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ABSTRACT

A study examined the effect of geographic mobility on elementary school students' achievement. Although such mobility, which requires students to make multiple moves among schools, can have a negative impact on academic achievement, the hypothesis for the study was that it was not a determining factor in reading achievement test scores. Subjects were 157 fourth and fifth grade students, who were a representative sample of a multiethnic, socioeconomic group in a suburban elementary school district in New Jersey. Students were divided into four groups for comparison: Group A, students who have consistently attended the same school since first grade; Group B, those attending two schools, changing after first grade; Group C, students attending three schools; and Group D, those attending four to six schools. Data were obtained from reading scores from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills administered in spring, 1995. Results indicated that, although the difference in attained reading scores between pupils who had moved only once and those who had attended the same school were relatively small, significant differences occurred between those who had attended one or two schools and those who had attended three or more schools. Findings revealed the hypothesis that mobility would not be a factor in reading achievement was not correct. Further research is suggested to determine the socioeconomic factors involved in mobility and their effect on students' academic achievement. (Four tables of data are included; 16 references, data for the 4 study groups, and related research are appended.) (Author/CR)

Mobility and Reading Achievement

by

Theresa Z. Waters

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

This was a study of the effect of mobility on fourth and fifth grade student's achievement. Reading achievement scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills were collected and compared in terms of school stability and mobility.

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Geographic mobility which requires students to make multiple moves among schools can have a negative impact on academic achievement. Such mobility is a problem in urban and semi-urban districts and it poses a dilemma in terms of academic evaluation. Standardized tests are used extensively in the United States to measure academic achievement. These tests are routinely criticized in terms of assessing literacy yet the national percentile scores derived from the test are used to compare school systems and schools within systems. Schools with a high rate of student mobility are compared on the same basis as those with much more stable student populations.

There have been few research projects that have focused specifically on geographic mobility and its relation to academic achievement, and very few specifically dealing with reading achievement. Long states that except among children of college educated parents, frequent long distance movement was found to be associated with an increased likelihood of achievement below the modal grade. He added that the effects of moves may vary according to the circumstances of the move, the socioeconomic status of the family, and the time of the year when the move occurs. When interstate moves occur, college educated parents are

more likely to know what to expect and how to ease their children's transition into a new school in a new area (Long, 1975).

Straits' research supports and duplicates Long's study finding that children of well educated parents have a scholastic advantage over their peers, which may serve to offset any adverse effects of migration on school success. Migration adversely effects school progress only among children with less educated parents. It should be noted that Strait found significant effects only if the head of the household had only eight years of formal education (Strait, 1987).

A move from one town or city to another can isolate a family from the school community. Vacha and McLaughlin contend that the social networks of less educated parents are so limited and so often centered around relatives, a move can effectively cut them off from the informal sources of information and contact with the schools that seem so important for insuring children's success (Vacha and McLaughlin, 1992). Lareau also found that parents with less than a college education are more likely to rely on social contacts with relatives rather than friends or coworkers (Lareau, 1987). If these families depend on relatives for school information and those relatives

aren't accessible, then the family is further isolated from the school community.

Each year 17% of school-age children move (Bureau of Census, 1986) of these, most move within a county. Of special concern to site-based administrators is the sense that if evaluation is to be based on net achievement of students within a given school building, buildings with disproportionate numbers of itnerant students will be unfairly jeopardized (Ingersoll, Scamman, and Eckerling, 1989).

Morris, Pestaner, and Nelson (1967) found mixed effects of mobility on reading and math achievement and found that mobility might be more beneficial for the more intelligent student. Whalen and Fried (1973) found that more intelligent students may benefit and less intelligent students may be harmed. Murname, Maynard, and Olds (1981) discovered that among low income families, even a move within city limits may have negative effects on children's achievement.

Families' reasons for moving are varied and complex. In a middle class family, a promotion may be the reason and the move is equated with success. On the other hand, a move is often made because of a family break-up or an inability to pay the rent. Single-parent families move more

often than two-parent families (Blane and Lacey, 1981). It is also possible that a break-down in family structure can negatively effect educational attainment.

Whalen and Fried (1973) presented statistical data which indicated that high mobility students of high intelligence had higher attainment scores than low mobility students of high intelligence, and that high mobility students of low intelligence attained lower scores than low mobility students of low intelligence. In simple terms, mobility increased the scores of intelligent children and depressed the scores of children with low intelligence. "Family mobility has consistently been found to increase a student's likelihood of being at risk" (Vacha and McLaughlin, 1992). Hammons found that the probability of eventual dropping out of school increased with the number of moves particularly with urban students (Hammons, 1988).

A study was done in the Denver, Colorado school system on the impact of geographic instability on achievement by 41,735 elementary, middle, and secondary school students. The results indicated an almost uniformly negative impact on student achievement, the most negative effects of geographic mobility were found at earlier grade levels.

The data in the study offered "compelling evidence that geographic mobility is an aversive influence on student achievement" (Ingersoll, Scamman, and Eckerling, 1989).

Hypothesis

To provide additional evidence on this topic, the following study was undertaken. It was hypothesized that geographic mobility was not a determining factor in achievement test scores in Reading at the elementary school level. A child from a working class family can attend several schools during the elementary school years without an adverse effect.

Procedures

Reading achievement scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills were collected and compared in terms of school stability and mobility. Data were obtained from Reading scores from the Iowa Test administered in Spring, 1995 at Washington School, West Orange, New Jersey. Using records belonging to the current 1995-6, one hundred and fifty seven fourth and fifth graders, reading scores along with the number of elementary schools that each child attended was noted.

The students are a representative sample of a multi-ethnic, lower socioeconomic group in a suburban elementary

school district in New Jersey. Twelve Special Education students and four participants in the English as a Second Language or Bilingual program were eliminated from the study. Fourteen new students who began at Washington School in Fall, 1995 were also not included because their Iowa Tests were administered a full six months later than the rest of the testing group. Students were divided into four groups for comparison. Group A consisted of those students who have attended Washington School consistently since the beginning of first grade, they have made one school move but these students began first grade at Washington School. Group B consisted of those students who attended two schools, having changed schools after the completion of first grade. Group C attended three schools in the course of their elementary experience. Group D was made up of those students who attended four to six schools.

Results

Table 1, The Summary Table for Group A

Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Group A (one school)	59.7581	23.5787	1.70360
Group B (two schools)	51.3171	26.1155	

Not significant
101 DF

Table 1, the summary table for Group A, those students having attended Washington School since the beginning of first grade, and Group B, those students having attended two schools after the beginning of first grade indicate no significant difference in composite reading sccres on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Table II, The Summary Table for Group C and D

Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Group C (three schools)	34.4286	22.8901	0.238630
Group D (four schools)	32.2727	21.7995	

Significant .01
DF 23

Table II, the summary table for Group C, those students having attended three schools since the beginning of first grade, and Group D, those students having attended four or more schools indicate no significant difference in composite reading scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Table III, The Summary Table for Group B and C

Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Group B	51.0732	26.0023	2.02001
Group C	35.1429	23.7871	

Significant .01
DF 53

Table III, the summary table for Group B, those students attending two schools since the beginning of first grade, and Group C, those students attending three schools since the beginning of first grade, indicates a significant difference in composite reading scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Table IV, The Summary Table for Groups A and B; Groups C and D

Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Groups A and B	56.1068	24.8225	4.08707
Groups C and D	33.8800	22.4709	

Significant
DF 126

Table IV, the summary table for Groups A and B combined indicates a significant difference in composite reading scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Conclusion

The difference in attained Reading scores between pupils who had moved only once and those who had always attended the same school was very small. Significant differences occurred, however, between those who had attended one or two schools and those who had attended three or more schools. The hypothesis that mobility would not be a factor in reading achievement was rejected.

Socioeconomic factors need to be considered. One explanation for the insignificant difference between Group A and Group B might be that both groups have somewhat stable home situations. Many of the students in Group B moved from urban districts when the student was in second or third grade possibly because the parents were dissatisfied with the urban school environment. These parents are willing to pay a higher rent for a smaller living space in order to secure a better education for their child. One fifth of the children in Group B had attended parochial school, prior to moving to the West Orange district, indicating a willingness to pay tuition and perhaps a belief system that values the importance of an education. Students in Groups C and D have moved three or more times, sometimes attending a new school at each grade level, often moving in the middle of the academic school year. It is doubtful that the student could be expected to make smooth transitions or that the parent would be able to help them catch up on missed curriculum.

Further research would be required to know the socioeconomic factors that were involved in the mobility itself. In general, families tend into one area once the oldest child enters school so reasons for mobility need to be looked into further. Divorce, separation, inability to

pay rent, loss of employment and foster care are all circumstances that can inhibit Reading achievement.

Socioeconomic status, education of parents, intelligence, and the factors that brought about the move all play a role in Reading achievement regardless of mobility and stability.

Native language could be another area for investigation. There are groups of students who learned English as a second language, don't speak English at home, or have non-English speaking parents. These are all considerations that could impede Reading achievement especially in terms of vocabulary development which is a large component of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

This thesis examined only one aspect of Reading achievement, a national percentile score in Reading on the Iowa Basic Skills Test. Other measures such as portfolio assessment, reading records, teacher evaluation, or even a reading series' unit tests should be equal determinants of reading achievement and success.

Related Research:
Geographic Mobility and Academic Achievement

Standardized tests are used extensively in the United States to assess student literacy. These tests are the subject of much criticism. The tests have not changed much over recent years although there have been great changes in the teaching of literacy. Standardized tests have not evolved with research - based understanding of the reading process: the tests are a bottom to top, part to whole approach to assessment, most classroom reading is taught in a meaning context, top to bottom, whole to part. Vocabulary in standardized tests is often presented in short phrases without helpful context clues. Comprehension questions are presented in multiple choice format which is no longer the standard form of assessing comprehension in a classroom. Assessment practices can run contrary to an entire curriculum. School communities which are committed to an integrated curriculum may still be required to administer tests that separate curriculum into subject domains. As Pikulski (1989) has pointed out, there are no articles being published or speeches being made that praise standardized tests for the progress that they have made or the good that they do; instead they are routinely criticized for their "limitations if not for the harm that they do to progress in literacy assessment

and instruction." Yet in spite of all the criticism, standardized tests are used more extensively than ever before.

Standardized reading tests are being used more than ever in schools today. According to Pearson and Valencia (1986), there are now at least 40 statewide competency testing programs, leading them to conclude that the "influence of testing is greater now than at anytime in the history of schooling." The emphasis on accountability and achievement has given more credence to standardized tests as the sole indicator of a student's achievement.

Neill and Medina estimate that over 105 million standardized tests are administered annually to the 39.8 million students in classrooms in the United States, this is an average of 2½ standardized tests per student per year. At this rate, by the time a student graduates, he or she will have been forced to take 30 standardized tests (Medina and Neill, 1989). A 1989 study by the National Center for Fair and Open Testing reported that an additional 30 to 40 million tests were administered to students in compensatory and special education programs. Two million tests are used annually to screen kindergarten students. These estimates are conservative because the

study concentrated on public schools and did not include private and religious schools, nor did it include tests used to identify gifted students or those with limited English proficiency. The Fair Test survey also revealed that standardized testing is most prevalent in the southern states and in large urban school districts, areas that often have low income and minority populations.

In 1985, Robert Ruddell conducted a study of legislators, administrators, and teachers in California which examined the relationship between test knowledge, attitude and instructional decision making. Ruddell found that most legislators expressed concern for the low achievement of minority students on standardized tests but did not believe in the necessity of different tests for different children. Principals and administrators were concerned with the match or mismatch of the test with the curriculum. Teachers expressed concern about the frequency of testing and the fact that too much time was spent on testing. Findings from Ruddell's study also revealed that standardized tests have little impact on instructional decisions. But Brozo and Brozo (1994) note a frustration experienced by classroom teachers because

they are forced to administer tests "foisted on them by state and local officials and are left with little choice but to teach to the tests when the pressure of accountability is placed on them. Given this pressure, it is not surprising that many teachers sink into a malaise around the time of state testing because of the monopoly on the curriculum and the difficulty they have in finding any meaningful reason for administering the test." Standardized tests have an inappropriate influence on curriculum, instruction and learning. Teachers look to the content or actual items of tests as concrete indications of what they should teach.

Edelsky (1992) supports Brozo and Brozo's contention that testing has a negative effect on school curriculum. She states that schools are organized by a hierarchical society to fit a hierarchical society and that tests are a prime instance of hierarchy making in action. According to Edelsky, teachers put terrific energy into either buying into or getting released from the hierarchy. Even if a teacher rejects the hierarchy, energy is still spent rejecting it. Many teachers who reject standardized tests still try either to prepare students a few weeks in advance or spend countless hours

justifying that they're refusing to do that. On the other hand, teachers who don't reject testing, or those who don't like it but still feel they have to do it, spend tremendous amounts of classroom time teaching students to take tests and giving them test-like exercises. "As a result, literacy and education is eventually conceived of as the tests themselves. The constant comparison - the ranking and sorting - along with the associated politically conservative idea that competition is what guides society, is one big way politics affects the day-to-day lives of children and teachers." (Edelsky, 1992).

Pikulski identifies a number of limitations in the most commonly used tests: overreliance on questions requiring literal recall; overuse of multiple-choice items and the requirement of a single right answer; the use of short, artificial pieces of text; and requiring students to attempt to read and respond to overly difficult test items. Although reading tests have been administered since the beginning of this century, it was not until the 1930's that the question/answer format became the most popular method of assessing comprehension and the basis for today's tests (Readence and Moore, 1983). Administrators came to regard the

question/answer format as the "most convenient, objective, and cost-effective means of comprehension assessment" (Brozo and Brozo, 1994).

There are not only problems in the format of standardized tests but also in the administration of these tests, since the use of a time limit can negatively affect slower readers. In addition according to Wodtke, the scores of minority students from low income families can be negatively influenced by a number of outside factors. If the test is administered by a person unknown to the child, a common occurence when the child is new in the school, the student is less apt to perform well. An unknown test administrator does not affect the performance of a white middle-class student however.

Reliability of test scores is an important issue that does not get the proper public attention that it deserves. Even educators are unaware or don't remember that each test has a reliability coefficient and a standard deviation. It is not uncommon for a standardized test to have a standard deviation of 15 and a reliability coefficient of .89. This means that the true score of the test can be up to 13 points higher or lower than the test score (Anastasi, 1989). Reliability is even lower for tests administered to children below grade level. In

recognition of the limitations of standardized testing of young children, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1988) strongly cautioned against "mass standardized testing of young children."

Neill and Medina argue that no test has sufficient reliability to warrant making decisions solely or primarily on the basis of test scores. Unfortunately decisions about class placement in homogenous settings or subject areas are often based on a test score. Children are rountinely placed in state mandated remedial reading programs on the basis of these test scores. And once they're placed in these programs, students "often suffer further indignities of overstandardization of curricula and diagnostic assessment schemes designed to force accountability based on narrow skills-based learning outcomes (Brozo, 1990).

Test validity tells us whether a test measures what it claims to measure, how well it measures it, and what can be inferred from that measurement. Content validity determines whether the test items relate to the trait or traits the test intends to measure. Criterion validity compares test performance against a standard that independently measures the trait that

the test purports to measure (Neill and Medina). According to Neill and Medina, test developers often validate the content of a test by asking subject area experts to make qualitative judgements about the relationship between individual test items and the traits that the test intends to measure. Neill and Medina humorously refer to this method as BOGSAT (Bunch of Guys Sitting Around a Table).

One way of evaluating criterion validity is to compare student's test scores and grades that are assigned to them by teachers. This method undermines a major selling point of standardized tests, that they are "objective substitutes for subjective teacher judgments." (Congressional Budget Office, 1986). If test scores and grades agree, why use the tests at all? If they differ significantly, which is better and how do we know? Administrators often assume that a test is a valid assessment of reading ability without performing a careful and critical analysis to determine its relevance and usefulness to teachers and students. The net result has been a narrowing of curricula and fragmentation of teaching and learning (Linn, 1985).

Brozo and Brozo (1994) express great concern about the students and teachers in remedial and learning

disabilities programs:

"on no one's shoulders does the disservice of standardized reading testing weigh more burdensome. These students work daily under the specter of failure. Like scarlet letters, test scores from the Gates-McGinite, the California Achievement Test (CAT), the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), Woodcock-Johnson, Durrell, and other norm-referenced tests are branded on the psyche of our children. These materials contribute, we belive, to a false assumption about our students, that there must be an appropriate match between the tests and the graded instructional/remedial materials and student's genuine learning needs."

Bias is a component of standardized tests' limited validity. Tests tend to reflect language, culture, and learning styles of upper-class whites. At the outset, "tests were designed to avoid the cultural and personal biases of teachers' judgments. However, just as it is impossible to eliminate bias from teachers, it is also impossible to produce a culturally unbiased test of reading and writing." (International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English, 1994). Hoover, Politzer, and Taylor state (1987) that researchers have discovered that the elaborated English commonly used in standardized tests prevents such tests from accurately measuring the achievement, ability or skills of students who speak nonstandard (e.g., African-American, Hispanic, southern Appalachian, working class) dialects. Research has shown that students tend to perform better

when they identify with the topics covered by the test items. This has been proven true of Mexican-Americans, of African-Americans, and of females. Standardized tests continue to be dominated by questions about and for middle - or upper class white males (Hoover, Politzer, and Taylor).

There are many acknowledged and unacknowledged problems with standardized testing in America, but normative testing continues to play a huge role in American education. As long as school systems continue to pay large sums to testing companies, test scores will continue to be considered an important and valid measure of achievement. There are movements towards alternative authentic assessment and portfolio assessment but it is highly unlikely that the yearly standardized tests will ever be abandoned. As long as taxpayers, legislators, parents, and district administrators continue to make judgments about what transpires in the classroom on the basis of national percentiles, it will be difficult to move towards a more holistic approach.

Although the issues of validity, reliability, and bias in standardized testing are often debated and discussed the impact of student mobility has been given

little consideration. Mobility is a fact of life in late twentieth century American life: divorce, separations, foster care, career moves, and recessions have made the American family mobile. The question that remains unanswered is what are the effects of student mobility on reading and academic achievement? There have been a few studies which focus on the relationship of mobility and achievement with varying results.

Sogbandi (1969) completed a study which was designed to determine if there were a lasting relationship between physical mobility of pupils in Grades one through six and their achievement in high school. His research resulted in no conclusive evidence in support of the extent to which low achievement in high school was related to mobility in elementary grades.

Irene Bessolo (1970) studied the relationships of local pupil mobility to reading achievement and intelligence tests results of educationally disadvantaged children in eighteen schools in Denver, Colorado at grades three and five. Selected test results uncovered differences in reading achievement and IQ scores between non-mobile and locally mobile disadvantaged children. "At the third grade level and at the fifth grade level, there was a significant difference in reading achievement, as measured by the mean

grade level scores in word meaning and paragraph meaning, between non-mobile and locally mobile children, favoring the non-mobile group."

Whalen and Fried (1973) maintain that some children move easily into strange environments, while other's attitudes and performance seem to deteriorate with every move. Interest and attitude have a direct relationship on children's academic performance and Whalen and Fried contend that mobility is a factor that can influence interests and attitudes and, consequently, classroom performance. Their study was conducted in Livermore, California during the 1971-1972 school year. Students who were referred to as having high mobility were those who had attended schools in four or more different cities. Low mobility students were those who had spent all of their school years in the city of Livermore. Whalen and Fried also factored in intelligence, those whose IQ was 110 or higher were labeled high intelligence while those with an IQ of 110 or lower were in the low group. It was found that of the 133 students who met the criterion of high mobility, only 79 students had IQ test and achievement test results in their files. Of the students who had attended Livermore

schools since kindergarten, 79 were chosen randomly to make up the low mobility group. The study concluded that high mobility students of high intelligence have higher achievement than low mobility students of high intelligence. High mobility students of low intelligence had lower achievement than low mobility students with low intelligence. While Whalen and Fried admit that it is difficult to generalize on the basis of their one study, their research indicates that a relationship does exist between mobility and achievement. They conclude that the interests and attitudes of higher intelligence students are stimulated by frequent geographic relocations. The more capable students have more confidence to meet the challenge of new environments and less capable students may find frequent moves too bewildering to accommodate.

Long (1975) did an analysis of Census data that demonstrated that except among children of college educated parents, frequent long distance movement was found to be associated with an increased likelihood of achievement below the modal grade. Interstate migration increases age-grade retardation and decreases the frequency of age-grade acceleration among children whose parents have less than a college education. He added

that the effects of moves may vary according to the circumstances of the move, the socioeconomic status of the family, and the time of the year when the move occurs. According to Long when interstate moves occur, college educated parents are more likely to know what to expect and how to ease their children's transition to a new school in a different area. Children of college educated parents are more likely to have continual exposure to other people's mobility and as a result be less unsettled by their own mobility.

Blane and Spicer (1978) prepared one of the first longitudinal studies on the effect of mobility on academic attainment. They compared the attainment of eleven year olds who were from military families with other students from high and low socioeconomic groups. "The comparisons between these groups over several changes of schools were surprising, and showed that mobility had any or little effect on the high socioeconomic group and military families but there was significant detrimental effect on the children from low socioeconomic group."

Straits' research supports and replicates Long's finding that children of well educated parents have a

scholastic advantage over their peers, which may offset any adverse effects of moving on school progress. Strait (1987) found that the detrimental effect of migration on school progress is a positive function of the cultural difference between the current and the previous places of residence but only among teenagers with less educated parents. A school-age move also seemed to increase the school dropout rate among children of less educated parents. Straits found that among low-income families even a move within city limits could have negative effects on children's achievement. In addition he found that a school-age move of 50 miles or more increases the dropout rate among students whose parents are less educated. Straits reported that among teenagers who had moved since starting school, 26% of the children of parents with fewer than eight years of schooling and 16% of the students of parents with fewer that ten years of schooling dropped out, but only 6% of those with better educated parents dropped out.

A family's geographic mobility can be a predictor of academic problems. Using national data, Coleman (1989) reported that when a family's socioeconomic status is held constant, the drop-out rate was 11.8%

for families who did not move, 16.7% if the family moved once and 23.1% if the family moved twice.

Geographic mobility is a complex phenomenon. Families move for a variety of reasons. A move can be the result of job success, in the form of a promotion or transfer. It can also be the result of a divorce or economic failure. Reasons for mobility can explain the type of effect on the academic success of the child. Blane and Lacey (1981) report that single-parent families move more often than two-parent families. Motherless families move more frequently than fatherless families. Family break-up due to marriage problems and illegitimacy is associated with higher rates of mobility than family break-up caused by the death of a spouse. Geographic mobility causing a change in schools and resulting from a break in family structure, does effect educational attainment adversely. Blane and Lacey also report that many previous studies focusing on the relationship between mobility and school success have included the military population. They suggest that the military should not be included in study samples because they represent a special case in respect to mobility, that a sample of service personnel represents a restricted social class range and mostly intact families.

Ingersoll, Scamman, and Eckerling (1987) found that student mobility in an urban setting can take a variety of forms. First, selected students are mobile within the school system itself. This intra-systemic mobility can occur because the student requires a change of program or placement and this results in a school transfer. Second, selected students are mobile in a broader context, that is, the student may leave the district only to return in a few months. Third, each year brings an influx of new students, some of whom enter at the beginning of the school year, others who enter midyear, and others who stay at home for a month or so before registering. Mobility occurs both within and external to a school district.

Ingersoll, Scammon, and Eckerling conducted their study in the Denver, Colorado school system. Data for their study was drawn from the student data base of a multiethnic urban population of more than 60,000 students. Student mobility or stability was defined by student enrollment patterns in the period from September 1985 through March 1987 when all elementary students were tested with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and

secondary students with the Tests of Academic Performance (TAP). Five student groups were identified.

Group 1 continuing students were identified as those who were registered in the Denver Public Schools in September 1985 and neither withdrew, transferred, or reentered within the period under study.

Group 2 continuing students were those who were on the Denver Public School census in September 1985 and made one, but no more than one, transfer, withdrawal, or reentry.

Group 3 continuing students were those on the Denver Public School roles in September 1985 and made more than one transfer, withdrawal, or reentry. Also, included in this group were those students who entered during the year after the official census and who transferred at least once.

Group 4 new-entry students were registered in Denver Public Schools in the fall of 1986 and made no transfers, withdrawals, or reentries within the period of the study.

Group 5 new-entry students were identified as those who were newly registered in the Denver Public Schools

in the fall of 1986 and made one or more transfer, withdrawal, or reentry within the period of the study.

Achievement levels of the two more stable student populations (Group 1 and 4) were consistently higher than those of the mobile student populations (Groups 2, 3, and 5). The negative effects of membership in the more mobile groups (2,3, and 5) are found in the early grades, although continued major detriment is noted well into grade 9. In eleventh and twelfth grade levels, the effect of mobility was greater in math than in reading. Ingersoll et al. concluded that geographic mobility, particularly midyear moving, does have a disruptive effect on achievement and adjustment.

Moving can have an isolating effect on a family, one that can create a chasm between families and the school community. Vacha and McLaughlin (1992) report that the single most consistent factor characterizing at-risk students is social class. Social class is a powerful determinant of school success. Vacha and McLaughlin found that the social networks of less educated parents are almost exclusively connected to relatives and so a move can effectively cut them off from the school community because they are no longer receiving those informal sources of information.

There is no longer an informal connection to school activities and information that are vitally important.

Research presented in the last decades supports the theory that mobility has a determining influence on academic achievement. Some types of moves may affect academic achievement more than others. But Blane, Piling and Fogelman warn against making too general an assumption that mobility is the sole casual contributor to achievement: "In reality, mobility effects may be a function of contamination of preexisting differences including socioeconomic status, or they may reflect other effects related to disruption of smooth psychosocial development."

Socioeconomic status, education of parents, intelligence and reasons behind the move all play a role in whether or not enrollment in a new school have positive or negative effects. Each of these variables plays a role in general academic achievement regardless of mobility or stability. As Straits (1987) put it, "school progress is positively associated with the family's head's education, spouse's education, and family income and negatively associated with being male, being in a female-headed household, and being in a large family with many younger siblings."

Whalen and Fried (1978) suggest that because we live in such a highly mobile society, educators and counselors should be aware of the problems faced by their mobile students and be ready to help those who find more difficulty in adjusting to new school settings.

Ingersoll, Scammon, and Eckerling (1987) acknowledge that while school administrators do not have the authority or capability to thwart the highly mobile behaviors of urban school populations, some intersystemic mobility can be discouraged. Administrators can better control those moves due to school program transfer or changes in assignment boundaries. They also suggest that the value of stability on children's achievement is an important message that should be passed on to parents and the community.

Just as socioeconomic status impacts achievement, it also impacts the methods that we use to measure achievement. Educators have long debated the value of standardized tests and whether or not they provide a valid measurement of achievement in a multicultural population. Bias, validity, and reliability have long been issues of concern, more recently researchers are questioning reading assessment and whether it can properly assess literacy levels. The methods of teaching literacy have changed

considerably, but standardized tests have been minimally altered and the skills that are emphasized are isolated and narrow.

Edelsky (1992) suggests that educators find more appropriate methods of assessment. She admonishes administrators to get rid of the perceived need to compare everyone and instead look at assessments that do not sort or rank.

The International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English's Joint Task Force on Assessment (1994) assert that assessment must serve, not harm, each and every student. They state that the processes of reading and writing are complex ones, not measurable by simplistic multiple-choice examinations.

There is a search going on for alternative assessment because there is no one single assessment that serves the needs of all. Farr (1992) writes that finding new methods of assessment will require tolerance and compromise. He states that "critics of schools should become aware that assessment must serve more than school accountability. Decision makers should understand that assessment is more than numbers on a page." Farr

stresses that innovative alternatives to reading achievement tests can be found but school districts will need help with developing assessment that is customized to a particular system, its teachers, and its students. According to Farr, this will require a vision that focuses on what real literacy means and link instruction and assessment together.

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GROUP A

Student #	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Total
2	48	38	42
4	25	37	30
7	14	37	24
8	44	30	37
9	64	62	62
13	41	21	30
14	94	71	89
15	92	30	73
16	92	92	92
17	41	50	44
18	94	95	96
27	52	90	72
23	52	43	48
26	29	50	38
28	88	95	93
30	55	57	55
32	25	1	4
33	52	38	44
34	48	25	35
35	55	71	61
37	99	95	98
38	41	50	44
40	44	64	55
41	97	90	95
43	55	30	40
44	99	99	99
45	75	71	73
46	41	21	30
48	37	33	33
60	75	38	59
61	29	18	22
62	20	38	27
63	71	71	71
64	41	57	48
70	75	57	67
72	88	84	87
76	84	50	72
77	84	71	80
79	61	35	50
82	98	93	98
84	75	62	71
85	66	57	62
94	61	79	70
95	27	48	36
108	35	35	35
112	86	79	84
117	66	62	65
118	94	79	90

Group A continued..

Student #	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Total
119	56	73	63
123	38	18	29
124	51	35	43
125	38	22	30
128	97	93	93
129	86	66	81
136	86	79	84
139	82	35	67
140	82	57	75
141	80	57	72
143	71	35	56
152	82	57	75
155	61	35	50
157	61	32	47

62 Students

Average 59.596774

GROUP B

Student #	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Total
1	13	31	20
3	30	55	40
5	76	61	68
10	12	57	30
29	55	57	55
42	55	33	44
49	84	71	80
50	37	77	58
53	29	25	27
54	17	50	30
55	29	38	33
57	75	50	64
69	44	33	37
71	52	38	44
78	47	18	31
89	51	52	51
96	11	13	11
99	71	90	81
100	71	90	81
102	92	57	82
105	89	93	93
106	92	85	90
109	71	57	61
110	5	32	14
111	18	5	8
113	71	62	67
115	47	32	41
121	51	40	47
126	80	73	78
127	94	90	94
132	51	15	37
135	27	18	23
142	24	43	31
144	56	32	43
145	6	4	3
146	56	43	50
148	97	96	98
150	80	48	70
151	80	48	70
153	89	85	88
154	47	18	31

41 Students

Average 51.317073

GROUP C

Student #	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Total
20	17	7	10
58	58	77	67
75	25	43	33
87	51	32	42
93	34	43	37
97	27	5	13
98	2	22	8
107	42	7	21
114	89	66	83
131	51	10	27
133	71	40	59
134	6	2	2
147	47	40	43
149	47	48	47

14 Students

Average 35.142857

GROUP D

Student #	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Total
12	1	38	8
19	17	11	12
22	71	38	57
65	79	43	69
66	6	3	4
67	23	18	20
75	25	43	33
81	48	25	35
90	61	52	56
120	21	18	19
138	61	22	42

11 Students

Average 32.272727