centers (MCA) in Oklahoma City; and Francis Tuttle Technology Center (HOPE) in Oklahoma City were established as well.

When comparing the political, social, and economic climate between the state and the nation during the early to mid-1990s, there was a resemblance on the impact these implications had on both the state and the nation, resulting in national education reform and the development of DOR Programs across the state of Oklahoma.

From a political perspective, the issues of drugs, crime, and juvenile incarceration, were significant implications to Oklahoma's political climate during the development of DOR Programs. These issues were also prevalent in the United States during this period. Consequently in the early to mid it 1990s, the high school dropout became front and center stage and education reform became one of our nation's major priorities. In 1993, Congress passed and President Clinton signed into law all the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which was passed largely due to the fact that the United States had begun to recognize the lack of educational equity and excellence for all students in the country. This act included educational reform that would address graduation rates, responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy. Part of this political agenda was to address drugs, violence, unauthorized presence of firearms, and alcohol, and would offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning for all students. As with Oklahoma House Bill 2640 of 1994, it was critical that the act addressed the needs of all students, even those that were associated with juvenile delinquency.

From a social perspective, the disengagement of youth, the high school dropout problem, drugs, crime, juvenile incarceration, wasted human capital, poverty, and teen pregnancy, were significant implications to Oklahoma's social climate during the development of DOR Programs. On a national level, poverty, drugs, and crime became major issues in the United States and were believed to be associated with students dropping out of school prematurely in the early 1990s. In 1995, the poverty rate for children living with parents who dropped out of high

school was 57%, compared to 4% for children with one parent with a college degree. According to the Annual Population Survey (1998), the schools with the highest percentage of children living in poverty had the highest dropout rate. On the issue of drugs, the 1995 National Household Survey (which collects self-reported information from 4000 to 9000 individuals each year) indicated that drug use had declined, but that illegal drug use among teenagers (ages 12 to 17) increased from 1990 to 1995. This trend was also recognized in Oklahoma, possibly resulting in a higher dropout, crime, and juvenile incarceration rates. Again, these issues made Oklahoma House Bill 2640 of 1994 relevant to not only the climate of the state, but the nation as a whole.

From an economic perspective, a struggling national and state economy, the decline in the oil field industry, dependence on public assistance, and a shortage in the workforce were significant implications to Oklahoma's economic climate during the development of DOR Programs. On a national level, the high school dropout problem, unemployment, and poverty were major concerns as it related to the economy. By the early 1990s, the dropout problem had a cost estimated at over 200 billion a year (Jimerson, 2000), a significant increase from the 1970s and the 1980s. It was realized in the mid-1990s that the higher the dropout rate, the weaker the economy became. Since high school dropouts earned less, it was in inevitable that they would generate fewer tax receipts and more likely recipients of welfare and unemployment payments (US Department of Education, 1996). As with the political and social issues, Oklahoma House Bill 2640 was seen as a solution to

address this problem from a juvenile standpoint (Oklahoma House Bill 2640, 1994).

What was the Original Purpose of DOR Programs?

In their purest and earliest form, DOR Programs were established for the purposes of crime prevention, alternative education, and career specific training.

The first purpose issue, crime prevention, defines DOR Programs as being a preventative measure towards crime, drugs, violence, and other risky behaviors. According to ACTE (2007), society reaps the reward of increased graduation rates as high school graduates are also less likely to commit crime, and more likely to engage in civic activity, including voting and volunteering. To this day, many citizens, educators, and modern stakeholders of DOR Programs fail to realize that the concept of Oklahoma's DOR system was not rooted in education, but that it is one of many components of Oklahoma's juvenile justice reform initiated in 1994. Prior to the development of these programs, the state of Oklahoma, as well as the nation, began to experience trends in drugs, crime, and juvenile incarceration amongst juveniles (Flesher, 2013). Additionally, becoming more apparent over the course of decades, those who were at risk of becoming delinquent often lived in difficult circumstances, including parental alcoholism, poverty, breakdown of the family, overcrowding, abusive conditions in the home, the growing HIV/AIDS scourge, or the death of parents during armed conflicts (World Youth Report, 2003). As a result, crime prevention became the most significant part of House Bill 2640 of 1994. Through the provisions set forth by the newly established Oklahoma Juvenile Authority system, youth were referred to DOR Programs in hope that

specific programmatic strategies would prevent them from succumbing to menacing behaviors that negatively impacted Oklahoma's social climate.

The second purpose issue, alternative education, establishes DOR Programs’ purpose as providing second chances for juveniles who had dropped out of school. Falling under the alternative education umbrella, these programs were designed to provide youth with an untraditional education setting that would allow them to complete requirements for high school credentials, receive social and emotional support, and prepare for the transition from high school to a career or college. Untraditional education includes a number of approaches to teaching and learning separate from what is offered by mainstream or traditional education setting. Small class sizes, close relationships between teachers and students, and a strong sense of community are all fundamental components of untraditional school settings. When looking at the original purpose of DOR Programs, this study found they were developed more in alignment with type II programs as described by Raywid (1994). Type II programs, also known as *Last Chance Schools*, are designed to provide continued education program options for at-risk students. According to Raywid (1994), type II programs are those in which students are “sentenced” to a school or program. Because of DOR’s early association with juvenile delinquency, the programs initially carried the connotation of discipline, which aimed to segregate, contain, and reform troubled youth. As a result, these programs served as a last chance for at risk youth to receive public education. But as the demands and social dynamics of society would become increasing confusing and complex in the 1990s (World Youth Report, 2003), it became increasingly

difficult for youth to negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood. In order to continue their existence in Oklahoma's educational scene, it was important that the DOR Programs recognize this change and incorporate a response in their programmatic designs.

The third purpose issue, career-specific training, indicates that DOR Programs were established to provide opportunities for students to participate in career-specific training. Because of earlier research explaining the benefits of career and technical training, this approach was considered to be critical to the success of DOR Programs as it utilized the strategy of experiential learning to engage and motivate youth that had been unsuccessful in school (Kolb, 1984). Through this strategy, students would be given a chance to acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and feelings in a relevant setting. Experiential learning is more aligned with the CTE model today that prepares students for advanced level occupations in the workforce and postsecondary education through an apprenticeship form of pedagogy and learning.

There are several speculations that can be made about the original motive behind the development of DOR Programs. Although it would be a good argument that the original purpose may have been driven more by national/state concerns about social welfare programs, or even that they were created to substantively address the needs and condition of youth in poor and socially unsupportive circumstances, it appears that the original purpose was based upon the populist attitudes of Oklahoma to keep kids off the streets. As the interview evidence provided, juvenile delinquency was a significant issue in the early 1990s. Similarly,

literature indicates that the 1990s witnessed the broadest and most sustained crackdown ever on serious juvenile offenses (Zimring, 1998). The best explanation for the youth crime scare in the 1990s was a public and legislative reaction to escalating rates of serious youth violence. Between 1980 and 1993, adolescent arrest for homicides more than doubled, and this increase provoked projections of further increases in future years (Zimring, 1998).

Has the original purpose of DOR programming been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light the original purpose?

All of the original components of DOR Programs still remain visible in the concept of dropout recovery today, but a shift in their emphasis has been observed over the years. In their beginning, DOR Programs were more associated with juvenile delinquency and their purpose was primarily focused on crime prevention. These programs were designed largely in part to support the educational needs of youth associated with the Oklahoma Juvenile Authority. However, the 1990s saw major increases in the social issues that were correlated to delinquent and criminal behavior (World Youth Report, 2003). Eventually, DOR Programs began to support all types of students at risk of dropping out and those who would benefit from a nontraditional education setting (ACTE, 2007; Kazis, 2005).

New purposes have also emerged over the years. Today, these programs address a variety of issues, but tend to focus more on the issues of graduation and obtaining a high school diploma or GED, credit recovery, and providing students with opportunities to participate in career specific training. This new focus can be attributed to recognition that students who have dropped out of school do not

necessarily have behavioral problems. Contrary to the 1980s when a growing number of alternative schools were geared towards students who were disruptive in school (Young, 1990), DOR Programs began to focus on the students' needs for academic and social rehabilitation (Raywid, 1994). These new foci included life skill preparation, counseling services, work-based learning experiences, and mentoring. The emergence of these themes of program focus can likely be associated with the changes of philosophies and expectations as it relates to the responsibilities of school. Unlike expectations prior to the 1970s, schools are more often found to be responsible for providing a holistic educational learning environment to students. This includes supporting the academic needs of the students as well as their physical and emotional needs. With a variety of social challenges prevalent in the nation and Oklahoma (crime, drugs, violence, poverty, changing workforce expectations, etc.), it is critical that students of today are prepared with a variety of academic, career, and social skill sets to navigate in today's society (Kazis, 2005). Today, DOR Programs involve the diversification of traditional education by utilizing distinctive educational strategies to meet the many needs and interest of specific groups of students. Most importantly, DOR Programs are continuing to adapt to the nation's ever-changing environment, and are centering their programmatic designs on the expectations of Oklahoma's society, and their local communities at large.

Demographically, how have dropout recovery programs looked over time and what can be discerned from such changes?

This study observed several themes related to how DOR Programs have looked over time. Specifically, the research took an overall look at the demographics pertaining to gender, ethnicity, and enrollment with special student demographic characteristics in mind. The data were collected utilizing extant information from 1999 to 2008, which included a population of 9611 students that have been served through DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma (ODCTE DOR Report, 2008).

When determining student ethnicity of all DOR Programs in Oklahoma from 1999 to 2008, Caucasian students have been the majority, followed by African-American, then Hispanic, Native American, and lastly Asian. When comparing ethnicity percentages of all DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma to the enrollment of students in all technology centers statewide, there is difference in the ethnicity breakdowns amongst students served. In FY 2012, ODCTE reported Caucasian students were overwhelmingly the majority, followed by Native American, African American, then Hispanic, and lastly Asian. Although there are more Native Americans being served in technology centers statewide, it can be concluded that African-American and Hispanic students are more likely to be enrolled in DOR Programs.

When examining gender, males have been the majority of students who have been enrolled in DOR Programs. Although males can be considered the majority, females have been enrolled slightly less than half of the time. When

examining special demographic characteristics of students who have been enrolled in programming, Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) were the majority, followed by students who were pregnant, adjudicated, identified and serviced by an individualized education plan (IEP), and homeless. The minority of those students enrolled under special demographic characteristics were those considered to be teen parents at the time of enrollment.

When looking at the overall demographics, which include ethnicity, gender, and other demographic characteristics, the majority of students have been white, male, and enrolled under some special demographic characteristic. The minority student has been female and Asian.

The most obvious thing that can be discerned from the changes in DOR program demographics is that there appears to be a decreasing trend in those students enrolled under special demographical characteristics. Specifically, five out of the six special demographic characteristics (pregnant, homeless, parenting, adjudicated, and IEP) observed saw a decrease in the average of those students enrolled between 1999 and 2008. Additionally, the number of students enrolled under the special demographic characteristic of AFDC/TANF appeared to have an increase over the ten year inquiry period. This observation should provide great concern for taxpayers and legislatures as it could be exposing an even greater problem within Oklahoma communities; an increasing dependence on government assistance.

The most unexpected finding about the changes in DOR program demographics over time was that of ethnicity. Overall, the ethnicity levels of enrollment remained steady over the 10 year inquiry period, with whites having the majority of enrollments, followed by African-American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and multiracial groups. It was expected that the white ethnicity group would maintain the majority over this period, but it was also expected that there would have been a more dramatic increase in Hispanic and African-American enrollments as well. This was especially anticipated as previous literature has repeatedly emphasized the rapid growth of the Hispanic community and the issues that have arisen related to Hispanic and African-American school completion (Gausted, 1991; Howley & Haung, 1991; Penberthy, 1997; Pallas, 1987;, Gruskin, Campbell, Paulu, & OERIUSN, 1987; Vail, 1998; Vaznaugh, 1995). This unrealized change in DOR program enrollments is even more so confusing in that most of the current DOR Programs are located in heavy populated areas, including urban and suburban areas near several of Oklahoma's largest cities (Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Lawton, Ardmore, Ponca City, Midwest City, and El Reno), the same cities that have reported that the Hispanic communities have almost doubled statewide over the last decade (Borgerding, 2012). This may be exposing a broader issue at hand, considering that for some reason Hispanic students are not benefiting from the opportunities that DOR Programs are providing.

How have dropout recovery programs been evaluated, and historically, how have these programs been successful and what opportunities exist within these programs serving at-risk youth?

DOR Programs have been evaluated on 11 standards since the year 2008. Prior to 2008, there is no history of DOR Programs being evaluated through ODCTE. These standards include the areas of high school credentialing, career strategies, coordination activities, enrollment and student/teacher ratio, instructional materials utilization, qualified instructional personnel, credentialing plan, program goals and objectives, program advisory committee, counseling services, and student accounting and reports. Since 2008, the DOR Programs have been evaluated in three year intervals. Remarkably, all six DOR Programs observed between 2008 and 2012 passed their evaluations and every standard was achieved with a passing score.

On-site evaluations are conducted by evaluation teams that consists of individuals considered to have expertise in the programs including, visiting teachers, program administrators, instructional leaders, and representatives from relevant divisions of ODCTE. The responsibility of the team is to review the program's self-study, complete the appropriate evaluation instruments, and write a narrative summary of the evaluation findings and conclusions. This narrative summation includes the commendations and strengths of the programs, specific recommendations for improvement for any standards that were not met, and general suggestions for improvement as related to the program minimum standards. An oral report of the evaluation team's findings is presented to the institution's

administrative staff, with time allowed for discussion of the findings. When looking at why these programs have been successful, evaluation findings associated with six DOR Programs indicate that much of the success can be attributed to the DOR Programs' ability to integrate learning strategies, support strategies, quality instructors, low teacher/student ratios, innovative instructional materials, qualified personnel, and data collection strategies. Career preparation, career education, community involvement, and life skills training strategies are also considered to be significant to their success as well. From an evaluative standpoint, DOR Programs from 2008 to 2012 have been successful in serving at-risk youth and achieving the expectations set forth by the ODCTE.

When analyzing the successfulness of DOR Programs through interviews with stakeholders of DOR Programs (e.g. ODCTE staff, technology center administrators, and former students), evidence indicated that they believe DOR Programs have been successful overall. Accordingly, key themes in DOR Programs' success include learning strategies offered, number of graduates from programs, student/teacher ratios, instructional materials utilization, qualified instructional personnel, and counseling/support services.

When looking at areas in which DOR Programs have been challenged or have opportunities for improvement, evidence indicated that both high school credentialing and credentialing planning were the most significant issues limiting the success of DOR Programs. This could be the result of DOR Programs not having the ability to transcript academic credit, and that any academic credit awarded must be done in collaboration with the sending school district of that

student. Unfortunately, DOR Programs can only recommend academic credit and the transcription of credit is at the discretion of the sending school district. If a seamless credentialing process is not planned or practiced between the local DOR Programs and their sending school districts, delays and inaccuracies in academic credit awarded can be expected, potentially causing the issuance of high school diplomas to be in jeopardy as well.

Implications

Research

The most important contribution that this research makes is that it provides a solid foundation for the programmatic concept of DOR in the state of Oklahoma. Prior to this research, very limited information existed that explained how DOR Programs emerged on Oklahoma's educational scene, what their purpose has been, what types of students have enrolled, how many students DOR has served, how these programs have been evaluated, how successful they have been, and what opportunities for improvement exists within these programs serving at-risk youth. The new knowledge I have provided through this research will hopefully serve as a catalyst for future inquiry about DOR Programs in the state.

Although history has been rendered through this study, there is still much room for further research that can serve as advocacy for DOR program existence. For example, it will be important to know how successful students have been after graduation from DOR Programs. Since career specific training is such an important aspect with DOR, one could research the related and positive placement rates of former students. Questions like, "Where do they work?" or, "How much do they

make?" or, "Are they attending College?" are questions that can help determine the effectiveness of DOR Programs. This information can be accessed through the ODCTE follow-up system, which is required to be done by every technology center and the state of Oklahoma. Additionally, studies can be done to research the potential economic and social effect that DOR Programs have had on their communities. For example, if a given DOR program has served over 1000 students since its inception, it would be good to know how the graduation of those students has positively impacted the society. As discussed earlier in this study, the economic and social impact of graduates can be correlated to tax revenues, welfare expenditures, standard of living, unemployment, and crime. In order for these programs to continue to be replicated across the state and funded in the future, it is important that future researchers emphasize the return of investment that DOR Programs can offer individuals, local communities, state, and the nation as a whole.

Policy

There should be several types of policies or legislative actions considered as a result of this research. For example, a policy that recognizes the value of DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma could be accomplished through provisions of additional funding. In the past there has been an attempt to pass legislation that would increase Career Tech funding to expand DOR Programs statewide (HB 1667 of 2007, authored by Rep. Ken Lutrell of Ponca City), but that attempt failed 66-44 on a party line vote. Even those associated with Career Tech saw this idea as being "too ambitious" (ODCTE Administrator, interview, 2008). One who would

advocate for DOR Programs may naturally agree with the intent of the HB 1667, but may soon realize that this may not have been the smartest solution.

For example, when comparing regions, a ten percent dropout rate looks a whole lot different in Oklahoma City than it does out in the Panhandle. This way of thinking is likely to be more responsible with tax payers' dollars and more realistic in addressing the need of an obviously dynamic problem. A more reasonable and realistic solution would be a policy that allows ADM funding to follow the student into DOR Programs. One may speculate that this process is already occurring, and in a sense it is, but the technology centers in many cases are not shared an adequate amount of ADM funding proportional to the amount of time students are enrolled in DOR courses. In many cases, students are spending 100% of the time at the technology centers, but may only receive a portion of ADM funding from the partnering school district. As a result, many DOR Programs may be doing all the work, but may not be funded appropriately to do the work. This is a problem, and a policy that requires equitable funding between the technology center and the partnering sending school district would greatly benefit the DOR system as a whole.

Another example of a policy that should be considered relates to DOR Programs' ability to transcript high school credit. For example, a technology center in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan area provides opportunities for DOR program students to enroll and complete academic course requirements. However, official transcription of the earned credit cannot be done by the technology center alone, as this process can only be completed through the acknowledgement and approval

from a partnering comprehensive school district. Consequently, this has presented great challenges to the DOR program system, and as a result, many delays and inaccuracies in student record reporting have occurred. A great benefit of the modern DOR system is that many programs offer flexible learning environments, as students are not bound to seat time and can progress in their studies at their own pace. This is quite beneficial to a student who has gotten behind or is over age for the current grade they are in, but it defeats the purpose if the transcription process hinders their ability to officially gain credit in a timely manner. A policy that provides DOR Programs the ability to transcript academic credit will certainly benefit the programs and allow for a more seamless transition for students pursuing high school diplomas and post-secondary education.

Practice

In practice, this research has provided a qualitative account of the history of DOR Programs and how they have benefited the state of Oklahoma, but I believe that there are some fundamental issues that still need to be considered in order for DOR Programs to exist in the future. First and foremost, I believe that the current DOR program evaluation system needs a process overhaul. As I inquired about specific things to get a grasp on how effective DOR Programs have been over time and what impact they have had on their communities, I repeatedly found that there were major gaps and inconsistencies in how the information was collected. Additionally, it is also unclear what the desired outcomes are for programs within the DOR system. Through my observation, as well as personal experience, I have only seen an emphasis made on the inputs (enrollments) and throughputs

(instruction) of DOR programming, but not an emphasis on the outputs (results). At a minimum, you need five pieces of information in order to understand levels of performance, find gaps in performance, and improve performance. The five pieces of information are center, spread, shape, trend and results compared to benchmarks (Ewy, 2009). Additionally, if program indicators are not adequately and sufficiently operationalized both in terms of measurement and processes for collecting measurement data the information collected is flawed and does not give a true reflection of program performance. This appears to be the case with the current DOR program evaluation process, and changes will have to occur in order for the DOR system to effectively and accurately communicate the success and impact of DOR Programs throughout the state of Oklahoma.

Recommendations

While the body of literature containing information about high school dropouts, alternative education, and CTE strategies serving at-risk youth is quite extensive, the information regarding current practices specifically related to DOR Programs in the state of Oklahoma is lacking. In order for DOR Programs to exist as viable strategies for serving at-risk youth and those who have dropped out of high school, it is recommended that some very important issues be considered in the future.

As a system, DOR Programs are lacking a systematic process that provides evidence of their success, opportunities for improvement, and overall impact to the state of Oklahoma. This is quite troubling; especially since the availability of literature explaining their history and purpose hinders the opportunity to create new

knowledge and advocacy towards their existence. The solution is not simple, but not overly complicated either. It is imperative that the ODCTE and the DOR Program system embark on a strategic effort to define what's important and how and when those things that are important are being measured.

As mentioned earlier in this study, all technology centers are responsible for providing follow-up results for students previously enrolled in career training programs. These results answer questions such as "What are they doing now?", "Did they complete the program", "Where do they work", "How much do they make", and "What certifications did they gain". Additionally, program measures such as retention, completion, and positive/related placement are key indicators of success within the follow-up process. Making this process an expectation for all DOR Programs would be a good start in developing accountability within the system. Additionally, it will be important that the DOR system incorporate other fundamental goals necessary for a system that serves its purpose. For example, this research has provided that one of the major purposes for DOR Programs is to give a second chance for juveniles to complete high school diploma requirements. If this is so, then it is only logical that the DOR system utilize completion data to determine its effectiveness and impact to Oklahoma's society. Clearly explaining their impact to Oklahoma and understanding their opportunities for improvements in practice and execution, will increase the likelihood of DOR Programs to be supported socially, politically, and economically as a viable strategy for serving at-risk youth and those who have dropped out of high school.

Another important issue to consider is the changing demographics in the state of Oklahoma. As the majority of Oklahoma counties have had significant increases in the Hispanic communities, it will be important that DOR Programs adapt to this change in demographics and work to find ways to ensure that Hispanic students are provided opportunities to enroll in DOR Programs. This idea applies to any culture or race that sees significant demographic changes in Oklahoma. DOR Program enrollment demographics should be proportional and reflective of the dropout issues and needs within the community.

Lastly, and from a programmatic perspective, DOR Programs should re-evaluate their credentialing processes and funding structures. The inability to transcript academic credit has greatly hindered DOR Programs ability to progress students forward in the credit obtainment process. At this point, the ability to transcript academic credit could be considered as a paradigm shift in thinking, as in the past, both those associate with comprehensive education schools and those associate with "vo-tech" believed that academics had no place in technology centers. This reality has come to past, as CTE has been identified as a strategy for dropout prevention and recovery. Additionally, ADM funding has been inequitable between DOR Programs and partnering sending school districts. As provided in this research, many DOR Programs are not receiving an adequate share of ADM funding, and the decision about the percentages is controlled mainly by the partnering school district. Unless legislation is passes that sets up a universal credentialing process and funding structure for DOR Programs, it is recommended that other alternative school models such as charter schools, which would provide

programs more flexibility in school processes such as credentialing and enrollment, or the Full-Service Community School model, which strategically seeks mutually beneficial partnerships with local agencies, businesses, in order to counter the typical cost of providing students the support needed to help them graduate.

Conclusion

The contributions of this research could not have been made at a better time, as dropout recovery has generated major interest in the last couple of years. New models of dropout recovery, including re-engagement centers, charter school networks, and public-private partnerships are blossoming nationwide. But so far, most of these programs are pockets of promise rather than comprehensive public-policy strategies (Sparks, 2013). The fact remains that a disproportional amount of attention has gone to identifying teenagers who are at-risk of dropping out compared to the efforts expended on bringing back those students who have left. Educators and researchers who work with at-risk students say that there is no way to really achieve the Graduation Nation goal of a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020 without taking the time to find, bring back, and keep the students who have already fallen through the cracks (Sparks, 2013). I agree with this philosophy, and hope that this research has contributed new knowledge to the area of dropout recovery and that it serves as a catalyst for future research addressing the high school dropout problem.

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APPENDIX A

University of Oklahoma

Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title:	A Historical Analysis of Dropout Recovery Programs in the State of Oklahoma
Principal Investigator:	Dennis L. Portis III
Department:	Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted at Metro Technology Center and the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. You were selected as a possible participant because it has been determined that you may be knowledgeable about the history of dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study
The purpose of this study is:

To research the history of dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma.

Number of Participants
About six (6) people will take part in this study.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

You will be asked to participate in an interview. The interview will be audio-taped. The interviews will be conducted in person at a location convenient for you.

Length of Participation
Interviews will last approximately 30 to 90 minutes.

This study has the following risks:
Interview questions are designed for the participant to provide perspectives about a program and not opinions about any specific individual, group of people, or organization. However, if the participant believes that it is necessary to provide information about a specific individual, group of people, or organization, to answer interview questions, and that information is considered negative in nature, the researcher will take the following precautions to reduce the possibility of risks and discomfort from participating in their interview: (a) Participants will be free to discontinue the interview at any time; (b) Researcher will not name participants or their specific school/district in any research reports stemming from this study; (c) Researcher will not play the audiotape of the interview except for transcription and coding; (d) Audiotapes of interviews will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office and will be destroyed in 2013.

Benefits of being in the study are
Currently, there is no documented history on the existence of dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma. Data collected from the interviews will be used to render a history about their existence, which will be beneficial to technology centers, the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, and the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Confidentiality
In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you without your permission. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

The OU Institutional Review Board may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis.

Compensation
You will not be reimbursed for you time and participation in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Contacts and Questions
If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at

Principal Investigator: Dennis L. Portis III, phone: 405-414-7199, email:dportis@gmail.edu

Advisor: William Frick, phone: 405-325-xxxx, email:frick@ou.edu

Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions or if you have experienced a research related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

____

Signature Date

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol for ODCTE Administrator and Technology Center Instructional Leaders

The following questions were chosen to draw evidence about the history of dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma. Specifically, these semi-structured interviews were designed to draw evidence about the original purpose of dropout recovery programs, and to find what political, social, and economical implications influenced the creation of these programs.

Protocol:

1. What has been your connection(s) with dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma?
2. Who were the key players and what were the key circumstances giving rise to the implementation of dropout recovery?
3. With that connection that you've had, what are some of the political implications that you have observed, or have been made aware of that had influenced the creation of these programs?
4. From a social perspective, what social implications were visible or relevant to the United States, and more specifically, Oklahoma, during the creation of these programs?
5. When considering the economy, what condition were the United States' economy, and more specifically, Oklahoma's economy, during the creation of these programs? What issues related to Oklahoma's economy made the development of dropout recovery programs a viable option?
6. How, if any, has the political, social, and economic landscape changed from the original conditions that gave rise to dropout

recovery in Oklahoma? What specific conditions can be attributed to the longevity of the programs?

7. What, from your knowledge and understanding, were the original purposes and ideals of dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma? Has that purpose, from your perspective, been sustained over the years or has that purpose evolved? Please provide details to why do you feel this way.
8. From your perspective, have dropout recovery programs been successful or unsuccessful in serving at-risk youth? Why or why not?
9. Where do you see dropout recovery programming going and what do you believe is its future? How do you know? What supports your informed opinion?
10. Would you like to add anything else in relationship to the history of dropout recovery programs? If so, why would this be important to a study rendering the history of these programs?

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Interview Protocol for Former Dropout Recovery Program Students

The following questions were chosen to draw evidence about the history of dropout recovery programs in the state of Oklahoma. Specifically, these semi-structured interview questions were designed to draw evidence about the effectiveness of dropout recovery programs through the perspectives of former students.

Protocol

1. What time periods were you enrolled in a dropout recovery program?
2. Why did you choose to enroll in a dropout recovery program?
3. From your experience, what are dropout recovery programs doing to be successful?
4. From your experience, what might be causing dropout recovery programs to be unsuccessful.
5. What was unique about the structure (both academic and non-academic) of the dropout recovery program you attended in comparison to the previous school(s) you had attended?
6. Did you graduate with your high school diploma, GED, and/or a career certification? If you did graduate with a high school diploma, GED, and/or career certification, do you think your dropout recovery experience effectively prepared you for college, other forms of postsecondary education, or the workplace? Why or why not?
7. Do you feel that the academic instructors in your program used a variety of instructional materials and delivery methods to meet the

needs of all students and the requirements of the GED/high school diploma?

8. Do you feel that the career training instructors in your program used a variety of instructional materials and delivery methods to meet the needs of all students and the goals and objectives of the career training program?
9. Do you feel that your academic instructors were qualified to teach subject areas pertaining to the requirements of the GED/high school diploma? Why or why not?
10. Do you feel that your career training instructors were qualified to teach subject areas pertaining to the goals and objectives of the career training programs? Why or why not?
11. On average, about how many students were in your academic class and in your career training class?
12. Do you feel that the necessary equipment and supplies were made available to you in both your academic instruction and career training experience?
13. Do you feel that the dropout recovery facilities were adequate in classroom space and utilities including storage areas, restrooms, and offices?
14. Do you feel that the career training program you participated in ensured that the safety features in the instructional facilities and equipment were properly?
15. Do you feel that dropout recovery program encouraged community involvement and promoted a greater understanding of the program's needs and accomplishments?
16. Do you feel that student leadership activities were considered an integral part of course instruction? Gives some examples to why you feel this way.

17. Were you ever contacted by your institution after you graduated or left the program? If so, what for?
18. Do you feel that your instructor(s) ensured that students had proper work-related training experiences that met the goals and objectives of the career training program? Why or why not?
19. Would you refer someone else to a dropout recovery program if they are not succeeding in a traditional setting? Why or why not?
20. Would you like to make any other comments pertaining to your experience in a dropout recovery program?

APPENDIX D

Oral History Reminder List

The following steps were used as a strategy while preparing for and conducting interviews. Moyer (1993) provided these guidelines and suggestions to make interviewing for history simple and effective.

1. Decide your research goals and determine if oral history will help you reach them. You may find that your goals change. Do, however, focus.
2. Conduct preliminary research using non-oral sources.
3. Define your population sample. How will you select the people you will interview? Contact potential interviewees, explain your project, and ask for help.
4. Assemble your equipment to fit your purposes. Research and choose the kind of recording that you need to produce and then choose your equipment. For example, does it need to be broadcast quality? Does it need a long life? What can you afford?
5. Use an external microphone for better sound quality. This also applies to video.
6. Test your equipment beforehand and get to know how it works under various conditions. Practice using your equipment before going to the real interview.
7. If audio cassette taping, use sixty-minute tapes that screw together.
8. Compile a list of topics or questions.
9. Practice interviewing.
10. Make a personalized checklist of things you must remember to do before, during, and after the interview.
11. Verify your appointment a day or two before the interview.
12. On the day of the interview, give yourself extra time to get there.

13. Interview and record in a quiet place. When setting up, listen for a moment. Make adjustments, such as stopping the pendulum on the tick-tock clock, putting out the dog that's chewing noisily on the recorder cord, and closing the door on the noisy traffic.
14. Make sure the interviewee understands the purpose of the interview and how you intend to use it. This is not a private conversation.
15. Start each recording with a statement of who, what, when, and where you are interviewing.
16. Listen actively and intently.
17. Speak one at a time.
18. Allow silence. Give the interviewee time to think. Silence will work for you.
19. Ask one question at a time.
20. Follow up your current question thoroughly before moving to the next.
21. Usually ask questions open enough to get "essay" answers unless you are looking for specific short-answer "facts."
22. Start with less probing questions.
23. Ask more probing questions later in the interview.
24. Wrap up the interview with lighter talk. Do not drop the interviewee abruptly after an intense interview.
25. Be aware of and sensitive to the psychological forces at work during the interview.
26. Limit interviews to about one to two hours in length, depending on the fatigue levels of you and your interviewee.
27. In general, don't count on photos to structure your interview, but you can use them as initial prompts. Carry large envelopes for borrowed and labeled artifacts such as photos.
28. Label and number all recordings immediately.

29. Have the interviewee sign the release form before you leave or send a transcript to the interviewee for correction before the release form is signed.
30. After the interview, make field notes about the interview.
31. Write a thank-you note.
32. Have a system to label and file everything. Do it.
33. Copy borrowed photos immediately and return the originals. Handle all photos by the edges and transport them protected by stiff cardboard in envelopes. Make photocopies for an interim record.
34. Copy each interview tape. Store the original in a separate place and use only the duplicate.
35. Transcribe or index the recordings. Assign accession numbers to recordings and transcripts. Make copies of all work. Store separately.
36. Analyze the interview. Verify facts. Compare your results with your research design. Did you get what you need? What further questions do the interview results suggest? What improvements in your method do the interview results suggest?
37. Go back for another interview if necessary.
38. If you decide to, give the interviewee a copy of the recording or transcript. Ask for transcript corrections and a release form.
39. Make provisions for long-term storage.

APPENDIX E

Pre-Interview, Interview, and Post-Interview Checklist

Pre-Interview Action	Check if Complete
Schedule Interview	
Input calendar reminder in Microsoft Outlook and send reminder to interviewee.	
Send interviewee informed consent	
Test voice recorder before hand	
Verify interview appointment a day or two before the interview	

Interview Action	Check if Complete
Leave for interview early. Give yourself extra time to get there	
Ensure that interview is conducted in a quiet place.	
Ensure that interviewee understands the purpose of the interview and how you intend to use it.	

Post-Interview Action	Check if Complete
Label and number all recordings immediately.	
Have the interviewee sign the release form before you leave.	
Make field notes about the interview (if necessary).	
Send thank you note.	
Transcribe or index the recordings.	
Analyze the interview. Verify facts.	
Note what improvements in your method do the interview results suggest.	

APPENDIX F

The Accuracy and Usefulness of Physical Evidence Form

The following questions, as suggested by Clark (1967), will be asked to determine the accuracy and usefulness of physical evidence used in the case study.

Document Title: ________________________Type: _________________

1. Where has the document been and what is its history?

2. How did the document become available (public domain, special considerations)?

3. What guarantee exists that the document is appropriate, accurate, and timely?

4. Is the integrity of the document without concern?

5. Has the document been changed in any way?

6. Is the document representative under the conditions and for the purposes it was produced?

7. Who created the document and with what intention (potential bias)?

8. What were the sources of information (original source, secondary data, other) used to create this document?

9. Do other sources exist that can be used to confirm the information in the document?

APPENDIX G

DOR Evaluation Standards

Standard 1(High School Credentialing): Dropout Recovery Program will provide high school credential opportunities that will increase high school completion rate for the state of Oklahoma.

Evaluation Questions

1. Does the dropout recovery program gather census data on communities that are served to ensure that all possible clients are being recruited?

   Sample Documentation: Census data, demographic information, sending school demographic data, DHS, court system

2. Does the dropout recovery program offer both avenues: a GED or a high school diploma?

   Sample Documentation: Plan of study, GED requirements

3. Are records of high school completion by dropout recovery students documented to the appropriate agencies?

   Sample Documentation: Follow-up reports, quarterly reports to ODCTE, reports to sending schools

Standard 2 (Career Strategies): Dropout Recovery Program will provide career strategies through a technical program or and employment component to enhance potential for employment.

Evaluation Questions

1. Do the dropout recovery students maintain dual enrollment and career tech programs?

Sample Documentation: Class rosters with dual enrollment

2. Does the dropout recovery program all for career readiness opportunities to students?

   Sample Documentation: Curriculum, schedule classes, guest speakers

Standard 3 (Coordination Activities): Dropout Recovery Program works with agencies and entities serving juvenile populations in the intake and screening process to determine educational placement of students.

Evaluation Question

1. Does the dropout recovery program administration interact with partner agencies and entities that serve juvenile populations?

   Sample Documentation: Contact list of agencies and entities, meeting agendas, e-mail, and telephone contact log.

Standard 4 (Enrollment and Student/Teacher Ratio): Dropout Recovery Program will ensure class sizes and students/teacher ratios are conducive to effective learning of at-risk students.

Evaluation Question

1. Does the dropout recovery program maintain levels of class size based on SDE recommendations for class sizes?

   Sample Documentation: Class rosters

Standard 5 (Instructional Materials Utilization): Incorporate appropriate structure, curriculum, interaction and reinforcement strategies designed to provide effective individualized instruction that meet PASS Skills requirements as mandated by Oklahoma State Board of Education.

Evaluation Question

1. Does the dropout recovery program provide documentation that that PASS objectives are addressed and the curriculum development on an individualized basis?

   Sample Documentation: syllabus, crosswalks of curriculum to PASS, lesson plans and EOI scores

Standard 6 (Qualified Instructional Personnel): Demonstrate that teaching faculty are appropriately licensed, certified, or alternatively certified and have been selected on the basis of factors that qualified them to work with at-risk students.

Evaluation Question

1. The dropout recovery program document that teaching faculty are appropriately licensed, certified, or alternatively certified and have been selected on the basis of factors that qualify them to work with at risk students? This includes teachers of core subjects meeting Highly Qualified status as required by Oklahoma State Department of Education.

   Sample Documentation: Current license/certification for each teacher for area they are responsible for teaching. Reports of subject areas assessments that teachers are highly qualified to teach or H.O.U.S.S.E. forms documenting highly qualified status for each staff member that is teaching core subjects the plan for teacher to reach highly qualified status

Standard 7 (Credentialing Plan): An individualized credentialing plan will be developed for each student based on career goals and high school graduation requirements for each sending school district or preparation for a GED.

Evaluation Question

1. Will the dropout recovery program individualize each student's credentialing plan?

   Sample Documentation: Plans of study, assessment results, intake documentation

Standard 8 (Program Goals and Objectives): State clear and measurable program goals and objectives.

Evaluation Question

1. Does the dropout recovery program have a long-term strategic plan in place that includes; annual and long-term goals as well as short-term objectives or benchmarks to show steps and progress to reaching goals?

   Sample Documentation: strategic plan, timelines to reach goals and documentation of progress towards achieving goals

Standard 9 (Program Advisory Committee): Develop and advisory board that includes a minimum of six members from a diverse population including but not limited to: educational entities, social/community service organizations, parents and/or student, and juvenile justice representatives.

Evaluation Question

1. Does the dropout recovery program utilized and advisory Board to assist in planning for student success?

   Sample Documentation: List of board members and meeting times, minutes of meeting as well as interactions such as visits to members and members'

interaction with students and other board members; how information is shared and suggestions are implemented

Standard 10 (Counseling Services): Include counseling and social service components to remove barriers for student success. Providers of services are not required to be certified and school counselors.

Evaluation Question

1. Are counseling services offered to all dropout recovery students?

   Sample Documentation: loss sheets on interaction time with students, list of agencies used in interactions, referrals to and from other agencies and the results, counseling session plans

Standard 11(Student Accounting and Reports): Submit program and student information as requested by ODCTE.

Evaluation Question

1. Does the dropout recovery program administrator supply requested information to ODCTE?

   Sample Documentation: credits earned, student demographics, students served versus students seeking services, credentialing, completion and retention rates

When looking at how successful or unsuccessful dropout recovery programs have been, past evaluations from six DOR Programs from 2008 to 2011 were used to determine the effectiveness of these programs. Table 5 provides a graphical display of the results.

APPENDIX H

Coding of Evidence

What were the political, social, and economical implications that influenced the development of these programs?

(Coded Interview Evidence)

A Historical Analysis of Dropout Recovery Programs in the State of Oklahoma

What were the political, social, and economical implications that influenced the development of these programs? (Political)

IID	EVTYPE	CODE	Word/Word Cluster	Coding Key	
1	INTERVIEW	A	huge cost of incarcerating juveniles	**A**	Crime and Incarceration Costs of Juveniles
1	INTERVIEW	A	invest in keeping kids out of jail	**B**	High School Dropout Problem
2	INTERVIEW	A	cost of trying to cure the problem	**C**	Student Discipline Reform/Corporal Punishment
4	INTERVIEW	B	interim study related to the number of high school dropouts, and then somebody said let's look at how many of those are in prison	**D**	House Bill 2640 (Juvenile Justice Reform Act)
6	INTERVIEW	B	Data gathered to determine the dollars needed to address the need for alternative education programs indicated that over 36,000 students had been suspended and approximately 8,500 students had dropped out of Oklahoma's schools.	**E**	School Law (10 Day Rule)
5	INTERVIEW	C	inability of the schools to administer punishment, short of expulsion or suspension, has led to an increased dropout rate and has also caused other societal problems such as our prison growth in our state, especially among young offenders.	**F**	End of Instruction (EOI) Legislation
5	INTERVIEW	D	The unofficial title of it bill was the Juvenile Justice Reform Act. This was a crime prevention bill. It re-established the office of juvenile affairs in the state of Oklahoma, it set up academies for alternative education in our state which had been hit and miss. This set up funding for academies in all areas in Oklahoma, rural and metropolitan. It also provided seed money for implementing a grant program through career tech to solve the dropout recovery of the dropout problem in our state.		
6	INTERVIEW	D	In 1995, the emphasis on Oklahoma's most at-risk youth came primarily out of directives from Oklahoma's Juvenile Justice Reform Act.		
4	INTERVIEW	E	School law also changed on attendance. In extracurricular you got the 10 day rule. Could be gone half the year for extracurricular and no one track of that. That also could cause success not to happen		
9	INTERVIEW	F	Oklahoma has a serious drop out problem and legislation has required students to pass End of Instruction exams that if not passed will keep them from graduating. Schools are being held accountable for the delivery of education through site report cards. This measure has increased the number of students being released from the traditional setting.		

A Historical Analysis of Dropout Recovery Programs in the State of Oklahoma

What were the political, social, and economical implications that influenced the development of these programs? (Social)

IID	EVTYPE	CODE	Word/Word Cluster	Coding Key	
1	INTERVIEW	A	the waste of human capital	**A**	The State's Recognition of Wasted Human Capital
2	INTERVIEW	A	wasted potential	**B**	Disengagement of Youth in School/High School Dropouts
1	INTERVIEW	B	We truly believe that the kids we can reach with occupational training	**C**	Drugs, Crime, & Juvenile Incarceration
3	INTERVIEW	B	the social implication was that you put a square page in a round hole, and now you have this other option which up to now has been very successful	**D**	Poverty
	INTERVIEW	B	They were so bored in class that they started falling behind in the third, fourth, and fifth grades, and so they just quit going to school	**E**	Rising Teen Pregnancy Rates
4	INTERVIEW	B	there was a whole lot of community concern about dropouts	**F**	The State's Recognition of Alternative Education Programs as Being Effective Strategies
4	INTERVIEW	B	the state Department of Education started the alternative education division	**G**	Inadequate Services Provided to Minority Populations
8	INTERVIEW	B	The reasons for creation of credit recovery and drop out programs was to address the ever growing numbers of drop outs that were occurring in the Oklahoma City Public Schools and metropolitan areas.		
4	INTERVIEW	C	criminal record		
4	INTERVIEW	C	drugs		
4	INTERVIEW	C	we had a big drug problem in Oklahoma that was contributing to the number of juvenile offenders and adult offenders		
5	INTERVIEW	C	What we had learned in our state was that a significant amount of juvenile driven crime was occurring in day time when these little baggers were out of school, and they were out reeking havoc in our neighborhoods		
7	INTERVIEW	C	More dropouts enter the judicial system and prison population as well.		
4	INTERVIEW	D	poor home life		
4	INTERVIEW	E	The other thing that happened that year was that it was a big concern the number of pregnancies, teenage pregnancies		
7	INTERVIEW	E	Females who drop out of school are more likely to become mothers at a young age, be single parents and need government assistance.		
6	INTERVIEW	F	Data from decades of research clearly shows that students in the alternative education academies improve their grades, improve their attendance, increase the number of courses passed, and decrease dramatically the number of behavioral referrals.		
6	INTERVIEW	F	It was common for students who had experienced years of academic failure and countless suspensions, to find that the smaller environment and new strategies from carefully selected teachers were the necessary incentives they needed to thrive and to offer leadership no one anticipated.		
9	INTERVIEW	G	The number of minority students that Oklahoma has not been able to successfully serve.		

A Historical Analysis of Dropout Recovery Programs in the State of Oklahoma

What were the political, social, and economical implications that influenced the development of these programs? (Economical)

IID	EVTYPE	CODE	Word/Word Cluster	Coding Key	
1	INTERVIEW	A	not in real good shape	**A**	Struggling Economy
3	INTERVIEW	A	At that time, and it's not like now, there were people struggling to make ends meet	**B**	Decline in Oil Field Industry
3	INTERVIEW	B	It was the oil field bust in the early 80s	**C**	Shortage in Workforce
4	INTERVIEW	B	We just finished an oil boom and we just recovered partially from the downturn	**D**	Economical Costs to High School Dropouts was Visible
4	INTERVIEW	C	And if we don't start getting more high school seniors with high school diplomas, and getting them to go to work with skilled labor versus them going to prison, we would not have enough people to build a workforce		
2	INTERVIEW	D	we tried to make taxpayers, or potential tax payers out of persons that could potentially be dependent upon public assistance		
6	INTERVIEW	D	Oklahoma's leaders knew that they could not continue to ignore the numbers of dropouts, juvenile justice referrals, and suspensions.		
7	INTERVIEW	D	Lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue		

What was the original purpose of dropout recovery programs?

(Coded Interview Evidence)

A Historical Analysis of Dropout Recovery Programs in the State of Oklahoma

What was the original purpose of dropout recovery programs?

IID	EVTYPE	CODE	Word/Word Cluster	Coding Key	
1	INTERVIEW	A	provide an alternative venue for kids	A	To Provide an Alternative Learning Environment that is Supportive for Students who had not been Successful in School
2	INTERVIEW	A	one size doesn't fit all as it comes to education	B	A Crime Prevention Strategy
1	INTERVIEW	A	kids that for one reason or another were not successful at their home high school	C	A Workforce Development Strategy
2	INTERVIEW	A	these programs are a second, third or even a fourth chance that these young people have to come back and realize their potential		
1	INTERVIEW	A	Often times that had to do with contextual academics		
2	INTERVIEW	A	social judgment on these young people has changed the things that they face out there as young people that are possibly different such as peer pressure, more bullying, more things like that		
3	INTERVIEW	A	The teachers are not their parents, but they give them more advice than any of their family		
5	INTERVIEW	A	was all included to get kids who were out of schools and on the streets to get them off the streets and back in school		
5	INTERVIEW	A	career tech to solve the dropout recovery of the dropout problem in our state		
6	INTERVIEW	A	The original purpose was to serve students in grades six through twelve who were in danger of not completing a satisfactory education and graduating from high school.		
6	INTERVIEW	A	The original purpose was to serve students in grades six through twelve who were in danger of not completing a satisfactory education and graduating from high school.		
8	INTERVIEW	A	traditional high school programs and delivery an alternative pathway to obtaining a high school diploma and transitioning them into forms of		
9	INTERVIEW	A	To serve the widespread dropout issues		
4	INTERVIEW	B	wanted a place to send OJA referrals		
5	INTERVIEW	B	This was a crime prevention bill		
7	INTERVIEW	B	I think because of juvenile justice reform and school reform.		
4	INTERVIEW	C	the need to have a high school diploma and GED to enter the workplace		
4	INTERVIEW	C	if we didn't increase the number of high school graduates in the state of Oklahoma, then we were not going to have enough people to feel the jobs of 2015 and 2020		

Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light of the original purpose?

(Coded Internet Evidence)

A Historical Analysis of Dropout Recovery Programs in the State of Oklahoma

Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light of the original purpose?

PID	EVTYPE	CODE	Word/Word Cluster	Coding Key	
1	INTERNET	A	Designed to reconnect youth, to an educational and occupational goal	A	Being Available for High School Dropouts/Students At Risk of Dropping Out
2	INTERNET	A	Who have not succeeded at the traditional high school	B	Providing an Opportunity for Students to Obtain High School Diploma/GED
3	INTERNET	A	Students who exited the program before graduation	C	Providing Students a Combination of Career & Academic Training
5	INTERNET	A	Who have left the educational environment, or are at severe risk of dropping out of school	D	Life Skill Preparation
6	INTERNET	A	Who have already dropped out of high school	E	Alternative Education Setting
7	INTERNET	A	Who have dropped out of school or are at immediate risk of dropping out of school	F	Counseling Services
1	INTERNET	B	Allows a student to pursue a high school diploma	G	Work-Based Learning Experiences
3	INTERNET	B	Regaining credits for a diploma or GED	H	Mentoring
4	INTERNET	B	Students may earn their high school diploma by achieving credits		
5	INTERNET	B	Have an opportunity to earn their high school diploma or GED		
6	INTERNET	B	Students will earn a high school diploma		
7	INTERNET	B	Allows learners to receive a high school diploma		
1	INTERNET	C	Half-time vocational training		
3	INTERNET	C	Pursue a technical field of study		
6	INTERNET	C	Students participate in one of Metro Tech's full-time career majors		
1	INTERNET	C	Half-time academics		
6	INTERNET	C	Students spend half days attending academic courses		
2	INTERNET	C	Combines an academic component with occupational training		
4	INTERNET	C	Students are enrolled in three hours of career instruction and three hours of academics		
5	INTERNET	C	Combines the academic classroom with specific career training		
7	INTERNET	C	provides academic and technical training opportunities		
1	INTERNET	D	Help the student prepare for the "real world"		
4	INTERNET	D	Life skills training		
5	INTERNET	D	The program includes life skills training		
6	INTERNET	D	Students are instructed in the following life skill competencies		
2	INTERNET	E	Opportunity to continue their education in a different setting		
4	INTERNET	E	Offer alternative pathway for a student to achieve his or her goals		
2	INTERNET	F	Receive individual and career counseling		
5	INTERNET	F	Personal and career counseling		
5	INTERNET	G	Job shadowing		
5	INTERNET	H	Mentoring from business and community leaders		

A Historical Analysis of Dropout Recovery Programs in the State of Oklahoma

Has the original purpose been sustained over time or have there been modifications and changes that evolved in light of the original purpose?

PID	EVTYPE	CODE	Word/Word Cluster	Coding Key	
1	INTERVIEW	A	I think it has sustained and it's even more critical at this juncture than it was back then. I think he is off course into adulthood a lot faster now than they were in the 1980s. They come with adult baggage and we have to help them figure out how pack and unpack and get where they want to get.	A	Purpose has sustained (Social Implications)
4	INTERVIEW	A	I think were still doing a very good job of doing that. The programs have matured and the programs are doing a better job of meeting those objectives.	B	Purpose has evolved (Political Implications)
2	INTERVIEW	A	The social judgment on these young people has changed the things that they face out there as young people that are possibly different such as peer pressure, more bullying, more things like that.		
3	INTERVIEW	A	I just have one little thing and that evolvement a lot of times has had to happen because of the breakdown of the family unit.		
4	INTERVIEW	A	We've implemented best practices within the schools so we can better meet those students needs. A lot of time dropout recovery programs from my perspective does a better job with meeting individual needs of students.		
7	INTERVIEW	A	Because it is another approach to serve students that have such a hard time with typical school		
2	INTERVIEW	B	Yes these programs have evolved a great deal in my opinion. I think people have been very good to look and see what worked, what didn't work, and why it didn't work and change what didn't work to make it where it would.		
6	INTERVIEW	B	With the change in leadership at the state level, other priorities became the agenda		
9	INTERVIEW	B	The programs have has sustained itself but the growing numbers of high school drop outs and the increasing pressures for student performance through EOI and Common Core have forced many administrators to refer more and more students into alternative education programs.		

How have dropout recovery programs been evaluated, and historically, how have these programs been successful or unsucessful serving at-risk youth?

(Coded Document Evidence)

A Historical Analysis of Dropout Recovery Programs in the State of Oklahoma

How have dropout recovery programs been evaluated, and historically, how have these been successful and what opportunities for improvement exist with these programs serving at-risk youth?

PID	EVTYPE	CODE	Word/Word Cluster	Coding Key	
1	DOCS	A	reviewing goals for clarification	A	High School Credentialing
1	DOCS	A	including stronger documentation of the measurable outcomes	B	Career Strategies
2	DOCS	B	instructors be encouraged to utilize the Applied Technology, Writing, Business Writing, Listening, and Observation instructional components of KeyTrain to augment the students' life skills and career-readiness instruction	C	Coordination Activities
4	DOCS	B	program be extended to include a second year component that reaches out to include curriculum that has internships, shadowing, mentoring and work based learning experiences	D	Enrollment & Student/Teacher Ratio
2	DOCS	C	documentation of such interaction was not evident in the self-study materials	E	Instructional Materials Utilization
3	DOCS	F	validate H.O.U.S.S.E. credentialing	F	Qualified Instructional Personnel
5	DOCS	G	develop and deploy a Student ILP-Individualized Learning Plan	G	Credentialing Plan
6	DOCS	G	implementation of a GED preparation course	H	Program Goals & Objectives
1	DOCS	I	supporting documentation of how these suggestions, from the advisory committee, are implemented into the program	I	Program Advisory Committee
4	DOCS	J	it was determined that to better serve the needs of the students in the program, a "care manager/family outreach" person be implemented into the program	J	Counseling Services
				K	Student Accounting Reports