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An examination of supplemental educational services expectations and realities in a large public school district

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AN EXAMINATION OF SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES: EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES IN A LARGE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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ABSTRACT

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind* (*NCLB)* Act. This sweeping legislation brought reform to every area of public education by establishing seven performance-based provisions. Supplemental Educational Services is a core aspect of *NCLB*, designed to meet two of the seven goals: improving academic performance of disadvantaged students and promoting innovative programs. SES tutoring is provided free of charge to parents for students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch and that attend a Title I school that has not made Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, for three or more years. The aim of this tutoring is to ensure that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to tutoring to help improve their academic scores.

The purpose of this research was to examine the practices of SES providers in a large metropolitan school district to examine the pedagogical practices, the qualifications of SES providers, and the accountability measures in place to ensure maximum student academic gains. Through an anonymous online survey taken by SES providers, as well as interviewing the SES coordinator in the target district, I was able to gain a clearer understanding of the SES system. My findings are consistent with other key studies across the nation (Munoz, Potter, & Ross, 2008; Rickles & White, 2006); that is, that little accountability among SES providers to districts could result in questionable student academic gains. Because of research such as this, new federal legislation is currently being drafted to issue states waivers

from the restrictions of mandatory *NCLB* Title I budgets, wherein 5 to 15% were allocated to SES tutoring (McNeil, 2011).

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DEDICATION

To my father, who taught me the value of hard work.

To my mother, who has always believed in me.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Topic and Research

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the pedagogical practices and accountability standards of Supplemental Educational Services, or SES, in a large metropolitan school district. These services are required to be provided for students who attend Title I school that have not met Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, for three or more consecutive years. This study researched the practices of SES providers in a large school district to gain insight into the standardization of practices, and the regulations that are in place to ensure the effective use of federal funding for the program.

Significance of Research

In an era of high-stakes testing and school accountability, programs have been put in place to help ensure the success of all students. This is especially true for Title I schools, who receive billions of dollars in additional funding yearly. Under Title I Part A legislation, one program available to students who receive free/reduced lunch rates and attend a Title I school that has not met AYP for three consecutive years is free Supplemental Educational Services, or SES tutoring. SES tutoring is a provision set forth by the *No Child Left Behind*

Act of 2001 (*NCLB*, 2001) that aims to help failing schools improve their AYP by giving intensive interventions in reading, language arts and math to students that choose to take advantage of the program (*NCLB*, 2001). Districts are required to put aside 20% of their Title I funds to pay for SES tutoring and school choice programs, with a minimum of 5% for SES tutoring. School choice allows parents to move their children to a school within a district that has demonstrated AYP. In 2010, the federal Title I Part A budget was $14.5billion, with nearly $2.9 billion allotted to the SES program (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). With such a large amount of money being spent on SES tutoring, one would hope that it has been proven to show significant student academic gains. However, although SES providers report their student data regularly according to state guidelines, no large-scale, nation-wide studies have been completed at this time. A number of states and local school districts have completed their own studies, showing positive, though often small or insignificant, gains. (Chappell, Nunnery, Pribesh, & Hager, 2010)

In addition, states are required to remove an SES provider from the state-approved SES provider list if after two years the SES provider cannot demonstrate positive student academic gains (U.S. Government Accountability Office [USGAO], 2006). Yet, there are neither federal regulations nor state funds available for SES provider monitoring (Chappell et al., 2010).

Certainly, the intentions of the *NCLB* Act were admirable when free SES tutoring was included in the original legislation. Theoretically, it makes sense; by providing free tutoring to a child at an under-performing school, students of all SES status are better equipped to

raise their academic performance scores. However, based on my experiences, I am curious as to the effectiveness of these SES providers. Low enrollment rates currently exist for eligible students and those that do attend have not demonstrated a strong correlation between the SES tutoring and improved academic success. This thesis aimed to examine the current practices of SES providers in a large metropolitan district so as to ascertain the following:

A. What types of services are being offered?
B. Are the SES providers using pedagogically sound practices?
C. What are the qualifications of the SES providers?
D. What is the percentage of eligible students being served?
E. Are there measures in place to ensure standardization of practices?
F. How does this district identify effective programs and eliminate those that are not?
G. What percentage of the district's budget is being spent on these programs?
H. What are the obstacles that block the success of this well-intended program?
I. What are the factors that contribute to the success of these SES programs?

Rationale

I became interested in this topic because for the past year and a half I have been working part-time as a tutor for a company that provides SES tutoring. I have seen

advertisements seeking tutors from other SES providers, who offer a much greater pay, but no set curriculum or plan. Also, the variation among companies in terms of cost to the county, promise of academic gains, and credentials of the providers is huge. I became curious about the standardization of pedagogical practices, and informally began to investigate. As a future educator, I want to believe that these programs can make a difference. If the students who genuinely do need and want help to better their academic performances seek out the services of a SES provider that does not observe educationally sound practices, and this child does not improve, I feel this could be devastating for their self-esteem. Anxiety over academics is a major contributing factor for students quitting school. I see this as being one link in a cycle that could be fixed. No doubt, if SES tutoring provided individual improvement, the AYP progress of weak schools might also improve, leading to additional funding.

I feel SES effectiveness is a critical area that needs to be more fully explored. The amount of federal money being spent on SES tutoring has increased by 45% from $1.75 billion in 2001 to $2.45 billion in 2005 (Steinberg, 2006). In a time when there are drastic budget cuts in school districts across the United States, we need to be certain that the money being spent is being utilized as efficiently as possible. SES tutoring is paid for from a minimum of 5% of the school's Title I funds, which are meant to promote learning for disadvantaged children (Hess & Finn Jr., 2004). However, it remains difficult to fully grasp the scope of improved or stagnant student achievement after participating in SES tutoring. Surprisingly, SES providers are not required to report student performance outcomes after

receiving services, making it nearly impossible to compare the effectiveness of services (Steinberg, 2006). This project explored the policies of SES services as set forth by federal legislation (NCLB, 2001) by synthesizing information from the *NCLB* Act and related research, and by surveying the practices of the 116 SES providers in one of the largest metropolitan school districts in the nation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Federal Funding for Education

According to the Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited to it by the States, are reserved to the States prospectively, or to the people" (U.S. Constitution Amend. X.). Because education is not mentioned at all in the Constitution, it has been deemed a state and local responsibility. Furthermore, every state constitution *does* ensure its citizens' rights to education. However, since the mid-twentieth century, the federal role in public education has expanded greatly, and continues to increase today (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006).

During the Eisenhower administration from 1952 to 1960, special education for the disabled was made a part of the federal agenda. President Eisenhower pled for support for the National Association for Retarded Children, established in 1952. Also, states were asking for funds to research education for the mentally disabled. Federal laws made aid available for special education research on a matching basis (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). In the following years, Congress passed laws to support teacher-training programs for the disabled, diagnostic equipment, such as hearing and vision screening equipment, and books

for the blind (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). The laws were designed to give states the ability to educate their special needs students, so that they could assume future responsibility and costs for their education.

In October 1957, the Soviet Union launched the world's first orbiting space satellite, *Sputnik*. This led to an immediate change of the federal government's educational focus. Prior to the Soviet's launch, the emphasis had been on under-performing students. Efforts were now to win the "Race for Space," which would show American superiority in science and technology. Focus was now shifted to educating the best and brightest students, in order to become competitive and successful in space exploration. In 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, which sent an unprecedented amount of federal funds to our nation's schools. These funds were targeted at science and language initiatives for high-academic achieving students. In addition, the Physical Science Study Committee gave funds for the development and distribution of science curriculum. However, federal officials were prohibited from exercising any control over local curricula, and made efforts so as not to show any unwanted federal control over local classrooms (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006).

When President John Fitzgerald Kennedy took office in 1960, he kept his campaign promise to initiate a general aid package to public education; however due to racial tensions and feelings about segregated schools, this idea was never realized. In 1961, President Kennedy assembled a team to develop "A National Plan to Combat Mental

Retardation". The findings from this study were used to implement two new laws, the Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Act, which granted $265 million in federal aid over five years to support programs for the mentally retarded, and the Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Construction Act, which granted $330 million over five years for new buildings to serve disabled citizens (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006).

In addition to his interest in special education, President Kennedy was also concerned with the state of inner-city schools. In 1961, the availability of federal grants for urban schools led fourteen of the largest school districts to form the Council of Great City Schools, or CGCS. The aim of the CGCS was to handle the federal grants themselves, rather than having to apply through the state (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). It became more common for urban school districts to apply directly for federal funds, and marked a change in state-federal relations (Gillis, 1962). This compensatory education for "culturally disadvantaged" students placed emphasis once again on under-achieving students, and away from the *Sputnik* era trend of focusing on high-achieving students (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006).

In the 1960's, President Lyndon Johnson, a former schoolteacher himself, made education and civil rights a priority of his administration. Immediately after taking office, he passed the Vocational Education Act and the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963. In 1964, he passed the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, which barred discrimination on the

basis of race, color, or national origin in all programs receiving federal aid (Nelson & Weinbaum). The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 provided for the implementation of project Head Start. Head Start was one of the first congressional efforts to address educational gains through poverty intervention (Ramey & Campbell, 1979). Also passed by President Johnson's administration, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, or ESAE, established Title I, providing increased federal funding for school districts that would implement programs to assist students of low socioeconomic status (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). ESAE is currently up for revision.

Later, in 1974, President Richard Nixon passed a series of amendments to the ESEA. The amendments drastically increased funding for compensatory programs in low-income areas, as well as funded a variety of educational ventures, such as drop-out prevention programs, school health services, gifted children's programs, women's equity programs, career education, arts education, metric education, consumer education, ethnic heritage centers, federal educational programs for migratory, delinquent, and Native American pupils, and dozens of other programs (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). President Nixon also increased federal funding for educational programs by 23% - from $2.8 billion in 1974 to $3.5 billion in 1975 (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). In doing so, he reinforced the idea that carefully targeted compensatory programs are essential for equality in American public schools.

President Nixon also made changes to Title VII, which was aimed at helping non-

English speaking students succeed in the classroom. Title VII was originally part of the ESEA, but President Nixon removed the income restrictions for eligibility for this program. Because of this, funds were now available for non-English speakers, regardless of their household income. In addition, students with mental, physical, and emotional disabilities were also eligible to receive funds, despite family income. President Nixon set the momentum for funding students, not only based on poverty-related criteria, but for all disadvantaged students (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006).

In 1975, with the support of several major interest groups, President Gerald Ford passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, known by its legislative number, P.L. 94-142. Advocates for the legislation based their argument around civil rights issues, specifically equal access to high-quality education for all (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2996).

When President Jimmy Carter took office in 1977, he pledged to create a new federal cabinet to oversee the management of the many federal educational programs. In 1979 Congress passed the Department of Education Organization Act. This department faced a variety of issues, including paying for the variety of new programs now in place in addition to showing that these programs were effective. The economic strain of the nation in the late 1970's led to an increased public interest in the effectiveness of federally funded education programs. The general population wanted to ensure that their tax money was being spent in a way that was generating positive results for students. Congress was feeling pressure to show that the financial contributions were generating student achievements. Program

evaluation and student assessment became the main priority of the federal education agenda (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). The newly created Office of Educational Research and Improvement was given the task to research effective strategies for teaching diverse populations of students. Standardized testing gained momentum as a way to measure both program effectiveness, and student academic gains.

At the same time, a report was released that stated Scholastic Aptitude Test, or SAT, scores had declined steadily over the past fourteen years. Because of this, many state departments were asked to develop stronger programs of basic skills competencies in the areas of reading and mathematics, and to assess student achievement in these areas regularly. Federal grants were given to states that complied, and in 1978 these programs began to be implemented. The purpose of regular assessments was to evaluate the overall effectiveness of schools, and to hold teachers and administrators accountable for measureable student results (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). By 1980, all 50 states had minimum competency standards, or a state-testing program of some kind. However, this was where most states stopped. Testing was the reform, and plans to develop school improvement based on test results did not occur. The logical step would have been to use student achievement scores as a vehicle to drive new instructional practices.

When President Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, he issued the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act, ECIA. This act cut the amount of federal aid to education and also limited the extent of federal regulation in schools. The ECIA drastically altered the ESEA by consolidating 29 categorical programs into block grants called Chapter II grants. Block

grants are large sums of money given to regional governments by the federal government with only general provisions about how the money should be spent. More than $1 billion was cut from federal education funding in the first year (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). President Reagan also intended to dismantle the newly formed Department of Education.

While the President was trying to reduce federal involvement and funding for public education, the Secretary of Education at the time, Terrel Bell, was considering how he might form a commission to complete a nationwide study on the state of the education system (Bell, 1993). Although he did not have the President's approval for such a task, his goal was to have education become a priority for the Reagan administration. He used his position as Secretary of Education to move the study forward, and 18 months later *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* (Bell, 1983) was released. This report used language to motivate the American public to support their schools. Phrases such as "a rising tide of mediocrity" and "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America, the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" raised a strong reaction in the American people. It highlighted several areas of major concern: American students compared unfavorably to foreign students in democratic countries, a general decline of SAT scores over the last generation, weak inferential skills in high school seniors, low student achievement in science, and growing illiteracy rates in the United States (Berube, 1991). In response to this report, states began to adopt more accountability measures, and to create commissions to generate research studies of their own.

Terrel Bell has come to the defense of teachers in this matter. He states that the decline of parental involvement is largely to blame for the decline in student success. He believes that the negative attention focused toward teachers was unfair and misguided (Bell. 1993). Nevertheless, reform was made at the school level. The aim of school reform was to make American students the best and brightest, so as to once again make the United States economically competitive (Berube, 1991).

Known for his fiscal conservatism and his notions of less government involvement, President Reagan's solution for reform of schools was mostly that which was cost-effective, such as restoring discipline, ending drug and alcohol abuse, and strengthening parental influence (Berube, 1991). In addition, *A Nation at Risk* (1983) had recommended that "standardized tests of achievement should be administered at major transition points from one level of schooling to another, and particularly from high school to college. These tests should be administered as part of a nationwide (but not federal) system of state and local standardized tests" (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). President Reagan also emphasized accountability and achievement and made federal aid to schools reliant upon compliance to federal mandates (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006).

When President George H.W. Bush took office in 1989, one of his main priorities was education. He called a national education summit of governors, which was the first one to be held since the Great Depression (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). During the Governors' Educational Summit, the commitment to a set of national performance standards was

strengthened. Although not formalized for several more years, it was at this summit that the outline for National Education Goals Panel (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006) was written. The goals were:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a safe, disciplined environment conducive to learning (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006).

In 1991, President Bush formed the National Council on Education Standards and Testing. The purpose of this Council was to consider the appropriateness and practicality of establishing national standards and assessments. In 1992, the Council issued a report that

confirmed the necessity for national standards aligned with assessments. However, the Council also recommended that states should have the ability to set their own curriculum. Also, federal aid for states was not contingent upon states' participation in national assessments (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). Within the standards movement, the federal government was trying to establish that by providing a quality education by way of uniform curriculum for all students, rather than increasing spending per student, would increase educational outcomes. Also, it would allow for comparisons of student achievements to be made across schools and districts within a state. Even within the decade prior, comparisons of student achievements could be made through examinations of either the Iowa Test of Basic Skills or the California Achievement Test with rankings available nationwide.

When President William Jefferson Clinton took office in 1993, he quickly expanded on the National Education Goals Panel, with the title now evolved to *Goals 2000: The Educate America Act* (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). This act included the six original goals, but also added teacher qualification and parental involvement objectives. This new legislation also recognized the reform efforts happening in the states, and awarded them for development of their own standards-based curriculum and assessments. After three years, funds would then be directed to local districts to implement state initiatives (Weinbaum & Nelson, 2006). In addition, President Clinton restructured the ESEA of 1964, under the new name *Improving America's Schools Act*, or IASA. IASA allocated funds to states' Title I budgets to help socioeconomically challenged students meet the new state standards (Weinbaum &

Nelson, 2006).

Throughout the past 60 years, education has increasingly become a priority of federal government. Focus has shifted from students with disabilities, to those who are high achieving, to those with low socioeconomic status, to civil rights of students. Every administration since President Eisenhower has focused on at least one aspect of American public education. This trend continued with President George W. Bush and his sweeping educational reform, No Child Left Behind.

No Child Left Behind

In January 2001, three days after being sworn in, President George W. Bush proposed his No Child Left Behind Act, *NCLB*. This came as a surprise to the nation, as President Bush had not run his candidacy on an educational platform. However, it quickly passed through Congress, and was signed by President Bush on January 8, 2002. *NCLB* remains a comprehensive and complex education law that represents the most significant expansion of the federal government into education in our nation's history since the *ESEA*. The legislative publication consists of more than 1,100 pages of statutes and regulations that not only increases federal funding to states, but also increases federal mandates and requirements of states, school districts, and public schools (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). The original aim of the Bush administration's *NCLB* was to decrease the education gap between

the highest and lowest achieving students by holding all students to the same standards of academic achievement. Content standards were also a core part of *IASA*, but *NCLB* introduced the use of standards in not only reading and math, but also in science (Stecher & Vernez, 2010).

To accomplish a decrease in the achievement gap, *NCLB* has seven performance-based provisions set forth to ensure results. These include:

1. improving the academic performance of disadvantaged students,
2. boosting teacher quality,
3. moving limited English proficiency students to English fluency,
4. promoting informed parental choice and innovative programs,
5. encouraging safe schools for the 21st century,
6. increasing funding for Impact Aid, and
7. encouraging freedom and accountability (*NCLB*, 2001).

One key element of *NCLB* is to promote scientifically based research on all areas of student achievement to understand what is working to further the academic gains of America's students. The Educational Science Reform Act, *ESRA*, of 2002 furthers the establishment of using data to evaluate educationally sound practices (Yeagley, 2002). Because of this, states were required to assess student performance by way of standardized testing in grades 3-8. These assessments are a component of how AYP is evaluated in schools.

Consistent with the goals of improving academic performance of disadvantaged students and promoting innovative programs, SES tutoring is a core aspect of *NCLB*. SES tutoring is provided free of charge to parents for students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch and that attend a Title I school that has not made AYP for three or more years. The aim of this tutoring is to ensure that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to tutoring to help improve their academic scores. Also, *NCLB* set a goal to have all children proficient in reading and math by the 2013-2014 school year. SES tutoring was a piece of the puzzle designed to help meet this goal. However, very little evidence has been gathered to support SES tutoring as an effective means of raising student academic performance scores (Rickles & White, 2006).

Other Studies on SES Effectiveness

Although no large, national studies of the effect of SES tutoring on student academic gain have been completed at this time, several studies have taken place across large districts. One such study was completed by Munoz, Potter and Ross in 2008 in a large district in Kentucky. They examined the scores of students using the subgroups of race and poverty status. They compared state standardized test scores for students who had received SES tutoring and students who had not received any services, in the areas of reading and math. They found no significant difference in student achievement scores. They also looked at different school levels, such as elementary, middle, and high school.

Again, they found no statistically significant effect of receiving SES tutoring (Munoz et al., 2008).

A second significant study on SES tutoring effectiveness took place in the Los Angeles Unified School District by Jordan H. Rickels, and Jeffrey A. White in 2006. They found low participation rates among students eligible for SES tutoring, with only 13% of eligible students applying for the program, and only 8% of those who applied actually attending a program. Of the 8% who attended, 3% attended nine-tenths of the program hours. Those who attended SES tutoring did not show significantly higher gains than those their peers who applied but were not accepted. However, they did find that the 3% who had higher attendance did show slight improvements over those with low attendance rates (Rickles & White).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Overview

The purpose of this research was to determine any standardization of practices among SES providers within a large school district, and to examine the accountability measures in place to ensure effective use of federal Title I funds. Therefore, in order to gain insight into the practices of the SES providers, I administered an anonymous online survey. In addition, I examined the state Department of Education website to find information regarding the policies and procedures for monitoring and evaluating SES provider effectiveness.

Methodology

In order to explore and examine the research questions set forth, I investigated the accountability and educational practices of SES providers within my target district. I explored the policies of SES services as set forth by federal legislation (*NCLB*, 2001) by synthesizing information from the *NCLB* Act and related research, and by surveying the practices of the SES providers in one of the largest school districts in the nation.

To answer the research questions about SES providers within my target district and their effectiveness, I first completed my Institutional Review Board, or IRB requirements, to conduct research with human subjects. I then created an anonymous and confidential survey to the SES providers (see Appendix A). I sent an email to the providers asking for their participation in this project. Initially I had a very small response. I then began to call each provider, and ask for their assistance. This did not yield the result I had hoped for, and I got an even smaller response. I followed up with two additional emails, allowing one to two weeks between attempts. At this time 28 out of 116 SES providers have participated in my survey. This is 24.1% of the population in my targeted district. The questions I generated were used to determine the qualifications of SES providers and/or if they operate using basic educationally sound practices, such as administering initial and post assessments, and individualizing curriculum to meet students' specific needs.

Target Population of This Study

Supplemental Education Services, or SES, consists of twenty hours of free after-school tutoring for children who attend a Title I school that has not met AYP for three or more consecutive years. SES tutoring is paid for by a percentage of a school's federal Title I funds (Hess and Finn Jr., 2004). Funds are submitted directly from the school's budget to the SES provider.

As of October 2010, the target district reported serving over 179,000 students. The 2010-2011 operating budget for this district was $1.35 billion and the Title I funds totaled over $31.1 million. In 2010 - 2011, only 4,998 students out of the 29,684 eligible students were placed into SES programs, and only 942 completed the program (see Appendix B).

Looking at these large numbers, representing so many children and so many dollars, it becomes necessary to examine the practices of SES providers, the effectiveness of SES programs, and the amount of money being spent on such programs.

In 2010-2011, the target district reports 116 approved and operating SES providers in the county. This is an increase of 65.7% from the 70 approved providers in the 2009 – 2010 school year. By studying these providers, I have discovered what their credentials are, how large they are, what they charge hourly for their services, and their pedagogical approach to each child's education. The state Department of Education sets the criteria for who can apply to be an SES provider. These requirements are as follows: [the provider] (1) has a demonstrated record of effectiveness in increasing student academic achievement, (2) is capable of providing supplemental educational services that are consistent with the instructional program of the school district and the state's academic standards and (3) is financially sound (fldoe.org, 2011). Also, the DOE website states that SES providers who do not show improvement in student academic achievement for two or more years will be removed from the state-approved list. Individual districts provide information to the state to assist in evaluating and monitoring. However, SES providers self-report their data to the district monthly. This is cause for alarm in that it seems unlikely that a provider would

send data to the district proving their ineffectiveness. Due to this, the Florida Department of Education has put measures in place to ensure reliable data reporting such as requiring an attendance roster for students or parents to sign on every tutoring session, a parent-signed progress report to be submitted monthly to the district, district observations of SES programs, and a training program for all SES providers (fldoe.org, 2011).

Survey Questions for SES Providers

To help me examine the scope of SES providers within my target district, I sent a link to my survey via email to the person listed as the main contact for each provider. I used the online survey provider surveymonkey.com to host my survey. The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions, as well as several open-ended questions, as follows:

1. Do you have a degree or background in education? If not, what field is your degree in? What other credentials do you possess?
2. Do you provide reading, math, or both to SES or non-SES students?
3. How long have you been in business in this county?
4. How long have you been an SES provider?
5. Why did you decide to become an SES provider?
6. Is your business part of a local, state or national franchise?
7. At the height of the SES season, approximately how many employees, including part time, does your facility maintain?

8. On average, how many students are currently enrolled with you?
9. What zip code is your facility located in?
10. Do you complete a diagnostic assessment for students on their initial session?
11. How do you provide services to your clients?
12. Parents have many choices for SES providers for their children. How does your company handle attracting new clients? Do you offer transportation or incentives for students and families?
13. What obstacles, if any, contribute to students completing your program?
14. What do you charge hourly for SES services?
15. What guidelines, if any, are in place for setting hourly charges to parents or school districts?
16. How do you measure student academic gains?
17. What percentage of SES students complete your program? What percentage of SES students continue on in your program at their own expense? Do you offer a discounted rate for those who do?

Study Limitations

I am aware that my study has several limitations. First, my sample size is only 24.1% of the population. Because this was an optional and voluntary survey, those who chose to participate may have had responses different than those who did not participate. Perhaps

one reason why such a large percentage of respondents have earned an advanced or Master's degree is that those with higher credentials felt more comfortable in answering the questions. Furthermore, I can only assume the responses are truthful. If I were to complete this study on a larger scale, I would work more closely with the district, and seek qualifications from the SES provider applications.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Overview

The purpose of this research was to examine the practices of SES providers in a large metropolitan school district, and to assess if these findings were consistent with pedagogically sound practices. This study researched the SES providers to try and determine any standardization of practices. Also, this study looked to the school district to conclude what measures were being taken to ensure that the SES providers were being held accountable for student academic gains.

Survey Results

In asking these questions, I was trying to determine several factors that could contribute to students making academic gains. First, do the SES providers have the credentials to be providing effective intervention tutoring? In the state of my target district, SES providers must have a minimum of 60 college credit hours. However, 64.3% of the SES providers that responded to my survey possess a Master's or advanced degree in education (see Appendix C).

I wanted to know if the SES providers offer reading, math, both, or non-SES tutoring

as well. I found that 75% of respondents deliver both SES reading and math, while only 35.7% offer non-SES reading and math (see Appendix D).

I then asked several questions to determine the business models of the SES providers in the district. One factor that may be contributing to the low student achievement rates is the amount of time the SES provider has been in business. According to my survey results, 35.7% have been in business for less than 2 years, with another 35.7% being in business between two and five years. 67.9% are independently owned, and not part of a franchise. These providers may not have had time to develop a proven method for student success. Additionally, I asked what zip code the facilities were located in. I wanted to know if they were mostly in low-income areas. Due to the confidentiality of my survey, I cannot state exact locations, but what I found was that a number of these providers do not have an actual facility that they operate from. Instead, they operate in the students' home, public libraries, or online. Furthermore, some facility centers are located in states other than Florida, which is the location of my target district.

I asked an open-ended question to discover why these companies decided to become an SES provider. Over half stated a desire to reach children that would not otherwise have access to academic tutoring. 28.5% of respondents either already owned or worked at a private tutoring company and saw SES tutoring as an extension of services already being offered.

50% of SES providers reported operating with an average of more than twenty

tutors and 64.3% currently have more than fifty students enrolled with them (see Appendixes E and F). When looking at what the SES providers charge hourly per student, it becomes clear that huge profits are being made from public education funding. 92.9% of SES providers charge the district more than $50 hourly per student (see Appendix G).

I asked what guidelines are in place for setting hourly charges and I got a variety of answers. SES providers are required to deliver a minimum of 20 hours of tutoring to students, and according to my survey results, most SES providers deliver only the minimum amount of hours. 35.7% replied determining the hourly charge by looking at the district's per pupil allotment, and dividing that number by twenty. Twenty hours is a significant amount of time, but perhaps the amount of hours should be raised, to ensure students have sufficient time to gain mastery of concepts. Chappell et al.'s 2011study of SES provider characteristics found that the longer the programs lasted, the more positive the learning gains. Four respondents stated a need to maximize profits; one went so far to say, "Tutors don't come cheap by the hour". Four respondents replied there are "none", and one reported, "I don't know". One SES provider reported giving a free laptop and internet connection, which adds to the cost of their program.

Incentives such as laptop computers, gift cards, and even cash for completion of the SES program are a common practice among SES providers. Because SES tutoring is for low-income students, and is provided free of charge to parents, the addition of

incentives is an attractive deal. Offering a low-income family a laptop computer, when they might not otherwise be able to have one, is a sure way to ensure your company the business of that family. The company I work for gives tokens for students' hard work and compliance. The tokens may by used immediately or saved to purchase small items such as stickers and toys.

96.4% of survey participants complete a diagnostic assessment for students upon their initial visit, but how this assessment is given has variations. Some report giving this assessment in the student's home, others use a computer-based assessment, while some providers use the district's pre-assessment. However, 100% of survey participants indicated that they monitor student academic gain through the use of pre- and post-assessments in areas of student need. This is inconsistent with the previous question of diagnostic assessment. Other methods of tracking student academic gains are also noted and indicate that 21.4% of SES providers use student portfolios, 75% use end of lesson assessments, 78.6% use tutor observations, 14.3% examine student report cards, and 39.3% conference with the parents and/or student (see Appendix H).

Tutoring is provided mostly on a 1:1 scale, with 85.7% reporting using this method. 78.6% utilize small group tutoring, and 21.4% provide online tutoring. In addition, 60.7% operate using a set, published curriculum provided by their company, while 3.6% report allowing individual tutors to set their own curriculum (see Appendix I).

In my experience as a tutor, I have worked for two different companies. The first, which did not offer SES tutoring, allowed individual tutors complete control of the

curriculum, lessons, and progress monitoring. The second company, which I currently work for, works with both SES and non-SES students. Students are given a diagnostic assessment upon their first visit. The results are analyzed, and an educational plan is developed for that child, based upon their individual needs. The curriculum is pre-determined by the company, but the child is placed appropriately for their skill sets. Tutoring is provided in a small group setting, with no more than three students per tutor. Students in math and advanced reading work from workbooks, with tutor assistance. Math students have access to a large variety of manipulatives. Beginning readers have more phonics-based instruction and target specific sounds with each lesson. There are many manipulatives and strategies to encourage these young readers.

One question I set out to answer was the standardization of practices. I have found no such standardization of curriculum in my study. I believe this would be difficult to implement, due to the many different SES providers.

According to my studies in the field of education, thus far the SES providers seem to be acting in accordance with educationally sound practices. Why, then, is there little correlation between students receiving SES services and student academic gain (Rickles & White, 2006)?

During the 2010-2011 school year, my target district had 29,684 students eligible to participate in SES tutoring programs, yet only 7,576 students applied, and 4,998 participated. Out of those who did participate, only 942 students successfully completed the program (see Appendix B). That is only 3.1% of the total eligible

students, and 23.8% of students who participated in SES tutoring. When asked what percentage of students successfully completes their program, the SES providers who took my survey reported a large range, from 59% to 100%. They were also asked what factors contribute to students not successfully completing the program, and 78.6% answered lack of parental support, 71.4% chose attendance, 35.7% chose transportation issues, 35.7% lack of motivation, 25% behavioral issues, and 14.3% stated learning disabilities (see Appendix J).

By 2006-2007, 42 states had adopted measures to evaluate the effectiveness SES providers. At the same time, more than half the states had begun to monitor SES provider effectiveness by way of student academic gains. However, only eight states had databases that contained student academic scores with which to compare growth after completion of SES tutoring (Stecher & Vernez, 2011).

Upcoming Legislation and the Future of SES

When I began this study 8 months ago, it was not yet in the forefront of legislation. However, within the past year SES tutoring has become a popular legislative issue. The importance of financial accountability has not gone unnoticed, and this is now a topic that is frequently debated.

In September 2011, United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan unveiled a plan that would allow states to receive waivers freeing them from large portions of *NCLB*

restrictions. Under these revisions, states that develop new education improvement and accountability strategies, including new teacher evaluations that would include student growth criteria, would be eligible for waivers (McNeil, 2011). This would allow states the freedom to use the 20% of Title I funds currently being used for SES tutoring and school choice programs in a manner they feel would most benefit the 15% of their lowest performing schools (McNeil, 2011). In addition, states would be free from the requirement to have 100% of their students proficient in math and reading by the 2013-2014 school year.

Although most lawmakers agree that *NCLB* needs to be reformed, they cannot agree on the most appropriate method of doing so and this new legislation has caused a firestorm of controversy. Some see SES as an indispensible tool for helping students of low socioeconomic status receive necessary help, while others feel that SES is an ineffective "one size fits all" approach. Those in favor of keeping SES tutoring, such as Charles Brown, the executive director of Healthy Families, in Washington, which operates tutoring programs for students in Maryland and the District of Columbia, feels that schools and districts will do "whatever is cheapest and easiest" to offer interventions. However, others feel SES is ineffective, such as Noelle Ellerson, the assistant director of policy analysis and advocacy at the American Association of School Administrators. Emerson has said, "For the most part, the flexibility in funding will free up the funds and allow [districts] to provide programs and services with more proven track records" (McNeil, 2011).

Future Research Questions

After completing this study, I have found some questions that I had previously not thought of. If I were to continue this research, I would seek answers to the following questions:

1. The minimum is twenty hours, but how many SES providers offer additional hours to students?
2. What is the district per pupil allocation of funds for SES tutoring?
3. Do SES providers charge the same hourly rate for SES and non-SES students?
4. Why does SES tutoring have such a low percentage of eligible students enrolled?
5. What are the academic gains, if any, of students enrolled in SES tutoring in this district?
6. Are changes in teacher evaluations in this district a result of coming *NCLB* waivers?
7. If given a waiver with new legislation, what will new intervention measures for the lowest performing students look like?

APPENDIX A: SES PROVIDER SURVEY

APPENDIX A: SES Provider Survey

1. Do you have a degree or background in education? If not, what field is your degree in? What other credentials do you possess?
2. Do you provide reading, math, or both to SES or non-SES students?
3. How long have you been in business in this county?
4. How long have you been an SES provider?
5. Why did you decide to become an SES provider?
6. Is your business part of a local, state or national franchise?
7. At the height of the SES season, approximately how many employees, including part time, does your facility maintain?
8. On average, how many students are currently enrolled with you?
9. What zip code is your facility located in?
10. Do you complete a diagnostic assessment for students on their initial session?
11. How do you provide services to your clients?
12. Parents have many choices for SES providers for their children. How does your company handle attracting new clients?
13. Do you offer transportation or incentives for students and families?
14. What obstacles, if any, contribute to students completing your program?
15. What do you charge hourly for SES services?
16. What guidelines, if any, are in place for setting hourly charges to parents or school districts?
17. How do you measure student academic gains?
18. What percentage of SES students complete your program? What percentage of SES students continue on in your program at their own expense? Do you offer a discounted rate for those who do?

APPENDIX B: DISTRICT SES ENROLLMENT DATA FOR THE 2010 – 2011 SCHOOL YEAR

APPENDIX B: District SES Enrollment Data for the 2010-2011 School Year

2010 – 2011

Total Applications for 2010-11	Total Placement for 2010-11	Students not placed for 2010-11	Students who completed the program for 2010-11	Students expected to complete the program by 5/1/2011
7576	4998	2578	942	251

*Total Number of Students Eligible for the Program as of 8/1/2010= 29,684

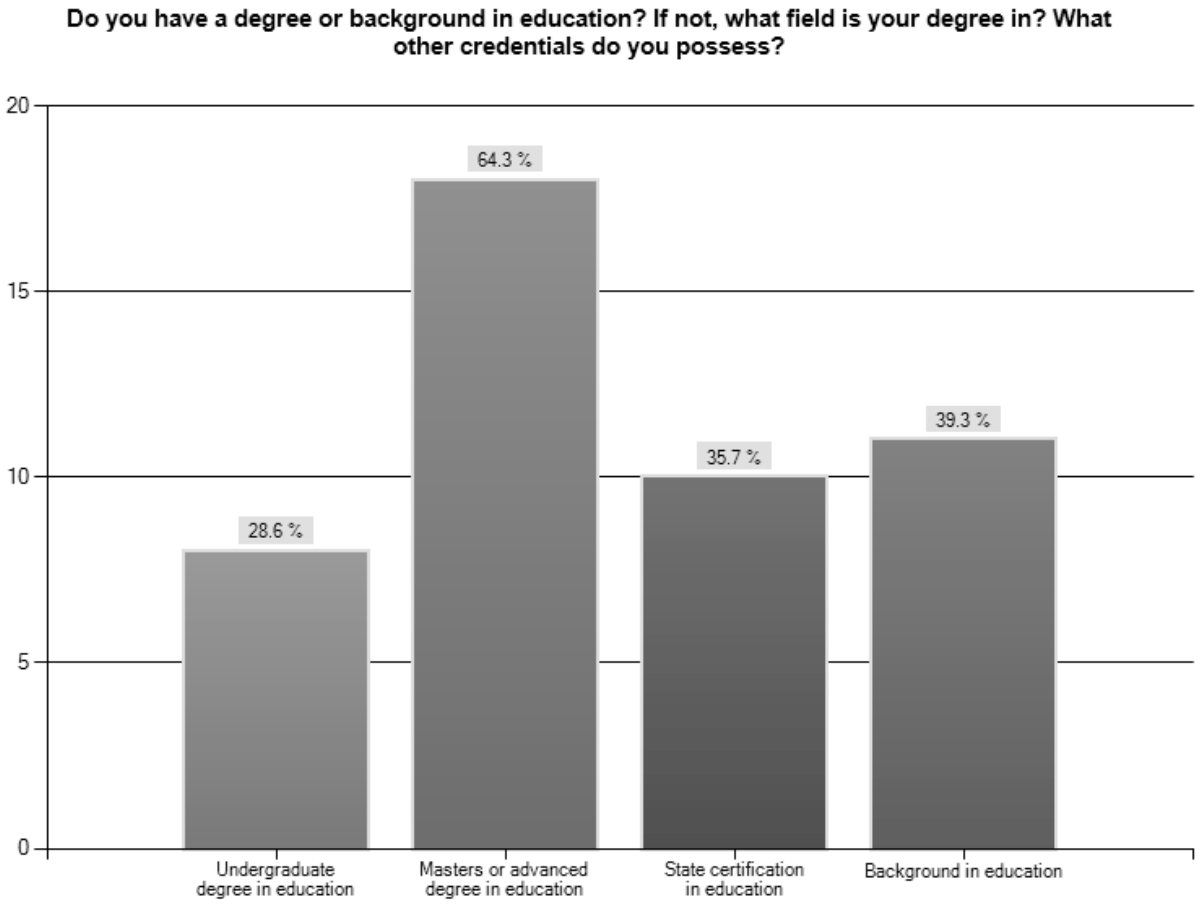
Students Attending the SES Program as of 4/1/2011

90%

3958 = Student Reported Attendance
4394 = Total Student Placement

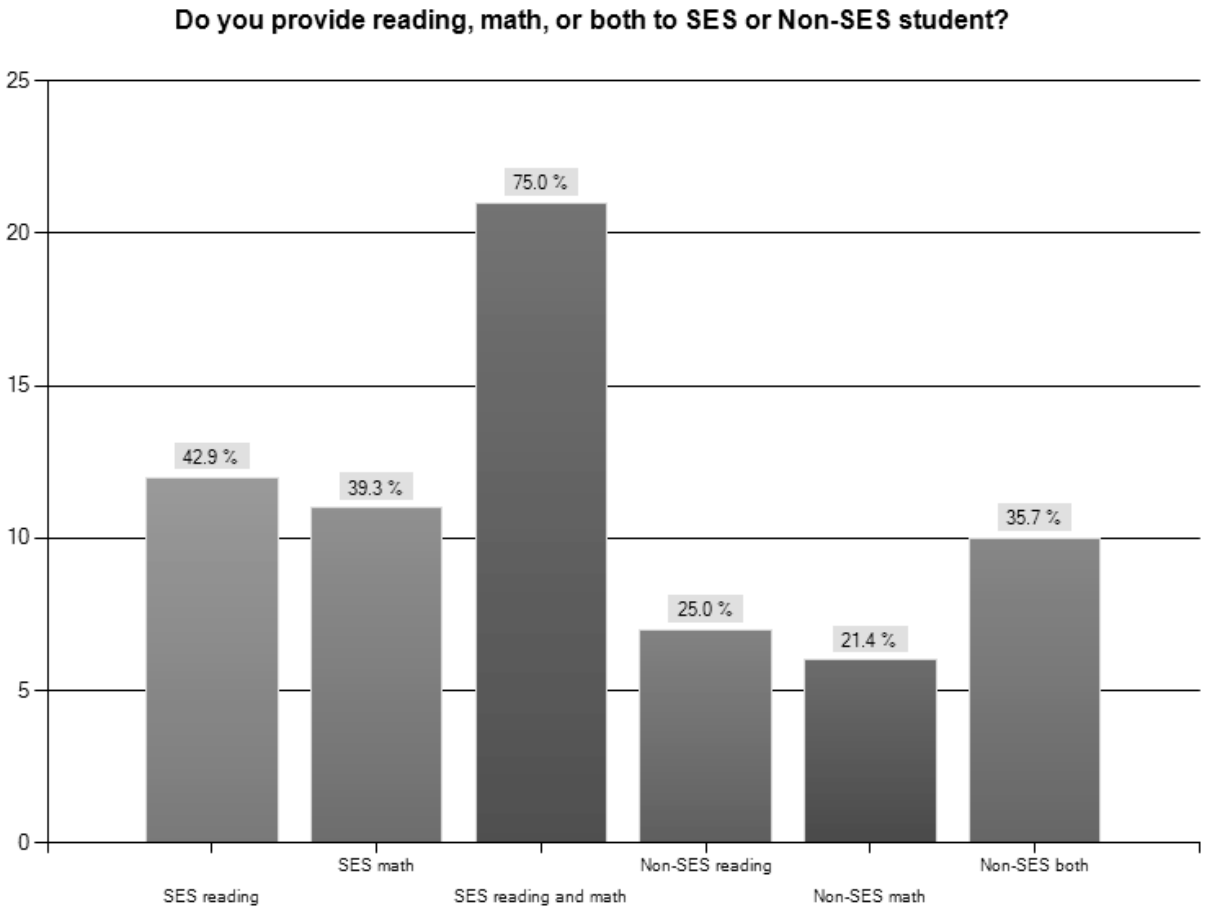
APPENDIX C: CREDENTIALS OF SES PROVIDERS IN THIS DISTRICT

APPENDIX C: Credentials of SES Providers in this District



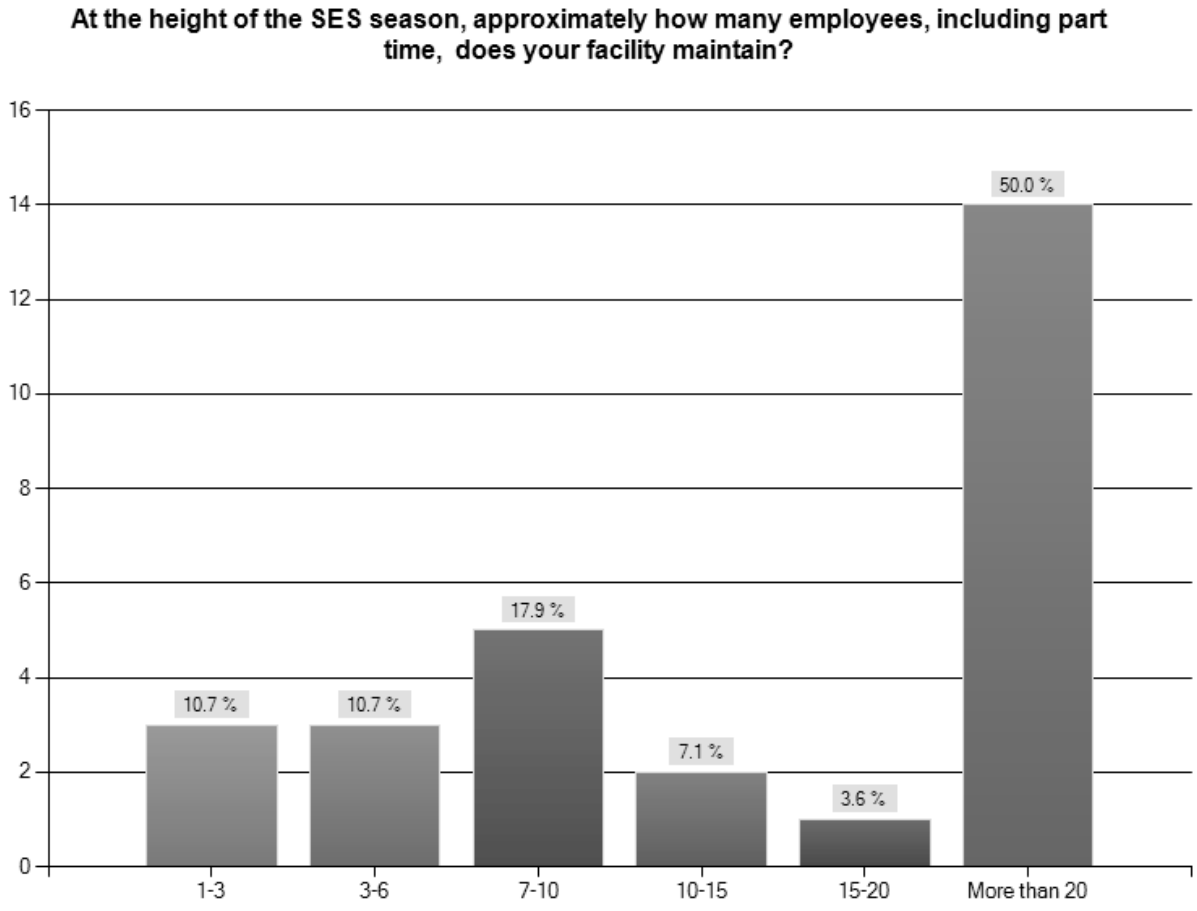
APPENDIX D: PROVIDERS OFFERING SES AND NON-SES SERVICES

APPENDIX D: Providers offering SES and non-SES services



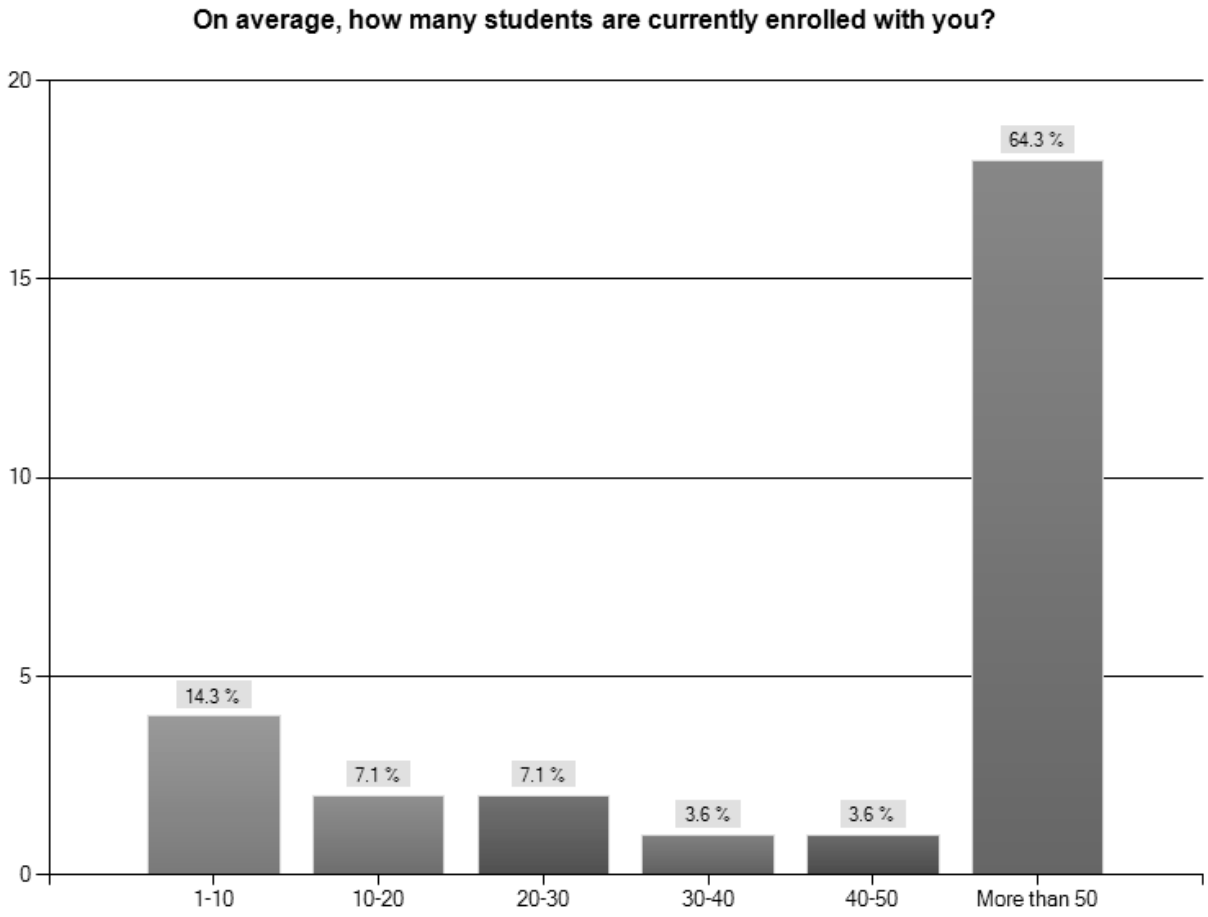
APPENDIX E: NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES HELD BY SES PROVIDERS

Appendix E: Number of Employees Held by SES Providers



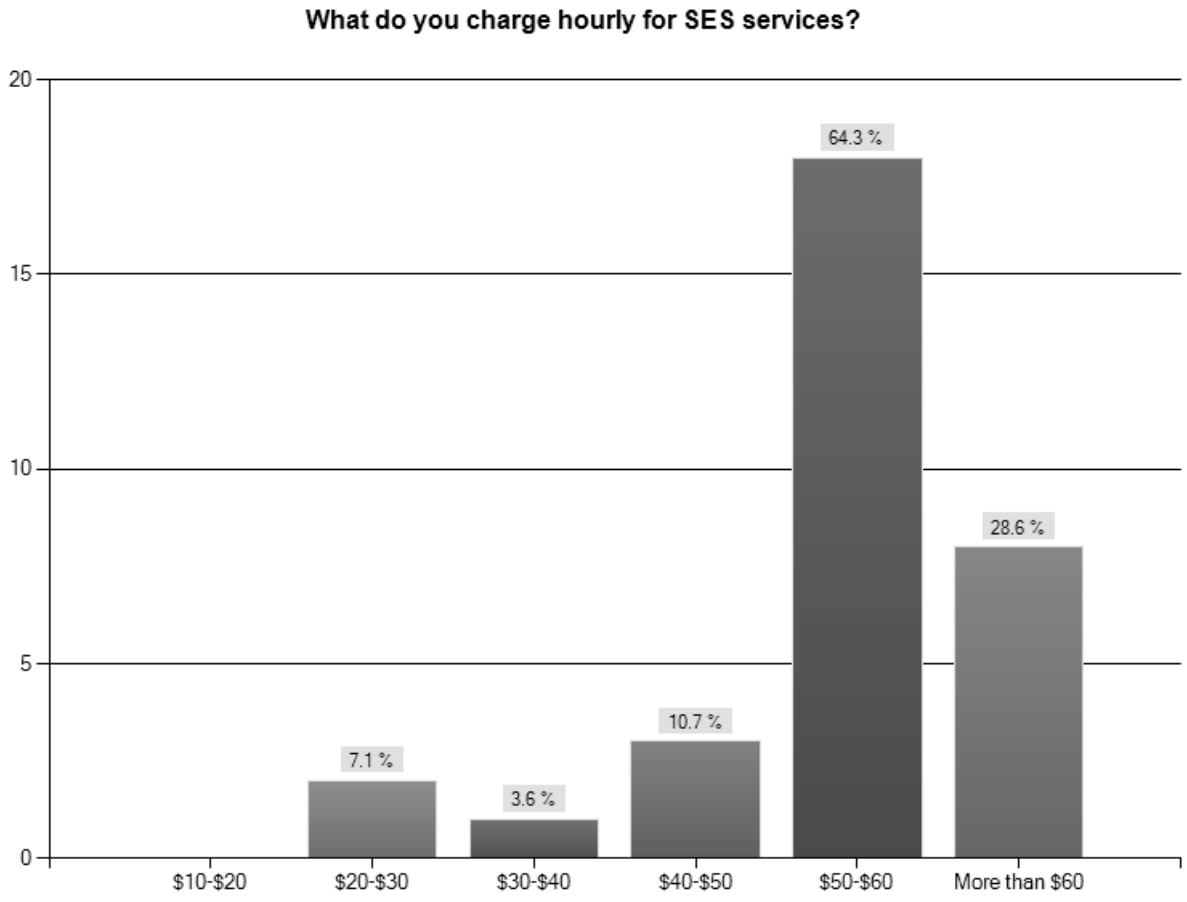
APPENDIX F: AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED WITH SES PROVIDERS

Appendix F: Number of Students Enrolled with SES Providers



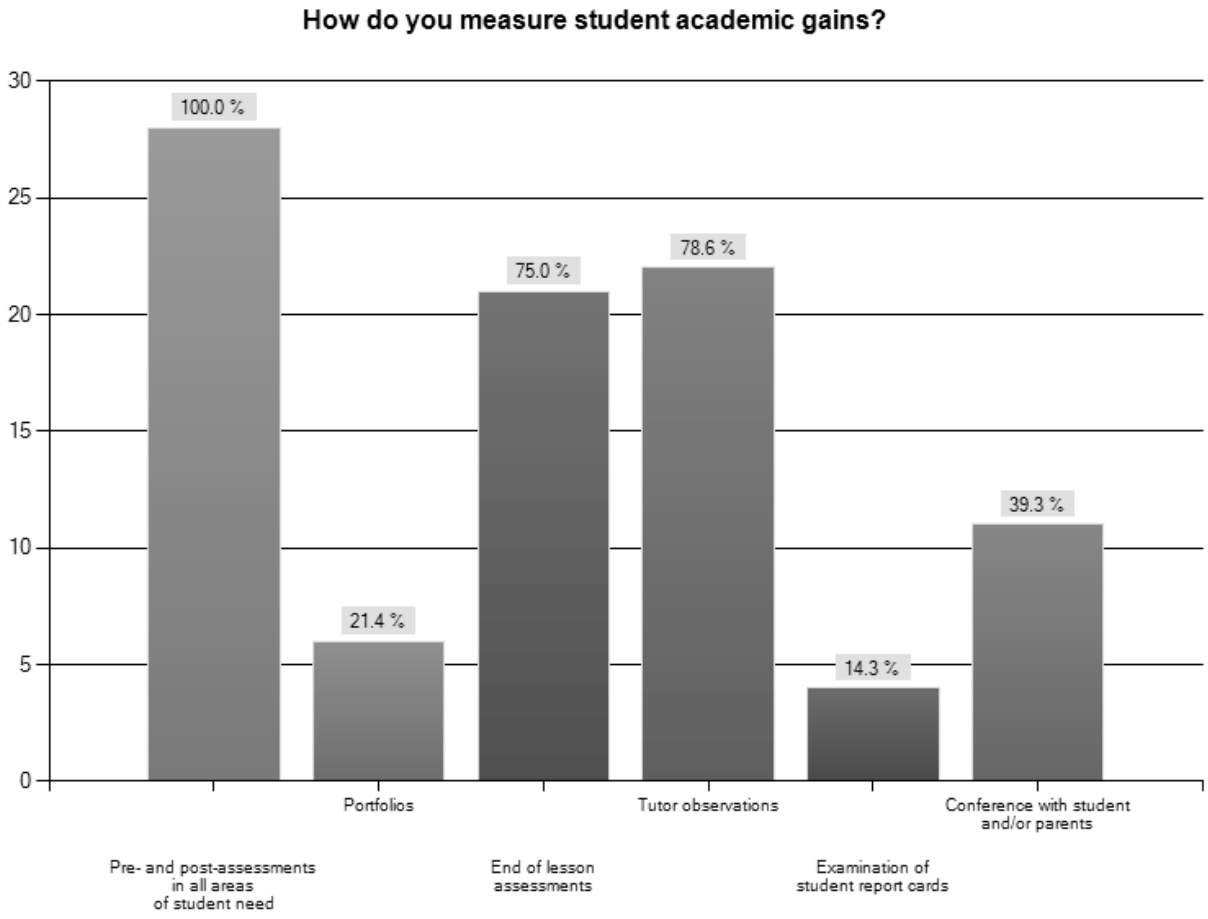
APPENDIX G: THE AMOUNT CHARGED HOURLY BY SES PROVIDERS

Appendix G: Amount Charged Hourly by SES Providers



APPENDIX H: HOW SES PROVIDERS MEASURE STUDENT ACADEMIC GAINS

Appendix H: how SES Providers Measure Student Academic Gains



APPENDIX I: HOW SES PROVIDERS ARE IMPLEMENTING SERVICES

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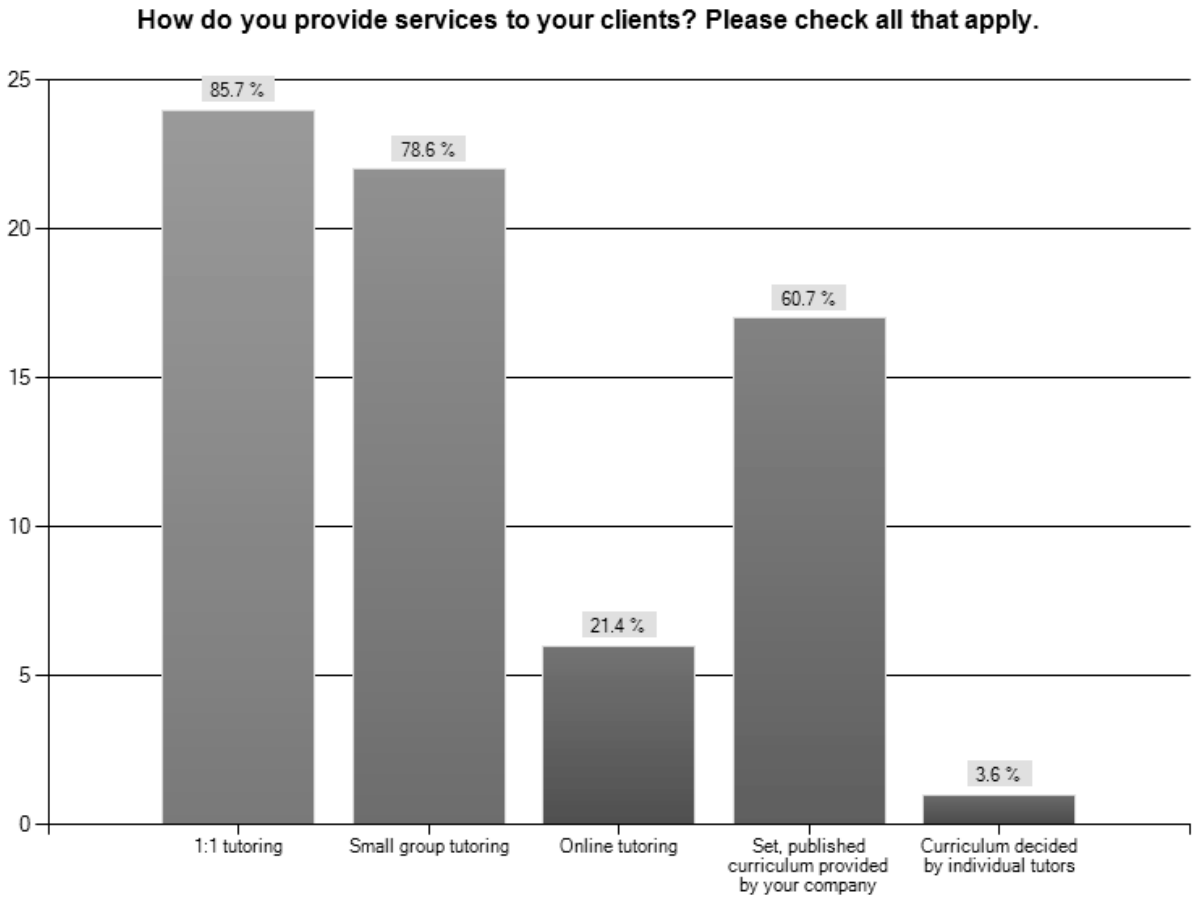
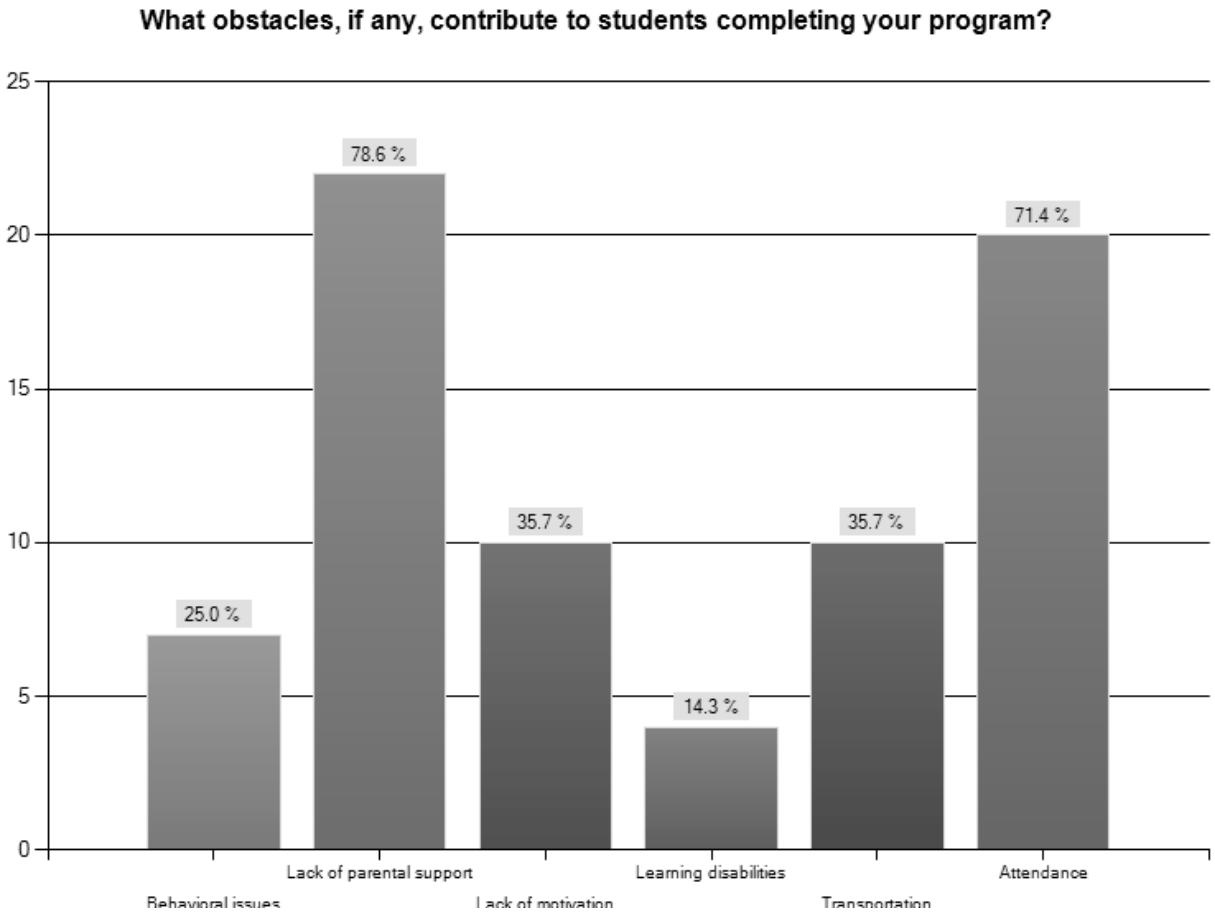


APPENDIX J: SES PROVIDERS' INSIGHT INTO OBSTACLES IN STUDENTS'SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF SES PROGRAMS

Appendix J: SES Providers' Insight Into Obstacles in Students' Successful Completion of SES Programs



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