

1-1-2004

At-risk students: Teacher perception of literacy and criminal behavior

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This research is a product of the graduate program in [Early Childhood, Elementary, and Middle Level Education](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

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At-Risk Students: Teacher Perception of Literacy and Criminal Behavior

(TITLE)

BY

Traci Jo Ann Reiter

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in Education in Elementary Education

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2004

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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ABSTRACT

An ever present concern within our education system is literacy. The implications of an illiterate population could be detrimental to the American way of life. Without literacy, America could not be a self-governing society. Without literacy, there are no critical thinkers. Without critical thinkers, society could not govern itself. Even Thomas Jefferson argued that literacy was vital to America if it wanted to become a political democracy (Macionis, 2005). With crime on the rise and prisons becoming increasingly overcrowded, educators and society are faced with the responsibility of finding out what will become of our low literate students. Are low literacy levels predictors of later criminal behavior? Moreover, do low literacy levels among at-risk students predispose them to criminal behavior? To answer these questions, descriptive research was conducted to determine teacher perceptions of literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among at-risk students. The subjects of the study consisted of teachers (N=12) from the Bridges Program, an alternative school, and schools (N=6) from the Illinois Regional of Office of Education #11 area. Teachers completed the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey in order to provide insight concerning teachers' perceptions of literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among at-risk students. Literacy and at-risk data collection from these schools was obtained from the *2003 Illinois School Report Card* for each school. Descriptive analysis of survey, literacy, and at-risk data sets was performed to determine patterns or relationships. More research is needed such as a causal comparison study to determine if illiteracy causes criminal behavior.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this master's thesis to the people who have supported or assisted me during this project.

To my family, especially my parents Robert and Patrice Reiter, who encouraged me to advance my education and provided the necessary emotional support for that to be possible.

To my friends, especially Lori Driver-Dixon, Karen Hartbank, and Tom Ethridge, who provided perspective when I had none.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the individuals who have been instrumental in the completion of this project. I would like to acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Merribeth Bruning, for without her patience and perseverance this project would not have been completed. I would like to acknowledge my other committee members, Dr. Marilyn Lisowski and Dr. William Reed Benedict. I offer a special thank you to Dr. Lisowski for her commitment to this research project in the various forms it took and for her infinite wisdom to all things research. I offer a grateful acknowledgement to Dr. Benedict who brought the sociological perspective to this research and who has sparked in me a deeper interest in the sociology of education. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the Bridges Program teachers for their participation in this project.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Importance of the Study

An ever present concern within our education system is literacy. Children come to school with a desire to read. The better part of early elementary school is spent acquiring the necessary skills needed to read. Throughout the middle and upper elementary grades, reading becomes a critical skill that is nourished and refined in hopes of passing knowledge onto students. High school attempts to expand the literacy abilities of students, allowing them to explore the world and the opportunities available to them as they embark upon adulthood. However, the undesirable reality is that not every child completes this process successfully, nor becomes a literate and productive member of society, therefore making literacy a constant and primary concern among educators and society.

The implications of an illiterate population could be detrimental to the American way of life. From the conception of America, education and literacy have been the modes of social and economic mobility. Without literacy, America could not be a self-governing society. Without literacy, there are no critical thinkers. Without critical thinkers, society could not govern itself. Even Thomas Jefferson argued that literacy was vital to America if it wanted to become a political democracy (Macionis, 2005). Therefore, the first institution for many citizens is the public school system where parents send their children in hopes of a brighter future. Today, the goal of many is to move from the public school system to institutions of higher learning which requires literacy.

However, there are others who do not find upward mobility in the education system and instead encounter frustration and failure. Among this population, a growing number are moving into less desirable institutions, correctional institutions.

With crime on the rise and prisons becoming increasingly overcrowded, educators and society are faced with the responsibility of finding out what will become of our low literate students. Are low literacy levels predictors of later criminal behavior? Moreover, do low literacy levels among at-risk students predispose them to criminal behavior? Educators and data analysis of literacy levels can provide insight into these and other literacy related questions. Therefore, there is a need to examine teachers' perceptions of the relationship between literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among students in the at-risk population.

Statement of the Problem

Do teachers perceive a relationship between literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among at-risk students?

Hypothesis

Teachers perceive a relationship between literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among at-risk students.

Definition of Terms

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) – a program that provides adults instruction in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics.

- Alternative School – an elementary or secondary school for children who have failed to behave or perform within the standards of conduct at a traditional school.
- At-risk – factors that may impede students from academic success including, but not limited to, racial/ethnic minority status, economically disadvantaged (low-income), learning disabled, behavioral disordered.
- Correctional Education -- any form of educational enhancement provided by a correctional institution.
- Crime – a social harm that the law makes punishable (Garner, 1999).
- Crimes against Persons – a category of criminal offenses in which the perpetrator uses or threatens to use force, such as murder, aggravated assault, or robbery (Garner, 1999).
- Crimes Against Property – a category of criminal offenses in which the perpetrator seeks to derive an unlawful benefit from, or do damage to, another's property without the use or threat of force, such as burglary, theft, or arson (Garner, 1999).
- Criminal Offense - a breach of the criminal code.
- Curriculum – a set of courses for study offered by an educational institution or program.
- Delinquency – behavior or conduct that is not in accordance with social norms or the law.
- Document Literacy – the skills required to locate and use information found in printed materials such as on a job application, a bus schedule, or tax forms (Haigler, 1994).

- Drug Crimes – any crime committed in which drugs are sold, purchased, found in possession, or being trafficked.
- Functionally Illiterate – the ability to function in society when lacking literacy abilities.
- Illinois Learning Standards (ILS) – the 30 goals and 98 standards that all Illinois public school students should know or be able to do in the seven core academic areas of language arts, mathematics, science, social science, fine arts, physical development and health, and foreign languages as a result of elementary and secondary schooling (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004).
- Illinois School Report Card – public record mandated by state and federal law that provides information on students, instructional setting, school district finances, academic performance, performance on state assessments, adequate yearly progress, and planned improvement for the school and district (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004).
- Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) – an exam administered to Illinois students in grades 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 that measures individual student achievement in relation to the Illinois Learning Standards in reading, mathematics, and writing in grades 3, 5, and 8 and science and social studies in grades 4 and 7 (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004).
- Illiterate – the inability to read printed materials consisting of words and numbers in order to derive information.

- Literacy – the ability to read printed materials consisting of words and numbers in order to function in society. Equated with educational attainment or educational level.
- Literacy Tasks – any task that requires the use of printed materials to find information, such as reading a paragraph, finding a location on a map, or the use of numbers for arithmetic operations.
- Low-Income Students – students who come from families receiving public aid, live in institutions, or with a foster family supported by public funds, or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch; equated with the term economically disadvantaged (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004).
- Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) – an exam administered to Illinois students in grade 11 that measures individual student achievement in relation to the Illinois Learning Standards in reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social science (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004).
- Prison – a state or federal facility of confinement for convicted criminals (Garner, 1999).
- Prisoner - a person who is serving time in prison, also known as an inmate (Garner, 1999).
- Prose Literacy - the skills needed to use information from texts that include editorials, news stories, poems, and fiction (Haigler, 1994).
- Quantitative Literacy – the skills required to use and apply arithmetic operations found in printed material such as balancing a checkbook or calculating a tip (Haigler, 1994).

- Sentence – the judgment that a court formally pronounces after finding a criminal defendant guilty, such as a sentence of 20 years in prison (Garner, 1999).
- Sex Crimes – crimes committed that are sexual in nature, such as rape, molestation, or sexual assault.
- Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey – survey used to gather data on teacher perception. The survey includes four sections: personal information, professional information, six five-point Likert-scaled statements, and two open-ended questions.

Assumptions

The following assumptions underlie the study:

1. Teachers' perceptions of the relationship between literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among the at-risk population is valuable and worthy of research.
2. Reading is a necessary life skill and worthy of study.
3. Criminal behavior is a persistent problem in society and worthy of study.
4. The study will include only demographic and academic data reported from *2003 Illinois School Report Cards*.
5. The data used from the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards* are valid and reliable.
6. Literacy is equated to educational reading level.
7. Literacy is determined based on percentages of students passing or exceeding the Illinois Learning Standards as reported by the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards*.

8. The Illinois Standards Achievement Test and the Prairie State Achievement Examination are valid and reliable measures of literacy.
9. The Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey is a valid and reliable instrument to measure teacher perception of literacy levels as predictors of criminal behavior.
10. Teachers were surveyed on a voluntary basis.
11. The survey was completed conscientiously by qualified Illinois teachers.
12. The schools selected are a representative sample of the Coles County area.

Delimitations

The following delimitations underlie the study:

1. The study was limited to teachers at one alternative school.
2. The study was limited to data from six public schools.
3. The study was limited to schools in the Coles County area.
4. The study was limited to 12 teachers' perceptions in the Coles County area.
5. The study was limited to demographic and information data from the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards*.
6. The literacy data was limited to scores from the Illinois Standards Achievement Test and the Prairie State Achievement Examination.
7. The study was limited to the use of percentages as to meeting or exceeding Illinois Learning Standards to determine literacy levels.

8. Measurement of teachers' perceptions of literacy levels as predictors of criminal behavior was limited to the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey.

Limitations

The following limitations underlie the study:

1. The use of students in grades 6-12 limits the generalizability of the results to students in grades K-5.
2. The use of at-risk students limits the generalizability of the results to gifted or heterogeneous populations.
3. The use of the students in Coles County limits the generalizability of the results to other students in Illinois or in other states.
4. The focus of study on literacy limits the generalizability of the results to other factors than socioeconomic status that could be related to crime.
5. The focus of study on low-income students limits the generalizability of the results to other factors related to crime such as substance abuse.
6. The use of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test and the Prairie State Achievement Examination for literacy levels limits the generalizability of the results to other assessments of literacy.
7. The use of data from the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards* limits the generalizability of the results to other assessments of demography.

8. The use of data from the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey limits the generalizability of the results to other assessments of teachers' perceptions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will review the literature related to literacy and crime. The information will be divided into four basic areas: literacy levels of prisoners, types of crime, literacy and delinquency, and the relationship between literacy levels and types of crime.

Literacy Levels of Prisoners

The studies that examined the literacy levels of prisoners are reviewed in this section.

Loeffler and Martin (1982) performed a study on the existence of Adult Basic Education (ABE) curricula for functionally illiterate adult inmates in state correctional education programs. State Department of Corrections (N=44) responded to a questionnaire about ABE curricula. From the states' response, 37.6% use ABE as a basis for curricula. Data on inmate population indicated that 28 of 38 states with an ABE curriculum have an average educational achievement between the fifth and seventh grades, with 32 states below the seventh grade. The findings reported supported that there was no nationwide ABE curricula for the functionally illiterate inmate attending educational programs in state correctional institutions.

A report on the data of education and correctional populations was presented by Harlow (2003). The surveys (N=7) used to compile the data included the Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities, 1991 and 1997; Survey of Inmates in Local Jails, 1989 and 1996; Survey of Adults on Probation, 1995; National Adult Literacy Survey; and Current Population Survey. The findings indicated that correctional

populations were less educated than the general public. The number of prisoners without a high school education increased from 1991-1997 and that 75% of state inmates did not have a high school diploma. In addition, the data reported stated the main reason for school dropouts was behavior or academic problems. The data also found that less educated inmates were more likely to be recidivist than educated inmates.

Haigler (1994) reported on the National Adult Literacy Survey among the U.S. prison population. Inmates (N=1,150) from federal and state prisons (N=80) from across the country completed a survey including background information and three literacy tasks. Background information included demographics, education, and reading practices. The literacy tasks included prose, document, and quantitative tasks. Scores reported were based on scales that were divided into five levels, Level One (0-225), Level Two (226-275), Level Three (276-325), Level Four (326-375), and Level Five (376-500). Findings that were reported focused on literacy skills, before and during incarceration, recidivism, and literacy practices and self-perceptions. Approximately 7 in 10 inmates performed at levels one and two in all three literacy tasks. Reading proficiencies were much lower than those of the general household population and educational attainment was highly correlated with literacy proficiency.

A study of the characteristics of a sample of inmates received by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction was performed by Littlefield (1989). Information obtained about the inmates (N=1,722) included race, age, educational level, estimated time to serve, and tested educational level. Findings reported that the high school completion rate among female inmates (N=166) was over 42% and among male inmates (N=1,556) it was over 60%. Recommendations from the study included an

emphasis on educational and vocational programs to help with the institution to community transition, continuing mandatory adult basic education for those inmates performing below the sixth grade level, and continuing high school equivalency programs.

A study to examine the perspectives that inmates had of their literacy needs and how those needs were being met in British Columbian correctional facilities was performed by Thomas (1992). Questionnaires were sent to adult correctional facilities (N=9) in which inmates (N=78) were interviewed. History of academic failure and weaknesses were prevalent among inmates. Findings indicated that inmates had positive feelings about their educational experiences, but that they were not in favor of mandatory educational assessments or attendance unless there were incentives. Recommendations from the study included improving services for low-literate adults and for improving the literacy environment.

Black performed a study comparing the literacy abilities of Australian prisoners and the general adult population (1990). The study also compared the literacy abilities of male (N=97) and female (N=95) inmates. The literacy tasks included document literacy, prose literacy, and quantitative literacy in the form of a questionnaire. Data were compared based on mean scores and percentages of correct responses for each item within each literacy area. The findings contradicted the belief that the Australian prison population was illiterate. Overall, the prison population did as well on the literacy tasks as the general population. The difference in literacy between the males and females within the prison population was small.

Hansell (1992) performed an attitudinal survey examining the opinions of two groups within a prison population regarding their personal literacy development. Male inmates (N=32) voluntarily participated in the survey. Half of the men were students and the other half were tutors. Information on the population included reading ability based on standardized test scores, years of schooling completed, racial mix, and general childhood information. The survey included questions according to four types of variables (educational, environmental, physical, and psychological). The results of the survey were analyzed through the SAS computer program. The findings indicated that those inmates that were proficient readers felt competent while reading and read for a purpose, while the other inmates had been influenced by physical or environmental liabilities. Limitations of the study included the reliability of the prisoners' answers based on memories and that the population was not representative of the entire prison population.

Brennan and Brennan (1984) examined the literacy needs of prisoners in Australia. Data were gathered through interviews and questionnaires of inmates (N=62) from five Australian prisons. The focus of the study was on the prisoners' opinions and appraisals of their reading and writing abilities. Suggestions on how reading and writing instruction within the prison system could be improved were also examined through inmate comments and suggestions. The findings indicated that the most common request among prisoners for aiding in their literacy needs was the implementation of a literacy education program.

Types of Crime

The studies that examined types and statistics of crime are reviewed in this section.

Harrison and Karberg (2004) presented data on prison and jail inmates from the National Prisoner Statistics and the Annual Survey of Jails from 2003. Statistics were reported for each state and the federal system and trends found since 1995 were included. Also included in the data were the total numbers in regards to race, gender, Hispanic origin, capacity of jails, and occupancy. A highlight of the report was that the prison population has increased by 40,983 which has been the largest increase in four years.

The prevalence of state and federal imprisonment in the U.S. population was examined in a report by Bonczar (2003). Estimates in the report included individuals that were imprisoned but on parole or released from parole. The lifetime chances of going to prison were examined using standard demographic life table techniques. The likelihood of imprisonment for persons born in 2001 was projected using estimations of age, gender, race, and Hispanic origin. Highlights from the report concluded that over 5.6 million U.S. adults have served time in prison and that U.S. residents between the ages of 35-39 in 2001 were more likely to have gone to prison than any other age group.

The Illinois Department of Corrections (2003) reported departmental data that examined both the corrections population and the department's infrastructure. Areas examined were the demographics of inmates including race, gender, and county in which the crime was committed. The number of offense classes and offense types were reported, and the numbers of inmates in the varying security level institutions were reported. Other statistics included in the report were juvenile offenders, budget, workforce, facilities, sentence exits, admissions, and recidivism rates. Findings of the

report included that 43,186 males and females were in the population as of June 30, 2003. Males accounted for 94% of the population. Crimes against persons were the most prevalent at 43%, followed by drug crimes at 25%, and crimes against property at 22%.

Literacy and Delinquency

The studies that examined the relationship between literacy and delinquency are reviewed in this section.

Pope (1977) performed a follow-up study of learning disabled children (N=47) to examine the relationship between reading ability, school status, and involvement with the police. During the initial study, the children were of a mean age of nine. During this study, the children attended a clinic weekly for two and a half hour sessions for 5 months to 2 years. The children received psychological and educational intervention including therapy groups and crisis intervention education. During the follow-up study, the children were of a mean age of 15 and had not attended the clinic for at least two years. At follow-up time, none of the children had a major encounter with the law, 81% were functionally literate, and all were either employed or attending school. The results indicated that learning remediation at the clinic may have had an effect on the students to not become involved in crime. The projection made by the study was that if this population had not received intervention, one third would have had encounters with the law.

A study that evaluated a multi-level intervention was performed by Land and Menzies (2003). The study focused on at-risk students (N=210) and used primary and secondary levels of support to improve literacy and behavior. The findings suggested

that a multi-leveled approach to intervention that consisted of both literacy and behavioral components improved reading achievement among students at varying degrees of risk. It was noted that there were no significant statistical data concerning behavior change and student risk status.

Wiley and Rios (1999) implemented a collaborative problem solving process for academic and behavioral remediation students. In this study, a second grade student (N=1) with behavior problems was the focus of the application of this process. A curriculum-based intervention plan was devised and used in place of a traditional psychoeducational process. The findings showed that reading ability and attention during class time increased while off-task and disruptive behaviors decreased.

Relationship between Literacy Levels and Types of Crime

The studies that examined the relationship between literacy levels and types of crime committed are reviewed in this section.

Lochner and Moretti (2001) examined the effect of education and participation in crime and incarceration. Data from the U.S. Census and changes in state compulsory attendance laws were examined to estimate the effects. Findings indicated that more secondary schooling resulted in the reduced probability of incarceration. The research also found that the main aspects of education and lack thereof related to murder, assault, and motor vehicle theft.

Bland (1968) performed a study to determine the association between levels of reading and computational achievement with the following variables: age, offense, and grade completion in school. The population included inmates (N=1,816) from varying

ages, types of custody, and types of offenses. The inmates were divided into two groups. Group I included inmates (N=597) who had not reached the fourth grade. Group II included inmates (N=1,219) who had reached the fourth, but not the eighth grade. Inmates filled out a 40 item questionnaire and took a series of achievement tests. The findings indicated that there was no significant correlation between reading level and offense in either group. In Group II, there was a great significance between reading level and age. Also, there was a significant relationship between grade completion and level of achievement in reading and computation.

Summary of the Literature Reviewed

The research on the literacy of inmates indicated that the prison population performed at a lower literacy level than the general population. Within the prison population, literacy levels varied. Some prisoners were functionally illiterate meaning that they could not read the prison intake materials and had difficulty functioning in correctional education programs. A large segment of the prison population was at the lowest levels of literacy. The number of inmates without high school diplomas was in the majority and increasing. The research also showed that literacy proficiency was highly correlated to educational attainment, leading to the conclusion that many inmates barely completed the latter half of grade school. However, there was a part of the population that was proficient in reading and read for a purpose.

The research made some conclusions about those prisoners with literacy problems. First, for those who were high school dropouts, the main reasons for dropping out were behavior and academic problems. Second, prisoners with weak literacy skills

had a history of academic failure and weakness. Third, many prisoners were plagued by physical or environmental factors that contributed to their literacy problems. Finally, the less literate prisoners were more likely to be recidivists than their more literate counterparts.

The research on crime indicated that crime was increasing in the United States and as a result, so was the prison population. The reports concluded that the prison population has made the largest increase in 4 years, over 5.6 million U.S. adults have served time in prison, and that U.S. residents between the ages of 35-39 in 2001 were more likely to have been in prison than any other age group.

The research on the relationship between literacy levels and delinquency concluded that a two part program of academic remediation and a behavioral program help increase literacy and decrease behavior problems. Children who receive both types of remediation are less likely to be involved in criminal behaviors.

There has been minimal research on the relationship between the literacy of prisoners and the types of crime committed and that research is conflicting. One study found that there was a relationship between aspects of education and crime. However, the other study found that there was not a significant correlation between reading levels and offenses.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Procedures involved in the study are reviewed in this chapter. This chapter includes four sections: overall design, population, implementation, and statistical analysis.

Overall Design

Descriptive research was conducted to determine teachers' perceptions of literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among at-risk students. Participating in this study were teachers (N=12) from the Bridges Program, an alternative school servicing the Illinois Regional Office of Education #11 (ROE #11) area. Teachers completed the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey (see Appendix A). To provide information on the students that the surveyed teachers work with, additional data were gathered from a representative sample of the schools (N=6) in the ROE #11 area. Data collected included information on literacy, graduation, and at-risk status. These data were collected from the Illinois State Board of Education's *2003 Illinois School Report Cards*. Descriptive analysis of literacy data and at-risk data sets was performed to determine any patterns or relationships among the representative schools and to support the statements made by the participating teachers. Descriptive analysis of the data from the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey was performed to determine the overall perceptions of teachers as related to literacy, graduation, and crime.

Population

The population of the study consisted of teachers (N=12) from the Bridges Program, an alternative school servicing the Illinois ROE #11 area. The seven counties included in this region are Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Moultrie, and Shelby. The Bridges Program provides services for students in grades 6-12 who have been referred to the program after repeated unsuccessful encounters at their home schools. Teachers completed the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey to provide insight into teachers' perceptions of literacy levels as a factor in future criminal behavior among at-risk students.

The other population of the study consisted of schools (N=6) from the ROE #11 area. From ROE #11, three school districts were randomly chosen using a number chart: Charleston Community Unit School District #1, Paris Union School District #95, and Shelbyville Community Unit School District #4. Since the survey participants teach students from grades 6-12 in these districts, the middle and high schools were used for data collection: Charleston Middle School; Charleston High School; Mayo Middle School; Paris High School; Moulton Elementary School; and Shelbyville High School. Literacy and at-risk data collection from these schools was obtained from the *2003 Illinois School Report Card* for each school.

Instrumentation

Data collection included teacher perceptions, literacy levels, and at-risk percentages.

Teacher perceptions were gathered using the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey. The surveys were distributed to teachers who work at the

Bridges Program. Before taking the survey, teachers were required to fill out the Participant Consent Form which explained the benefits and risks of the survey (see Appendix B). The survey first gathered data on the grade levels taught, number of students at-risk for any reasons in his/her classroom, years of teaching experience, and gender. The survey then included six statements concerning the teachers' perceptions of the relationship between literacy and future criminal behaviors and literacy and at-risk status, such as low-income or graduation status. The statements employed a Likert Scale. The survey concluded with two questions in a free-response format to allow the teachers to express their opinions as to what other factors may lead to criminal behavior and as to what interventions could be taken to promote literacy among at-risk students.

Data were collected to analyze the student population that is in the Bridges Program area. Literacy, low-income, and graduation rates were gathered from a representative school sample (N=6). From the seven county area, three school districts were selected randomly using a number chart. From each district, one middle school and one high school were chosen for data collection. The following schools were chosen: Charleston Middle School; Charleston High School; Mayo Middle School; Paris High School; Moulton Elementary School; and Shelbyville High School.

Literacy information was collected from the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards*. Literacy scores were determined in accordance to the percentages of students meeting or exceeding Illinois Learning Standards as determined by the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) for the middle schools and the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE). The ISAT reading percentages were collected for students in grade 8. The PSAE reading percentages were collected for students in grade 11.

Information gathered on the at-risk population was limited for the purpose of this study. Students may be considered at-risk for many reasons. At-risk students may be of an ethnic or racial minority, have a disability, be homeless, come from a home with parents who dropped out of school, or from an economically disadvantaged home. Due to available data, the at-risk population highlighted in this study consisted of students who were economically disadvantaged, or low-income. Rates of students classified as low-income were gathered from the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards* for each selected school. Low-income rate scores for literacy information are based on students receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

In addition, information concerning graduation rates was collected. At-risk students were those students whose academic success was in possible jeopardy. Therefore, collecting data on graduation rates provided insight into what percent of the school population was considered at-risk. In addition, research has shown that criminals are more often high school dropouts than high school graduates (Harlow, 2003).

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis procedures were conducted in the department of elementary education at Eastern Illinois University. Microsoft Excel was used to perform descriptive analysis for the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey and the literacy and at-risk data from the Illinois State Board of Education.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Results for this study are recorded in this chapter. The chapter is divided into four sections: quantitative results from the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey, qualitative results from the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey, quantitative results from the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards*, and hypothesis.

Quantitative Results from the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey

The Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey identified personal information, professional information, and the degree of agreement for literacy and criminal behavior statements. Data related to this information is provided in the following graphs.

Personal Information

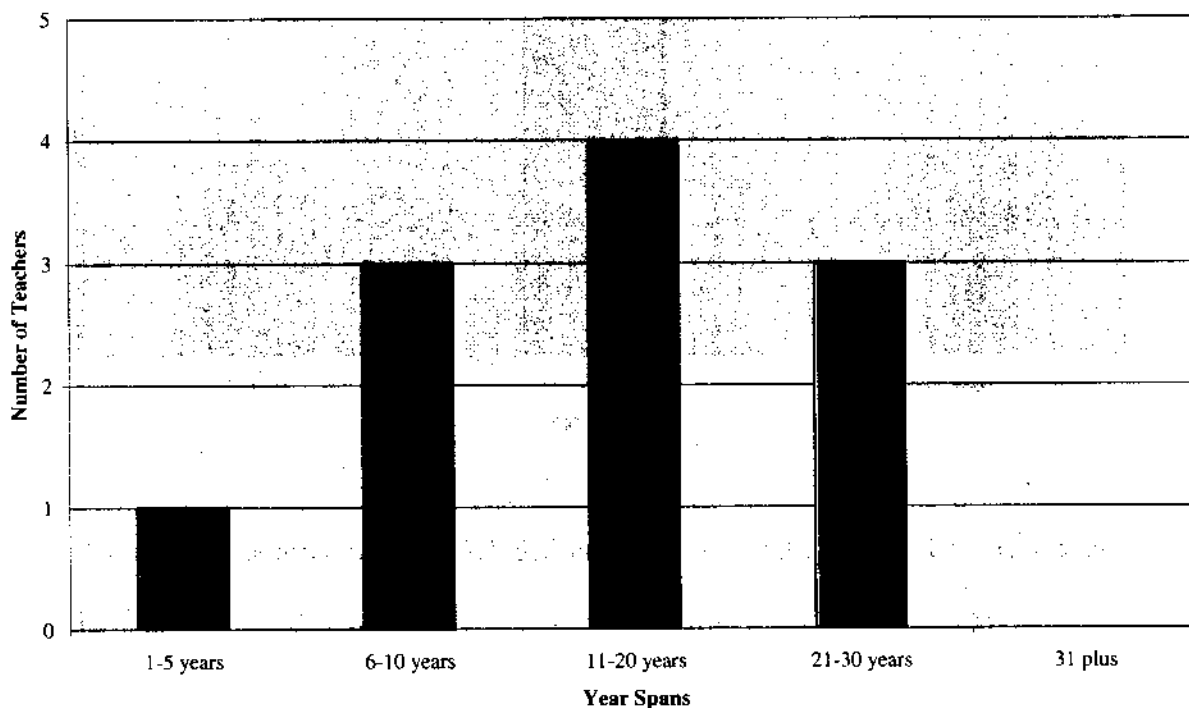
Bar Graph 1 reports the number of years the participating teachers have spent in the teaching profession. The numbers of years the surveyed teachers have been in the profession ranged from 1-30 years. Only one teacher had been in the profession for 1-5 years, while ten others had been in the profession anywhere from 6-30 years. More teachers identified themselves in the 11-20 years range than any other category. None of

the participants identified themselves as being in the profession for more than 30 years.

One participant did not identify a range of years in the profession.

Bar Graph 1

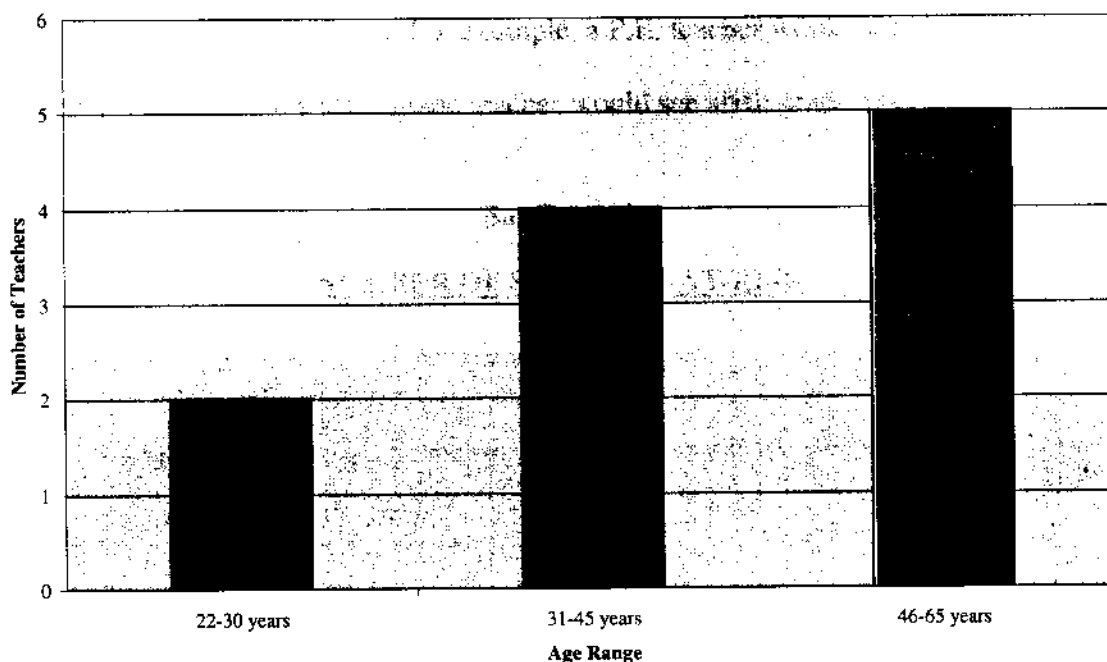
NUMBER OF YEARS IN TEACHING PROFESSION



Bar Graph 2 reports the age range of the teachers surveyed. Ages of teachers ranged from 22-65 years of age. Two teachers were between the ages of 22-30, four were between the ages of 31-45, and five were between the ages of 46-65. One participant did not identify an age range.

Bar Graph 2

AGE RANGE OF TEACHERS SURVEYED



Other information collected included grade levels taught and gender. All teachers have taught at least six different grade levels ranging from pre-kindergarten to high school or including adult or higher education. In regards to gender, 11 teachers identified themselves as female and one teacher did not respond.

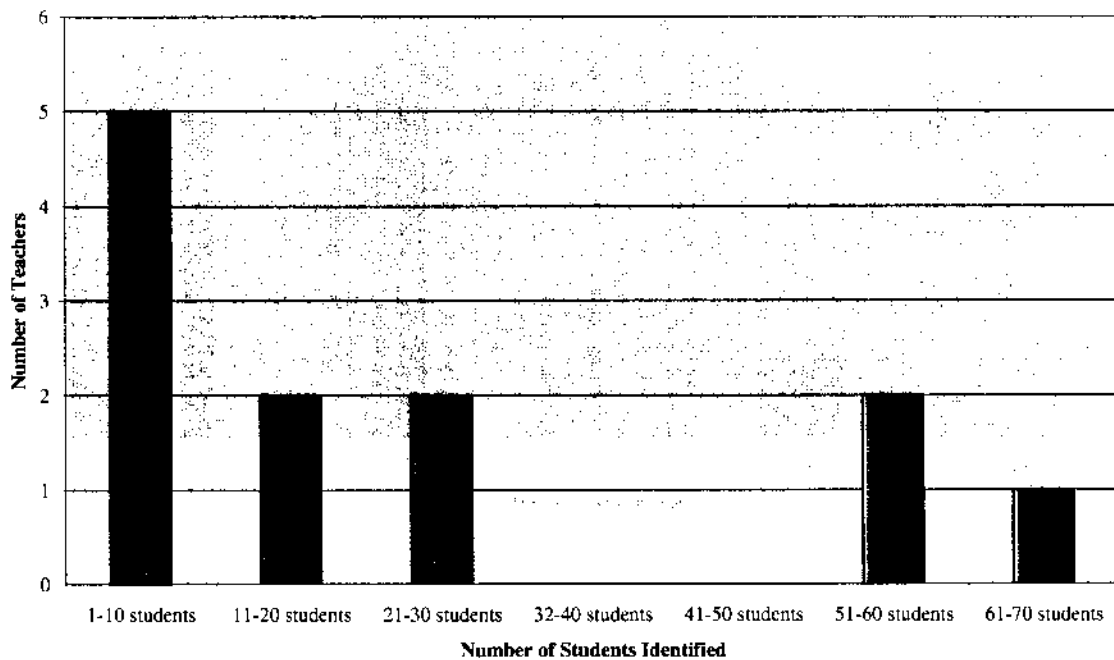
Professional Information

Bar Graph 3 reports the number of students at-risk for any reason in the classes of the surveyed teachers. Five teachers taught from 1-10 at-risk students. Four other teachers identified 11-30 at-risk students in their classes, while three teachers identified 51-70 at-risk students in their classes. The discrepancy in numbers may be attributed to a variation in grade levels taught by each teacher. Since the program provides services to grades 6-

12, some teachers may teach all grades, while others may only teach the middle grades or the high school grades. Also, depending on the subjects taught by each teacher, some teachers may see more students. For example, a P.E. teacher would see all the students from grades 6-12, while a sixth grade teacher would see sixth grade students only.

Bar Graph 3

NUMBER OF STUDENTS AT-RISK



Degree of Agreement for Literacy and Criminal Behavior Statements

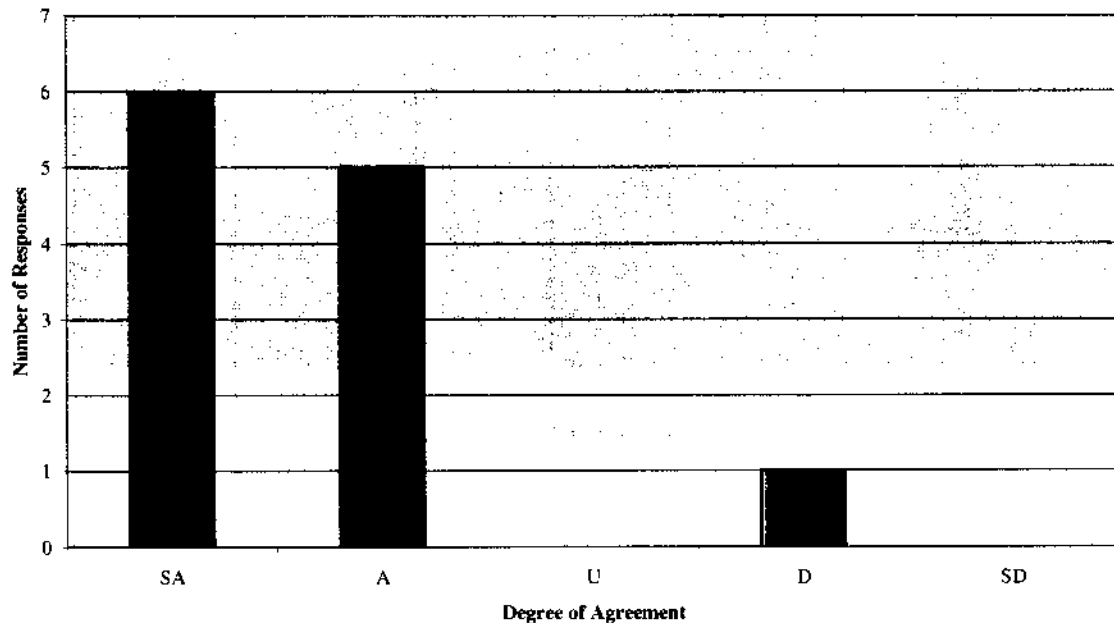
Six statements were posed for participants to indicate their degree of agreement using a five-point Likert scale.

Bar Graph 4 reports the responses for Statement 1, "Literacy achievement affects subsequent behavior choices." For this item, 11 of 12 teachers agreed to some degree with this statement. Out of those 11 teachers, five of them agreed with the statement

while six of them strongly agreed with it. There was one disagreement. Therefore, most teachers believe that literacy achievement affects subsequent behavior choices.

Bar Graph 4

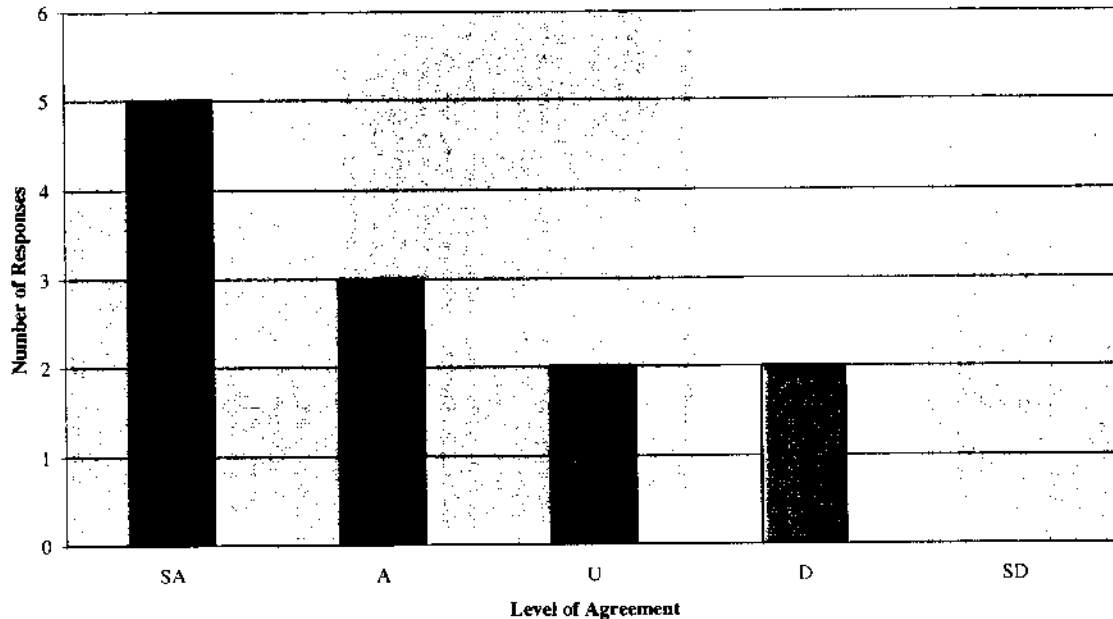
**LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT AFFECTS SUBSEQUENT
BEHAVIOR CHOICES**



Bar Graph 5 reports the responses for Statement 2, "Literacy levels are a factor in students engaging in criminal behavior." Responses for this statement were distributed across the scale. Eight of the teachers were in some form of agreement with this statement, five of which were in strong agreement. Of the remaining teachers surveyed, two disagreed with the statement, while two were undecided. Therefore, more teachers believe that literacy levels are a factor in students engaging in criminal behavior than those who do not.

Bar Graph 5

**LITERACY LEVELS ARE A FACTOR IN STUDENTS
ENGAGING IN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR**

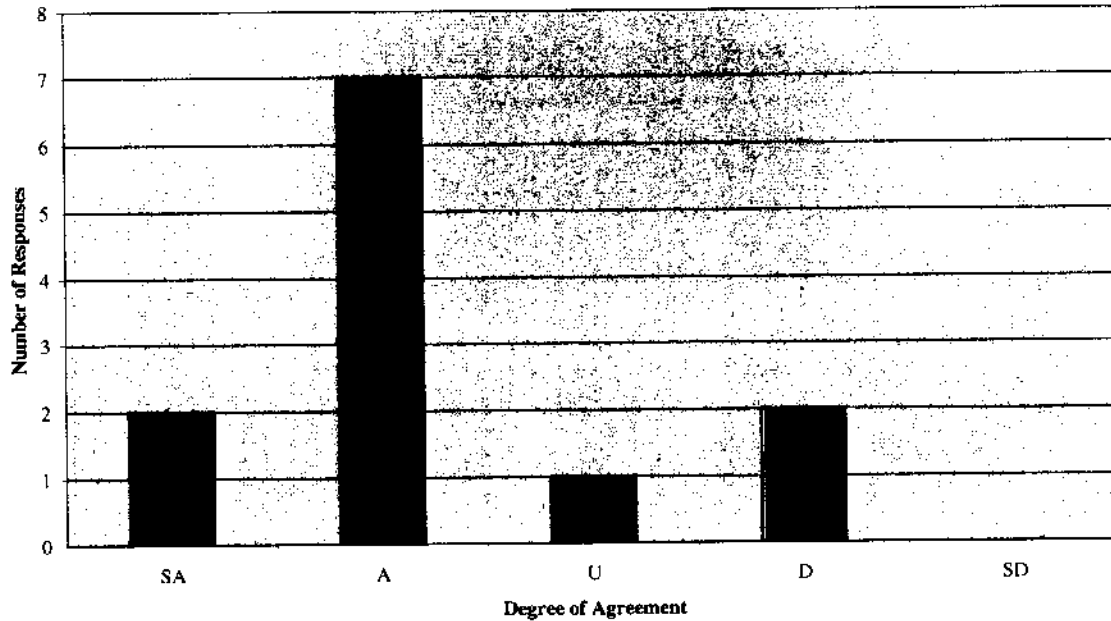


Of the six teachers who strongly agreed with Statement 1, “Literacy achievement affects subsequent behavior choices,” all but one agreed to some degree with Statement 2, “Literacy levels are a factor in students engaging in criminal behavior.” The remaining teacher was undecided for Statement 2, which may mean that even though literacy may affect behavior choices, it doesn’t necessarily factor into students engaging in criminal behavior.

Bar Graph 6 reports the responses for Statement 3, “People who commit crimes have below average literacy levels.” The majority agreed with this statement. There were two teachers who disagreed with this statement, but none that strongly disagreed. Only one person was undecided. Overall, most teachers believe that people who commit crimes have below average literacy levels.

Bar Graph 6

PEOPLE WHO COMMIT CRIMES HAVE BELOW AVERAGE LITERACY LEVELS

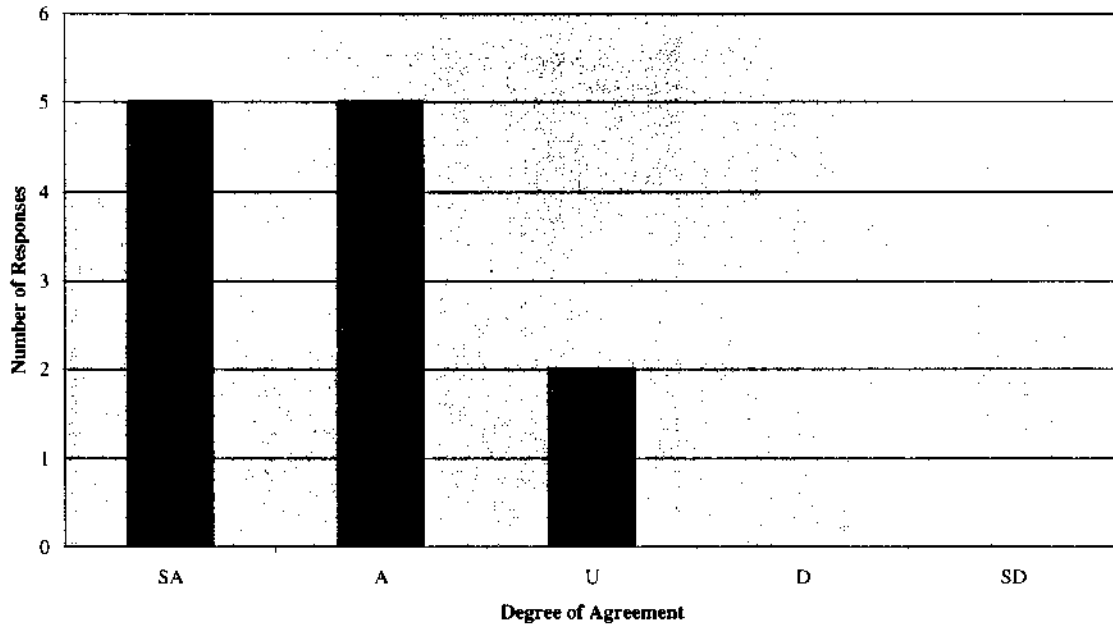


Of the seven teachers that agreed with Statement 3, "People who commit crimes have below average literacy levels," six of them either strongly agreed or agreed with Statement 2, "Literacy levels are a factor in students engaging in criminal behavior." The other teacher that agreed with Statement 3 was undecided for Statement 2. The discrepancy in the answers of this teacher may be because there are other factors in the lives of students that contribute to them engaging in criminal behavior.

Bar Graph 7 reports the responses for Statement 4, "Literacy levels are affected by low-income status." The results of these responses concluded that 10 of 12 teachers agreed to some degree with this statement. Of those in agreement with this statement, half of them strongly agreed while the other half only agreed. The other two responses were undecided for this statement. Therefore, teachers believe that literacy levels are affected by low-income status.

Bar Graph 7

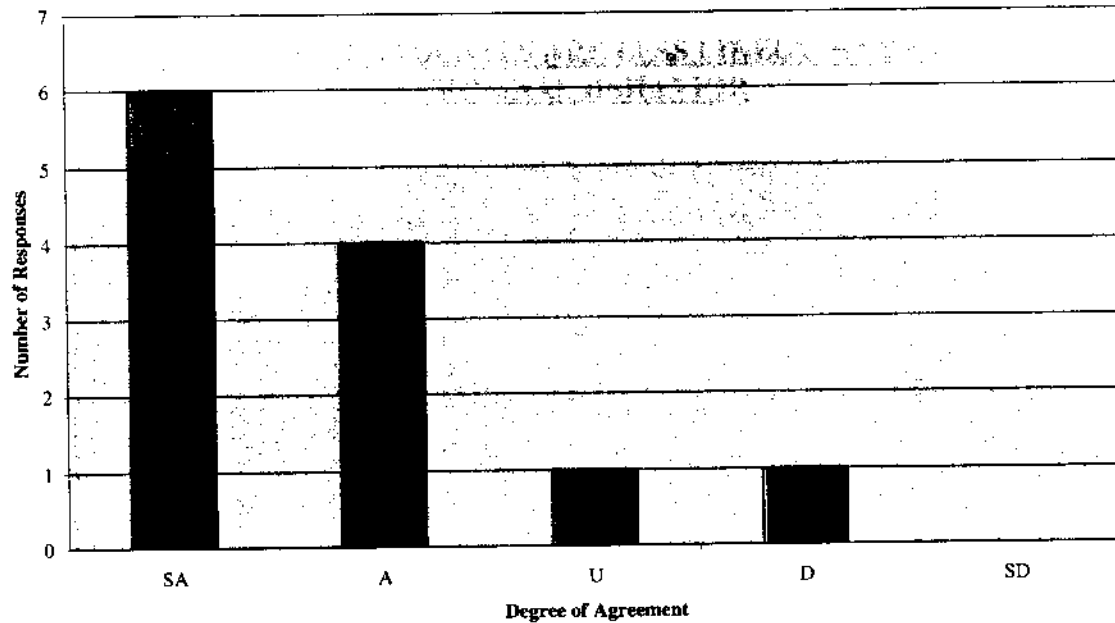
LITERACY LEVELS ARE AFFECTED BY LOW-INCOME STATUS



Bar Graph 8 reports the responses for Statement 5, “Students at-risk due to low-income are less likely to graduate from high school.” Half of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed with this statement, while another four simply agreed. None of the teachers strongly disagreed with this statement, but one teacher did express some degree of disagreement. One teacher was undecided on this statement. Overall, teachers believe that students at-risk due to low-income are less likely to graduate from high school.

Bar Graph 8

STUDENTS AT-RISK DUE TO LOW-INCOME ARE LESS LIKELY TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL



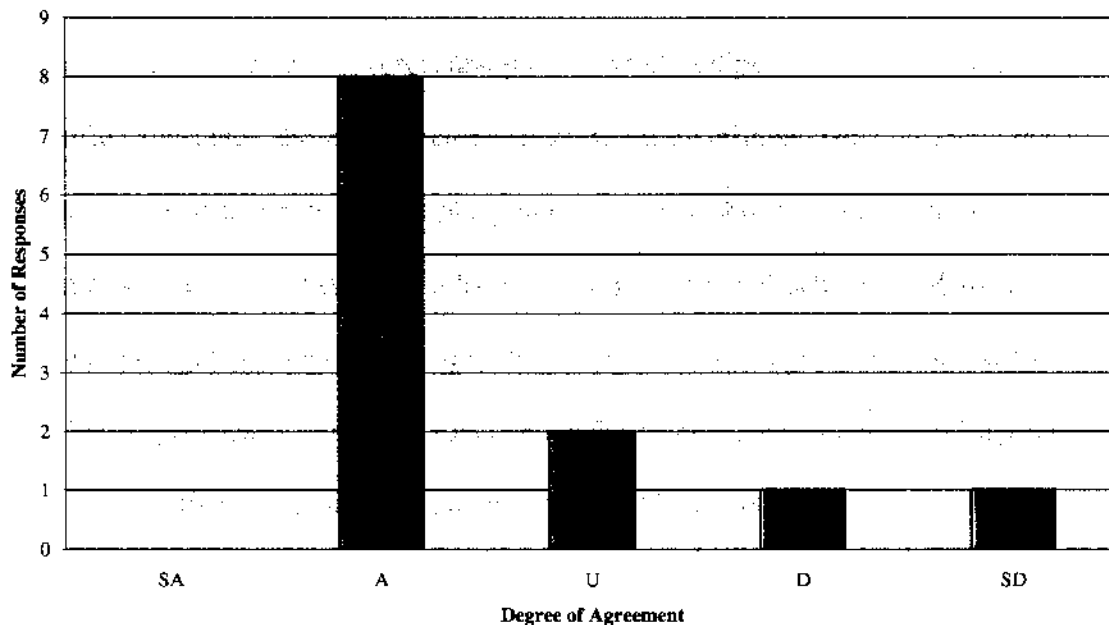
Of the five teachers that strongly agreed with Statement 4, "Literacy levels are affected by low-income status," all were in some agreement with Statement 5, "Students at-risk due to low-income are less likely to graduate from high school." This means that teachers who believe that low-income status affects literacy levels also believe that low-income students are less likely to graduate. This may mean that if low-income affects literacy levels and graduation, then low-income students may be less likely to graduate because of their literacy levels.

Bar Graph 9 reports the responses for Statement 6, "High school graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior." Eight teachers agreed with this statement, but none strongly agreed with it. Two teachers disagreed with this statement, with one of them strongly disagreeing with it. Two teachers were undecided for this statement. The

majority of the teachers believe that high school graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior.

Bar Graph 9

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ARE LESS LIKELY TO ENGAGE
IN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR**



There were no patterns found between the degree of agreement with the statements and the age of the teacher or the number of years in the teaching profession.

Qualitative Results from the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey

The Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey included two open-ended questions and one section for additional comments. Descriptive analysis of this information is provided in this section.

The first open-ended question on the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey asked, "What other factors do you perceive as predictors of future or current criminal behavior among students?" Over ten factors were cited by teachers as predictors of future or current criminal behavior among students. Six teachers identified family structure as a factor. Aspects of family structure noted by participants included lack of a parent, divorce, and parents with multiple partners. Five teachers identified substance abuse as a factor predicting future criminal behavior, with one of those teachers citing both student and parent substance abuse. Four teachers cited low-income/ socioeconomic status as a factor leading to criminal behavior. Many of the factors that teachers cited pertained to the home environment, but only four teachers cited this factor specifically. Other factors cited included emotional/ mental health problems, lack of a positive role model, and parental criminal behavior.

The second open-ended question on the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey asked, "What interventions are made to promote literacy with at-risk students?" Most teachers identified multiple interventions that are made to promote literacy with at-risk students. The most common interventions cited were using one-on-one approaches or individualized instruction and using different resources for reading, such as newspapers or magazines. Other interventions identified included using technology, such as video games, movies, or books on tape, Accelerated Reader, and encouraging free choice reading. Interventions that go outside the normal school included enrollment in after school programs, enrollment in an alternative school, such as the Bridges Program, or enrollment in an outside commercial program such as Sylvan Learning Center.

The final section of the survey was an open-ended comment section. Two teachers responded. One teacher commented on the importance of reading comprehension. The teacher said that reading comprehension is the key to learning and those students who struggle with this will become frustrated with reading. The other teacher commented on the relevancy of reading. The teacher said that students need to see the relevancy of reading to see how it will benefit them.

Quantitative Results from the 2003 Illinois School Report Cards

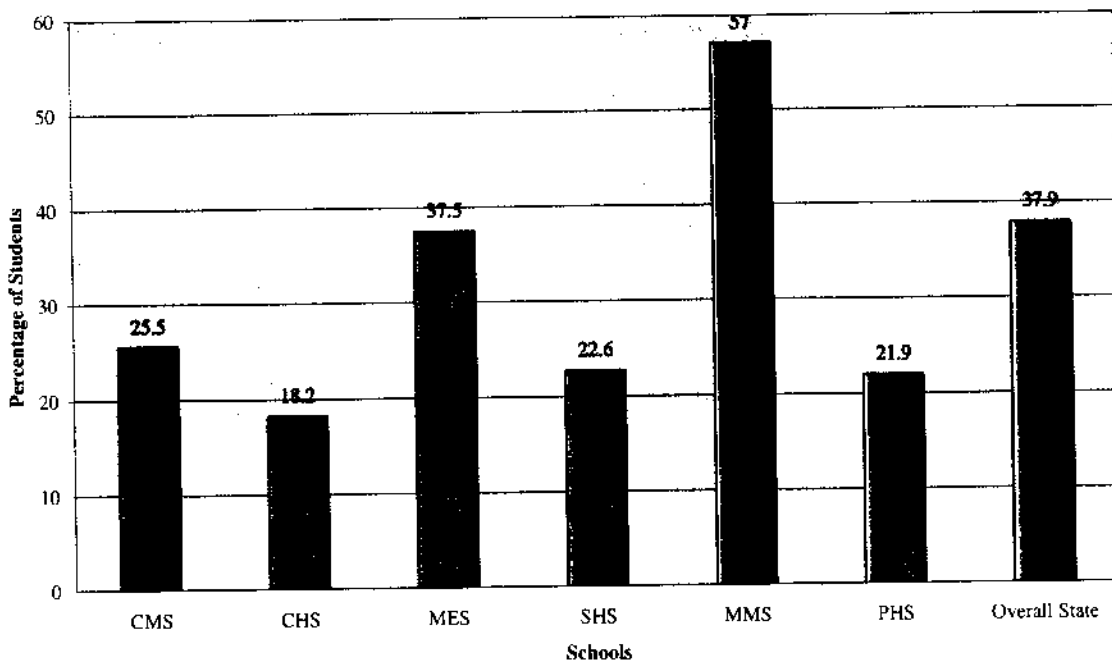
Data were collected from six schools in the ROE #11 area that the Bridges Program services. Data were collected to provide information on the student population with whom the surveyed teachers work. Since the Bridges Program services grades 6-12 in ROE #11, six schools from that area were chosen to look at literacy levels and at-risk status. Of those six schools, three were middle schools and three were high schools. Data were gathered from the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards* (see Appendix C). Data identified were at-risk, graduation, and literacy percentage rates. At-risk, graduation, and literacy percentages are provided in the following graphs.

Bar Graph 10 reports the percentage of low-income students attending Charleston Middle School (CMS), Charleston High School (CHS), Moulton Elementary School (MES), Shelbyville High School (SHS), Mayo Middle School (MMS), and Paris High School (PHS). With the exception of Mayo Middle School, all other low-income rates for the sample schools are lower than the overall state rate. It may be concluded that the low-income rate in the ROE #11 area is similar to or lower than the overall state rate.

From the sample, all schools except one have less than a 38% low-income rate. The low-income rate decreases from the middle school to the high school within each district. In Paris, the middle school has a 57% low-income rate and the high school only has a 21.9% low-income rate. The rate declines by 35.1% raising questions raised as to why there are more low-income students in the middle school than in the high school. A possible answer could be that low-income students are more likely to drop out of school during the high school years. Teachers in the study identified low-income status as a reason why students would not graduate from high school and as a predictor in future criminal behavior. Therefore, the increase in low-income status from middle school to high school may also indicate that more students may not graduate from high school, which may result in more of them committing crimes.

Bar Graph 10

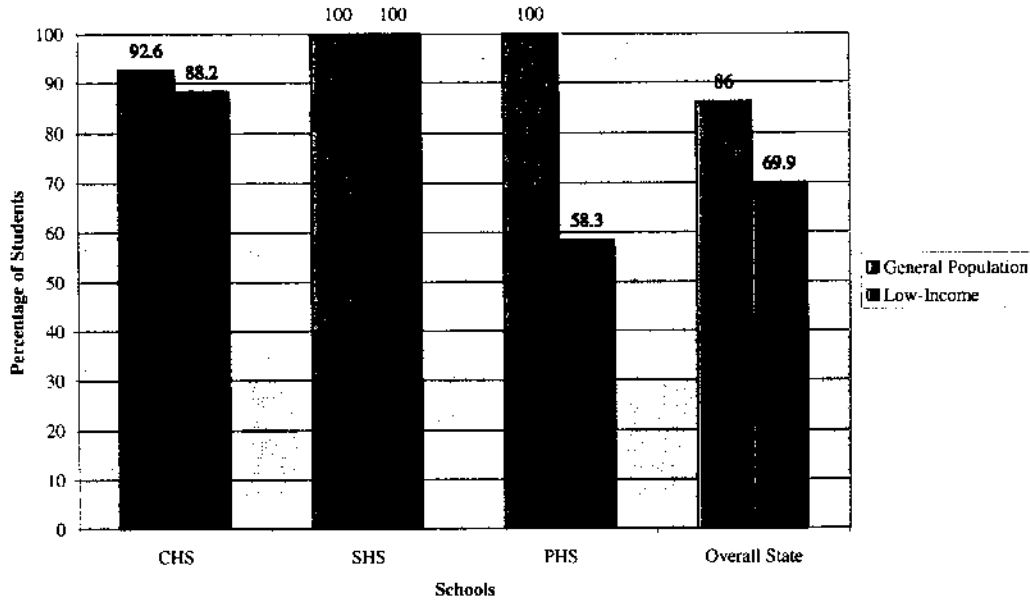
LOW-INCOME RATE



Bar Graph 11 reports the graduation rates of the general and low-income populations at the sample schools. Charleston and Shelbyville have a higher percentage rate of low-income students graduating than the overall rate. Paris High School has a lower graduation rate than the state for low-income students. Within the area, there is a great variance in graduation of low-income students. For Charleston and Paris, more students in the general population than the low-income population graduate from high school. Even the overall state follows this pattern. Shelbyville reports 100% of both the general population and the low-income population graduating. Among the Paris low-income students, which is 21.9%, only 58.3% graduate. Yet the school only reports a 2% dropout rate as seen in Bar Graph 12, leaving some question as to what happens to these students if they do not graduate or drop out. The teachers in the study agreed that students who graduate from high school are less likely to engage in criminal behavior. The low-income population has lower graduation rates than the general population, and according to teacher perception, this may indicate that the general population may be less likely to engage in criminal behavior than the low-income population.

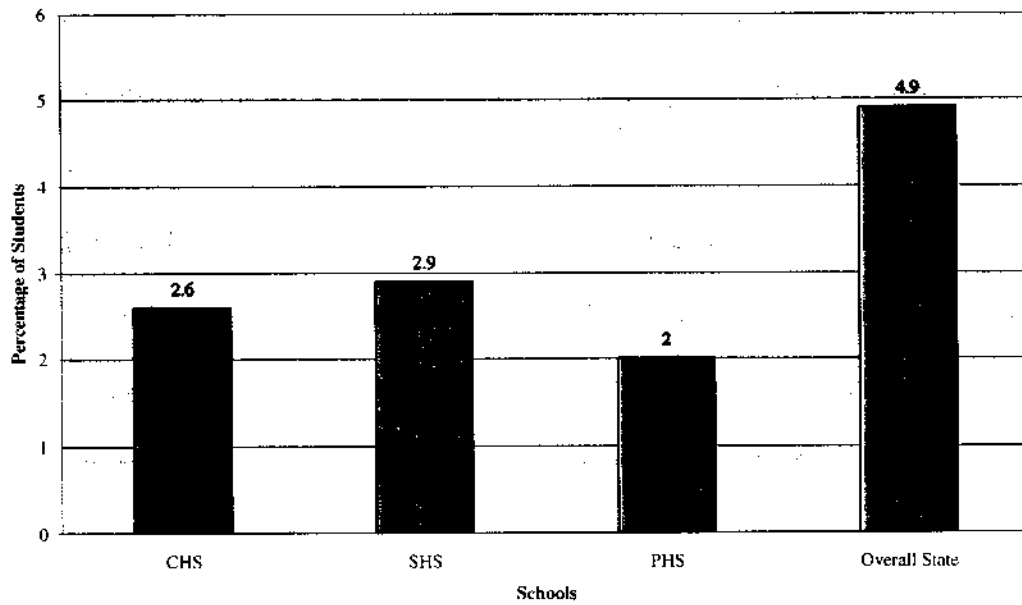
Bar Graph 11

**GRADUATION RATES OF GENERAL POPULATION AND LOW-
INCOME POPULATION**



Bar Graph 12

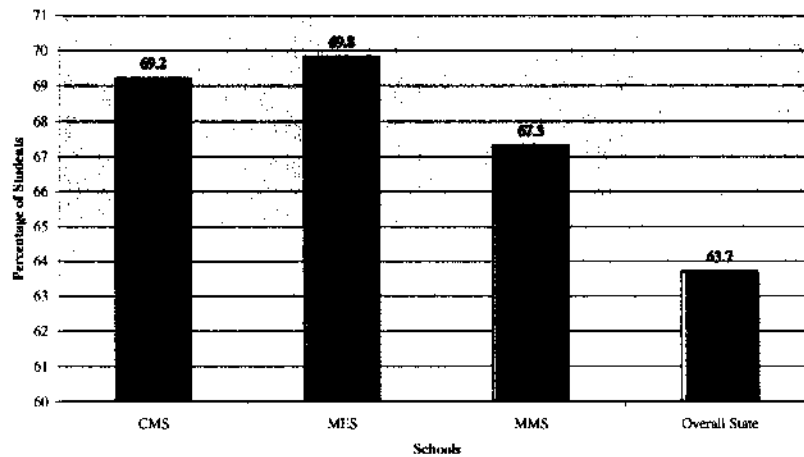
HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES



Bar Graph 13 reports ISAT student scores that meet or exceed the Illinois Learning Standards in reading. The selected schools are all within three percentage points of one another. The selected schools had higher percentages than the overall state by at least three percentage points. Overall, at least 30% of students are not meeting standards in reading at the 8th grade level.

Bar Graph 13

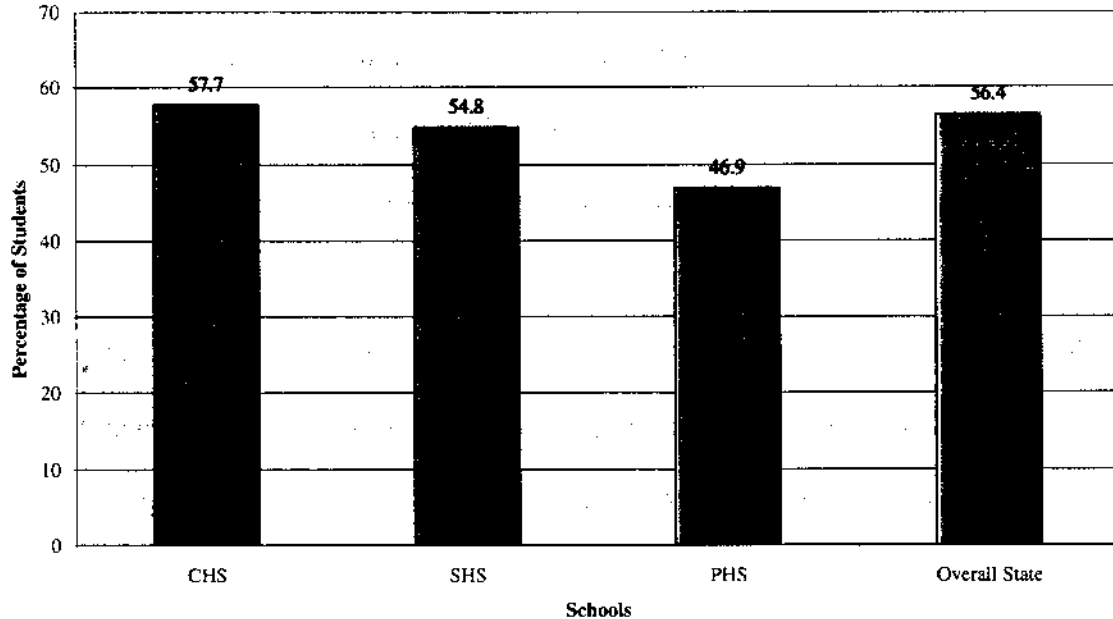
ISAT STUDENT SCORES MEETING OR EXCEEDING STANDARDS FOR READING



Bar Graph 14 reports PSAE scores meeting or exceeding Illinois Learning Standards in reading for all 11th grade students. Among the sample of schools, they all were within ten percentage points of the overall state rate. However, the rates conclude that less than 60% of 11th grade students meet or exceed standards in reading. At Paris High School, the lowest rate of the sample has 46.9% of students meeting or exceeding standards, meaning that more than half of the students are not meeting or exceeding standards in reading. In the ROE #11 area, less than 60% of students are meeting or exceeding standards in reading.

Bar Graph 14

PSAE SCORES MEETING OR EXCEEDING STANDARDS IN READING



According to Bar Graph 13, at least 30% of 8th grade students are not meeting standards in reading. Bar Graph 14 reports that at least 40% of 11th grade students are not meeting standards in reading. This means that a significant portion of the school population is below standards in reading. In the survey, the majority of teachers agreed with Statement 3 that, "People who commit crimes have below average literacy levels." Therefore, this may mean that the students not meeting standards in reading are at risk for committing crime later in life.

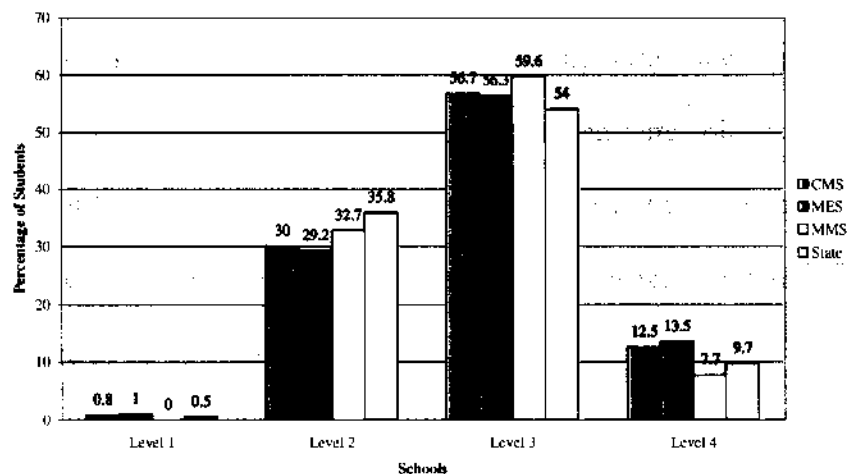
The Illinois State Board of Education measures performance on both the ISAT and PSAE using performance levels. There are four performance levels ranging from academic warning to exceeding standards. Level I is the academic warning level meaning that students have limited knowledge and skills and apply knowledge and skills

ineffectively. Level 2 is the below standards level meaning that students have basic knowledge and skills and apply knowledge and skills in limited ways. Level 3 is the meets standards level, in which students have proficient knowledge and skills and effectively apply knowledge and skills to solve problems. Level 4, the exceeds standards level, is the highest performance level in which students have advanced knowledge and skills and creatively apply knowledge and skills to solve problems and evaluate results (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004).

Bar Graph 15 reports ISAT performance level percentages in reading for all 8th grade students. Overall, most 8th grade students performed at Level 3, being able to effectively apply knowledge and skills to solve problems. More performed at Level 2 than Level 4, but more performed at Level 4 than Level 1. A small percentage of students performed at Level 1, academic warning. Overall, the students in the area performed at levels similar to the overall state.

Bar Graph 15

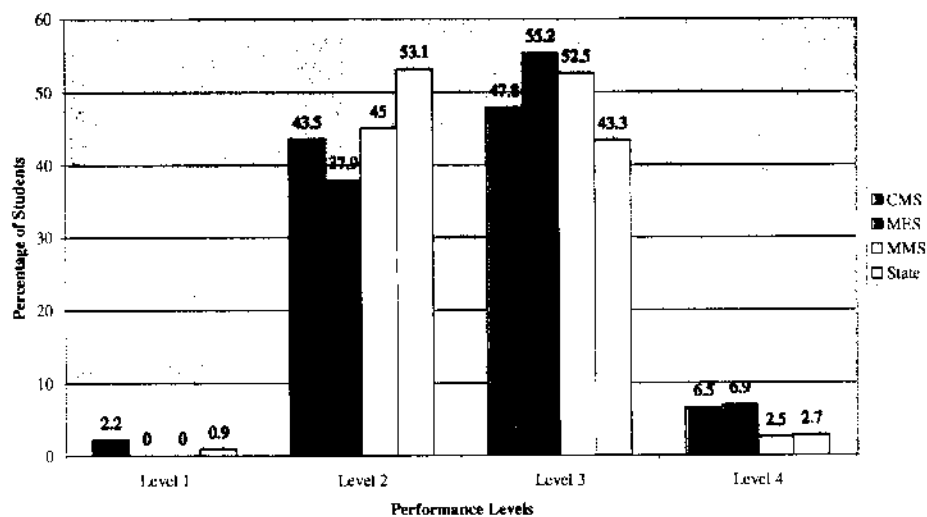
**ISAT PERFORMANCE LEVEL PERCENTAGES IN READING
FOR ALL 8TH GRADE STUDENTS**



Bar Graph 16 reports ISAT performance level percentages in reading for low-income 8th grade students. Their performance levels vary slightly from the overall 8th grade population (see Appendix D). Most students performed at Level 3 and Level 2 with Level 3 rates being only slightly higher. Therefore, of the schools selected, at least 90% of students were either meeting or below standards.

Bar Graph 16

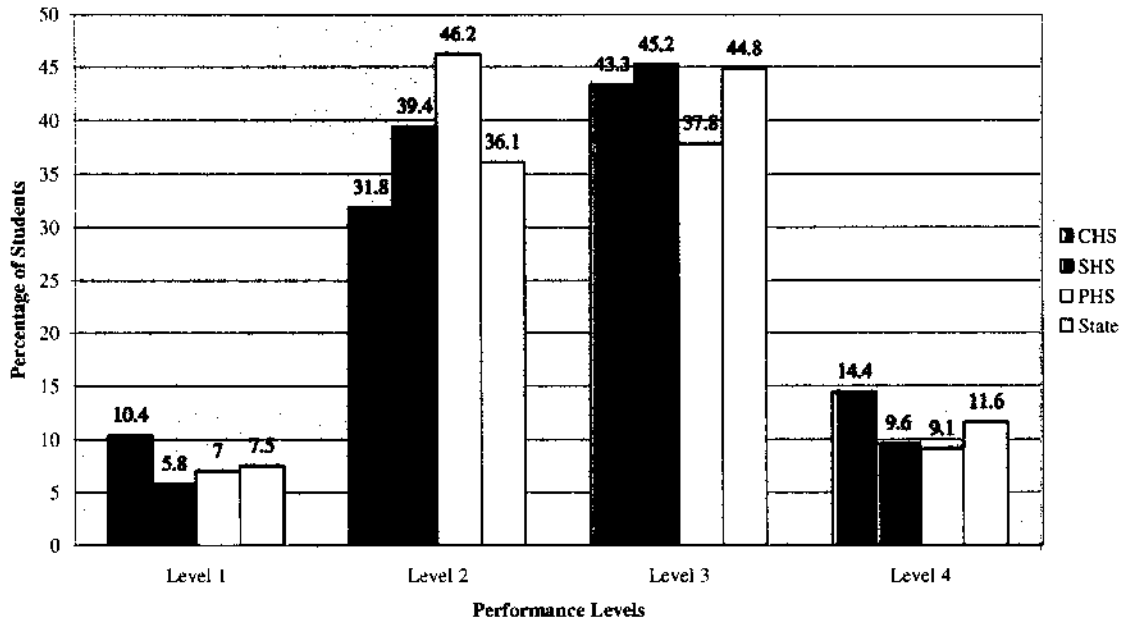
**ISAT PERFORMANCE LEVEL PERCENTAGES IN READING
FOR 8TH GRADE LOW-INCOME STUDENTS**



Bar Graph 17 reports PSAE performance level percentages in reading for all 11th grade students. With the exception of Paris High School, more students performed at Level 3, than at Level 2. Therefore, most 11th grade students are able to apply knowledge and skills in either limited ways or ineffectively enough to solve problems. In comparison to the data in Bar Graph 14, students seem to decrease in literacy performance from 8th to 11th grade.

Bar Graph 17

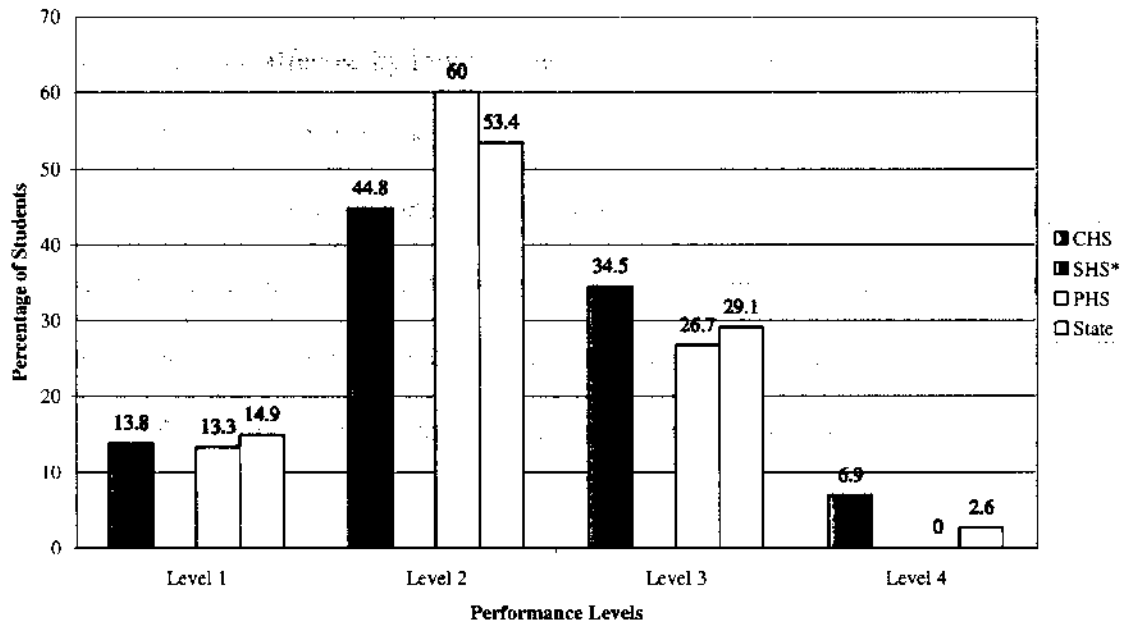
PSAE PERFORMANCE LEVEL PERCENTAGES IN READING
FOR ALL 11TH GRADE STUDENTS



Bar Graph 18 reports PSAE performance level percentages in reading for low-income students in 11th grade. More low-income students performed at Level 2 than any other level. Paris High School reported 0% of low-income students performing at Level 4. More Paris students, both seen in Bar Graph 17 and Bar Graph 18, perform at Level 2 than any other level in reading (see Appendix D). In comparison to performance among the 8th grade, low-income student performance shifts to more students performing at Level 2 than any other level from middle school to high school.

Bar Graph 18

PSAE PERFORMANCE LEVEL PERCENTAGES IN READING FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS



Note: Shelbyville High School (SHS) did not report percentages for low-income students in reading.

Hypothesis

Data resulting from the analysis of the study were employed in the acceptance or the rejection of the hypothesis.

Hypothesis

Teachers perceive a relationship between literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among at-risk students.

The Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey was used to determine if teachers perceive a relationship between literacy and criminal behavior in

addition to how at-risk status may affect later criminal behavior. The majority of the teachers agreed to Statement 2 that, "Literacy levels are a factor in students engaging in criminal behavior." The majority of the teachers also agree with Statement 4 that, "Literacy levels are affected by low-income status." This data were supported by additional data collected from the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards*. Data from the schools conclude that low-income students perform at lower levels in reading. Teachers believe that literacy levels are affected by low-income status and are a factor in engaging in criminal behavior. Therefore, if low-income status affects literacy levels and literacy levels are a factor in criminal behavior, then low-income status is also a factor in criminal behavior.

Additional data collected showed that teachers also believe that people who commit crimes have below average literacy levels. Therefore, not only do teachers perceive a relationship between low literacy levels and criminal behavior, but they also perceive that criminals have low literacy levels. According to the literature, the criminal population is less educated than the general public and more than half of them do not have a high school diploma (Harlow, 2003). The literature also finds that reading proficiencies are much lower for the prison population than for the general population and this is highly correlated with educational attainment (Haigler, 1994).

After careful consideration of data from both the Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior and the *2003 Illinois School Report Cards*, it appears that there is strong evidence to support the hypothesis. Teachers perceive a relationship between literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among at-risk students. The

hypothesis is therefore accepted and recommendations for further research are given in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, a summary and discussion are provided, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations for further study and practice are made.

Summary

This study was conducted to determine if teachers perceive a relationship between literacy levels and the possibility of future criminal behavior among at-risk students. Studies over the last 20 years have shown that it is likely that there is a relationship between literacy and criminal behavior. Major conclusions are discussed later in this chapter.

Discussion

Over the past few decades, crime has been on the rise while literacy levels have been declining (Harrison & Karberg, 2004). The literature demonstrates that when reading remediation and a behavior modification program are used with students, literacy increases while negative behavior decreases. Teachers believe that literacy and behavior are related. Increasing literacy may be a way to decrease negative behaviors that may lead to criminal behavior. In addition, increasing literacy among at-risk students may provide them with the opportunity to succeed in school, which in turn could lead to more opportunities later in life. Regardless of socioeconomic status, all students could benefit from increasing literacy levels.

In terms of socioeconomic status, low-income status in this study was investigated in terms of free or reduced-price lunch. Low-income status rates for literacy and graduation were analyzed. However, data did not explain how low-income status affects literacy and graduation rates. Many other factors associated with low-income status may have affected this study. Among those are the many dynamics that factor into a low-income home.

Some students in low-income homes have only one parent, while others have two. Within that family structure, parents may or may not work. Information regarding work status could provide insight into reading practices at home. For example, some low-income parents may not be able to obtain employment due to literacy problems. In that case, the parents may perpetuate the low literacy cycle within the family. Some students with an intact family structure may rarely see parents due to parent work schedules. However, other low-income households have two working parents, which could raise other concerns. The result may be that only one parent is home while the other parent is at work. Therefore, home life can factor into a lack of parent-child involvement. Literacy skills are not acquired at school alone. Parents in low-income homes may not have the time or resources available to help their children practice and advance literacy skills. Examining the multidimensional aspects of low-income status families could broaden the descriptive research and provide a more in depth examination of the population. Further research in this area could provide meaningful data that could be used to explore the complex relationship of low-income status and low literacy levels.

In addition to low-income status, this study focused on the perceived link between literacy and future criminal behavior. However, this study examined only one aspect of

the problem: the relationship among literacy and crime in the school population.

Additional research is needed to study literacy and crime in the correctional population.

Even though there is literature in this area, more could be explored. For example, a study of prisoner perceptions of the relationship between literacy and crime could determine whether prisoners believe that personal literacy factors into criminal behavior.

Society and educators need to not only work to increase literacy among the school population in order to possibly prevent future criminal behavior, but also need to deal with the problems that already exist, the rise in crime and the overcrowding of prisons.

According to the literature, crime is at an all time high (Harrison and Karberg, 2004). In addition, the literature also shows that criminals have literacy levels lower than the general population (Haigler, 1994). Finally, literature has shown that the more educated a prisoner is, the less likely that prisoner is of being a recidivist (Harlow, 2003).

Therefore, there is a need to increase literacy within the prison population. Increasing literacy among the prison population and among the school population could begin to solve existing and future problems in society.

Major Conclusions

The findings of this study allow the following conclusions to be drawn:

1. Literacy scores among the low-income population are lower than the general population.
2. Graduation rates among low-income are lower than the general population.

3. Most teachers believe that literacy achievement affects subsequent behavior choices
4. More teachers believe that literacy levels are a factor in students engaging in criminal behavior than those who do not.
5. Most teachers believe that people who commit crimes have below average literacy levels.
6. Teachers believe that literacy levels are affected by low-income status.
7. Teachers believe that students at-risk due to low-income are less likely to graduate from high school.
8. Teachers believe that high school graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior.
9. Teachers believe that other factors that may be predictors of future or current criminal behavior are family structure and substance abuse.
10. Interventions that teachers use with at-risk students to promote literacy include using individualized instruction and different resources such as newspapers or magazines.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for future research are suggested:

1. A survey of at-risk students' perceptions of their literacy and their risk for committing future crimes.

2. A survey of at-risk students' attitudes towards reading and its usefulness to their lives.
3. A longitudinal study over a ten-year period should be conducted to determine if at-risk students with low literacy levels later engage in criminal behavior.
4. An experimental study should be conducted to determine if increasing children's literacy will decrease juvenile delinquency.
5. A correlational study should be conducted on teacher expectation and student achievement.
6. A survey of prisoners' attitudes towards literacy and their perceived impact that attitudes had on the crimes they committed.
7. A survey of prisoners' attitudes towards reading and its usefulness to their lives.
8. A correlational study should be conducted of prisoners' levels of educational completion and types of crime committed.
9. A causal comparison study should be conducted to determine if illiteracy causes criminal behavior.
10. A correlational study should be conducted to determine if educational attainment is related to juvenile offenses.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for further practice are suggested:

1. It is suggested that all students have mastered the basic skills needed for reading by the time they exit the fifth grade.
2. It is suggested that students must complete a literacy exam before leaving the school system.
3. It is suggested that behavioral problems in the elementary and secondary schools be corrected in order to prevent future criminal behavior.
4. It is suggested that students not meeting or exceeding the Illinois Learning Standards in reading be placed in a literacy programs tailored to meet their needs.
5. It is suggested that students of low-income status be offered special services to increase their literacy.
6. It is suggested that the State Board of Education and the Department of Corrections join to research literacy levels and criminal behavior in an effort to determine relationships between literacy and crime.
7. It is suggested that more ABE programs are available to populations in need, such as at inner city community centers or local high schools.
8. It is suggested that correctional institutions designate appropriate funds for professionally led literacy programs in the prisons.
9. It is suggested that correctional departments provide opportunities for correctional education among the varying security level prisons.

10. It is suggested that a grant be written to request funds for teachers who are willing to go into the prisons to teach basic literacy skills.
11. It is suggested that prison libraries provide a variation in literature for different reading levels.
12. It is suggested that correctional departments hire an educator, whose primary responsibility is literacy assessment and development.
13. It is suggested that community-based programs such as family literacy programs be implemented through the collaboration of schools, reading councils, and interested community organizations.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey

Introduction

The following survey will be used for a master's thesis. The survey is anonymous and based on your experience as a teacher working with at-risk students. The questions posed are: What are the perceptions of teachers that work with at-risk students concerning literacy levels as possible predictors of graduation? What are the perceptions of teachers that work with at-risk students concerning literacy levels as possible predictors of criminal behavior? Thank you for your participation.

Personal information (Please circle)

Number of years in teaching profession: 1-5 6-10 11-20 21-30 31 plus

Grade levels taught throughout career: PreK-K 1-3 4-6 7-8 9-12 Adult Ed. Higher Ed.
(Circle all that apply)

Gender (optional): Female Male

Age range in years (optional): 22-30 31-45 46-65

Professional Information (Please write responses)

Grade level(s) currently teaching: _____

Number of students you teach that are at-risk for any reason: _____

Number of students you perceive as having any literacy problems: _____

Teacher Perceptions of Literacy and Criminal Behavior Survey

Please circle using the following scale:

SA- Strongly agree A- Agree U- Undecided D- Disagree SD- Strongly
Disagree

1. Literacy achievement affects subsequent behavior choices.

SA A U D SD

2. Literacy levels are a factor in students engaging in criminal behavior.

SA A U D SD

3. People who commit crimes have below average literacy levels.

SA A U D SD

4. Literacy levels are affected by low-income status.

SA A U D SD

5. Students at-risk due to low-income are less likely to graduate from high school.

SA A U D SD

6. High school graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior.

SA A U D SD

Please write responses for the following

What other factors do you perceive as predictors of future or current criminal behavior among students?

What interventions are made to promote literacy with at-risk students?

Additional Comments:

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

Title of Investigation: Teacher Perceptions of Literacy as Related to Criminal Behavior

Name of Principal Investigator: Traci Reiter

IRB File Number: 04-053

This document is to certify that I, _____, hereby freely agree to participate as a volunteer in a study as an authorized part of the educational and research program of the Eastern Illinois University under the supervision of Traci Reiter.

The research project and my role in the research project have been fully explained to me by Traci Reiter, and I understand her explanation as well as what will be expected of me by virtue of my participation in this research project. A copy of the procedures of this investigation and a description of any risks, discomforts and benefits associated with my participation has been provided and discussed in detail with me.

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions, and all such questions and inquiries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I am free to decline to answer any specific items or questions in the survey.

I understand that all data will remain confidential with regard to my identity.

I understand the benefits and risks of participating in this research.

I understand that participation in this research project is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project.

I understand that the approximate length of time required for participation in this research project is 30 minutes.

I understand that as a condition of my participation, the only benefit I will receive will be the good feeling of participating in and helping to further educational research.

I understand further that if I decline to continue participating in this research project, I will not forgo any benefits to participating as described above.

I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human subjects in this study, I may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Avenue
Charleston, IL 61920

Telephone: (217) 581-6230

Although this person will ask my name, I understand that all inquiries will be kept in the strictest confidence.

Furthermore, I understand that if I have any questions concerning the purposes or the procedures associated with this research project, I may call or write:

Traci Reiter
902 Jackson Ave. #2
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 348-6381

I also understand that it will not be necessary to reveal my name in order to obtain additional information about this research project from the principal investigator.

I FURTHER UNDERSTAND THAT I AM FREE TO WITHDRAW MY CONSENT AND DISCONTINUE MY PARTICIPATION AT ANY TIME.

Date

Signature of Subject

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Date

Signature of Investigator

APPENDIX C

Data from 2003 Illinois School Report Cards

Charleston Middle School and Charleston High School 2003 Illinois School Report Card Data

Table C1
Low-Income Rate

School	Percentage Rate
CMS	25.5
CHS	18.2
District	25.8
State	37.9

Table C2
Graduation Rate

School	Percentage Rate	
	Low Income	General Population
CHS	88.2	92.6
State	69.9	86

Table C3
High School Dropout Rate

School	Percentage Rate
CHS	2.6
State	4.9

Table C4
ISAT Student Scores Meeting or Exceeding Standards for Reading

School	Percentage Rate
CMS	69.2
State	63.7

Table C5
ISAT Performance Level Percentages in Reading for All 8th Grade Students

School	Performance Levels			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
CMS	0.8	30	56.7	12.5
State	0.5	35.8	54	9.7

Table C6
ISAT Performance Level Percentages in Reading for Low-Income Students

School	Performance Levels			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
CMS	2.2	43.5	47.8	6.5
State	0.9	53.1	43.3	2.7

Table C7
PSAE Scores Meeting or Exceeding Standards in Reading

School	Percentage Rate
CHS	57.7
State	56.4

Table C8
PSAE Percentage of All Student Scores in Performance Levels for Reading

School	Performance Levels			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
CHS	10.4	31.8	43.3	14.4
State	7.5	36.1	44.8	11.6

Table C9
PSAE Performance Level Percentages in Reading for Low-Income Students

School	Performance Levels			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
CHS	13.8	44.8	34.5	6.9
State	14.9	53.4	29.1	2.6

Moulton Elementary School and Shelbyville High School
2003 Illinois School Report Card Data

Table C10
Low-Income Rate

School	Percentage Rate
MES	37.5
SHS	22.6
District	32.8
State	37.9

Table C11
Graduation Rate

School	Percentage Rate	
	Low Income	General Population
SHS	100	100
State	69.9	86

Table C12
High School Dropout Rate

School	Percentage Rate
SHS	2.9
State	4.9

Table C13
ISAT Student Scores Meeting or Exceeding Standards for Reading

School	Percentage Rate
MES	69.8
State	63.7

Table C14
ISAT Performance Level Percentages in Reading for All 8th Grade Students

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
MES	1	29.2	56.3	13.5
State	0.5	35.8	54	9.7

Table C15
ISAT Performance Level Percentages in Reading for Low-Income Students

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
MES	0	37.9	55.2	6.9
State	0.9	53.1	43.3	2.7

Table C16
PSAE Scores Meeting or Exceeding Standards in Reading

School	Percentage Rate
SHS	54.8
State	56.4

Table C17
PSAE Percentage of All Student Scores in Performance Levels for Reading

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
SHS	5.8	39.4	45.2	9.6
State	7.5	36.1	44.8	11.6

Table C18
PSAE Performance Level Percentages in Reading for Low-Income Students

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
SHS	Not Reported			
State	14.9	53.4	29.1	2.6

Mayo Middle School and Paris High School
2003 Illinois School Report Card Data

Table C19
Low-Income Rate

School	Percentage Rate
MMS	57
PHS	21.9
District	41.5
State	37.9

Table C20
Graduation Rate

School	Percentage Rate	
	Low Income	General Population
PHS	58.3	100
State	69.9	86

Table C21
High School Dropout Rate

School	Percentage Rate
PHS	2
State	4.9

Table C22
ISAT Student Scores Meeting or Exceeding Standards for Reading

School	Percentage Rate
MMS	67.3
District	64.2
State	63.7

Table C23

ISAT Performance Level Percentages in Reading for All 8th Grade Students

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level3	Level4
MMS	0	32.7	59.6	7.7
District	0	35.8	56.9	7.3
State	0.5	35.8	54	9.7

Table C24

ISAT Performance Level Percentages in Reading for Low-Income Students

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level3	Level4
MMS	0	45	52.5	2.5
District	0	50	47.7	2.3
State	0.9	53.1	43.3	2.7

Table C25

PSAE Scores Meeting or Exceeding Standards in Reading

School	Percentage Rate
PHS	46.9
State	56.4

Table C26

PSAE Percentage of All Student Scores in Performance Levels for Reading

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level3	Level4
PHS	7	46.2	37.8	9.1
State	7.5	36.1	44.8	11.6

Table C27

PSAE Performance Level Percentages in Reading for Low-Income Students

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level3	Level4
PHS	13.3	60	26.7	0
State	14.9	53.4	29.1	2.6

2003 Illinois School Report Card

Data

CMS- Charleston Middle School
CHS- Charleston High School
MES- Moulton Elementary School
SHS- Shelbyville High School
MMS- Mayo Middle School
PHS- Paris High School

Table C28

Low-Income Rate

School	Percentage Rate
CMS	25.5
CHS	18.2
MES	37.5
SHS	22.6
MMS	57
PHS	21.9
Overall State	37.9

Table C29

Graduation Rate of General Population

School	Percentage Rate
CHS	92.6
SHS	100
PHS	100
Overall State	86

Table C30

Graduation Rate of Low Income Students

School	Percentage Rate
CHS	88.2
SHS	100
PHS	58.3
Overall State	69.9

Table C31
Graduation Rates of General Population and Low-Income Population

School	Percentage Rate	
	General Population	Low-Income
CHS	92.6	88.2
SHS	100	100
PHS	100	58.3
Overall State	86	69.9

Table C32
High School Dropout Rate

School	Percentage Rate
CHS	2.6
SHS	2.9
PHS	2
Overall State	4.9

Table C33
ISAT Student Scores Meeting or Exceeding Standards for Reading

School	Percentage Rate
CMS	69.2
MES	69.8
MMS	67.3
Overall State	63.7

Table C34
ISAT Performance Level Percentages in Reading for All 8th Grade Students

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level2	Level3	Level 4
CMS	0.8	30	56.7	12.5
MES	1	29.2	56.3	13.5
MMS	0	32.7	59.6	7.7
Overall State	0.5	35.8	54	9.7

Table C35

ISAT Performance Level Percentages in Reading for 8th Grade Low-Income Students

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level2	Level3	Level 4
CMS	2.2	43.5	47.8	6.5
MES	0	37.9	55.2	6.9
MMS	0	45	52.5	2.5
Overall State	0.9	53.1	43.3	2.7

Table C36

PSAE Scores Meeting or Exceeding Standards in Reading

School	Percentage Rate
CHS	57.7
SHS	54.8
PHS	46.9
Overall State	56.4

Table C37

PSAE Percentage of All Student Scores in Performance Levels for Reading

School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level2	Level3	Level 4
CHS	10.4	31.8	43.3	14.4
SHS	5.8	39.4	45.2	9.6
PHS	7	46.2	37.8	9.1
Overall State	7.5	36.1	44.8	11.6

Table C38

PSAE Performance Level Percentages in Reading for Low-Income Students

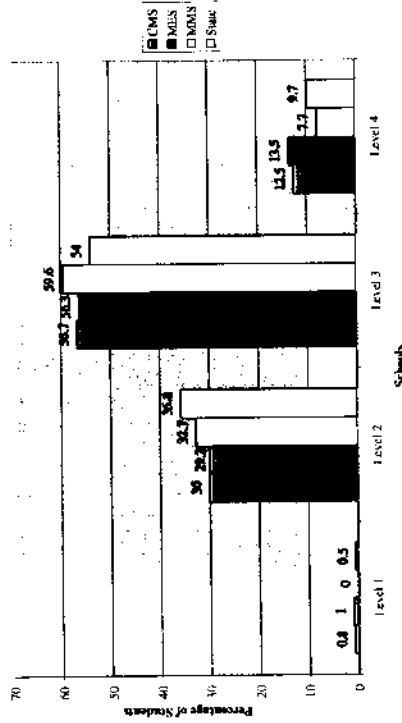
School	Performance Level			
	Level 1	Level2	Level3	Level 4
CHS	13.8	44.8	34.5	6.9
SHS*				
PHS	13.3	60	26.7	0
Overall State	14.9	53.4	29.1	2.6

*Did not report

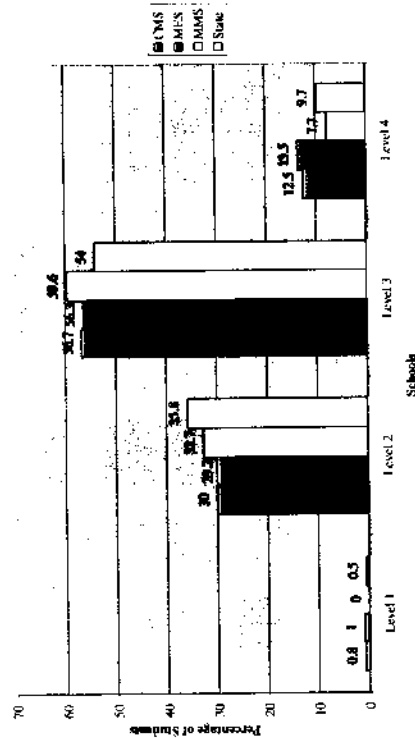
APPENDIX D

Comparison Graphs

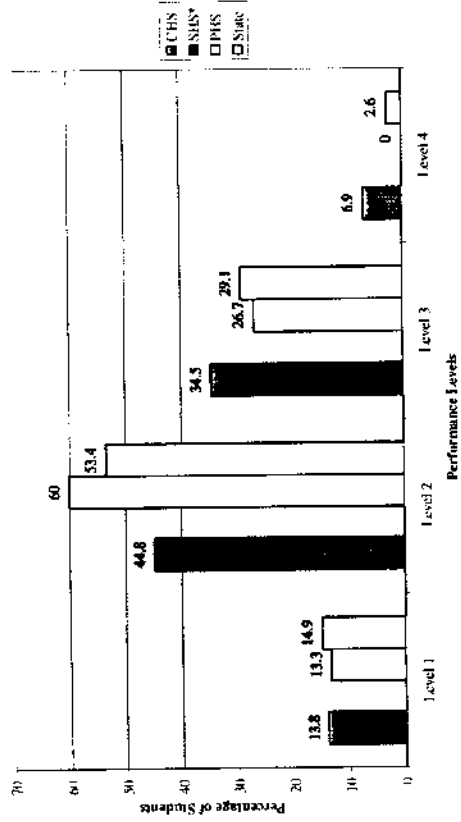
**ISAT PERFORMANCE LEVEL PERCENTAGES IN READING
FOR ALL 8TH GRADE STUDENTS**



**ISAT PERFORMANCE LEVEL PERCENTAGES IN READING
FOR ALL 8TH GRADE STUDENTS**



**PSAE PERFORMANCE LEVEL PERCENTAGES IN READING
FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS**



**PSAE PERFORMANCE LEVEL PERCENTAGES IN READING
FOR ALL 11TH GRADE STUDENTS**

