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The Effects of Year-Round School on Students with Learning Disabilities: A Case Study

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THE EFFECTS OF YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL ON STUDENTS WITH LEARNING
DISABILITIES: A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Title: The Effects of Year-Round School on Students with Learning Disabilities: A Case Study

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This case study investigated the effects of year-round school on students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School in Poway, California. Abraxas is an alternative school that operates on a block schedule and year-round calendar. The researcher attempted to answer the question: How does year-round school impact students with learning disabilities? The researcher implemented a mixed methods approach that utilized both quantitative and qualitative components. Data were collected from the California Department of Education and from the Abraxas High School website and district personnel regarding the graduation rate, average daily attendance, discipline reports and average credits earned. The researcher gathered additional information through surveys and interviews from the high school staff and from parents of students with learning disabilities. The findings of this study were mixed. Since Abraxas has gone to a year-round calendar, the graduation rate and average credits earned of students with learning disabilities have been increasing, discipline issues have been decreasing and attendance has remained under 50%. Although there are a number of positive things going on at Abraxas, it cannot be shown that year-round school has made a positive impact on the graduation rate, attendance, discipline issues and average credits earned. Additionally, according to teacher and parent surveys and interviews, the school climate is one that is conducive to learning and is student-driven. The faculty is very committed to student success and as an outsider observing

the school, it is apparent that teacher experience has as much an impact on the student learning at this year-round school. Questions raised for additional research are: How beneficial is a balanced calendar to “at-risk” students and students with learning disabilities? Is California’s Alternative Schools Accountability model the best model to measure student success and the success of a school program? Using data from formative assessments, what is the impact of summer learning loss on students with learning disabilities?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1	INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY..... 1
	Introduction..... 1
	Types of Year-Round Schools..... 2
	Learning Disabilities 3
	Alternative Schools..... 5
	Statement of the Problem..... 6
	Purpose of the Study 6
	Research Question 8
	Significance of the Study 8
	Overview of the School to be Studied 9
	Research Design 10
	Procedures..... 11
	Operational Definitions 12
	Traditional School Calendar..... 12
	Year-round School..... 12
	Single-track 13
	Multi-track 13
	Intercession..... 13
	Remedial classes..... 13
	Enrichment classes 13
	Balanced Calendar 13
	“At-Risk” students 14
	Definition of Special Education-Specific Terms 14
	Regression..... 14
	Recoupment..... 14
	Summer school..... 15
	Response to Intervention 15
	Limitations and Delimitations 15
	Summary 17
2	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE..... 19
	Introduction..... 19
	Various Year-Round Educational Calendar Options 22
	Advantages of Year-Round School..... 28
	Disadvantages of Year-Round School..... 33
	Student Achievement in Year-Round Schools..... 35

	Impact of Year-Round Education on Specific Student Populations	37
	“At Risk” Students	38
	Students with Learning Disabilities	38
	Climate.....	39
	Teacher Experience.....	40
	Summer Vacation and Achievement	41
	Transition from a Traditional to a Year-Round Calendar	42
	Extended School Year Services in Special Education	44
	Regression/Recoupment.....	46
	Nature or Severity of the Disability.....	47
	Special circumstances or other factors.....	47
	Summary	49
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	52
	Introduction.....	52
	Quantitative and Qualitative Procedures	52
	Site and Subject Population	56
	Instruments	57
	Surveys.....	57
	Interviews.....	58
	Potential Risks	60
	Consent Procedures	60
	Safeguarding the Subjects	61
	Data Analysis.....	61
	Reporting the Data	63
	Summary	63
4	REPORTING THE DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS	64
	Introduction.....	64
	Research Design	66
	Participants	67
	Surveys and Interviews.....	70
	Quantitative Data	70
	Parent Survey	71
	Faculty Member and Administrator Survey	75
	Graduation Rate.....	83
	Attendance.....	87
	Behavior/Discipline.....	91
	Average Credits Per Student.....	93
	Qualitative Data	94
	Parent Interviews	94
	Faculty Member/Administration Interviews.....	100
	Summary	107

5	DISCUSSION	109
	Introduction.....	109
	Data Analysis Findings.....	112
	Impact of Year-Round School on the Graduation Rate.....	112
	Impact of Year-Round School on Attendance	118
	Impact of Year-Round School on Discipline.....	122
	Impact of Year-Round School on Credits Earned per Student.....	125
	Impact of Year-Round School on School Climate.....	126
	Impact of Year-Round School on Teaching Experience	129
	Limitations of the Study	130
	Recommendations for Future Research	132
	Reflections	135
	REFERENCES.....	140
	APPENDIXES.....	152
	APPENDIX A - Approval Letter for the Parent Survey & Interviews.....	152
	APPENDIX B - Approval Letter for the Faculty Survey & Interviews	153
	APPENDIX C - Letter to the Associate Superintendent.....	154
	APPENDIX D - Faculty Survey Letter	156
	APPENDIX E - Parent Survey Letter.....	157
	APPENDIX F - Parent Follow-Up Letter	159
	APPENDIX G - Research Study Explanation Letter.....	160
	APPENDIX H - Teacher Survey	162
	APPENDIX I - Parent Survey	167
	APPENDIX J - Interview Invitation Letter for Parents.....	169
	APPENDIX K - Interview Invitation Letter for Faculty	170
	APPENDIX L - Interview Script—Parents	171
	APPENDIX M - Interview Script—Faculty.....	172

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1	Average Number of Days in School per Year by Industrialized Country 32
2	Summary of Statistically Significant Directional Findings of Studies (1980-1999) of Year-Round Schooling Effects on Achievement 36
3	Parent Survey Data..... 72
4	School Employment Data 76
5	Faculty Member and Administrator Beliefs about Teaching and Learning at Abraxas High School 78
6	Teacher and Administrator Opinions about Year-Round Schooling 80
7	Teacher and Administrator Beliefs Regarding the Performance of Students with Learning Disabilities 82
8	The Graduation Rate for the Entire Senior Class at Abraxas High School..... 85
9	The Graduation Rate for the Special Education Students at Abraxas High School..... 87
10	The Average Daily Attendance for the Entire Student Population at Abraxas High School..... 88
11	The Average Daily Attendance of the Special Education Population at Abraxas High School 90
12	Behavior/Discipline Data for the Entire School Population at Abraxas High School..... 91
13	Behavior/Discipline Data for Special Education Students at Abraxas High School..... 92
14	Average Credits Earned per Student per Year for the Entire School Population at Abraxas High School 94

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1 Traditional School Calendar	23
2 Balanced Single-Track Calendar	24
3 The Enrollment Data of the Students at Abraxas High School Listed By Year from 1996 to 2011	69

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Although year-round education is not the norm, it has been utilized throughout the United States for over a century, often as an educational solution for overpopulated areas and limited space. For example, schools in Baltimore and in New York City have participated in year-round education systems since the early 1900s (White, 1995). The traditional school calendar, which requires students to attend 180 days of school each year, was developed and implemented during the industrialization of America. While some school administrators consider utilizing a year-round calendar for overcrowding, most consider whether rearranging the school calendar would improve student achievement (Ballinger, 1995; White, 1995), improve attendance, decrease discipline issues (Heaberlin, 2000) or increase cost-savings (Costa 1987; Palmer & Bemis, 1999). Since 2002, the United States has pushed for a standards-based education for all students (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2003). The retention of knowledge over the long summer break has been the focus of studies for over 15 years. As a result, the year-round school calendar has become an increasingly popular alternative to the traditional nine-month school calendar (Kneese & Ballinger, 2008).

In 1994, The National Education Commission on Time and Learning concluded that educators continue to seek strategies to improve student achievement in content areas and standards. The United States experienced an increase from 1,905 year-round schools in 1993 to over 3,000 in 2006, with a student population of over 2,099,663 (National Association of Year-

Round Education, 2009). The vast majority of these schools are in California and Texas (Morison, 2002).

Types of Year-Round Schools

The phrase "year-round schooling" is actually a misnomer. Year-round school actually describes a variety of school calendars. Students who are enrolled in year-round schools do not attend school every week of the year. In many cases, they attend school the same number of days as students on a traditional nine-month calendar. Rather than a three-month long summer vacation, however, year-round schedules include several shorter vacations or intersessions spaced throughout the year (Chaika, 1999).

Year-round schooling offers two basic options: single-track and multi-track. Single-track year-round schools offer students the opportunity to engage in year-round learning while having a multitude of shorter breaks in lieu of extended summer vacations. In contrast, multi-track year-round schools rotate three or more groups in and out of the school with one group on vacation while the others are in session. Although the single-track, modified calendar has many short breaks, it does not extend the actual time that students spend in the classroom. Intersession classes are offered during the three-week breaks to provide quality activities and affordable remedial and enrichment classes. These sessions are offered every nine weeks in order to help students who desire improvement in various skills.

Studies indicate that students who are enrolled in a single-track, year-round school calendar may have a greater probability of improved achievement than students who are on the traditional calendar (Ballinger, 1987). However, traditional calendars have been in place for so long that their superiority is unquestioned by many. Originally, students who attended

traditional school calendars may have been required to work in the factories or on the family farm. Additionally, school buildings were not capable of maintaining cool temperatures during the summer months, which also resulted in the long summer break. Today, the majority of the United States population does not have agricultural obligations to meet. Nevertheless, the educational system continues to follow the traditional calendar (Cooper, Valentine, Charlton, & Melson, 2003).

The traditional school calendar can sometimes hinder students' learning opportunities because the three-month summer vacation will result in a learning loss for many students (Serifs, 1990). Lower-performing students traditionally have a greater loss of skills over summer vacation than other students. Furthermore, studies suggest that children need to be involved continually in some form of learning throughout the year in order to minimize learning loss (Weaver, 1992a). Year-round schooling, in contrast, is more beneficial to students because it offers more opportunities to participate in extended programs like remedial courses or enrichment programs.

According to Cooper (1996), in a meta-analysis of 39 national studies, all students experience some form of learning loss over the summer months, regarding what was learned the previous school year. Palmer and Bemis (2000) argued that "aside from more positive attitudes on the part of teachers, the research on nonacademic outcomes attributed to year-round education is for the most part inconclusive" (p. 6). Kneese's (2000) and Six's (1993) syntheses of year-round education studies from across the nation indicated that year-round education results in a greater improvement in student achievement than traditional school calendars.

Learning Disabilities

In 1963, while addressing a group of parents whose children were experiencing difficulty in reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics, Samuel Kirk coined the term "learning disabilities." At the conclusion of the meeting, parents formed the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, which is now the Learning Disabilities Association of America (Heward, 2009).

In the United States, children with learning disabilities have been placed in a variety of educational settings—from institutionalism to full inclusion into regular education classrooms. Students with learning disabilities have difficulties in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, or mathematics. The United States special education law, *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA, 2004) defines a learning disability as:

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Learning disabilities do not include "learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage." (IDEA 2004, p. 209)

Since 1975, the learning disabilities category, under special education, has been included in IDEA. Little (1993) defined a learning disability as a disorder that affects students' ability to interpret what they see and hear, or to link information from different parts of the brain. People with learning disabilities can assimilate into society if they receive a supportive education. This

study focused on the effects of a year-round school calendar on students with learning disabilities at one high school in California.

Approximately three million children aged 6 through 21 have some form of learning disability and receive special education in school. One out of every 20 people in the United States has a learning disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). A question that needs to be answered is; does the type of school calendar impact students with learning disabilities in the same way it impacts regular education students? Given the vast numbers of persons with learning disabilities across the United States, the educational calendar should benefit them as well as all students.

Alternative Schools

Alternative schools in the United States developed from European models. These schools greatly influenced Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner in the early 1900's. Both of their schools continue today and emphasize the development of a child's curiosities and innate abilities. Traditional schools emphasize a more structured curriculum and rote learning (Young, 1990). In the 1960's, alternative education had a second transformation. They were called free schools, holistic, and humanistic education (Young, 1990).

More non-traditional ideologies were associated with alternative education in the 1970's and 1980's. Since the early 1900's, alternative education has evolved in philosophy and ideology. Today's alternative schools are designed to prevent students from dropping out of school and address areas of academics, relationships with peers and teachers, and smaller school size (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

In the United States, the number of schools offering year-round education has increased. The problem that arises is: does the school calendar have an impact on students with learning disabilities? There have been a number of studies on the impact of year-round school on student achievement and attendance on entire student populations; however, there are limited studies relating specifically to students with learning disabilities.

Due to educational accountability in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, concerns regarding year-round education include whether year-round school positively affects the graduation rate, increases daily attendance, and decreases negative behavior in students, and if so, to what extent (NCLB, 2003). One identified problem is the lack of literature and studies on students with learning disabilities in relation to year-round schools. Research related to students with learning disabilities primarily focuses on summer learning loss.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of year-round schooling on students with identified learning disabilities. Limited research is available on students with learning disabilities as it relates to year-round school. This study attempted to bridge the gap in the literature regarding students with learning disabilities who are enrolled in a year-round school. The researcher analyzed graduation rates, attendance records, behavioral patterns, parents' and teachers' perceptions regarding academic performance, and opinions about the school calendar. The case study adds to existing literature on the impact of year-round schools on students with learning disabilities. Researchers have argued that students with learning disabilities who attend year-round schools have more time to master certain necessary skills such as reading, writing,

listening, speaking, reasoning, and math skills. Additionally, students with learning disabilities can get extra help during the intersession classes so they do not have to feel frustrated all year (McMillen, 2001). Similar students who attend traditional schools do not have the same opportunities because the long summer break interferes with the retention of the knowledge they learned throughout the previous school year. Some of these students attend summer school in order to learn the material they need to catch up with their peers (Warrick-Harris, 1995).

The researcher utilized parent and teacher surveys and interviews to record perceptions about their experience with the year-round school. This study reported how teacher experience affected students with learning disabilities. According to Shields and Oberg (2000b), teachers who are employed in traditional schools experience job stress and burnout after just a few months of school. Teachers who work in year-round schools appear to be more motivated and enthusiastic all year long and do not appear to experience the same level of job-related stress and burnout (Shields & Oberg, 2000b).

The original intention of the study was to compare standardized test scores of the special education population at two comparable elementary schools, one on a traditional calendar and the other on a year-round calendar. Scores were to be compared over a four-year period, along with an analysis of parent and teacher school climate and satisfaction surveys. However, the researcher's experience has been entirely at the high school level, and therefore, he decided to look for a high school in which to conduct the study. The researcher was going to analyze data from standardized test scores of students at the school before they entered the year-round school and again after attending for at least one full school year. The intent was to analyze Student Individual Education Programs (IEPs) to see if there had been any positive or negative changes to

the IEP after the implementation of the year-round program. When Abraxas High School was chosen as the site to be studied, the researcher found that the only standardized test needed was the one for graduation. The emphasis of the study was placed on the graduation rate, attendance rate, behavioral issues and average credits earned per student. These are criteria that were required by the state of California for the school's accountability. The researcher also decided to address discipline and school climate as they relate to students with learning disabilities.

Research Question

This case study addressed the impact of year-round school on students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School. The study determined whether there was a change in graduation rate, student attendance, and student behavior over time as a result of the switch to a year-round calendar. In addition, parent and teacher surveys recorded the perceptions and satisfaction of both respondents. Further investigation of the surveys were incorporated into interviews with both parties. The researcher hypothesized that there was an increase in the graduation rate and attendance as well as a decrease in student behavioral problems after a year-round education calendar was implemented. The study investigated the following question: How does year-round school impact students with learning disabilities?

Significance of the Study

There is limited research conducted specifically on students with learning disabilities attending year-round schools. Most of the research studies deal with student achievement and summer learning loss on entire school populations, but few specifically address the needs of students with learning disabilities.

Data from this study determined how the year-round school impacts students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School in Poway, California. Since Abraxas High School is the only high school in the district on a year-round calendar, data in the areas of graduation rate, credits earned, and behavior patterns of students with learning disabilities may lead the Poway Unified School District or other school districts to consider increasing the number of year-round calendar schools. An initiative such as year-round education needs to be research-based before it can be implemented to promote student achievement (Kane, 1994).

The results of the study conducted at Abraxas High School are inconclusive, but cause the researcher to remain optimistic regarding the impact on students with learning disabilities. Although some areas are inconclusive statistically, the effects of year-round school on the graduation rate and discipline reports appear to be moving in a positive direction and should be analyzed further in two to three years. The attendance rate of those students with learning disabilities has remained almost constant with very minimal increases.

Overview of the School Studied

The Poway Unified School District (PUSD) is located in San Diego County, California. Encompassing an approximately 99 square mile area, district schools are situated in San Diego and throughout rural Poway. PUSD operates twenty-five elementary schools (Grades K–5), six middle schools (Grades 6–8), five comprehensive high schools (Grades 9–12), and one year-round alternative high school. The district serves approximately 33,000 students and is the third largest school district in the county. Abraxas is the only alternative high school in the district and was selected as the site for this study based on several criteria, including the number of years it

has utilized a year-round calendar, the student population size, student demographics, and its use of individualized student learning plans.

The population of this study was students with learning disabilities enrolled in Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. The school has an enrollment of approximately 245 students, of which approximately 17% have a learning disability. Abraxas High School is an alternative high school that serves students who need an intimate and flexible educational environment. The students who choose to attend Abraxas are typically at risk of not receiving a high school diploma because of attendance, discipline, or other issues and they believe Abraxas can help them attain that goal.

The classroom teachers who participated in this study are regular education teachers, special education teachers, or both. The teachers at Abraxas High School were asked to complete a survey and to participate in an interview voluntarily. Due to confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher did not access student Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

In addition to faculty members and administrators, the researcher asked the parents of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School to complete a voluntary, confidential survey and to participate in an interview. Data were then analyzed from all the information collected.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of year-round schooling on students with learning disabilities. A single case study methodology formed the basis of the study. Stake (1995) defines a single case study methodology as one in which “cases interest in education and social services are people and program” (p. 17). The results of this study provide insight on the effects of year-round schooling on students with learning disabilities. This study,

in conjunction with other studies and a meta-analysis on year-round schools, offers an insight into the advantages and disadvantages of a modified school calendar.

The researcher employed qualitative and quantitative methods in order to explore the year-round calendars' programs and curricula, stakeholders' perceptions, issues relating to the graduation rate, student attendance, and discipline of students with learning disabilities. The researcher then analyzed data collected from surveys and interviews from parents and teachers of students with learning disabilities regarding perceptions of the year-round school as it relates to students with learning disabilities. The hypothesis of this study was that the year-round school calendar at Abraxas High School resulted in an increase in graduation rates and attendance and a decrease in behavioral issues for students with learning disabilities.

Procedures

Initial contact was made to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania after all surveys interviews, protocols and forms were created to attain approval to conduct the study. After receiving permission and authorization from the IRB, approval was granted from the central office at the Poway Unified School District to conduct the study at Abraxas High School. The researcher worked extensively with the assistant principal at Abraxas High School to gather data on the entire school and specifically on students with learning disabilities. Additional data were gathered from the California Department of Education (CDE) website.

Prior to the first site visit, the researcher sent surveys to all faculty and administrators via the internet using Zoomerang software. While at Abraxas, the principal assisted in the distribution of the surveys to parents of students with learning disabilities via an e-mail. The

researcher asked all of the participants to complete the surveys within two weeks and then he analyzed the responses. The participants in this study remained anonymous and the responses remained confidential.

While at Abraxas, the researcher conducted interviews with any faculty and administrators who volunteered to participate in the study. The researcher conducted parent interviews by telephone and all responses remained anonymous and confidential, like the surveys. Participation was voluntary and anyone could opt out at any time.

The researcher transferred data from the surveys, interviews, graduation rate, attendance rate, discipline reports and average credits earned into table form and analyzed them. A statistical and descriptive analysis was utilized to answer the research question: How does year-round school affect students with learning disabilities?

Operational Definitions

Traditional School Calendar

The traditional school calendar requires students to attend school for 180 days. This calendar is a nine-month calendar during which schools are closed for three months during the summer (Ballinger, 1987).

Year-Round School

The year-round school calendar requires students to attend school for 180 days. The year-round calendar consists of a shortened summer break and several other breaks throughout the year, more lengthy than the short breaks given in the traditional calendar. Year-round schools have two main tracks: single-track and multi-track (Kneese, 1996).

Single-Track

At a single-track, year-round school, all students attend school at the same time. This type of calendar is the most popular type of year-round school. Usually, students attend school for 45 days and then have a 15-day break (Kneese, 1996).

Multi-Track

At a multi-track year-round school, students attend school on varying schedules. This type of calendar allows more students to attend the same school at different sessions and it is often implemented when overcrowding is a problem. Multi-track calendars often consist of four different schedules (Kneese, 1996).

Intersession

Intersession is a break where students have the opportunity to attend remedial or enrichment classes provided by the school. Intersessions commonly last for three-week periods (Ballinger, 1998).

Remedial Classes

Remedial classes are offered to help low-performing students improve their academic skills (Ballinger, 1998).

Enrichment Classes

Enrichment classes are offered to enrich and accelerate the learning of high-performing students (Ballinger, 1995).

Balanced Calendar

Balanced school year is a rearrangement of the school year to provide continuous learning by dividing the regular two-month summer vacation into shorter, more frequent breaks throughout the year. Students in a balanced school year program receive the same amount of

instruction time as students on a traditional calendar. A balanced school year is also called Year-Round School (YRS).

“At-Risk” Students

“At-risk” students are students who are not experiencing success in school and are potential dropouts. Usually, they are low academic achievers who exhibit low self-esteem. Generally they are from low socioeconomic status families. At-risk students tend not to participate in school activities and have a minimal identification with the school. They have disciplinary and truancy problems that lead to credit problems. They exhibit impulsive behavior and their peer relationships are problematic. Family problems, drug addictions, pregnancies, and other problems prevent them from participating successfully in school. As they experience failure and fall behind their peers, school becomes a negative environment that reinforces their low self-esteem” (USLegal.com, 2011).

Definition of Special Education-Specific Terms

Regression

Regression is a substantial loss of any critical life skill. Some degree of loss in skills typically occurs with all students during normal school breaks and normal loss is not considered regressive. Regression determination is made as to whether the school break would result in a student’s failure to recover lost skills in a reasonable time following his or her return to school after the break (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

Recoupment

Recoupment is a student’s ability to recover a loss of skills within a timeframe that is reasonable following a school break. The general recoupment time for special education

students is approximately six to eight weeks. There are varying rates and styles of recoupment among individual students (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

Summer School

Summer programs for schools are optional and voluntary programs that focus on enrichment, remedial or reinforcement activities, or address new skills. Summer school is not required by FAPE. Extended school year (ESY) services can be used in combination with existing summer school programs if such programs are available and are appropriate for a student's needs (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a method of intervention designed to provide early, effective assistance to children who are having difficulty learning. Additionally RTI was designed to function as one part of a data-based process of identifying learning disabilities. The RTI method was developed as an alternative to identifying learning disabilities with the ability-achievement discrepancy model, which requires children to exhibit a discrepancy between their ability, measured by Intelligence Quotient (IQ) testing and academic achievement as measured by their grades and standardized tests (California Department of Education, 2011).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are the natural conditions that may affect a study's outcomes (Charles, 1998), relating to the study's internal validity or threats (Wiersma, 1994). Major internal threats include experimental mortality or attrition, selection, diffusion of treatment, and bias contamination (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). This study analyzed data on the school population for attendance

rate, graduation rate, discipline referrals and average credits earned as well as for the students with learning disabilities who attend Abraxas High School. The participants in this study included the faculty members, administrators and parents of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School. Due to the small size of Abraxas, all of the members of the faculty who teach students with learning disabilities and all of the parents of students with learning disabilities were asked to participate. However, because of the small number of participants, the survey results may not be generalized.

Additionally, Abraxas High School is not required to keep hard data as it relates to the special education population. The researcher obtained data for the entire school population from the California Department of Education website and from Abraxas High School. Another limitation to the study is that data on the graduation rate, attendance rate and discipline on students with learning disabilities are all non-quantitative and totally perceptual. This information was gathered from the assistant principal and special education department chair at Abraxas high School. This information is based on the experience each of them has dealing with each of the three areas to be studied and is deemed by the researcher to be appropriate and sufficient; however, it is a limitation.

Costs of year-round school were not a factor in this study; however, there appear to be increased costs in keeping the school open year-round. Some expenses are maintenance, repair and utilities expenses. Also, the entire staff must be available all year, including school personnel such as teachers, custodians, secretaries, cafeteria personnel, counselors, nurses, bus drivers, which could result in an increase in salary. In some schools the

principals' workload dramatically increased, forcing districts to hire additional assistant principals to help with the increased administrative load." (Dean & Ryna; 2002)

Summary

In this dissertation, Chapter 1 contains the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research question, overview of the school surveyed, limitations, participants, research design, procedures, operational definitions, and definitions of special education specific terms. This chapter sets the groundwork for the research on the effects of year-round school on students with learning disabilities. The researcher selected Abraxas High School in Poway, California due to its student population and its number of years on a year-round calendar.

The researcher collected surveys and interviews from faculty and parents as well as data on graduation rates, attendance rates, and discipline records in order to formulate a conclusion as to the effects that year-round school had on students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School.

Chapter 2 provides the review of literature related to year-round schooling and special education. The chapter begins with the history of year-round calendars as well as what a few of the calendars look like, and then progresses to the literature on the advantages and disadvantages of year-round schools. A number of articles on student achievement and summer learning loss also appear. The chapter concludes with the importance of the study.

In chapter 3, the methodology for the study is explored. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of year-round schooling on students with learning disabilities. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore programs, curricula,

stakeholders' satisfaction, and other issues that may be related to student success in a year-round school setting. The researcher utilized a single case study approach at Abraxas High School in Poway, California. The surveys and interviews of teachers and parents of students with learning disabilities are described, along with how quantitative data were collected from the assistant principal at Abraxas High School and the California Department of Education website regarding graduation rate, attendance and behavioral issues.

The researcher went to Abraxas High School to conduct a site visit in February and May 2011 to collect data and conduct a follow-up. Chapter 4 is the analysis of the data collected from the teachers and parents of students with learning disabilities, the California Department of Education website, and school records from Abraxas High School. The chapter is very descriptive and detailed with the responses. The researcher used a 2-proportion z-test to analyze the graduation rate and average attendance using data from the school's last year on a traditional calendar as a base year for statistical purposes.

In chapter 5, the researcher gives an analysis of the findings of the study and discusses the effects of year-round school on students with learning disabilities. The researcher also details all limitations of the study and recommends possible future studies at Abraxas High School and beyond.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The traditional school calendar was developed for two primary reasons: 1) student-aged children would be free to work in the fields to plant, care for, and harvest crops during the growing season as well as to work in industries that were emerging across the United States, and 2) schoolhouses lacked air conditioning, making schooling during the warm periods uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous (Morison, 2002). However, because of changes in modern farming techniques, it is no longer necessary for children to carry out farming responsibilities; in addition, air conditioning technology has greatly improved. According to Bradford (1991), less than 3% of the workforce in the U.S. engaged in agricultural work in the 1990s. Additionally, child labor laws limit how many hours children can work and conditions in which they are placed.

Year-round schools were familiar to children in colonial times, although the summer months involved fewer hours dedicated to school attendance (Morison, 2002). Nevertheless, school attendance was not mandatory until the 1800s. In many American cities during the 18th and 19th centuries, year-round schooling was the rule for as many as 11 months of the year. In 1900, the number of required school attendance days dropped to 180 (Morison, 2002).

Sheane (1994) agreed that year-round education is not a recent phenomenon in the United States or in other countries. The first year-round school in the United States occurred in 1904 in Bluffton, Indiana. As documented in *Year-Round Education: History Philosophy, Future* (Glines, 1995), records from the early 1900s describe year-round programs in a variety of communities, including Newark, New Jersey in 1912; Minot, North Dakota in 1917; Omaha, Nebraska in 1924; Nashville, Tennessee in 1925; Aliquippa, Pennsylvania in 1928; and

Ambridge, Pennsylvania in 1931. Year-round schools in Newark were developed to help immigrants learn English and to enable students to accelerate their learning. In Bluffton, they were developed to enhance learning and to create additional classrooms. Year-round school in Minot was developed to meet the needs of students who fell behind in their studies while schools in Aliquippa and Ambridge resulted from the lack of classroom space in the schools themselves. In Omaha, year-round school was created to offer continuous vocational training programs. Nashville's year-round schools were developed to improve the quality of education (Glines, 1997).

According to Glines (1997), William Wirt, the superintendent of Bluffton, created one of the most noteworthy calendar options. After moving to Gary, Indiana, Wirt instituted the work-study-play school and the famous year-round platoon system. Wirt, along with advocates from Nashville, Aliquippa, Omaha, Minneapolis, and Newark, led the continuous learning philosophies of pre-1940 administrators, and helped pave the way for the current year-round programs (Glines, 1997). Although from 1946 to 1966 there were numerous efforts to renew the plans (which did not survive the late 1930s depression years), the concept was not reactivated until 1968–1970 in Missouri, Illinois, California, and Minnesota (Glines, 1997). The majority of districts that adopted the year-round calendar during the 1970–1990 period did so in order to generate classroom space since the student population was growing at a faster pace than schools could be constructed (Glines, 1997). The educational and community benefits began to be more widely understood as calendar variations spread across the nation (Glines, 1997).

Within the last 25 years, Ballinger (1987) founded the National Association for Year-Round Education (NAYRE)—the largest and most active organization in support of year-round education in the United States. NAYRE is a year-round school calendar advocacy group that

sponsors conferences and conventions for school administrators, board members, teachers, and other individuals in order to provide leadership and service on all aspects of learning and time (National Association for Year-Round Education [NAYRE], 2008). NAYRE also provides consultants who work with local school systems, for a fee, to encourage communities to embrace year-round school calendars and then assist schools in making the transition to a year-round education calendar (NAYRE, 2008).

Despite advocates and programs in year-round schooling, the outdated, nine-month school calendar has continued to be a part of the learning schedule (Warrick-Harris, 1995). It is human nature to resist change, and many schools continue to use the old schedule (Warrick-Harris, 1995). A misconception persists that year-round education results in significantly less vacation time. Opponents do not realize that year-round schools offer a more even flow of learning for students with a similar number of days in attendance (Warrick-Harris, 1995). Opponents also do not see that year-round education can help schools respond to today's shift in societal structures and academic expectations (Warrick-Harris, 1995).

Students in the United States have a shorter school year than students living in 12 other nations around the world. Additionally, students in other information-age countries receive twice as much instructional time as American students do in their core academic areas (Kneese & Ballinger, 2008). By implementing a year-round program, students get the full amount of learning without having an extensive review of previously learned material due to summer learning loss. However, in their meta-analytical study, Cooper et al. (2003) indicated that more research on the theoretical impact of altering the traditional 180-day school calendar is required. The Ross, Stringfield, Sanders, and Wright (2003) study showed no gains academically between schools on a traditional school calendar and schools on a modified school calendar.

Various Year-Round Educational Calendar Options

In order to understand year-round schooling better, one must be aware of the different formats. School districts considering year-round schooling can choose from two basic options: single-track and multi-track. The single-track calendars allow all of the students to be off at the same time. For example, the more popular single-track schedule is generally 45, 60, or 90 days of mandatory attendance followed by a three-week break. The three-week intersession break offers students a chance to attend remedial or enrichment activities, which increase their exposure to the curriculum. In many districts, school libraries remain open and school nurses continue to be available through the three-week intersession (McGlynn, 2002). Students in the single-track schedule benefit from the more continuous learning patterns and from a reduced need for review (Serifs, 1990). Parents can choose to have their children participate in one or more of the intersessions and take a family vacation throughout the year during one or more of the other scheduled intersessions.

The following charts compare the distribution of days in school and days on break between the nine-month traditional calendar and the single-track calendar. Weekends are not counted in the charts. Both charts represent a standard school year of 180 days (NAYRE, 2008).

Traditional Calendar

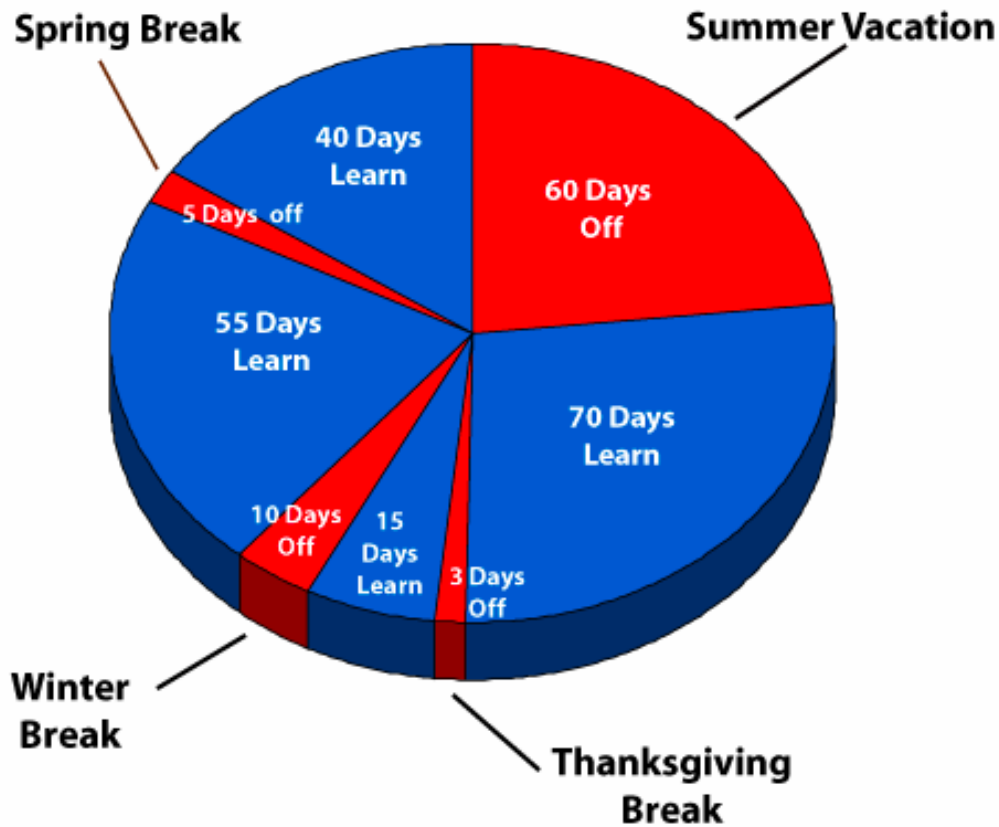


Figure 1. Traditional school calendar. Retrieved from the National Association for Year-Round Education, 2008, <http://www.nayre.org/>

The traditional calendar features a summer vacation of approximately 12 weeks followed by a period of in-session days of nine months, with the first break coming at Thanksgiving. The winter holidays are followed by 55 in-session days before a short spring break (NAYRE, 2008). Figure 2 shows the balanced single-track calendar.



Figure 2. Balanced single-track calendar. Retrieved from the National Association for Year-Round Education, 2008, <http://www.nayre.org/>

The single-track calendar reduces the long summer break and simply apportions those days throughout the school year, producing more frequent breaks and limiting long periods of in-session days as well as long periods of out-session days (NAYRE, 2008).

The alternative year-round calendar is the multi-track. Originally, schools adopted a multi-track calendar to help solve overcrowding without spending money on new facilities. Chaika (1999) noted that multi-tracking allows schools to enroll more students than the building could hold on a single-track schedule or traditional calendar. One multi-track option provides a 60-20 calendar, where students attend school for 60 days and have break for 20 days. This track allows for four schedules, making it so that only three-fourths of the students attend school at

any given time. Regardless of which multi-track option is utilized, multi-track, year-round schedules enable students to be placed in alternating vacation sequences so that one track is always on vacation. This track saves school systems money by offering more classroom availability and, therefore, accommodating more students (NAYRE, 2008).

School districts have implemented a variety of year-round schedules. Estimates on the exact number vary although at least 30 different scheduling patterns exist (Quinlan, C., George, C., & Emmett, T., 1987). Only the most common of these patterns are addressed in this review. The most common patterns are:

1. The *45-15 Single-Track Plan*. This is currently the most popular of the year-round calendars. In this plan, the year is divided into four, nine-week periods, separated by four, three-week vacations or intersessions. Students and teachers attend school for nine weeks (45 days), and then take a three-week vacation (15 days). This sequence of sessions and vacations repeats four times each year, thus providing the usual 36 weeks or 180 days of school attendance for every school year. Four additional weeks each year are allocated to winter holidays, spring vacation, and national, state, or local holidays.

2. The *45-15 Multi-Track Plan*. This plan usually divides students into four groups. Each group attends school for 45 days and then has 15 days of vacation. While Groups A, B, and C are in school, Group D is on vacation. When Group D returns, Group A goes on vacation. The rotation continues every three weeks, providing 33% additional space in the school.

3. The *60-20 Plan*. For this plan, students attend school for 60 days and have vacation for 20 days. Students rotate throughout the year until they have had three 60-day terms and three 20-day vacations. This plan can be conducted in either single-track or multi-track options.

4. The *90-30 Plan*. This plan allows for two 90-day semesters separated by a 30-day vacation period twice a year. The schools are closed during the traditional winter holiday period and for a lengthy spring vacation. This calendar may be conducted in either single or multi-track formats.

5. The *Concept 6 Plan*. This is a particularly useful plan when a school has a lack of space. It requires that students be divided into three groups with one group always on vacation, freeing up a considerable amount of space (up to 50%) for instructional use. There are six terms, but students only consecutively attend two of every four terms. Group A begins for the first 43 days; Group B then joins Group A for another 43 days. Group C enters, while Group A, having completed its 86 days, goes on vacation for 43 days.

6. The *Flexible All-Year Plan*. This plan allows the school to be open for instruction approximately 240 days per year. Students are required to attend the minimum number of days designated by each state, but they can tailor their vacation time as they please. This plan increases space by 20% to 100% but requires creating curriculum in smaller unit packages.

7. The *Four Quarter Plan*. This plan works in four, 12-week blocks: fall, winter, spring, and summer. Students attend three of the four quarters, freeing up 25% of space at any given time. The curriculum is organized so that each quarter is a separate entity—a course begins and ends with each 12-week period.

8. The *Quinmester or Five-Track Plan*. This plan divides the school year into five terms of 45 days each. There are five terms in each track, and students attend four of the five terms for a total of 180 days of instruction. This plan is usually used on a multi-track basis. It provides a common summer break, of approximately three weeks, for all students (Barber, 1996; Fox, 2000;

Glines, 1997; Gregory, 1994; NAYRE, 2008; Palmer & Bemis, 1999; Weaver, 1992b; Wildman et al., 1999).

Advantages of Year-Round School

There are several potential advantages to year-round education. Advantages of year-round education include: improved achievement, improved teacher and student attendance, reduced discipline problems, reduced teacher stress, increased motivation among teachers and students after frequent breaks, and increased availability of enrichment opportunities (Palmer & Bemis, 1999).

Worthen and Zsiray (1994) concluded that student achievement at year-round schools is equal to or greater than student achievement in traditional schools, that students and teachers in year-round schools have positive attitudes, and that most parents are satisfied with year-round schools as long as they are well-implemented. Proponents of year-round education point to Japan where student scores are higher than those in the U.S. on standardized tests and where students attend classes 220 days a year on average as opposed to the 180 mandated days in America (Lehrer, 2001).

Additional research conducted by Aldridge-Morris (1998) and Thomas (2002) found higher student attendance numbers in year-round schools. Thomas (2002) also found that teacher attendance in year-round in year-round schools increased. It is believed that the more frequent breaks rejuvenated the teachers. Unless there is a scheduled holiday, teachers know that the longest they will be working is nine weeks before another scheduled break comes along.

The benefits attributed to multi-track programs are: less overcrowding, reduction in class size, availability of teachers to work year-round, and better use of facilities with potential for

cost savings (Brekke, 1992; Stenvall, 2000). According to the director of Duke University's education program, "Students who attend year-round school may give up a few days at the pool, but they gain a small advantage over their counterparts who take a 10 to 12 week break for summer vacation" (Cooper, 2003, p. 23).

Other benefits associated with year-round calendars include decreased teacher burnout, lower dropout rates, and fewer discipline problems. Year-round schooling often increases students' academic retention and overall achievement. The year-round school calendar allows families to take vacations at times that adapt to their schedules, like skiing or golfing in the winter (Ballinger, 1987). This type of calendar also provides remediation time for students who fall behind, so they can catch up with their classmates periodically, instead of falling further behind. This schedule change often allows students to feel more enthusiastic and motivated about school (O'Neil & Adamson, 1993) and it provides teachers who are on another track the opportunity to make extra money (Haser & Nasser, 2003). Conversely, according to Christie (2003), students in traditional schools who fall behind do not have an opportunity to catch up on skills.

The experience of teachers in year-round and traditional schools is different in many aspects. Teachers who work in year-round schools view this calendar in a positive light due to flexible work schedules, reduced stress, and increased time for professional reflection (Haser & Nasser, 2003). Teachers in traditional schools experience many positive aspects as well. They have the opportunity during long summer vacations to further their education, spend quality time with their families, and get second jobs (Haser & Nasser, 2003).

In schools offering intersession programs during the vacation periods, teachers credited these programs with enhancing and supplementing the regular curriculum (Quinlan et al., 1987).

In addition, intersession courses provide opportunities for teachers to experiment with different curricula and grade levels (Zykowski, Mitchell, Houston, & Gavin, 1991). Another advantage for teachers is that less review time is necessary at the beginning of each instructional block, because the shorter vacation periods result in less learning loss than long summer breaks (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996). Researchers claim that the difference in retention between shorter vacations and longer breaks is especially great for low socio-economic and high-risk students (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Kneese & Knight, 1995; Quinlan et al., 1987). High-risk students include those with learning disabilities. This may occur because students have access to immediate remediation in year-round education (Curry, Washington, & Zyskowski, 1997).

Ballinger (1998) noted that summer learning loss is a reality indicated by both experience and research. The year-round schedule often benefits students who are non-English speaking by giving them extra opportunities to continue learning their second language (Ballinger, 1998). Children with learning disabilities benefit as well (Cooper et al., 2003). For those who suggest summer school as an alternative to year-round education with intersession programs, statistics indicate that fewer than half of United States students are involved in this type of structured summer learning program (Ballinger, 1995). Furthermore, summer remedial instruction often occurs too late for students to catch up, and it generally lacks sufficient focus to be of much assistance (Ballinger, 1995). Meanwhile, the extended summer vacation often hinders the retention of knowledge and, as a result, more students fall behind. Christie (2003) pointed out that because children learn best when learning is continuous, year-round schools provide a more positive learning environment.

Palmer and Bemis (1999) reported that students on year-round calendars have improved attitudes because of their more frequent breaks from school. Fardig's (1992) research indicated that after one year of experiencing a 60-15 calendar, students felt more positively about year-round education. Alkin (1983) and Herman (1991), in two other studies, used the Student Attitude Measure to compare the self-concept of students in large, urban, year-round schools to students in a national norm group. Results from both studies indicated that year-round students have significantly lower self-concepts than the norm group. Two additional researchers independently compared year-round students to those on a traditional schedule (Nygaard, 1974; Shields, 1996). One study indicated no difference using the Self Appraisal Inventory, whereas the other study indicated that students on a traditional calendar scored significantly higher on items regarding self-acceptance on the Educational Process Questionnaire (Palmer & Bemis, 1999).

In traditional schools, some students forget important skills during the summer break (Warrick-Harris, 1995). Consequently, teachers spend a vast amount of time re-teaching skills that have been forgotten over the long summer vacation. In year-round schools, the students remember important skills after the start of a new session (Warrick-Harris, 1995).

Educators can also benefit from year-round school calendar changes. Levine and Ornstein (1993) found that teachers were not as fatigued because of the shorter instructional cycles. Teachers also showed fewer absences from school and spent less time reviewing materials that they had taught in the previous term (Barron, 1993; Kocek, 1996; Serifs, 1990).

According to Palmer and Bemis (1999), teachers' attitudes improved with experience in year-round programs. The attitudes measured concerned year-round education, school quality, scheduling of personal activities, and morale (Palmer & Bemis, 1999). One study comparing a

year-round calendar to a traditional calendar indicated that the teachers who were the most accepting and positive towards the year-round schedule had the most exposure to it, whereas staff on traditional calendars had the most negative attitudes about it (Palmer & Bemis, 1999; Shields, 1996). Costa (1987) found that, when teachers who worked at a year-round school took the Elements of Quality survey concerning topics such as management, community confidence in the school, and organization of the school, they scored higher than teachers on a traditional calendar. Another study focusing on the ease of scheduling personal and family activities showed that teachers who work at a year-round school expressed significantly higher satisfaction in that area than traditional calendar teachers (Elsberry, 1992). Teachers who work on a year-round calendar reportedly have more positive attitudes about school climate and effectiveness than those on a traditional calendar (Palmer & Bemis, 1999; Prohm & Baenen, 1996). In three other studies, parental attitudes and opinions toward year-round schooling became more positive the longer the school remained on a year-round schedule (Fardig, 1992; Nygaard, 1974; Pelavin, 1979).

The school and local community may benefit from a year-round calendar as well. Substantial money can be saved by increasing the school's capacity by choosing year-round scheduling instead of constructing new facilities (Serifs, 1990). In addition, schools that have chosen the year-round program experience less vandalism during the summer months, which results in fewer juvenile delinquencies (Serifs, 1990).

According to a study by Chaika (1999), the additional days added to a school year cost approximately \$11 per day per student, or about \$440 per year per student. Retaining a student costs about \$6,000 per year in addition to remediation costs and possible expensive special

education costs (Chaika, 1999). Sheane (1994) noted that a year-round calendar offers teachers and administrators opportunities to be creative in the types of extracurricular activities offered to students, permitting activities to take place throughout the year. Year-round education has not damaged athletic programs. Student athletes benefit from year-round education in two ways: 1) a significant portion of the sports season is free of exams and homework requirements, thereby allowing an increased concentration on the sport, and 2) student athletes experiencing academic difficulty can use the intersessions for remediation in order to achieve good standing in school mid-season (Ballinger, 1995).

American students attend school for fewer days per year than students in almost all industrialized countries (Year-Round School, 1998). Table 1 compares the average number of days in school attended between the United States and 15 other countries:

Table 1

Average Number of Days in School per Year by Industrialized Country

Country	# of Days in School per Year
Japan	243
South Korea	220
Israel, Luxembourg	216
Netherlands, Scotland, Thailand	200
England, Hungary	192
Finland, New Zealand, Nigeria	190
Spain, Sweden, United States	180

By the time Japanese teens complete grade 12, they have spent the equivalent of at least three more years in school than their U.S. counterparts (Year-Round School, 1998). Standardized

test results also typically show Japanese students' scores to be far superior to those of students in the United States (Wooley, 1996).

Disadvantages of Year-Round School

In addition to many cited benefits of year-round school, researchers also note some disadvantages as well. Weaver (1992a) stated that students forget information regardless of the length of their break. With year-round school, teachers have to review at the beginning of every new session instead of reviewing one time after the long summer break. Consequently, some students might need more remedial assistance than they would require in a traditional school schedule (Warrick-Harris, 1995). Another disadvantage is a decrease in summer programs. When schools move to a year-round schedule, summer youth camps begin to suffer due to use of the school building for classes. Also, summer businesses suffer from lack of assistance from high-school students who are attending school instead of working. Many students miss extracurricular camps and clinics because they are in school during the summer (Weaver, 1992a).

In addition, multi-track calendars may require additional operating costs. For example, they may not allow sufficient time for routine maintenance issues to be resolved, can be inconvenient for teachers (who might have to change classrooms during the year), can lead to overworked clerical staff and parents, and can result in some students missing school events scheduled at off-track times (Stenvall, 2000; Worthen & Zsiray, 1994).

In many school districts, some schools are on the year-round schedule while others are not (Warrick-Harris, 1995). This discontinuity can disrupt families with children in different vacation sequences. It is difficult for parents to schedule vacations when their children attend school on different calendars (Barber, 1996). Another issue affected by vacation sequences is student participation in extra-curricular activities (Cooper et al., 2003). If year-round student

teams or clubs compete with traditional calendar schools, they might miss an opportunity to compete in important events or activities. Secondary students who attend year-round schools also lose the opportunity to engage in full-fledged seasonal employment during the summer break (Peters, 2002). Students tend to move in and out of jobs with the more frequent breaks.

Employers may not be willing to accommodate or hire students from year-round schools because of the students' inability to commit to work for long periods of time.

There are also disadvantages of year-round school for teachers. Some teachers who work in year-round schools find it difficult to further their education (Warrick-Harris, 1995). Many universities offer graduate courses and advanced degrees only during the summer months when traditional calendar schools are on break (Warrick-Harris, 1995). Classes can be three weeks in length for three to four hours at a time during the weekday, thereby eliminating this option for a teacher on a year-round calendar to participate (Warrick-Harris, 1995).

Furthermore, year-round schools tend to be more expensive. Buildings are occupied by students and teachers while regular principals and administrators are on vacation; this creates a need for additional administrative support (Cooper et al., 2003). Operating a school is more expensive when salaries of 12-month employees must be paid, and there is also more wear and tear on the building (Serifs, 1990). McGlynn (2002) acknowledged, "The year-round calendar costs the school district an additional \$30 per student" (p. 40). According to Hasser and Nasser (2003), it becomes difficult to schedule in-service and staff development training for teachers because of varying teacher schedules. Lack of communication between cycling teachers could also lead to repetitive curriculum. In addition, there are fewer opportunities for teacher development by outside professionals (Hasser & Nasser, 2003).

Student Achievement in Year-Round Schools

One of the most compelling arguments for year-round schools is that the students' learning and retention are enhanced. Research in this area is still inconclusive. However, studies by Palmer and Bemis (1999) and Roby (1995) indicated that moderate increases in student scores on standardized tests were achieved. Merino (1983) stated, "While year-round schooling may be useful for some things, it has no beneficial or detrimental impact on academics" (p. 30). Many studies indicated no significant differences in academic achievement between students attending traditional schools and those on year-round schedules (Sexton, 2003; Fritts-Scott, 2005). Campbell (1994) concluded that students in year-round schools read fewer books than traditionally-schooled children. However, other studies conducted by Roby (1995), Marks (2006), and Backman (2008) showed that students in the year-round schools outperformed those students on a traditional calendar in reading and math.

O'Neil and Adamson (1993) initially encouraged year-round schooling as a solution to increasing enrollment. However, they concluded that "year-round schooling has not raised test scores, but neither has student achievement suffered. Ultimately converting to year-round school creates many difficulties and shows no clear advantages" (p. 92). A study conducted by McMillan (2005) also stated that the research is still inconclusive as to which school calendar is more beneficial as it relates to student achievement. As stated by Howell (1988), the only beneficial year-round systems were those for whom overcrowding had become a devastating problem.

Palmer and Bemis (1999) examined the effects of year-round education on achievement over a period of three decades. Most of the studies analyzed data on elementary school students.

Altogether, 75 individual comparisons of standardized achievement tests in reading, math, language, writing, science, social studies, or the complete battery were analyzed. The elementary schools studied followed a year-round schedule for three to five years, although others had implemented such programs anytime between one and twenty-one years ago (Palmer & Bemis, 1999). Table 2 presents a summary of statistically significant positive or negative effects of year-round education on student achievement. Because the results did not weigh any study by sample size, the results should be viewed as suggestive of achievement trends.

Table 2

Summary of Statistically Significant Directional Findings of Studies (1980-1999) of Year-Round Schooling Effects on Achievement

Subject	Positive Year-Round	Negative Year-Round	Sign Test <i>p</i> Level
Reading	11	2	.015
Math	9	2	.035
Language & Writing	5	2	NS
Science	1	0	---
Composite	1	0	---
Total	27	6	.005

Note. Retrieved from *Just in time for research: Children, youth, & families: Year-round education* by E. Palmer & A. Bemis, 1999, <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/7286-09.html>.

According to Palmer and Bemis (1999), 42 tests of year-round schools revealed no effect or pattern. The results in Table 2 show that 27 of 33 comparisons indicated significant positive effects of year-round education on achievement. Likewise, 11 of 13 comparisons in reading and 9 of 11 in math showed significant positive results. It is reasonable to conclude that students attending year-round schools are likely to perform as well as, if not better than, their peers in

traditional nine-month programs, especially at the upper elementary school level (Palmer & Bemis, 1999).

Standards based education can be instrumental in raising the achievement level of students. Here students can work at their own pace and get extra help if needed. Those who are particularly stronger in some areas can advance at a quicker pace and possibly finish sooner and spend more time on an area that may be more difficult. In a standards based system, everyone is working toward the same goals and there are expectations for students, parents, teachers and administrators. Assessments are used to inform instruction, and clear and concise standards are used to ensure success for all students, regardless of their ability level. “Academic standards are a fair and effective way to give students the ‘rules of the game’ when they are in school. By comparing a child’s performance to a fixed standard, parents, children, and teachers all know precisely what is expected. Every time the child attempts a task, the performance is compared to the standard—not to the performance of other children. The most important advantages for children and their parents are fairness, clarity and improved student learning” (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994).

Impact of Year-Round Education on Specific Student Populations

Presently there is limited research on the impact of year-round schools on students in subgroups like “at-risk” students, and students with learning disabilities. Therefore, it is difficult to measure any positive or negative effects due to the lack of literature and studies conducted on this population of students.

Studies that have been conducted share a consensus on the benefits for disadvantaged, special education, and bilingual students. According to his study, Alcorn (1992) reported that, disadvantaged students typically lose significantly more knowledge over the summer break than

other students. Doyle and Finn (1985) concluded that special education students adapt to a year-round school because of the daily routine that is implemented and because they do not have a large break over the summer vacation. Further stated in Alcorn's study is that, Ballinger (1987) analyzed the benefits favoring the bilingual, limited English, and English as a Second Language student. He found that the additional exposure to English speaking environments was an asset to those students who might otherwise spend their traditional summer vacations in non-English language situations. (p. 87)

"At-Risk" Students

There have been limited studies on year-round school and "at-risk" students. While some studies concluded that year-round schools are beneficial to "at-risk" students, those studies failed to determine the effects of the additional learning time that occurs with intersessions and other extended learning programs (Kneese, 1996). It is still unclear whether the benefits to "at-risk" students are due to the adjustment of the school calendar or to the additional time allowed for learning (Kneese, 1996).

Students with Learning Disabilities

Research suggests that a school calendar offering more regular breaks of three to four weeks might help to reduce skill regression for students with learning disabilities. According to Davies and Kerry (1999), the implementation of year-round calendars may eliminate the need for related support services during summer months. Long summer breaks cause regression in all children, and children with learning disabilities are no exception (McMillen, 2001). One review by Shields and Oberg (2000) that examined studies of both children with and without learning disabilities concluded that regression and retention: 1)

vary across skills, people, and circumstances; and 2) are likely to be a more serious problem for children with learning disabilities, although some studies showed that there may be little or no difference between these two groups of children. A study on block scheduling conducted by Bugaj (1998) examined the benefits to special education students. Bugaj determined that the perceptions of special education teachers and administrators were that students were integrated more in regular classes, had more success in regular education classes, had more program options, and achieved more of their IEP goals.

Climate

There have been numerous studies conducted on school climate and year-round schools. The studies primarily compared the school climates of traditional calendar schools and similar year-round schools. Other studies on school climate examined specific schools a few years after they went to a year-round calendar. Researchers surveyed parents and faculty members and, in all cases, school climate was higher in the year-round schools or after the implementation of year-round education (Adams, 2001; Backman, 2008).

The studies gathered information about school climate using questionnaires designed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals or other similar school climate surveys. In a study in rural Tennessee, students and teachers were surveyed after the implementation of year-round school (Lasater, 2005). There was a statistically significant preference for the year-round program (Lasater, 2005). In this study, only those teachers and students who had experience on both calendars were surveyed on the benefits and satisfaction of being on a year-round calendar (Lasater, 2005). In 2005, Fritts-Scott administered the Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire to faculty members at two similar schools in Arkansas. One school

was on a traditional calendar, the other on a year-round calendar. The study results indicated significant differences in benefits and satisfaction in favor of the year-round school (Fritts-Scott, 2005). Shields and Oberg (2000) studied two schools that transitioned to year-round in Ontario. School climate and teacher satisfaction were very high at both the schools, with approximately 30 teachers within the school district wanting to be transferred to one of the year-round schools.

At a University School, a K-12 school located on the East Tennessee State University Campus, school climate improved after year-round school was implemented, and the teachers and parents became more positive about teaching and learning (Adams, 2001). In two other studies, teachers who taught in year-round schools had a more positive attitude than those on a traditional calendar according to 15 out of 18 survey questions about school climate and effectiveness (Palmer & Bemis, 1999; Prohm & Baenen, 1996). In a study conducted by Helton (2001), 528 respondents in 23 schools in Florida indicated that they believed year-round education made their schools better in academic achievement, attitude, and other factors. In another study, Fardig (1992) reported that parent attitudes toward year-round schooling became more positive over time.

Teacher Experience

In a North Carolina study, significant factors in the academic growth of students in reading and mathematics were the teachers' years of experience and possession of a Master's degree (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004). When comparing teachers with five years of experience to first year teachers, one can expect the more experienced teacher to make three to four months more progress (Barton & Rowe, 1994). Wayne and Youngs (2003) reported in their research on teacher characteristics that teacher experience had a positive effect on student achievement, but

they also stated that the relationship between teacher experience and student achievement is difficult to decipher.

Sanders (2002) analyzed information on teacher experience and its effect on student achievement. He reported that student achievement increased during the first two years of teaching, leveled off at about 10 years of experience, and remained comparatively high up to year 25 when the achievement scores slowly began to decrease (Sanders, 2002). A study in the Memphis City School System examined a school reform program in an inner-city school and analyzed teacher experience. In the study, Ross et al. (2003) found that teachers who had been teaching for six or more years and who participated in the school reform program made significant increases in achievement with their students.

Summer Vacation and Achievement

Researchers have found that summer vacation definitely hinders learning and puts students behind by at least one month of instruction. Student scores on achievement tests were at least one month lower when they returned to school because of the effects of the extended summer vacation (Cooper et al., 2003). Various skills were lost in the areas of math and spelling because, as Cooper et al. (2003) noted, without practice, facts and procedural skills are more prone to be forgotten. There is a greater overall loss in math skills than in reading skills. Cooper et al. (2003) speculated that children of middle class homes have better opportunities to practice reading skills than math skills. The families with lower socio-economic status might not have the appropriate materials or parental guidance to practice and develop either reading or math skills during an extended break. Many parents of lower socioeconomic status work multiple jobs throughout the day. When on break, younger children in these homes often have to stay by

themselves or with older siblings. Summer programs are also not as easily available for these families (Warrick-Harris, 1995).

According to Warrick-Harris (1995), single-track year-round schools generally offer a three-week intersession every nine weeks. Students benefit from the optional remediation programs offered during intersessions as opposed to lengthy repetition during the regular session that might put them behind other students (Serifs, 1990). During the first week of intersession classes, childcare facilities were also available for students with working parents. The second week of intersession classes offered different enrichment activities for students. The third week offered students a chance to get some remedial help (Warrick-Harris, 1995).

As reported by Barber (1996), students who attend year-round schools have the opportunity to attend remedial courses during the three-week break, free of charge. These classes are small and taught by well-trained teachers. When students attend remedial classes, they are more likely to be better prepared when they return to the classroom (Barber, 1996).

Transition from a Traditional Calendar to a Year-Round Calendar

Shields and Oberg (2000b) point out that when a school district decides to change its traditional calendar to a year-round calendar, a lot of preparation must take place. In order for the change to be successful, the district must implement extensive communication, consultation, and planning programs. According to Shields and Oberg (2000b), proper communication is necessary between the school's faculty members, parents, and community members. All aspects of year-round calendars must be presented to each of these groups and all groups must be allowed to compare and discuss the issues. At these meetings, participants often use a question and answer format; therefore, they become more aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the two types

of calendars (Shield & Oberg, 2000b). The community members may be involved in the planning process and would thus be able to make choices regarding the calendars. Teachers, parents, and the community may be more willing to accept a new modified calendar because of this inclusion in the planning and decision-making process (McGlynn, 2002).

Before the new calendar can be implemented, the community must have frequent meetings over a year-long period, in order to discuss any concerns that they might have about the modified calendar (Weaver, 1992a). These meetings allow community members to become better educated about the new calendar. In addition, the calendar and rules of the new schedule should be flexible for staff and students in order to give the transition a better chance of success (Shields & Oberg, 2000b).

Parents and teachers may be hesitant about participating in the year-round calendar. If these stakeholders are not satisfied with the year-round calendar after the first year, they should be permitted to transfer to a traditional school setting that suits their needs (Shields & Oberg, 2000b). However, Shields and Oberg (2000b) found that the majority of teachers and students were happy with the year-round calendar. As a result, it has become a popular trend in many communities across the United States (Shields & Oberg, 2000b). Because of the complexity of implementing a year-round school calendar, it is important to consider the practices of schools and districts that have had success with this type of schedule.

Extended School Year Services in Special Education

Extended school year services for special education students are federally mandated, are written into a student's IEP, and are afforded to a select group of students with specific limitations and disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of

1997 (P.L. 105–17) set parameters for students with disabilities, entitling them to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). For some students, a program of special education and related services that extend beyond the traditional school year may be required. According to a report on special education and the extended school year, “Unrecouped regression, over time, may be evidence that FAPE is not being provided” (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007, p. 20). Factors that should be taken into consideration when making a determination as to a student’s need for ESY services include “regression/recoupment, degrees of progress, emerging skills/breakthrough opportunities, interfering behaviors, the nature and/or severity of the disability and other factors” (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007, p. 20). Extended School Year (ESY) services are based on the student’s special needs in education and not on the disability of the student. These services are not childcare and are not mandated for all students with disabilities. Extended School Year (ESY) services are not:

A continuation of the total IEP provided to a student with a disability during the regular school year; and are not required to be provided all day, every day or each day; are not an automatic program provision from year to year; are not summer school, compensatory services or enrichment programs; are not required to be provided in a traditional class setting; and are not a service to be provided to maximize each student’s potential.

(Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007, p. 20)

The Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education (2007) also stated that the IEP team’s decision regarding a student’s need for ESY services must not be postponed until after the summer for the sake of gathering data or determining what would happen if the services were not provided. Any procedures used by a local school division:

1. Should allow the decision by the IEP team regarding ESY services to be made early enough to ensure that parents can meaningfully exercise their due process rights if they wish to challenge an ESY decision;
2. Must ensure that the individual needs of the student are addressed and that the nature of the services provided will vary according to those needs;
3. Must not pre-limit the ESY services to a set number of days or hours of service or restrict the provision of ESY services for administrative convenience;
4. Must not allow the availability of ESY services to be limited by the financial resources of the school division;
5. Must not allow ESY services to be denied to those students who need the services in order to receive FAPE; and
6. Must not limit ESY services to predetermined disability categories or categorically exclude certain students with disabilities.

(Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007, p. 21)

The IEP team should make the decision regarding ESY services in a retrospective and prospective manner based on the unique needs of the special education student (Virginia Board of Education, 2002). Factors that can either alone or in combination point to a student's need for ESY include regression or recoupment, degree of progress, emerging skills and breakthrough opportunities, interfering behaviors, the nature or severity of disability, and special circumstances or other factors (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

Regression/Recoupment

The IEP team determines whether the student is likely to experience substantial regression over the break and will be unable to recover necessary skills within six to eight weeks after school resumes.

When assessing the factor of regression and recoupment, IEP teams must consider the following questions:

1. Does the student require extensive review to demonstrate previously learned skills?
2. What inconsistencies does the student demonstrate in mastered or partially acquired skills?
3. Has the student reached a critical point of instruction or behavior management where a break in programming would have serious, detrimental effects?
4. Does the student demonstrate behaviors or deficits that would cause regression if breaks in programming would occur?
5. Is there a degenerative medical condition that might cause regression?
6. Will a break in programming jeopardize the student's placement in the LRE?

(Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007)

The IEP team is not required to demonstrate student regression on a previous basis in order to make changes to ESY services (Virginia Board of Education, 2002). Should there be a lack of information in terms of regression, then the IEP team may use criteria established by expert opinion. Examination of criteria should include a review of current IEP goals, objectives, or benchmarks; observation and data from teachers, therapists, parents, and others having direct contact with the student before and during breaks in educational programming; data and observations regarding the student's performance after long weekends, vacations, and past

summer breaks; assessment of information maintained on the student, including pretest and post-test data; curriculum-based assessments, including pretest and post-test data; and other relevant factors (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

Nature or Severity of the Disability

The IEP team determines whether, without ESY services, the nature or severity of the student's disability is likely to prevent the student from benefiting from his or her educational program during the regular school year (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education).

Special Circumstances or other Factors

The IEP team determines whether, without ESY services, there are any special circumstances that will prevent the student from benefiting from his/her education program during the regular school year. Other factors cited in cases include:

1. The ability of the child's parents to provide educational structure at home;
2. The ability of the child to interact with children without disabilities; and
3. Areas of the child's curriculum that need continuous attention.

Extended School Year services must be provided by qualified personnel. Implementation can occur in a number of ways, but should include the following aspects:

1. Teacher and parent working together;
2. Learning packages with staff monitoring;
3. Home-based programs;
4. Grouping students with similar goals;
5. School-based programs;
6. Cooperative programs with other agencies;
7. Multi-system shared programs;

8. Contractual arrangements with service providers or agencies;
9. Community-based programs; and
10. Vocational setting (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

According to the *Extended School Year AZ-TAS Themes & Issues: A Series of Topical Papers on Special Education* (Arizona State Department of Education, 1993):

Some children with disabilities suffer losses of social, behavioral, communication, or academic skills during breaks in instruction and may need an extended school year (ESY) program in order to ensure that they receive the ‘appropriate public education’ that is federally mandated.

The work addresses the legal viewpoints of the ESY program and the court decisions that apply to ESY, it defines who must be considered for ESY, and it determines when the services are not appropriate. Factors that must be considered in ESY decisions include:

Regression-recoupment rates; motor communication; social skill levels; criterion-referenced and standardized test data; least restrictive environment consideration; behavioral needs; physical, mental, emotional, or health factors; past history; data-based observations of performance; teachers interviews and recommendations; parental input; critical learning stages; and parental skills and abilities. (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

Children with disabilities under the federal definition (34 CFR 300.7 and ARS 15-761) must be given consideration as to whether they will be eligible for ESY services. Only students whose learning will suffer a serious impediment due to an extended break from instruction should be enrolled in the program. This decision is based on the individual needs of the child and is not

automatically renewed from one year to the next. The “duration, frequency, and type of services” that the student receives during the ESY are determined by the IEP Team (Arizona Dept. Education, 1993). When the school, as a whole, functions on a year-round basis, ESY services are not as critical as in the traditional school year calendar because there is no extended summer break.

Summary

Over the past decade, year-round education has become increasingly popular in the United States. Many school districts are moving away from the traditional calendar looking for ways to increase academic achievement, attendance while decreasing behavioral issues. Because schools are now equipped with modern technology, many districts are looking for alternative options when it comes to educating today’s youth. The schools are progressing and changing to meet the needs of generations to come.

Year-round schools offer many benefits to today’s working families. There are different options available so that families can choose for themselves what is best for their children’s education. Single-track, year-round schools appear to offer more opportunities for struggling students because they offer remedial classes during breaks. High achieving students also reap rewards from enrichment and discovery classes offered during breaks.

Chapter 2 began with the historical perspective of year-round schools with its beginnings in the larger cities to accommodate for overpopulated areas and overcrowding of the schools. For the past 25 years, more emphasis has been placed on student achievement and summer learning loss than overcrowding. However, schools in Fairfax County, Virginia and Clark County, Nevada,

could not build schools fast enough, and multi-track year-round schools were implemented primarily for the rapidly growing population.

A variety of single and multi-track year-round school plans were discussed along with how a more balanced calendar throughout the year can be more beneficial for students. Although studies have shown that year-round schools have a moderate gain in student achievement over traditional schools, other studies have shown that student achievement is comparable to those operating on traditional school calendar. Other advantages of a year-round calendar include increased student and teacher attendance, increased in academic retention and decreased summer learning loss. Other studies concluded that students tend to have improved attitudes over students on a traditional calendar due to the more frequent breaks.

Studies have shown that there are advantages for “At-Risk” students, non-English speaking students, and students with learning disabilities who attend year-round schools. Researchers have found that school climate is better in year-round schools compared to traditional schools. Studies were conducted using the National Association of Secondary School Principals or other similar school climate surveys. Chapter 2 also described the transition from a traditional calendar to a year-round calendar, citing a proper planning and implementation.

There is very little research on year-round school in relation to students with learning disabilities. This study attempted to bridge some of the studies on year-round schools and link them specifically to students with learning disabilities. The research showed that by applying a standards-based education to a more balanced calendar, there were some positive impacts on these and all students. The chapter concluded with extended year services for special education students needing additional time outside the regular 180-day calendar.

In Chapter 3, the methodology of the study is explained. The types of quantitative and qualitative data that were collected and analyzed are addressed. The case study methodology and the participants are also determined. The respondents for this study were faculty and administrators at Abraxas High School and parents of students with learning disabilities. All forms, from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to the survey and interview instruments, are explained.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Introduction

The study focused on the effects of year-round school on students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School. For this single case study, the researcher used a quasi-experimental research method to assess the teachers and parents of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School in Poway, California. Due to the small numbers in the respondent groups, the researcher chose to distribute surveys to all faculty, administrators and parents of students with learning disabilities- no random sampling was utilized. One of the most important applications of case studies is the linking of program implementations with program effects brought about by explanations (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1990). This researcher utilized both qualitative and quantitative means to analyze data collected. The study began after the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. The research methodology of this study described in this chapter consists of the instrumentation, survey, and the research design. The participants of this study were the faculty members at Abraxas High School and the parents of students with learning disabilities.

Quantitative and Qualitative Procedures

The researcher conducted this study according to a guide that highlights clear and full disclosure of the methods and procedures. All research instruments including surveys and interviews were described and explained in detail to all members of the committee in order to assess all potential risks to the subjects.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of year-round schooling on students with learning disabilities. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore programs, curricula, stakeholders' satisfaction, and other issues that may be related to student success in a year-round school setting. Using a single case study approach at Abraxas High School in Poway, California, the researcher collected data from teachers and parents through surveys and interviews. The researcher also collected data from the California Department of Education website and the district office regarding graduation rate, attendance, discipline reports and average credits earned.

The quantitative data consisted of an analysis of the graduation rates, attendance rates and average credits earned provided by the California Department of Education (CDE) as well as data on student discipline at Abraxas High School provided by the assistant principal. Data were collected on the entire school population and on students with learning disabilities. State data on the graduation rate, school attendance, and discipline information, as well as survey and interview data were used to address the research question.

The qualitative data consisted of participants responding to surveys and interviews. The surveys measured the respondents' beliefs about teaching and learning, and recorded participants' opinions about year-round schooling at Abraxas High School. The teacher survey and interview questions used were based, in part, on a previous study (Wilson, 2008, see Appendix B). The researcher adapted the format, content, and design to represent the study's focus and research question regarding year-round school. The teacher survey addressed teaching and learning at the school, the school calendar, AYP, state testing, and preparation associated with year-round school (Appendix H). The researcher adapted the parent survey and interview questions from a previous study by Lattimore (2003) (see Appendix A). Permission was received

to use and adapt Ms. Lattimore's instruments. The parent surveys were designed to elicit information on the following scales: perceived student progress, quality of staff, school climate, socialization, perception of program, and parental involvement (Appendix I). The teacher and parent surveys varied in content and length and when combined, took approximately 15 minutes to administer. Groups of questions were combined to indicate specific categories. Most responses were on a five-point Likert-type scale. The survey responses ranged from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," with three intermediate selections. Other questions required free response answers.

The researcher invited the entire faculty and all of the parents of students with learning disabilities to participate in the survey regarding school climate, specifically as it relates to year-round school and students with learning disabilities. All surveys were completed online using Zoomerang software. All participants received a consent letter by e-mail describing the goals of the study and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher collected and analyzed data with statistics from the Zoomerang software. The data are housed in database management software for future analysis and study.

The researcher examined all returned surveys for failure of respondents to follow directions, explanatory comments, and other items noted by the respondents as well as any patterns that occurred with the responses. The response rate was noted and any invalid surveys omitted. The researcher reviewed data from interviews for any errors and transcribed for review purposes. Participation in this study was voluntary and parties could have withdrawn from the study at any time.

A structured interview process was utilized with the parents and faculty members. The interview guide contained questions related to general topics addressed in the surveys and was

designed to solicit the opinions of participants concerning key areas of year-round schooling as they relate to students with learning disabilities. Participants for these interviews were faculty members, administrators, and parents of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School.

When formulating questions for the interview guide, Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) suggested that two principles be considered:

1. Questions should be ordered from general to the more specific.
2. Questions of greater importance should be placed at the beginning, while those of lesser significance should be placed near the end.

The funnel approach (from general to specific) is one way of quickly engaging the interest of participants. Therefore, the researcher began with general questions, moved to specific questions, and then returned to a set of more general questions.

The researcher used a case study approach with exploratory and descriptive methods of data collection, and collected data from parent and faculty member surveys and interviews. Because the data were collected from two groups concurrently, this design is considered a one-shot case study (Stake, 1995). The single-bounded system studied was “Abraxas High School,” and the group studied was students with learning disabilities. At no time were students involved with this study in person or through any correspondence. The researcher utilized only data pertaining to these students, along with parent and teacher surveys and interviews.

In order to provide a detailed, in-depth profile of the population, the researcher employed multiple sources of data collection, surveys, and one-on-one interviews. Faculty members and parents were the target of the various data collection methods. A central administrator provided data about students. Prior to fieldwork, the researcher obtained permission to conduct the

investigation from the Poway Unified School District central office and from the principal of the high school. The researcher also obtained approval to collect data from subjects from the East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board, the committee for the protection of human subjects, as well as from the Assistant Superintendent of Poway School District, and the principal of Abraxas High School.

Site and Subject Population

The Poway Unified School District (PUSD) is located in San Diego County, California. Encompassing an area of approximately 100 square miles, district schools are situated in San Diego and throughout rural Poway. PUSD has twenty-five elementary schools (Grades K–5), six middle schools (Grades 6–8), five comprehensive high schools (Grades 9–12), and one year-round, alternative high school. The district serves approximately 33,000 students and is the third largest school district in the county. The researcher selected Abraxas High School based on several criteria, including the number of years it has been on a year-round calendar, student population, demographics, and individualized student learning plans.

The population of this study consisted of the faculty at Abraxas High School and the parents of students with learning disabilities enrolled in Grade 9 to Grade 13. The school has an enrollment of approximately 245 students, 17% of whom have a learning disability. The only contact the researcher had with students was through observations, specifically if the teacher asked the student to explain something about the program. The entire faculty and all parents of students with learning disabilities were asked to participate in the surveys and interviews. The assistant principal was the primary contact at Abraxas High School, and all correspondence occurred through his office. The researcher had conversations with multiple individuals at the site, including faculty members and parents, putting them at ease with the study. Denzin and

Lincoln (2000) stated that researchers must develop rapport, trust, and authentic communication patterns with participants (p. 84).

Instruments

Surveys

Prior to the administration of the surveys, the researcher sent a participation letter to the faculty members (Appendix D) and parents (Appendix E) to explain the nature of the survey and study. The researcher used a survey with a written questionnaire format. Responses to these questions resulted in data for the study. The teacher survey consisted of three sections: 1) opinions about teaching and learning at Abraxas High School, 2) opinions about the school calendar, and 3) opinions about their work environment as it relates to students with learning disabilities. The parent survey consisted of two sections: 1) opinions about teaching and learning at their school and 2) opinions about their children's' school calendar. A follow-up letter to the parents (Appendix F) was sent to obtain additional responses.

This study focused on the effects of year-round school on students with learning disabilities as revealed by teachers' and parents' perceptions of the school calendar. All of the faculty members, including building administrators, made up one respondent group, and the parents of those students with learning disabilities were the other respondent group. Since both respondent groups were small, every person was given a survey and opportunity to participate in the interviews. No random sampling was utilized. Each respondent group participated in the surveys online via the Zoomerang software package.

The teacher survey and interview questions were based, in part, on a previous study (Wilson, 2008). The researcher adapted the format, content, and design to represent the study's focus and research questions regarding year-round school. The teacher survey addressed teaching

and learning at the school, the school calendar, AYP, state testing, and preparation associated with year-round school (Appendix G). The researcher adapted the parent survey and interview questions from a previous study by Lattimore (2003) and designed the parent surveys to elicit information on the following scales: perceived student progress, quality of staff, school climate, socialization, perception of program, and parental involvement (Appendix I). The surveys for teachers and parents varied in content and length, and when combined, took approximately 15 minutes to administer. Groups of questions were combined to indicate specific categories, and most responses utilized a five-point Likert-type scale. The survey responses ranged from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," with three intermediate selections. Other questions required free response answers.

The entire faculty and administration at Abraxas High School and the parents of students with learning disabilities were invited to participate in the school survey via the Internet and Zoomerang software. The researcher collected data from the surveys and analyzed them for accuracy and errors. The data from this study is being housed in a database management software system for future analysis and study. All information from this study remains anonymous and confidential. Participation was entirely voluntary and respondents could withdraw from the study at any time without any recourse.

Interviews

A letter describing the study and inviting the parents of learning support students to participate in the interviews was attached to the end of the online survey (Appendix J). The entire faculty was asked to participate in the interviews while the site visit was conducted (Appendix K). The researcher interviewed the faculty members at the school and interviewed all of the parents by telephone. All parents of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High

School who received a survey request were invited to participate in the interviews as well as all faculty members, including the special education teachers. Each interview took 15 to 20 minutes to conduct. The interviews included both closed- and open-ended questions and enabled the researcher to understand how the year-round school calendar has affected students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School.

The researcher interviewed faculty members individually on campus during the school day in staff rooms, and interviewed parents at their convenience by telephone. The researcher made every effort to establish rapport and trust with each participant. The interview protocol consisted of approximately three pages in length, in order to conduct the interviews within a twenty-minute time frame. The researcher recorded responses manually, but asked the interviewees if audio-taping was permissible in order to ensure the accuracy of the data collection. Five parents allowed the researcher to audiotape their responses. The researcher assured respondents of confidentiality and anonymity, and he transcribed and organized data in word processing and database software.

Stake (1995) stated that the purpose of interviews is not to get yes or no answers but to attain a description of an episode, a linkage, or an explanation. During the interview, the interviewer primarily needs to listen, take notes as needed, control data collection, and prepare how the data will be used in the report. Once the interviews were concluded, the researcher developed a summary of the interviews, capturing key ideas and other aspects deemed important and relevant to the research study. The researcher looked for common threads among the faculty, administration and parent interviews. Common themes that existed among each respondent group were recorded and compared to the surveys and school factors to determine if there was a positive or negative effect on the students with learning disabilities.

Potential Risks

This study involved no risk to students since the researcher gathered only school-wide data on the graduation rate and attendance and discipline data and had no interaction with students. There was minimal risk to the faculty member and parent respondent groups. There is always some form of risk when there is interaction with respondents. All participants were adults, and all of the responses remained confidential and anonymous. The researcher coded the data so that individuals could not be identified.

Consent Procedures

The researcher received initial consent to perform the study from the Assistant Superintendent of the Poway Unified School District after IRB approval (Appendix C). Contact had been made with the Principal and Assistant Principal of Abraxas High School to explain the purpose of the study and review the process for selecting faculty members and parents for participation in the study. As detailed above, consent forms were incorporated into the online surveys for both the parents and faculty members. The researcher explained that participation was voluntary. Utilizing the list of potential subjects, the researcher set a mutually agreed upon meeting place, date, and time with each subject group. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and informed the potential subjects that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Faculty members received a second copy of the consent letter so that they had the primary researcher's contact information.

The final step was to schedule individual interviews at times and places that were convenient to the subjects. The researcher used a tape recorder for a few interviews so transcription could be performed later, and recorded all other responses manually.

After leaving the school site, the researcher placed the audiotapes and written transcripts in a locked briefcase and transferred the audiotapes and written transcripts to a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office upon arrival in Pennsylvania. No one has access to the file cabinet except the primary researcher.

Safeguarding the Subjects

In order to safeguard the faculty members and the parents after the interviews, a debriefing, by the researcher, took place to assure that the subjects were not harmed in any way during the data gathering process for this study. Additionally, all data collected remained anonymous and confidential. Only the researcher, advisors had access to the data which were coded in order to remain anonymous and confidential.

Data Analysis

The researcher selected Abraxas High School for this study because of the longevity of its being on a year-round calendar, and its classification as a model school through the California Department of Education. The school has acquired this distinction three times. This study specifically targeted students with learning disabilities because there is a limited amount of research that has been conducted on students with learning disabilities who attend school on a year-round calendar. Studies that have been conducted deal primarily with academic achievement and summer learning loss of regular education or "at-risk" students.

The researcher obtained data from the California Department of Education website and the assistant principal at Abraxas High School regarding graduation rates, attendance records, credits earned, and behavioral patterns. The researcher met with the assistant principal to review the data collected and clarify any issues. The researcher then sent a follow-up e-mail and conducted another school visit in May of 2011 for more clarity regarding the data collected. He

put the collected data in table form and analyzed each area with regard to the effects year-round school has on students with learning disabilities, specifically at Abraxas High School.

Using surveys and interviews, the researcher analyzed parent and teacher perceptions regarding academic performance and opinions about the school calendar as they related to students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School. Glesne (1999) created guidelines for the development of a coding system for evaluating transcripts of interviews. The researcher must begin with the development of major themes, and then break them down into subcodes. As the data are evaluated and analyzed, numerous iterations can take place. It is important to look at all the data with an open mind to view what is important to the study, overlooking nothing that may be of importance to the outcome. The researcher must look for connections and insights and consider how the analysis will be interpreted by others reading the study. At every step of the analysis, the researcher considered the question of how year-round school affected students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School. Then the researcher analyzed comments in critical issues and determined if they were positive, negative, or neutral, and what impact they made on the relevant issue.

Although not part of the initial data collection process, the researcher spent a significant amount of time observing the daily operation of Abraxas High School over a week-long site visit in late January and early February and again in May of 2011. The researcher was given free access to all areas of the school and sat in on classes throughout the week and met individually with faculty and administrators. The researcher noted the interaction of the faculty and administration with the entire student body as well as with the students with learning disabilities.

Reporting the Data

Reporting the data began with the presentation of a narrative account of the school studied. This was a general overview intended to give the reader a means of identifying with the site as the data were presented. The researcher then followed this with a detailed reporting of the data collected at Abraxas High School. The data were categorized, placed in table format, and then reported by category.

Summary

Chapter 3 presented the methodology and procedures that the researcher utilized to conduct this study. This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The quantitative data analysis consisted of data on the graduation rate along with attendance and discipline records collected from the California Department of Education and the Abraxas High School administration. The researcher used qualitative analysis on data collected from parent and teacher surveys and interviews. The survey population consisted of parents of students with learning disabilities as well as the faculty members at Abraxas High School. Data collection through surveys was completely anonymous and was gathered online through Zoomerang. The researcher collected data from face-to-face faculty member interviews at Abraxas High School and from parent interviews by telephone. The chapter ended with the data analysis reporting. The researcher categorized data results and placed them in table format for analysis.

Chapter 4

REPORTING THE DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The researcher's interest in year-round schools began when, in 1995, his nephews moved from a traditional school calendar in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to a year-round school calendar in Vista, California. Over the next few years, the researcher became intrigued with year-round schooling. In 2002, he attended his first conference hosted by the National Association of Year-Round Education in San Diego, California. He continued to attend this conference for the next three years and, during that time, decided to conduct a study on year-round schools. Initially, the researcher planned to conduct the study on an elementary school in the Allentown School District in Allentown, Pennsylvania. As time passed, however, this school district disbanded the year-round school due to a lack of any type of data on the transient student population. Since that particular elementary school was the only school within the district on a year-round calendar, the school board decided to return to a traditional school calendar.

When the three chapters were being developed, the researcher once again looked for schools in and around Pennsylvania that were on a year-round calendar, were a middle school or high school, and had a population of students with learning disabilities. One school that met these requirements was Grover Washington Middle School in the Philadelphia School District. Contact was made with the principal and a verbal commitment was made to conduct a study at his school. Unfortunately, the researcher's proposal hearing had not been completed at the time. When the proposal hearing drew near, the researcher again contacted the principal at Grover Washington Middle School, but he was informed that the Philadelphia School Board had decided to return this school back to a traditional calendar. The school had been on a year-round calendar

for about five years and yet no study had been conducted at the school to see if the school had benefited from this year-round calendar.

The researcher next made contact with Falls Church High School in Falls Church, Virginia. The researcher was interested in conducting a study in this school due to the school's proximity to the researcher, since he had used previous studies in the literature review from Virginia, and since this school was a secondary level school where the researcher had most of his experience. After further investigation, he found that this school was also returning to a traditional calendar and, thus, he would not be able to complete a study there.

After a considerable amount of time researching and contacting schools, the researcher decided to focus on schools in Southern California since this was where the interest in year-round school began. After many months of researching schools, Abraxas High School was selected for this study due to the researcher's interest in alternative schools, the fact that the school has been on a year-round calendar for six years, the overall increase in the graduation rate, and since the school had been selected as a model school in the state of California on more than one occasion. Additionally, the researcher wanted to know how students with learning disabilities are affected.

Chapter 4 describes in detail the data gathered from the field research at Abraxas High School and thus provides the substance to answer the research question: How does year-round school impact students with learning disabilities? The researcher utilized a case study format to determine, using qualitative and quantitative data, how the school operates on a modified, year-round calendar; how the participants view the year-round calendar; and how this calendar affects students with learning disabilities. The assistant principal at Abraxas High School and the California Department of Education website provided quantitative data on the school's

graduation rate, attendance, and discipline. The researcher gathered qualitative data from surveys and interviews with school administrators, faculty members, parents of students with learning disabilities, and from the researcher's observations during school visits.

The researcher collected data from surveys and interviews during a week-long site visit to Abraxas High School in late January and early February, 2011. Additional data and clarification of previous data took place during another site visit on May 20, 2011. The researcher first utilized the online survey tool, Zoomerang, to conduct faculty member and parent surveys and then he conducted in-person interviews with 11 faculty members and administrators at Abraxas High School in February. The researcher then conducted parent interviews with 11 parents by telephone during the school visit and after his return home to Pennsylvania.

The data collected from Abraxas High School and the California Department of Education was based on numbers from the entire school population and the senior classes since Abraxas High School is not required to keep or maintain any specific records regarding the graduation rate, attendance rate, and discipline referrals on special education students. However, the assistant principal at Abraxas High School, along with the special education department chair, determined that the graduation rate of the special education seniors was 15% less than the entire senior class, the attendance rate was 30% less than the entire school population, and that discipline referrals and suspensions were 40% greater than the entire school average. These figures are based on their perceptions and are non-quantitative data. Many factors affect these rates and are discussed individually in later sections.

Research Design

This researcher conducted descriptive research of the year-round school at Abraxas High School. In this case study, the researcher examined the year-round school at Abraxas High School

to determine the effect it has on students with learning disabilities. Yin (2003) concluded that case study research called for multiple data collection strategies, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative elements. The researcher used those strategies in the data collection and analysis.

Participants

Abraxas High School is an alternative school in the Poway Unified School District. Abraxas High School was selected based on several criteria, including its number of years utilizing a year-round calendar, student population size, student demographics, and the use of individualized student learning plans.

The population of this study is students with learning disabilities enrolled in Grades 9–12. Abraxas High School, with an enrollment of approximately 245 students, is an alternative high school that serves students who need an intimate and flexible educational environment. The students who attend Abraxas are typically at risk of not receiving a high school diploma. At the time of this study, there were 2 students in grade 10, 33 students in grade 11, 153 students in grade 12, and 56 students enrolled in grade 12+, which is the continuation grade. The demographics of the students at Abraxas are as follows: 43 Hispanic or Latin students, 2 American Indian or Alaska Native students, 10 Asian students, 1 Pacific Islander students, 17 Filipino students, 26 African American students, 143 White students, and 3 students listed with two or more races. At Abraxas, 17% of the student body has a learning disability and these students were the focus of this study.

The Abraxas campus was designed and built for alternative education in 1978. In 2002, Abraxas turned to block scheduling, and, in 2003, the entire campus transitioned to a year-round calendar. Abraxas received the designation of a Model Continuation School in 1998, 2006, and 2010. The campus consists of 21 classrooms, a career center, a computer lab, an art room, a science room, a

media center, and an administration building. Portable classrooms house the Basic Education Program. Additionally, there is an area for soccer, softball, and physical education classes and outside areas for basketball, volleyball, handball/racquetball, and weightlifting.

According to the California State Department of Education website, Abraxas has 26 classrooms that have Internet access and 171 computers for student use. As part of California's accountability program, public schools receive an Academic Performance Index (API) score based on their state test scores. The API drives the states system of rewards and sanctions on a school or the district. In 2010, Abraxas received a statewide rank of "B." Concerning Free/Reduced Meals, 23.8% of Abraxas students take advantage of this program while only 12.5% of students district-wide are on the program. Abraxas reports that 5.9% of its students have English as their second language while district-wide the percentage is 11.4%. Additionally, 10.6% of Abraxas's population is considered Fluent-English-Proficient (FEP). These students' primary language is not English, but they have scored high enough on a state test of English proficiency to be considered Fluent English Proficient (Ed-Data, 2011).

Student instruction at Abraxas High School is very individualized with some instruction in small groups or self-contained classroom settings. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of students with a wide range of skill levels, motivations, and goals. Each day, every student meets with his or her homeroom teacher to discuss his/her educational progress, talk about how to get and stay on track, and to arrange assistance, if needed, from any current teacher. The homeroom teacher serves as a teacher, counselor, disciplinarian, and record keeper. Credits for completing courses are issued because they are earned, not because the student has spent a certain number of hours in the classroom. Each of the students at Abraxas, including the students with learning disabilities, has an individual plan to assist them to be successful. Student

learning can occur in the form of small group instruction, individualized packets, or online classes. Students can take any combination of instruction formats in order to succeed. As long as the students have acceptable attendance and behavior, they have multiple options.

Since 1996, student enrollment at Abraxas fluctuated from a low of 245 students during the 2010/2011 school year to a high of 401 students during the 2006/2007 school year (see Figure 3). The students at Abraxas come from five other high schools within the Poway Unified School District. Their enrollment at Abraxas is not mandatory but the students must be willing to abide by the rules and criteria in order to attend this alternative high school. Prior to enrollment, the student and a parent must attend a mandatory pre-enrollment meeting during which the expectations of the student, the parents, and the school are clearly defined. Many of the students who attend Abraxas have attendance issues, discipline issues, credit deficiency, or other issues that would prevent them from being successful at one of the other traditional high schools they were originally slated to attend.

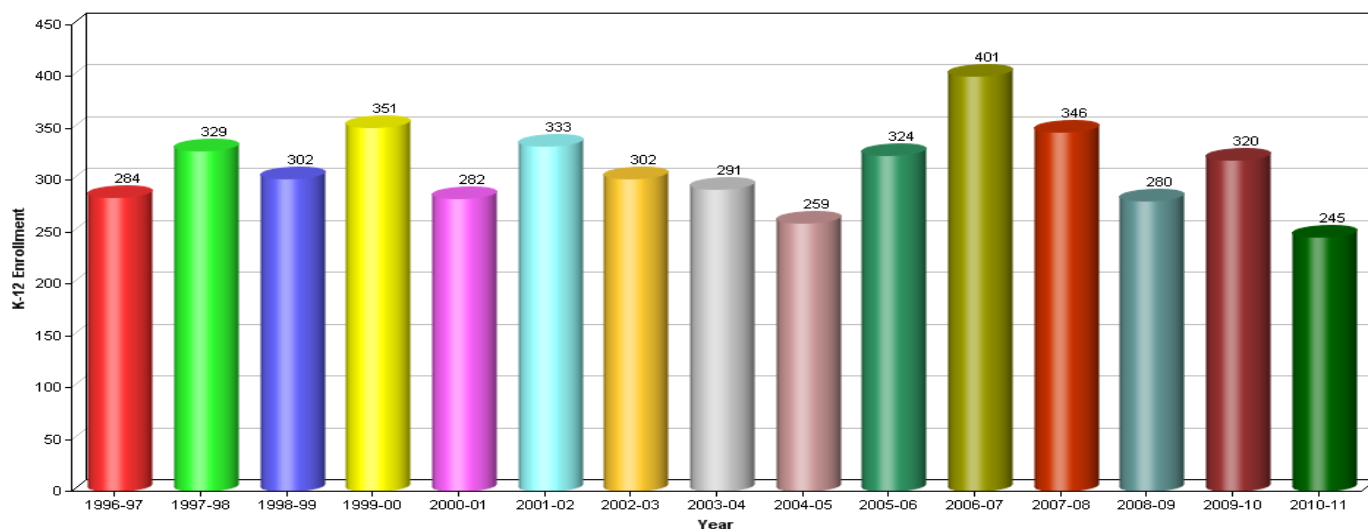


Figure 3. The enrollment data of the students at Abraxas High School listed by year from 1996 to 2011.

Surveys and Interviews

The researcher based the teacher survey and the teacher interview questions on a survey and a set of questions used in a previous study by Anne Wilson (2008). Prior to proceeding with the study, he received permission from Anne Wilson to modify the format, content, and design of the study (see Appendix B) in order to represent this study's focus and research question regarding year-round school. The teacher survey addressed teacher opinions regarding teaching and learning at the school, the school calendar, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), state testing, and preparation associated with year-round school (Appendix H).

The researcher modified, with permission, the parent survey and parent interview questions from a previous study by Royna Lattimore (2003) (Appendix A). The researcher also designed the parent survey to elicit information on the following scales: the perceived student progress, quality of staff, school climate, socialization, perception of program, and parental involvement (Appendix I). All of the faculty member and parent surveys and interviews revolved around the question: How does year-round school impact students with learning disabilities?

Both surveys employed a five-point Likert scale with numerals ranging from 1 to 5 (with 1 representing "strongly disagree," 2 representing "disagree," 3 representing "neutral," 4 representing "agree," and 5 representing "strongly agree"). This scale measured the extent to which respondents agreed with statements concerning a variety of features and programs at Abraxas High School.

Following the collection of the survey data, all of the respondents participated in an interview that provided the researcher with further knowledge about Abraxas High School. The qualitative data triangulated with the quantitative data allowed the researcher to obtain an

enhanced understanding of Abraxas High School and to answer the research question: How does year-round school impact students with learning disabilities?

Quantitative Data

Parent Survey

The parent survey was adapted, with permission, from a previous study conducted by Royna Lattimore (2003) which also dealt with parent satisfaction of a school program. The researcher presented the Abraxas Parent Survey through a website to 17 parents. The survey was available online for four weeks. Of the 17 surveys made available, 14 were returned, which represented a response rate of 82% (n=14). The percent responses for each question are reported in Table 3.

Parents who participated in the surveys and interviews have a child with learning disabilities who attends Abraxas High School. Of the participating parents, 93% wanted their children to continue attending Abraxas High School in the future. The parents were very positive about the Year-Round School (YRS) program with 93% indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the program to other parents who have children with learning disabilities. Only one parent responded neutrally to this statement. On the other hand, the parents were divided as to whether their children experienced an increased ability to get along with others. While 76% agreed or strongly agreed that their children improved their ability to get along with others, 23% were neutral on the issue and 8% disagreed. The parents also did not agree as to whether their children appreciated the YRS program. While 54% of the parents agreed or strongly agreed that their children enjoyed participating in the YRS program, 46% responded with a neutral response.

Table 3

Parent Survey Data

	SD	D	N	A	SA
I would like my child to continue attending Abraxas HS in the future.	7%	0%	0%	29%	64%
I would recommend the YRS program at Abraxas to other parents with children having learning disabilities.	0%	0%	7%	29%	64%
My child has improved their ability to get along with other students.	0%	8%	23%	62%	8%
My child enjoyed participating in the program.	0%	0%	46%	46%	8%
My child made new friends through the program.	0%	0%	36%	57%	7%
I am pleased with how staff worked with my child with learning disabilities.	0%	0%	0%	36%	64%
My child has benefited from the year-round calendar.	0%	0%	36%	50%	14%
My child's teachers seemed to make learning exciting and fun.	0%	0%	7%	43%	50%
The staff at Abraxas HS truly care about my child.	0%	0%	7%	21%	71%
My child was safe at the school.	0%	0%	0%	14%	86%
Staff takes prompt action when problems occur.	0%	0%	0%	21%	79%
Staff is willing to talk to me if I have any concerns or suggestions.	0%	0%	0%	21%	79%
I have participated in activities with my child at school.	0%	0%	69%	31%	0%
I am satisfied with the special education program at Abraxas HS.	0%	0%	7%	43%	50%
My child made improvements in academic achievement at Abraxas	0%	0%	14%	43%	43%
My child made improvements in attendance while at Abraxas HS.	0%	0%	57%	36%	7%
My child made improvements in discipline while at Abraxas HS.	0%	8%	15%	62%	15%
There is an open line of communication between myself and the staff	0%	0%	0%	21%	79%

How much academic progress do you feel your child has made while at Abraxas HS?

Much less than at a traditional calendar school year	0%
Less than at a traditional calendar school year	7%
Similar to a traditional calendar school year	7%
More than at a traditional calendar school year	71%
Much more than at a traditional calendar school year.	14%

Please indicate your level of involvement in your child's program.

None	0%
Receive information from staff	0%
Give information to staff (i.e. phone calls, meet with teacher)	7%
Give and receive information to and from staff	79%
Participate in decisions with staff	14%

Note. SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, and SA=Strongly Agree. Questions adapted with permission from R. Lattimore, 2003.

As shown in Table 3, the majority of the parents (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that their child made new friends while 36% responded neutral. The parents were overwhelmingly positive about the staff at Abraxas. Each of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were pleased with how the staff at Abraxas High School worked with their child. While 64% of the parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child benefited from the YRS program, 36% responded neutrally, which indicated that the perceptions of this program vary.

While 93% of the parents believed that the teachers make learning exciting, 7% responded neutrally to this question. Of the parents, 92% agreed or strongly agreed that the staff truly cares about their children while only 7% responded neutrally. All of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their children are safe at the school. All of the parents also agreed (21%) or strongly agreed (79%) that the staff takes prompt action when problems occur. This was another indicator that the parents are very positive about the staff at Abraxas. All of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the staff is willing to discuss concerns or suggestions. When this is aligned with the previous answers concerning staff communication, it can be inferred that the parents either agreed or strongly agreed that there is an open line of communication between the parents and staff at Abraxas High School.

The responses concerning parental involvement were not as positive. While 31% of the parents agreed that they had participated in activities with their child, 69% responded neutrally to this statement. As stated previously, one parent of each child must attend a mandatory informational meeting before their children are permitted to enroll at Abraxas. In addition, the administration at Abraxas has an open door policy and anyone can stop in to see what is taking place at the school during any school days.

The majority of the parents (93%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the programming at Abraxas while 7% responded neutrally. Of the respondents, 43% agreed and 43% strongly agreed that their children saw improved academic achievement at Abraxas while 14% responded neutrally. The parents' satisfaction with the programming correlated with how well their children were doing in school. The neutral category in the improved academic achievement area was double the neutral category in the school programming area.

The parents were not as positive about attendance. Only 43% either agreed or strongly agreed that their children improved their attendance at school while they attended Abraxas and the rest responded neutrally. The parents were also divided on the issue of discipline. While 77% agreed or strongly agreed that their children made improvements in discipline while at Abraxas, 15% responded neutrally, and 8% disagreed.

Of the respondents, 71% indicated that their child made more academic progress in the year-round school than in a traditional school year, 14% stated that their child made "much more" progress, 7% said that their child's progress was similar to that seen in a traditional calendar year, and 7% said that their child's progress was less than that seen in a traditional calendar year. It made sense that the parents would feel their child has made vast improvements in academic achievement considering the increase in the graduation rate. Students attending Abraxas may have been expelled from a traditional high school, may have dropped out, had attendance or other discipline issues, or just needed another avenue to be successful. Even though many rules are different at Abraxas, Abraxas students have a sense of belonging and ownership that they did not have at a larger traditional high school. Of all the parents, 79% indicated that they give and receive information to and from staff while only 14% indicated that they participate in decisions about their children with staff and 7% percent stated that they give

information to staff via phone calls and meetings. Overall, the parents felt that the year-round program at Abraxas High School made a positive impact on their children with learning disabilities.

Faculty Member and Administrator Survey

All of the faculty members and the administrators at Abraxas received access to the online survey through email for two weeks. After a follow-up email, 70% (14 out of 20) of the faculty members and administrators at Abraxas completed the survey. This survey measured a number of different dimensions including teaching and learning at Abraxas High School, teacher's opinions about year-round schooling, and the performance of students with learning disabilities. All of the respondents for this section were either teachers or administrators.

The majority of the study respondents, 57% (8 out of 14), were general education teachers while 29% (4 out of 14) were special education teachers and 14% (2 out of 14) worked in administration. No significant relationship existed between the respondent type (teacher or administrator) and any of the study variables. The majority of the respondents had been working at the school for five years or longer while 14% (2 out of 14) had been working at the school less than one year. No significant relationship existed between the respondent seniority and any of the study variables. The two respondents who indicated that they were new to the school were both special education teachers, which will be taken into consideration when evaluating the teacher responses between regular education teachers and special education teachers. The percentages for the responses to each question for the school employment data are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

School Employment Data

How are you involved in providing services in your school?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
General Education Teacher	8	57%
Special Education Teacher	4	29%
Administrator	2	14%

How long have you worked at Abraxas High School?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
< 1 Year	2	14%
1 - 2 Years	0	0%
3 - 5 Years	2	14%
5 - 10 Years	4	29%
> 10 years	6	43%

The data on beliefs about teaching and learning at Abraxas High School revealed that 93% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students with learning disabilities can achieve the goals that have been set for them (see Table 5). While 50% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that Abraxas sets high standards for academic performance of students with learning disabilities, 50% responded neutrally. Similarly, while 64% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that learning is fun at Abraxas for students with learning disabilities, 36% responded neutrally. None of the faculty members disagreed with this statement.

Regarding students respecting others who get good grades, 79% either agreed or strongly agreed while 7% each responded with neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Of the respondents, 7% strongly agreed and 7% agreed that students seek extra work to improve their grades while 72% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 14% recorded a neutral response.

Notably, none of the respondents disagreed that the atmosphere at Abraxas is conducive to learning. An overwhelming majority (93%) believed that Abraxas has an atmosphere in which students learn effectively and the same amount of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that students at Abraxas have the ability to achieve academically. Only 7% responded neutrally. One hundred percent (100%) of the faculty believed that academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.

While all of the respondents believed that academic achievement is acknowledged and recognized, 85% of the faculty members responded that they are proud to teach at Abraxas and 15% responded neutrally. Respondents also did not agree about the student work ethic. While 36% agreed or strongly agreed that students try hard to improve their performance on tests, quizzes, and projects, 50% responded neutrally, and 14% disagreed. Furthermore, 79% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Abraxas High School is preparing its students for the future and 21% responded neutrally to this question.

Table 5

Faculty Member and Administrator Beliefs about Teaching and Learning at Abraxas High School

	SD	D	N	A	SA
Students with Learning Disabilities can achieve the goals that have been set for them.	7%	0%	0%	36%	57%
Abraxas High School sets high standards for academic performance	0%	0%	50%	36%	14%
Learning at Abraxas High School is fun.	0%	0%	36%	57%	7%
Students respect others who get good grades.	7%	7%	7%	57%	22%
Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.	29%	43%	14%	7%	7%
Abraxas has an atmosphere in which students learn effectively.	0%	0%	7%	57%	36%
Teachers at Abraxas believe their students have the ability to achieve academically.	0%	0%	7%	50%	43%
Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.	0%	0%	0%	43%	57%
I am proud to be a teacher at Abraxas.	0%	0%	15%	8%	77%
Students try hard to improve their performance on tests, quizzes and projects.	0%	14%	50%	29%	7%
The learning environment at Abraxas is orderly and serious	0%	7%	21%	43%	29%
Instruction at Abraxas prepare students for the future.	0%	0%	21%	43%	36%

Note. SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, and SA=Strongly Agree. Questions adapted with permission from A. Wilson, 2008.

While investigating teachers' opinions about year-round schooling at Abraxas High School (see Table 6), the researcher found that 92% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that year-round schooling promoted effective teaching and learning with respect to students with learning disabilities. Only one respondent (8%) responded neutrally. None of the respondents selected disagree or strongly disagree. All but one of the respondents (99%) agreed or strongly agreed that year-round school enabled students with learning disabilities to overcome learning problems and only one respondent (8%) responded neutrally to whether or not year-round schooling helped students improve their test scores. All of the others (92%) either agreed or strongly agreed that year-round schooling improved test scores.

While one participant (8%) responded neutrally to whether year-round schooling makes it difficult for students to hold jobs, the rest either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Similarly, 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that year-round schooling allowed opportunities for families to take vacations and 8% responded neutrally to this statement. The same percentages held true for the question of whether year-round schooling presented obstacles for single parents.

The respondents did not agree about enrichment and remediation in the YRS programs. While 23% agreed or strongly agreed that YRS enabled students to engage in enrichment or remediation activities, 46% responded neutrally, and 31% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. In general, the respondents believed that YRS led to a greater retention of learned material. The majority (77%) strongly agreed or agreed that YRS led to a greater retention of learned material while the rest responded neutrally. Similarly, 77% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that YRS reduced the amount of time spent in class review while the remaining 23% responded neutral. All of the respondents believed that YRS reduced student stress and all of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that YRS was based on information about how students learn most effectively. The faculty members and administrators felt so strongly about YRS and the advantages it has for the students at Abraxas that many indicated that they would not choose to return to a traditional school calendar. While the majority of the respondents (92%) agreed or strongly agreed that YRS kept students engaged in learning during the entire year, 8% disagreed. In addition, 92% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that YRS motivated students to attend school while 8% responded neutrally. Overall, the faculty member opinions of YRS were overwhelmingly positive regarding how it related to the students.

Table 6

Teacher and Administrator Opinions about Year-Round Schooling

	SD	D	N	A	SA
Promotes effective teaching and learning.	0%	0%	8%	8%	84%
Enables students to overcome learning problems.	0%	0%	0%	38%	62%
Helps students to improve test scores.	0%	0%	8%	54%	38%
Makes it difficult for students to hold jobs.	69%	23%	8%	0%	0%
allows families opportunities to take vacations.	8%	0%	0%	38%	54%
Presents obstacles for single parents.	61%	31%	8%	0%	0%
Allows students to take enrichment classes during intercessions.	8%	23%	46%	15%	8%
Leads to greater retention of learned material.	0%	0%	23%	23%	54%
Reduces the amount of time spent in class review.	0%	0%	23%	23%	54%
Reduces student stress.	0%	0%	0%	31%	69%
Is based on information about how students learn most effectively.	0%	0%	0%	31%	69%
Keeps students engages in learning during the entire school year.	0%	8%	0%	15%	77%
Motivates students to attend school.	0%	0%	8%	38%	54%

Note. SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, and SA=Strongly Agree. Questions adapted with permission from A. Wilson, 2008.

When considering the performance of students with learning disabilities (see Table 7), the majority of the respondents (64%) did not believe that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and AYP supported student learning while the rest (36%) believed that it did. Of all the respondents, 93% indicated that the school has students with learning disabilities who perform below the state standards. While 79% stated that the school undertook specific actions or interventions to address the poor performance of those students with learning disabilities, 21% stated that such interventions were not applicable to Abraxas High School. The majority of the respondents (86%) stated that instructional and curriculum changes occurred to address the performance of students with learning disabilities while 43% stated that staff and organizational changes occurred. The majority of the respondents attributed student improvement to specific actions or interventions (86%) or to year-round attendance (64%). The Abraxas teachers cited many reasons for the improvement of students with learning disabilities including individualized

attention, IEP goals, incentive awards, online resources, classroom aides, and tutors. Finally, the teachers stated that the homeroom period was critical for maintaining consistent contact and communication between the teachers and the students.

Furthermore, the respondents believed that teacher-made tests (92%) and curriculum-based measurements (69%) assessed the academic progress or the performance of students with learning disabilities. Portfolios were the least-used technique (23%). Of the respondents, 86% believed that special education teachers and regular education teachers in the school collaborated and the majority (50%) identified co-teaching and committee participation as the main modes of collaboration. When asked if special education teachers and regular education teachers collaborated in other ways, 42% responded that did. They stated that the two groups of teachers collaborated via the constant monitoring of special education students in regular education classes, IEPs, conferencing, meetings regarding individual student learning, phone calls and direct communication on a regular basis, sharing information regarding student progress and student needs, communication if mainstreamed, and constant communication between special education teachers and regular education teachers. Overall, the faculty members did not equate the success of the performance of the students with learning disabilities with the NCLB legislation or with AYP but, rather, with the success of the school and its programs.

Table 7

Teacher and Administrator Beliefs Regarding the Performance of Students with Learning Disabilities

Has NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) requirements helped your school's students with learning disabilities?	YES 36%	NO 7%	
Does Abraxas High school currently have students with mild learning disabilities performing below state standards?	YES 93%	NO 7%	
If students with learning disabilities performed below the state standard, did you or your school undertake to address the poor performance of those students?	YES 79%	NO 0%	N A 21%
What measures have been taken to address the poor performance of students with learning disabilities?			
Instructional Changes	86%		
Staff Changes	43%		
Organizational Changes	43%		
Curricular Changes	86%		
Nothing	0%		
Not Applicable	7%		
Other, please specify	0%		
To what do you attribute the improvement of your students with mild learning disabilities?			
Specific actions or interventions	86%		
Student population changes	14%		
Staff changes	21%		
Students attending on a year-round calendar	64%		
State's recalculation of AYP	0%		
Chance	7%		
Our students with mild learning disabilities subgroup has improved	0%		
Other	0%		

What data are used to measure the academic progress or performance of your students with learning disabilities?

Standardized tests	54%
Textbook tests	31%
Teacher-made tests	92%
Portfolios	23%
Curriculum based measurement assessments	69%
Progress monitoring	62%
Other	8%

Do special education teachers and regular education teachers in your school collaborate?	YES	NO
	86%	14%

If special education teachers and regular education teachers collaborate, how do they do so?

Co-teaching	50%
Common planning time	17%
Committee participation	50%
Grade level meetings	0%
Not applicable	17%
Other	42%

Graduation Rate

One factor used to measure the success of an alternative school or program in the state of California is its graduation rate. The students who attend Abraxas High School have four options in order to graduate. In order to earn a high school diploma from Abraxas High School, students need to take a minimum of 230 credits with 30 required courses. If after an extended year (grade 12+), the 18 year-old student does not have enough credits to receive an Abraxas diploma, the student moves to the Adult Education Program. By attaining 190 adult education credits with 25 required courses, the student can receive their adult education diploma. If a student in the Adult Education Program receives 190 credits with 18 required courses, they can receive an adult

education degree with a General Education Development (GED) Certificate. The only other option the students have is to take the GED by itself. Any student who leaves Abraxas High School and becomes a part of the Adult Education Program is dropped completely from any further reporting at Abraxas High School, including from the graduation rate. The researcher does not know what year this practice started for reporting purposes.

The 2003-2004 school year was the last year that Abraxas was on a traditional calendar and thus is the base or comparison year for graduation rates that were charted and analyzed from the 2004-2005 school year to the 2009-2010 school year. Table 8 lists the results of the comparisons; these data represent the graduation rates of all the students (both special education students and non special education students) in the senior classes at Abraxas High School while Table 9 presents data on the special education students.

The researcher utilized a two-proportion z-test to analyze the overall graduation rates at Abraxas High School. The base year for statistical purposes was the 2003-2004 school year, the last year that the school used a traditional calendar. The hypothesis was that year-round school has not made a difference on the graduation rate. Statistically, over six years, the hypothesis was rejected twice by the data (indicating that year-round school has made a difference on the graduation rate) and the data failed to reject the hypothesis four times (meaning it did not make a difference on the graduation rate). The last two years of the study are the most significant years because they reflect the data from the fifth and sixth consecutive years of the school being on a year-round school calendar. Table 8 shows that the graduation rate increased for each of these years and for the last three years when a student could have attended Abraxas for all four years of his or her high school career. During the last two years of the study, the p-value was less than .001. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a positive impact on the graduation rate.

Table 8 also shows that there were slight changes in the graduation rate from year to year from 2003 through the 2006 school year. For example, there was a 9% increase in the graduation rate at the end of the 2007 school year and then a slight gain of less than 2% the following year, which brought the total up to 73.3%. In the 2008-2009 school year, the graduation rate increased by almost 9% to 82%. The graduation rate then increased by 11% for the 2009-2010 school year, bringing the total rate to 93%. This increase was attributed partially to a curricular change that introduced online classes to the Abraxas campus. Another factor was that a number of students left Abraxas High School to attend the Adult Education Program, which helped raise the graduation rate at Abraxas.

Table 8

The Graduation Rate for the Entire Senior Class at Abraxas High School

	<u>School Year</u>	<u>Graduation Rate</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>z</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>Result</u>
BASE						
YEAR	2003/2004	68.30%	231			
	2004/2005	58.10%	201	1.14	0.25	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
	2005/2006	62.60%	218	1.33	0.9	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
	2006/2007	71.60%	298	-0.76	0.22	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
	2007/2008	73.30%	270	-1.21	0.11	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
	2008/2009	82.00%	227	-3.35	<.001	Reject Hypothesis
	2009/2010	93.00%	226	-6.62	<.001	Reject Hypothesis

Note. n = the number of seniors at the school for that particular year, p = the observed significance level (looking for $p < .05$), z = standard score.

As stated previously, the California Department of Education does not require Abraxas High School and the Poway Unified School District to keep specific data on the graduation rate of special education students. Upon further investigation, with the help of the assistant principal and the special education department chair at Abraxas, the researcher determined that special education seniors graduate 15% less often than the entire senior classes (see Table 9). Since the

special education students are allowed to attend high school until they are 21 years of age, they are not counted in the dropout rate and they cannot be suspended for more than ten days.

The researcher once again utilized a two-proportion z-test to analyze the graduation rates of the special education students at Abraxas High School. Once again, the base year for statistical purposes was the 2003/2004 school year (the last year the school used a traditional calendar). The hypothesis was that year-round school has not made a difference on the graduation rate. Even though the graduation rate has been increasing, the hypothesis failed to be rejected five times over six years. This means that year-round school has not made a difference, statistically, on the graduation rate for the special education students at Abraxas High School for the first five years of the year-round calendar. During the last year of the study, the $p\text{-value} < .05$, which means that there was a positive impact on the graduation rate since 2009. However, there needs to be more than one year of the hypothesis being rejected in order to inform, statistically, that year-round school has made a difference on the graduation rate of special education students. It would be interesting and beneficial to track the graduation rate of the students with learning disabilities for at least the next two years.

From the 2003-2004 school year through the 2009-2010 school year, there was a steady increase in the graduation rate with the exception of one school year (2004-2005). The graduation rate increased from 68% to 93% over these years. A number of factors appeared to be related to this increase, including a change to individualized instruction. Individualized instruction ultimately affects how the students are learning. Abraxas High School students now have the ability to receive small group instruction, self-paced instruction, instruction packets, or online classes. Therefore, the students have the ability to find what works best for them, which results in success in the classroom. Furthermore, a combination of these modes of instruction can

be utilized. The primary focus of individualized instruction is to enable the student to attain enough credits to graduate.

Abraxas High School is also unique in that it is also on a block schedule and, therefore, students can take as few as two classes at one time. By doing this, they can spend more time focusing on fewer subjects with the hopes of achieving higher grades and passing the courses. While interviewing the faculty members, it became apparent that the teachers and the administrators at Abraxas High School have a genuine concern for the success of their students with learning disabilities. Forty-three percent of the faculty members have been at Abraxas High School for more than ten years. Seventy-nine percent of the faculty members and administrators surveyed believe that Abraxas and the year-round calendar prepare the students for the future and 93% believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.

Table 9

The Graduation Rate for the Special Education Students at Abraxas High School

School Year	Graduation Rate	n	z	p	Result
BASE					
YEAR 2003/2004	58.10%	40			
2004/2005	49.40%	34	0.64	0.75	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2005/2006	53.20%	37	0.3	0.62	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2006/2007	60.90%	51	-0.31	0.37	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2007/2008	62.30%	46	-0.52	0.3	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2008/2009	69.70%	39	-1.08	0.14	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2009/2010	79.10%	38	-2.02	0.02	Hypothesis Rejected

Note. n = the number of special education seniors for a particular year, p = the observed significance level (looking for $p < .05$), z = standard score.

Attendance

An evaluation of the attendance for the entire high school at Abraxas revealed that the average student attendance decreased from the 2003-2004 school year to the 2009-2010 school year even though the rate remained almost the same from 2004 to 2010. Table 10 shows the

average daily attendance for all of the students at Abraxas by school year and shows that there was an overall decrease in the student population at Abraxas during the same period. The researcher utilized a two-proportion z-test to analyze the attendance rates at Abraxas High School. The base year for statistical purposes was the 2003-2004 school year (the last year the school was on a traditional calendar). The hypothesis was that year-round school did not positively impact the attendance rate. Over six years, the hypothesis was rejected three times and it failed to be rejected three times. Since the hypothesis was rejected three times in no particular order, no conclusion could be made about year-round school and average daily attendance.

Table 10

The Average Daily Attendance for the Entire Student Population at Abraxas High School

Year	Average Daily Attendance	n	z	p	Result
2003/2004	40%	291			
2004/2005	45%	259	-1.26	0.100	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2005/2006	51%	324	-2.75	0.003	Reject the Hypothesis
2006/2007	49%	401	-2.35	0.009	Reject the Hypothesis
2007/2008	39%	346	0.217	0.586	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2008/2009	46%	280	-1.16	0.124	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2009/2010	48%	320	-2.05	0.020	Reject the Hypothesis

Note. n = the number of students at the school for that particular year, p = the observed significance level (looking for $p < .05$), z = standard score.

The State of California does not require that data be kept on special education students concerning attendance. The assistant principal relayed to the researcher that a 30% decrease in the attendance rate is typical for the special education students at Abraxas High School compared to the whole school. The average attendance rate for the special education students by year is

presented in Table 11. The researcher utilized a two-proportion z-test to analyze the average daily attendance rates of the special education students at Abraxas High School. The base year for statistical purposes was, again, the 2003-2004 school year. The hypothesis was that year-round school did not make a positive impact on the attendance rate of the special education students at Abraxas High School. Over six years, the hypothesis failed to be rejected. Therefore, year-round school has made no positive impact on the attendance rate of the special education students.

There was no apparent reason for the consistent lack of increase in the attendance percentage at Abraxas. From the 2007-2008 school year to the 2009-2010 school year, the number of students taking online classes increased. This does not account for the drastic drop in attendance during the initial implementation year, however. Forty-three percent of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed that the attendance increased while attending the year-round calendar while 57% were neutral as to the effect of year-round school on attendance. The parents saw how much their child was attending school but they can also saw that they were making strides in their education over what it was at a traditional high school. In reviewing the data from the faculty members, the researcher determined that 92% believed that year-round school motivates students to attend school. However, the data from the district clearly does not reflect that there is a positive correlation at Abraxas High School in terms of attendance.

Abraxas has a program titled “Reward Friday.” During any nine-day credit period, Abraxas students can earn a day off from school on selected Fridays. To qualify for this reward, the student must be on time daily, must be present eight of the nine days, and the one allowed absence must be excused. In addition, the student must have exemplary behavior and must be productive in each class, completing a minimum of two credits. The students at Abraxas can also

earn Life Skills elective credits for attendance. These Life Skills elective credits are described in more detail in the average credits per student section later in this chapter.

According to the California Department of Education, Abraxas students need to be present for 15 hours a week for attendance purposes and state reporting. The school utilizes a rollback policy, which allows the school to take hours from the following week and apply them to hours that may be deficient from the previous week, allowing the attendance to appear greater than it is. Tables 11 and 12 present Abraxas High School's average attendance rates on any given day for the school year without the rollback adjustment.

Because of Reward Fridays, the attendance rate for the entire school can never be higher than 90%. If the criteria for the incentive were implemented, students could have an attendance rate of 80%. Add the rest of the student body and the fact that there were 161 truancy referrals for the 2009/2010 school year, and it becomes apparent why the attendance rate fell to 52%.

Table 11

The Average Daily Attendance of the Special Education Population at Abraxas High School

Year	Average Daily Attendance	n	z	p	Result
2003/2004	28%	50			
2004/2005	32%	44	-.40	0.34	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2005/2006	36%	55	-.91	0.18	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2006/2007	34%	68	-.67	0.25	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2007/2008	27%	59	0.10	0.54	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2008/2009	32%	48	-.35	0.36	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis
2009/2010	34%	54	-.58	0.27	Failed to Reject the Hypothesis

Note. The letter n represents the number of special education students at Abraxas for that particular year, p = the observed significance level (looking for $p < .05$), z = standard score.

Behavior/Discipline

Abraxas High School's disciplinary data resulted from taking the total number of suspensions divided by the student enrollment to calculate the average number of suspensions per student. The number of discipline referrals per student was determined by taking the total number of discipline referrals and dividing that number by the enrollment for the year. Table 12 shows the disciplinary acts per student per year for every student at Abraxas High School. From 2003/2004 (the last year that Abraxas was on a traditional calendar) to the 2009/2010 school year, the discipline referrals per student dropped almost 55% school-wide.

Table 12

Behavior/Discipline Data for the Entire School Population at Abraxas High School

School Year	Suspensions per Student	Average Discipline Referrals per Student
2003/2004	0.44	3.70
2004/2005	0.56	1.44
2005/2006	0.34	1.30
2006/2007	0.35	1.65
2007/2008	0.13	1.25
2008/2009	0.33	1.70
2009/2010	0.35	1.65

No specific data were available on discipline referrals concerning the special education students at Abraxas High School. The researcher learned, however, that there is an approximately 40% higher discipline rate among the special education students compared to the whole school. Table 13 represents the data on the special education population at Abraxas High School that was supplied from the assistant principal and special education department chair at Abraxas High School based on their knowledge and longevity with special education at the school. Special education students are informed that they can be suspended for a maximum total of ten days due to their IEP and state and federal regulations. Once a special education student's suspensions reach this limit, the school is limited as to what can be done.

If a student with learning disabilities has little or no discipline issues, they are eligible for the Reward Fridays like the rest of the student population. In addition to the Reward Fridays, the special education students have the opportunity to receive elective credits for attending school and for arriving on time for 15 consecutive days. As a reward for exhibiting positive behavior, such students receive one elective credit in Life Skills. This reward for attendance and behavior is another way positive reinforcing students and it may deter students from skipping school and getting in trouble while they are at Abraxas High School.

Table 13

Behavior/Discipline Data for Special Education Students at Abraxas High School

School Year	Suspensions per Student	Average Discipline Referrals per Student
2003/2004	0.62	5.18
2004/2005	0.78	2.02
2005/2006	0.48	1.82
2006/2007	0.49	2.31
2007/2008	0.18	1.75
2008/2009	0.46	2.38
2009/2010	0.49	2.31

Infractions of the rules at Abraxas High School that resulted in discipline referrals were primarily for truancy, technology issues, and defiance. These issues accounted for over 60% of all the discipline referrals. Seventy-seven percent of the parents surveyed believed that their children with learning disabilities made improvements in discipline while attending Abraxas High School. No specific data were available concerning how many students were repeat offenders and how many students had little or no discipline referrals. Abraxas High School has a School Resource Officer who is part of the school and who gets to know all of the students. His presence is to help deter any major incidents. If a major incident does occur, the Resource Officer is either at the school or in close proximity to assist the administrators.

Average Credits per Student

In order to graduate with a high school diploma from Abraxas High School, each student needs to complete 230 credits with 30 required courses. Students have the ability to finish course work or begin new courses during the intercessions in order to catch up on or accelerate their learning. Students on campus can choose to work toward the regular high school diploma or toward the adult education diploma if they are 18 years of age.

The data listed in Table 14 reflects the number of credits earned per student by school year. Since the implementation of YRS in the 2005/2006 school year until 2007/2008, there was a steady increase in the average credits earned per student. For example, in 2003/2004 (the last year Abraxas High School was on a traditional calendar), students took an average of 13.54 credits. This number increased to 23.95 credits per student after YRS was implemented in 2005/2006 and to a high point of 32.80 credits per student in the 2007/2008 school year. The average number of credits per student then decreased during the next two school years to 30.10 credits per student in 2009/2010.

The students at Abraxas may take classes in a variety of modes including self-paced with packets, small group instruction or on-line classes. Students are responsible for their own progress at Abraxas while the teachers support and encourage them.

Table 14

Average Credits Earned per Student per Year for the Entire School Population at Abraxas High School

School Year	Average Credits Earned Per Student
2003/2004	13.54
2004/2005	23.95
2005/2006	27.70
2006/2007	30.67
2007/2008	33.30
2008/2009	32.80
2009/2010	30.10

Qualitative Data

Parent Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with 11 parents of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School (64.7% of the parents who were sent the surveys initially). The interview questions complemented the survey data and provided a richer portrait of the issues surrounding the research question. The researcher recorded all of the qualitative data manually and entered it into Zoomerang for analysis.

In general, the interviewed parents reported satisfaction with Abraxas High School and with the education that their children were receiving. In this section, the questions are presented in the sequence they were asked followed by a description of the parent responses.

What do you like best about the year-round program at Abraxas High School? In response to this question, Parent #1 said, “My son is going to school all year without the long summer break. Traditional schools have too long off in the summer and he would tend to get bored.” Parent #2 said, “I am not sure as yet as my child has only been there a week and a half. I hope I like it better than the traditional schedule.” Parents #3 and #4 just said, “the shorter

summer break.” Parent #5 stated, “. . . that my son only has to take 3 classes at a time and work at his own pace. He has a hard time taking five or six classes all at once like at most other high schools.” Parent #6 liked the individualized attention given to his son. Parent #7 said, “the shorter time in school for my son to comprehend the classes he is working on. He has a hard time staying focused and the year-round program allows him to work on fewer classes at a time and for a shorter period of time during the school year.” Parent #8 stated that she liked the “shorter summer break and the breaks in between quarters. He works ahead during the quarter breaks to get his credits up in order to graduate on time.” Parent #10 liked the idea of being able to take on-line classes because this enabled students to work at their own pace. If it is a class they are interested in, they can finish early and, if it is a class they are having difficulty in, they can take their time and get help from a teacher. Parent #11 said, “the attention that is given to my child because of the smaller class size and schedule allows him to be successful as a student.” Parent #12 said that his child does better in school with more breaks and with smaller breaks during the year.

In general, the parents claimed that YRS made the summer “shorter” and provided their children with an opportunity to have more frequent, smaller breaks throughout the year. Additionally, the parents liked the individualized attention that their children received in the year-round program. One appreciated that her son only had to take three classes at a time and could work at his own pace to complete those credits. A few parents liked the fact that their children could take online classes because their children were self-motivated and did not want to be at school every day.

What do you like least about the year-round program at Abraxas High School? In response to this question, the parents indicated “nothing” in more than half of the interviews.

Parents #2 and #7 were concerned that students have fewer opportunities to experience extra-curricular activities during the year-round program. A few parents were experiencing a year-round school for the first time and, thus, were unsure about it. However, for the most part, all of these parents remained very positive about the program. Parent #8 responded with, “I do not care for the Reward Fridays. My son is being rewarded to not go to school if he has good attendance for a certain amount of time, but I guess he is going to school more now than he did when he was at his other school.” Parent #9 stated that getting her child to school was an issue since there is no organized school transportation to Abraxas High School.

What instructional programs do you believe have made a difference in improving the student achievement of your child at Abraxas High School? Parents #1 and #4 specifically responded that being able to take the CASAS test allowed their child to get the necessary elective credits for graduation. Parent #3 said, “the small class size and being able to focus on 3 classes during a rating period allows for more success. Parent #5 also said, “taking 3 classes at a time to focus on a few things rather than 5 or 6 different classes have made a difference with my child. I can see a difference with how he approaches school and learning.” Additionally, parent #6 added, “that the addition to online classes and block scheduling has made the biggest impact and only having to take three classes at a time.” Parent #7 stated, “Since the school has a homeroom period, my son can go to any teacher for help every day if he needs it or he can continue working on an online or independent class”. Parent #8 talked about the smaller class sizes, the individualization of instruction, and the individualization of programs for the students to work at their level of comfort and by learning in the best way possible. Parent #9 was glad that there are a variety of different programs to help her child be successful. Parent #10 reflected on “the time they can meet with their teachers, that is set aside for the students to get help. The homeroom

period allows the students to be able to talk to any teacher that the student may need assistance from.” Parent #11 said, “students have the ability to learn and work at their own pace.” Parent #12 stated that they appreciated the aspects that the students only have a few classes a day and that they can work at their own pace. They also liked the fact that the school is willing to work with students who may need to come to school a little later in order to help get a younger sibling to school.

In terms of instructional programs, a few parents praised the CASAS testing (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems). The parents indicated that the smaller class sizes and the fewer classes were beneficial because their children could focus on fewer subjects at a time. Two parents mentioned that it was helpful for their children to start the day in a homeroom where they could ask questions and get extra help if they needed it. Their children enjoyed having this time before they started their day of classes. Finally, many parents said that the children’s ability to “work at their own pace” was an important feature of the school. The inclusion of online classes into the curriculum, particularly, gave technologically savvy students the ability to complete coursework at their own pace.

How do you believe the instructional programming at the school provides flexibility to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities? Eight of the eleven respondents said that the individualized programming at Abraxas was critical to their children’s success. The parents also mentioned the students’ ability to work at their own pace, the variety of classes available, and the teachers’ unique delivery models as being instrumental in helping meet the needs of students with learning disabilities. For example, Parent #1 responded with, “Abraxas has been very versatile in my son’s absences. He was able to switch to independent study for a short

period while he was ill. Then, when he returned to school, he could pick up where he left off with no penalties.”

The parents said they enjoyed the fact that teachers have the opportunity to get to know their children on a one-on-one basis and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Parent #4 stated that, “the teachers take a personal interest in their students and care about them.” Parent #2 said, “I feel the small class size and more time for the teachers to interact and get to know the students needs so they can help them better.” Parent #3 liked that there is a program for all types of students depending on their needs. In particular, the parent liked the fact that students can complete both online classes and regular classes at their own pace. Parent #5 appreciated the fact that the school’s programming is based on the student’s ability. Teachers work with the students one-on-one daily. Parents #6 and #7 also liked the individualized program that enabled each student to work at their own pace. Parent #8 said, “the willingness of administration to work with students’ scheduling. There is the one room schoolhouse, independent study, online classes, and traditional type classes with a small class size.” Parents #9, #10, and #11 liked the aspect that everyone can work at their own pace and take classes that fit into their schedule. Parent #12 said, “my child does better working at his own pace. If he needs some assistance from the teacher, he has the ability to see them during the homeroom period.”

Please elaborate on the actions or interventions that have been taken for the students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School or specifically with your child. Almost all of the parents mentioned the one-on-one guidance that the teachers provided to the students. They claimed that the children had benefited significantly from this one-on-one instruction. The parents reiterated the fact that the teachers are in consistent communication with families in order to provide the most appropriate learning environment for each student. Parent #1 said, “there

have been several meetings to attend to my son's learning disabilities. I believe they are aimed toward helping my son graduate and plan for his future. G. A. (a Special Education teacher) cares immensely about my son and all her students.” Parent #2 felt they were not in the school long enough but that “so far our experience has been a very positive one. I feel they are truly concerned and care about what my child needs and have the time to help her.” Parent #3 talked about meetings with parents and special education teachers occurring on a regular basis. “Teachers are also involved with the meetings at times as well.” Parent #4 said, “they can work one-on-one with any of their teachers or the special education teacher during the homeroom period.” Parent #5 liked the aspect that their son had extra time to take tests and she appreciated the one-on-one help from teachers. Parent #6 commented that, “I am made aware of how my child is doing on a regular basis. There is constant communication by the school.” Parent #7 also appreciated that teachers are in contact with the parents if an issue arises. “The faculty and administration are doing what they can to help my child graduate.” Parent #8 talked about how the special education teachers work with the student, the parent, and the regular education teacher to plan and implement the student's IEP. Parent #9 said, “the teachers will call home with any changes in grades, discipline, and attendance for my son. Teachers have a genuine concern for how my son is doing in their class.” Parent #10 stated that the teachers work with her child on a regular basis and that extra time is given on tests if it is needed. Parent #11 commented, “the special education teachers are willing to work with my child and I am kept in the loop with what is going on with them.”

What would be your suggestion for improving the year-round program at Abraxas High School as it relates to students with learning disabilities? Eleven parents responded to this question. Seven of these said that “nothing” should be changed. Parent #2 and #3 mentioned that

the students' vacations at Abraxas High School did not always mesh with other schools' breaks. Parent #9 stated that she did not like the fact that that, on some Fridays, Abraxas students did not have to go to school. They felt that the students should always be in school. Overall, the parents seemed very happy and pleased with the year-round program at Abraxas High School.

Faculty Member/Administrator Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with the faculty members and administrators at Abraxas High School in early February 2011. The interview questions complemented the survey data and provided the researcher with a better understanding of the issues surrounding the research question. The researcher manually recorded all qualitative data during the interviews and entered it into Zoomerang for analysis.

The researcher interviewed 11 faculty members and administrators, which represents 55% of the faculty members surveyed. The breakdown of the staff interviewed was the following: 3 administrators, 1 special education teacher and 7 regular education teachers. Overall, the faculty members at Abraxas High School have a very vested interest in the success of their students and they feel that the year-round calendar is best for the students they teach. In this section, the faculty member/administrator interview questions are listed followed by the responses of the interviewees.

Please elaborate about your thoughts on the actions or interventions that contribute to student achievement, attendance, and discipline of your school's students with learning disabilities. In response to this question, faculty members #1 and #5 mentioned repeatedly the advantages of having an extended homeroom period, which allowed them to get to know the students on a one-on-one level. They stated that they learn about all aspects of the students' lives during this period and, therefore, can better understand how to help the students. Faculty

members #1, #4, #5, and #7 identified the small class size as a positive factor since it allows for a more individualized classroom setting. Faculty member #2 said, “The students know there are many people they can go to. It allows the adult at school to be a guide, mentor, cheerleader, and disciplinarian.” Faculty member #8 believed that the school’s flexible schedule plays an integral part in some students’ success. He stated that some students could start school at 8:30 am instead of the regular 7:45 am start time. There are factors that play into who is permitted to start later, but this is an option for some students. Faculty member #2 also stated that the students at Abraxas High School know the extended staff at the school and that every student calls the faculty members by their first name. The students know the secretaries, the custodians, and the security personnel by name and these individuals know the students by name as well. Everyone plays an important role in the education of the students. Faculty member #10 said, “Students know the rules up front and what is expected of them. Many know this is their last chance at succeeding at school and know the staff at Abraxas will do what they can to help them succeed.” Faculty member #4 spoke about the Response to Intervention (RTI) program. He said that this program is used as a tool to try to find if there are any problems early on for the students.

Tell me more about the measures that you or your school has taken to address the performance of students with learning disabilities. After being asked this question, faculty member #2 talked specifically about the collaboration between the regular education teachers and the special education teachers. He spoke about how both sets of teachers not only meet for the IEP, but that they will call each other and find out how the student may be progressing on a weekly basis. Faculty member #9 said, “The individualization of instruction has made the greatest impact on student achievement. Each student can learn in the best mode of instruction for him or her. Some may be able to do online classes while others may need to sit with a teacher

in small groups or they may need more individualized help in order for them to succeed.” The school as a whole has addressed the graduation rate, the dropout rate, the number of credits earned per student, and the daily attendance of all students including the attendance of those with learning disabilities. A “team” teaching approach has been implemented in which everyone has a stake in the success or failure of a student. Faculty member #3 stated, “teachers keep anecdotal records of students, and the faculty may discuss some of them at their faculty meetings. Telling the whole faculty about the good things that happen to their students helps keep the teachers energized and motivated. It makes it all worthwhile.” The local community college and Abraxas High School also exchange data regularly on their students. There is a very good working relationship with the community college and a number of the students from Abraxas matriculate there. Every single student at Abraxas passed the California State Exit Exam although some students took the test up to three times before they passed.

Please explain the academic instructional setting for students with learning disabilities in your school. One comment that was described repeatedly by the staff was the small classroom sizes. Small class sizes result in a great deal of one-on-one instruction and assistance. Students feel more comfortable asking questions and participating in discussions because of small class sizes. Faculty member #11 said, “senior English and Economics classes have real-world applications associated with the curriculum. By showing the students real world applications, it makes the classroom more meaningful for everyone.” Faculty member #1 said, “the school found that many of the students struggled with workloads of six or seven classes at a time. The school moved to a block schedule and now the students take a minimum of two classes and a maximum of three classes at a time and can work at their own pace. When they are done, they are done. Some students work ahead—if the credits are achieved early, they can graduate midway through

the school year.” Faculty member #2 said, “By having the homeroom period, students can get more help in the area they are struggling in. This is a time for them to meet with the special education teacher as well.” A few of the teachers identified the homeroom period as another advantage in the schedule for students with learning disabilities as well as for the whole student population.

Please explain how you measure student progress and your data collection process.

The major goal at Abraxas High School is for the students to graduate from high school. To reach that point, students must earn credits toward advancement and graduation. Students are responsible for keeping track of where they are in school and how they are progressing. The homeroom teacher keeps a record of each student’s course completions and the classroom teacher and the guidance counselor track this as well. Faculty member #2 said, “when a student lights up and truly understands the concept that is being taught. When they know how to use what was just taught in the class outside of school. If you can show them when and how they will use what you teach them in class, they are more apt to pay attention and grasp the concepts.” Faculty member #1 stated, “The CASAS and the State Exit Exam are required by the state of California for any high school student to graduate and so they also affect the school’s measure for success.” Faculty member #8 stated, “ultimately, student progress is measured by the student graduating, receiving a diploma, and getting a job.” Faculty member #7 said, “student success in the classroom is when the teacher sees the student truly understands the concept that is being taught. Sometimes the students face lights up. That is when you really know they got it.”

Please explain the collaboration between general education and special education teachers in your building. Faculty member #3 said, “collaboration is constant and ongoing. The curriculums for the regular education students and the special education students are the same, so

a special education teacher often helps regular education students as well as special education students even though special education students may have additional accommodations within the classroom.” The special education students have their homerooms in the special education rooms with that teacher. Faculty member #4 stated, “Some faculty feel they are forced to interact with the special education teacher while others make it a regular routine to do what’s best for the special education student.” Faculty member #10 commented, “in a large school, the student must fit into the program but, at a small school like Abraxas, the school fits the student.” Faculty member #11 said, “the special education teacher is involved with all aspects of the special education student’s high school education. They will call home in conjunction with the regular education teacher to stress the importance of what might need to be addressed. The regular education teachers and special education teachers assist each other with planning and implementing the instruction in the best way possible for the student to learn.”

Please elaborate on the actions or interventions that have been taken for the students with learning disabilities in your class or your school. Faculty member #2 said, “since Abraxas High School is an alternative school, the students at Abraxas do not need to take some of the state testing (STAR) that the rest of the schools across the state take. Abraxas High School is measured on the Alternative School Assessment Model (ASAM). This model consists of thirteen measures and the school is required to pick three that relate best to their focus. Abraxas uses the measures of Attendance, Graduation Rate, and Credits Earned.” Faculty member #4 stated, “telephone calls or e-mails are made on a regular basis, letting the parents know how their child is progressing within the class. If a problem exists, phone calls are also made by the teacher and, if it is significant enough, the assistant principal or principal will make the call to the parent or guardian.” Faculty member #5 said, “Students meet with regular education teachers and special

education teachers daily due to the longer homeroom period. The parents are continually kept in the loop when there are concerns and when students are doing well, although we could be doing more by letting the parents know when their child has done something positive.” Faculty member #6 said, “it is all about the students being successful and showing them they can succeed. Sometimes you need to think outside the box when it comes to alternative assignments. By giving them options, students can be creative and will rise to the occasion, most of the time.” Faculty members #8 and #9 also talked about the learning support student meeting with the special education teacher on a regular basis for assistance.

What instructional programs do you believe have made a difference in improving student achievement of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas? What particular elements of the program made it effective? There were a number of different responses to this question but a number of faculty members also responded with the same answers. Most of the responses to this question involved the individualization of each student’s schedule and involved how learning can take place. Faculty member #1 stated, “every opportunity is given for the student to be successful, whether it is being able to take an online class or packets that the students can work at their own pace or sitting in a small classroom in a traditional setting.” Faculty member #2 said, “by allowing some students to start school at 8:30 allows for those students who habitually get to school late the opportunity to be successful and get to school on time.” Faculty member #6 said, “students are provided a variety of modes of instruction and can pick the modes that fit their needs (i.e. small group instruction, work packets, or online classes). This allows them to not be bored by messing up the form of instruction.” Faculty member #10 stated that, “Response To Intervention (RTI) has been an integral part of the experience at Abraxas High School. By determining a problem a student is having, a plan can be put in place

for the student to succeed. Some students need to start school a little later in the morning, and so the start time for these students can be at 8:30 a.m. instead of the traditional 7:45 a.m. starting time.” Additionally, three faculty members talked about the fact that students who maintain good attendance, exhibit good behavior, and complete all of their work can have a Reward Friday once in a nine-day cycle. Faculty were mixed with their opinions on the Reward Fridays. Comments ranged from, “it motivates the students to come to school and do well, just to get a legal day off of school“ to “it just promotes absenteeism”. More teachers, however, were in favor of the Reward Friday.

How do you believe the instructional programming at the school provides flexibility to meet the needs of a variety of learners, especially those with learning disabilities? In response to this question, the faculty members and administrators stated that students are more apt to learn if the teaching method is directed at their modality and, therefore, the variety of instruction modes available at Abraxas High School help meet the needs of Abraxas’ students. The teachers affirmed that they also play an integral role in instructional programming. The one-on-one relationships between the students and the teachers make the school a more conducive learning environment than larger schools. In addition, the faculty members and administrators stated that programming at Abraxas is very flexible in meeting the needs of each student. Every student at Abraxas, whether he or she is a special education student or a regular education student, has some form of individualized education plan. Each student’s education plan is geared specifically to that student’s needs, and a “mentor” is assigned to help him or her along the way. Everyone at the school, including the teachers, the administrators, and the staff, plays an integral role in the success of each student.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the descriptive and inferential analyses related to the research question: How does year-round school impact students with learning disabilities? The graduation rate, attendance, and behavior patterns were analyzed in conjunction with parent and faculty member surveys and interviews. The data on student attendance and discipline showed no significant difference in the attendance rate or the discipline rate from the 2003/2004 school year to the 2009/2010 school year. When the researcher investigated the graduation rate, it was apparent that there was a significant increase in the graduation rate during the same period. In addition, there was an increase in the number of credits earned per student. The administration at Abraxas High School believes that the introduction of online classes contributed to this difference.

Some of the parents who were surveyed and interviewed stated that they liked their children having shorter summer breaks. While the faculty members looked at these breaks as providing less time to review material that was already taught, the parents looked at these breaks as allowing less time for their children to get in trouble. The overwhelming majority of the parents also stated that the teachers at Abraxas truly care about their students. They commented that the teachers communicate frequently with the parents, keeping them informed of their child's status. The parents, in general, are supportive of the year-round school at Abraxas. They know that the teachers are doing everything they can to help their children be successful and graduate from high school. One parent stated that the calendar difference made scheduling at home difficult at times but other parents were glad that their children's friends were on a different calendar schedule so that their children would not get into as much trouble. The Abraxas High School climate is very positive in the parents' view. They are supportive of what

the teachers and the administrators are doing for their children.

The faculty members and administrators both expressed a positive reaction to the school climate. Some teachers became excited when they talked about their experiences at Abraxas High School. They were very passionate about teaching at Abraxas High School and many stated, “they couldn’t see themselves teaching on a traditional calendar ever again.” They believed strongly in the concept of the year-round philosophy and they believed that the administrators at Abraxas High School were supportive of them. The teachers stated that they have a genuine desire for their students to be successful. Each teacher at Abraxas takes on the roles of teacher, counselor, disciplinarian, and mentor and guides individual students through their high school years, helping them achieve their education to the best of their ability. The atmosphere of mutual respect between the faculty members and the students shows that the students respect the faculty members for the job they do in educating them and preparing them to be successful in life.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The year-round schooling movement in the United States began primarily as a result of overcrowded schools in Baltimore and New York City. In the early 1900s, students in urban areas were more likely to benefit from year-round schooling rather than a traditional school calendar because they were less likely to be working on family farms. Today, educators are interested in year-round schooling and its impact on achievement (Ballinger, 1995; White, 1995), attendance, and discipline (Heaberlin, 2000). The United States has seen an increase in the number of year-round schools from 1,905 in 1993 to over 3,000 in 2006 with a student population of over 2,000,000 (NAYRE, 2009).

Numerous studies have compared student achievement in schools on traditional calendars with those on year-round calendars. Numerous studies concluded that students' achievements in year-round schools are equal to or greater than students' achievements in traditional schools (Worthen & Zsiray, 1994; Roby, 1995; Ballinger, 1998; Palmer & Bemis, 1999; Cooper et al., 2003; Cary, 2006; Marks, 2006; Backman, 2008). However, additional studies have concluded that students attending year-round schools do not achieve at the same level or higher than students who attend traditional calendar schools (Merino, 1983; Howell, 1988; O'Neil & Adamson, 1993; Campbell, 1994; Sexton, 2003; Fritts-Scott, 2005). The research on student achievement in year-round schools and traditional schools is still inconclusive as it relates to regular education students and students with learning disabilities. The surplus of research on

year-round schooling has highlighted a great number of variables that influence the overall findings with regard to individual student groups and their achievements.

Presently there is limited research on the impact of year-round schools on students in specific subgroups, such as students identified at risk for failure and students with specific learning disabilities. This limited research makes it difficult to measure any positive or negative effects. Alcorn (1992) reported that disadvantaged and learning support students lose significantly more knowledge over the summer than their peers. Doyle and Finn (1985) reported that special education students adapt well to a year-round calendar because of the larger measure of routine that can be achieved. Due to limited research, it is unclear whether the benefits to those with learning disabilities and at-risk students are due to the adjustment of the school calendar or to the additional time allotted for learning due to shorter summer breaks and intersession classes (Kneese, 1996). Shields and Oberg (2000) examined studies of students with and without learning disabilities and concluded that regression is likely to be more serious for children with learning disabilities. Other studies showed that there was no difference between the two groups.

The results of this case study are mixed as they pertain to the effects of year-round schooling on students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School. Abraxas High School is an alternative school that operates on a year-round calendar. The researcher analyzed data from this study with respect to the graduation rate, attendance, discipline, and credits earned from the 2003-2004 school year through the 2009-2010 school year. Specific school data was collected from Abraxas High School and from the California Department of Education's website. The assistant principal and the special education department head at Abraxas High School approximated specific data on the special education students since the California Department of

Education does not require Abraxas High School to maintain records specifically on their special education student population. Instead of AYP, school performance at Abraxas High School is measured by the Alternative Schools Accountability Model. The school must pick three specific areas out of 13 that must be reported yearly. Abraxas uses the graduation rate, attendance rate and average credits earned. For record keeping purposes, all information is based on the long-term student population of the entire school and not on any specific subgroup. In the case of special education and, specifically this study, this was problematic for research purposes and is less likely to occur in schools in other states because reporting of data are mandatory for specific funding. Other schools, like those in Pennsylvania, need to keep very specific records on the special education population in order to keep state funding. Additionally in this study, the researcher surveyed and interviewed faculty members and administrators at Abraxas High School and parents of students with learning disabilities during January and February 2011.

The analysis of the data from the faculty members as it related to students with learning disabilities included their opinions about teaching and learning at Abraxas, the year-round school calendar (YRS), Adequate Yearly Progress, state testing and preparation associated with YRS. Of the 20 faculty members at Abraxas High School, 14 staff members (70%) completed the survey. Many parents of Abraxas High School students also participated in this study by completing a survey that asked them to respond to questions pertaining to perceived student progress, the quality of the staff at Abraxas, school climate, socialization, perceptions of the program, and parental involvement.

A study conducted by Bugaj (1998) examined the benefits to special education students through the surveys and interviews of parents and teachers. Bugaj found that the overall

perceptions of the faculty members and the parents were positive. The results of his study indicated that learning support students who were mainstreamed into regular education classes were integrated more, had more success, and achieved more of their IEP goals (Bugaj, 1998). The study conducted at Abraxas High School verifies these findings.

Data Analysis Findings

The findings for this study determine the effects of year-round schooling on students with learning disabilities as they relate to graduation rate, student attendance, discipline, credits earned, and parent and faculty member perceptions at Abraxas High School. The researcher gathered data for the graduation rate, student attendance, discipline, and credits earned from the assistant principal at Abraxas High School as well as from the California Department of Education website beginning with the 2003-2004 school year and continuing through the 2009-2010 school year.

Impact of Year-Round School on the Graduation Rate

For the 2009-2010 school year, Abraxas High School had a graduation rate of 93% for all senior students and approximately 79% for all senior students with learning disabilities. The graduation rate at Abraxas High School has been on the rise since the school implemented a year-round calendar in 2004. The graduation rates of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School are estimated based on information gathered by the assistant principal and special education department head. The assistant principal has been at Abraxas High School since its inception and has a vast knowledge of the school and student population. A study conducted in Arizona schools by Davies and Kerry (1999) reflected an increase of the graduation rate in

schools that operated on a year-round calendar. In another study conducted by Cary (2006), student achievement increased, which resulted in a higher graduation rate.

At Abraxas High School, the researcher utilized a 2-proportion z-test to analyze the graduation rates of students with learning disabilities. The base year for statistical purposes was the 2003-2004 school year (the last year the school used a traditional calendar). During the first five years of the year-round program, the graduation rate continually increased overall. Statistically, the year-round schooling could not have had a positive impact on the graduation rate for this population of students. In 2009-2010, the p-value was less than .05, which meant that year-round schooling could have had an impact on the graduation rate. However, the hypothesis needed to be rejected for more than one year in order to show a positive impact on the graduation rate of students with learning disabilities.

When looking at the data statistically for the entire senior population, the p-value for the 2-proportion z-test at Abraxas for the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years is less than .001. This results in rejecting the hypothesis that the p-value in 2003-2004 is greater than or equal to any other year's p-value. This brings the researcher to the general conclusion that year-round schools appear to be increasingly more effective in the last two years of the study with respect to the graduation rate. The 2007-2008 school year was a pivotal year to review. At that time, Abraxas had been on a year-round calendar for four years. Since a large portion of the student body at Abraxas could have attended the school from 9th grade, it was the optimal timeframe to conduct any study at a school. However, at the conclusion of that school year, there was no significant statistical difference in the p-value. A number of factors could be attributed to the

school's success as it relates to the graduation rate: block scheduling, a dedicated and compassionate staff, differentiated instruction, and the ability to graduate mid-year.

When Abraxas began year-round schooling in 2004, the students at the school had already experienced the effects of block scheduling for one school year. Changing to a block format allowed the students to focus on fewer subjects at a time. The school board and the administration believed that having fewer classes was the right choice for the students at Abraxas. The homeroom period allowed students to discuss their successes and difficulties both at home and at school. The staff and students found this beneficial, especially at the beginning of the day. Parent #7 stated, "Since the school has a homeroom period, my son can go to any teacher for help every day if he needs it ...". If students were experiencing difficulties in other classes, homeroom teachers were authorized to allow students to travel to other classrooms in order to work with teachers in those specific areas. Information from teachers and parents suggested that students worked very closely with their homeroom teacher who was responsible for keeping a record of all courses that individual students completed. While conducting site visits at Abraxas, this researcher made numerous observations of the bond shared between the faculty member and the students that could not be measured with any survey or interview.

For example, faculty members and administrators were visible throughout the day talking to the students one-on-one and showing genuine compassion and concern for the students at the school, asking about their weekends or evenings, family members or giving some words of encouragement. The faculty members at Abraxas believe that their students can be successful and they work hard to keep all students on task. When surveyed, 43% of the faculty members indicated that they had been teaching at Abraxas High School for more than ten years, 79%

believed that the year-round calendar used at Abraxas is preparing the students for the future, and 93% of the staff believed that their students had the ability to achieve academically. Students must work closely with the teachers to keep on track since there is a great deal of responsibility given to the students to assure that they will graduate in a specific time period.

Differentiated instruction is utilized throughout the campus at Abraxas High School. Depending on their strengths and abilities, students have options to take classes in small groups, independently with packets, or on-line to give the students the versatility to be successful. The students can choose how they learn best and can take classes in different modalities in the same quarter. Learning support students work closely with the learning support teacher and regular education teachers to find the best mode of instruction for them. Students at Abraxas High School may have issues as to why they were not successful at the traditional high school. Perhaps their learning styles were not met at their previous school.

Along with the versatility of learning, students also have some choice in how long to attend Abraxas High School. The regular education students at Abraxas have the ability to continue their education for an additional year after the 12th grade, while the special education students can attend school until they reach their 21st birthday in accordance with the California Department of Education on alternative education and IDEA guidelines. Students have the ability to graduate mid-year (December) if all of their coursework is completed or to continue and graduate in June. The researcher believes that holding an additional graduation ceremony in December, which allows students additional time to finish course work, has helped increase the graduation rate. Students can feel a sense of accomplishment when they complete their coursework and do not have to wait until June to graduate. Even if a student does not graduate in

June of their senior year because of a few incomplete credits, they are more apt to complete the coursework in a half or a full school year with the encouragement of their teachers and administrators. Students with learning disabilities may need additional time to process certain concepts, and allowing them to attend an additional quarter, semester, or year may be beneficial in the areas of graduation rate and student achievement. Students do not have to be in overload mode when it comes to taking an abundance of classes in order to “hurry up” and graduate. At Abraxas High School, students are given time to process and master the specific skills they need to be successful.

During the additional year, students continue to be on the school rolls/roster. If regular education students turn 18 years of age and do not have enough credits to graduate with an Abraxas diploma, they are transferred to the Adult Education Program. In this program, the students can continue to work toward a different diploma, the Adult Education Diploma. This diploma requires fewer courses: 25 courses versus 30 courses for an Abraxas Diploma. They must also pass the state CASAS exam. Other than a GED, students can opt to receive an Adult Education Certificate w/GED. This only requires the students to take 18 required courses and pass the GED exam. Once a student is transferred to Adult Education, they are immediately dropped from any enrollment numbers at Abraxas and they are not considered dropouts for state recording purposes.

Many factors contribute to the yearly graduation rate of any school. When the researcher evaluated the parent surveys, he found that 86% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their children with learning disabilities had made improvements in academic achievement while at Abraxas High School. Correlated with the academic achievement, 85% of the parents

believed that their children made more academic progress at Abraxas than when they attended a traditional calendar school. Parent #3 said, “I like that there is a program for all types of students depending on their needs. Students can complete both online classes and regular classes at their own pace”. This allows everyone to get an education and be successful at his or her own pace. The parents, in general, were very pleased with the achievements their children made. Faculty member #9 said, “The individualization of instruction has made the greatest impact on student achievement. Each student can learn in the best mode of instruction for them. Some may be able to do online classes while others may need to sit with a teacher in small groups or they may need more individualized help in order for them to succeed ...”. The faculty as a whole agreed that the individualization of instruction along with the support given to the students has impacted the graduation rate of students with learning disabilities. When the graduation rate is high, parental satisfaction should also be high. By purely looking at the numbers, Abraxas appears to be doing an outstanding job servicing its students in the area of the graduation rate, this is one reason it was recognized as a model school for 2010. The graduation rate continues to increase; however, a percentage of students are lost when they are moved into adult education, and many of these are learning support students.

Who is counting these students, are they considered dropouts by anyone, and how is the success of these students being measured? These additional questions do not affect Abraxas High School, but they are relevant to the special education students who have moved on into the adult education program and could be the focus of a future study. There needs to be at least one more year of data regarding special education students. The graduation rate has been affected in a positive manner with respect to changing to a year-round calendar, and the statistics have shown that the p-value is getting smaller every year, resulting in a positive effect for year-round school.

However, with the current data, there can be no conclusion made as to the impact on the graduation rate of students with learning disabilities.

Impact of Year-Round School on Attendance.

Studies conducted by Aldridge-Morris (1998), Palmer and Bemis (1999), Heaberlin (2000), Thomas (2002), Backman (2008) and others showed that student attendance in year-round schools was higher than at schools that were on a traditional calendar. When the 2-proportion z-test was utilized on the data for learning support students, there was no statistical data supporting the fact that year-round schooling made a positive impact on the attendance rate. The test failed for all six years of data for the study. The average daily attendance rate over the six-year period was 32%. The average daily attendance during the last two years of the study was 32% and 34%, respectively.

During the last year that Abraxas was on a traditional calendar (2003-2004), the average daily attendance rate for the entire school populations was 40%. During the first year on a year-round calendar, the average daily attendance rate rose to 45% and, for the 2009-2010 school year, it reached 48%. These rates are calculated as an average daily attendance rate of 46.3% for the six years the school has been on a year-round calendar. Overall, there has been an increase in attendance over the six-year period but that rate is still below 50%. When compared to the response of the faculty members on the survey, 92% agreed or strongly agreed that year-round schooling motivates students to attend school while 8% remained neutral to the statement. Therefore, a great deal of discrepancy existed between the attendance records and the faculty members' opinions on attendance. For the state standards dealing with alternative schools, students must attend a minimum of 15 hours a week to achieve 100% attendance. The faculty

sees that there may be students who are habitually absent, but if they meet the minimum of 15 hours, their attendance has been met by the state.

Regarding the parents, 43% of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed that the attendance of their children with learning disabilities increased while attending the year-round calendar, while 57% were neutral as to the effect. This figure is more aligned with the school data on attendance. A number of factors may attribute to the low daily attendance rate. These factors are truancy at Abraxas, Reward Fridays, and the introduction of on-line classes/cyber school.

The disciplinary reports since 2003 show truancy from a low of 100 referrals to over 390 referrals in a year. Truancy for 2009-2010 is over 200 referrals as well. There is a direct correlation between truancy referrals and attendance. When the truancy rate rose, the attendance rate dropped. If the truancy rate declined, the attendance rate increased. Even though faculty members and administrators make telephone calls and truancy referrals are made, attendance has not statistically increased.

Special education students who are over the age of 18 can receive up to three truancy letters. These letters are given after day three, day six, and day nine of absences. If students receive the third letter, they are dropped from the rolls until the next intake session, which occur seven times a year. At that time, students must go through all the preliminary induction/success classes and then start in the Basic Education classes. Basic education at Abraxas is also called the "One Room Schoolhouse." One Room Schoolhouse classes begin each day at 11:45 am and continue until 2:00 pm. The students do not eat lunch at Abraxas and they are housed separately from the rest of the student body. The socialization aspect is taken away. In order to move from the Basic Education class to the regular classes at Abraxas, students must be present for 45 days

and complete two classes. During this time, special education services are provided. This program is designed for students who are truant and non-productive.

If regular education students reaching the age of 18 and special education students approaching the age of 21 continue to lack credits, they are encouraged to transfer to the Adult Education program. Students with learning disabilities can go through the cycle of regular education classes and Basic Education repeatedly. Students are notified that there are a limited number of days a special education student can be suspended and that they cannot be dropped from the rolls at the school. This results in high absenteeism among the special education students.

Reward Fridays are another factor that affects the school's attendance rate. Any student who is on time daily, is present for eight of nine days during a nine day credit period, is productive in class, completes a credit in at least two classes, and has exemplary behavior, is entitled to an excused absence on the next available Friday. Statistically, a student would only have to be present 90% of the time to get an allowed absence. Only one parent had any comment on the Reward Friday and this parent contradicted herself by saying she did not like having it but that her child did have better attendance at Abraxas than at the previous school. Students can only have the reward if they meet all the requirements and if a parent gives the child and Abraxas permission to allow the reward.

Another possible reason for the decreased attendance was the introduction of on-line classes during the 2008-2009 school year. Students can take these classes on or off campus, so the possibility arises of students not being marked present for attendance purposes. Some students do take the online classes on campus since these can be incorporated into the homeroom period or taken later in the day. Attendance would be counted for these students. Since Abraxas

began using on-line classes, attendance has decreased by 1%. In the researcher's opinion, the school numbers are small, and it only takes a few students enrolled in on-line classes for the attendance rate to drop.

At an alternative school in California, students must attend school 15 hours per week for state reporting purposes. At Abraxas, the student day is five hours long. Thus, the students only need to attend school three days a week to get credit for attendance. Additionally, if a student only attends school for ten hours one week and twenty hours the following week, the school is allowed to use a "roll-back" method to carry five hours back to the previous week. This results in perfect attendance for both weeks even though the student only attended school for 60% of the time (six days out of ten). When the researcher compared the state data for the average daily attendance, it showed an increase of between 39% and 48% for each year the school had been on a year-round calendar. In addition, 2005-2006 had an average daily attendance rate of 99%. At the time of this data analysis, there was no published state data for the 2009-2010 school year on the average daily attendance at Abraxas High School.

The average daily attendance rate, like the graduation rate, can be very deceiving. Abraxas High School calculates the percent of students who are present the minimum of three hours per day, while, for state reporting purposes, the school needs to calculate a minimum of 15 hours per week. This is where the roll-back comes into play and increases the attendance rates. The attendance rate is the second piece of criteria chosen by Abraxas High School to determine if an alternative school in California has been successful. The attendance rate and criteria is set by the California Department of Education and, for state purposes, the attendance at Abraxas is very high. However, as explained, there is a vast difference between the data of actual attendance and the state reported rate. The parents are aware of this because they overwhelmingly responded

with a neutral response as it affected their child at Abraxas High School. Overall, the attendance of the learning support and regular education students has not been affected in a positive or negative manner by the change to a year-round calendar at Abraxas High School.

Impact of Year-Round School on Discipline

Students with learning disabilities are affected the same as the regular education students with regard to student discipline, with the exception of those students who have behavioral issues written into their IEP. The researcher found no studies conducted on students with learning disabilities directly relating to student discipline and year-round calendars. With regard to disciplinary referrals and student suspensions, the literature is inconclusive as to what calendar is most beneficial. In studies conducted by Palmer and Bemis (1999), Shields and Oberg (2000), and Backman (2008), disciplinary referrals and student suspensions had decreased while on the year-round calendar. However, studies conducted by Heaberlin (2000) and Sexton (2003) reported no difference in disciplinary referrals and student suspensions. Although disciplinary records are not a measure of success of a school by the state of California, it is beneficial to see how the school has progressed in this area since it moved away from a traditional school calendar in 2004.

On average, students with learning disabilities are seen by the assistant principal for behavioral issues approximately 40% more than in the entire school. There has been a drop in suspensions per student and disciplinary referrals per student from 2003-2004, when the school was last on a traditional calendar, until the 2008-2009 school year. Disciplinary referrals dropped by 55%, while suspensions per student dropped by 21%. Regular and special education students

all deal with the same issues of truancy, technology issues, and defiance, which resulted in 60% of the disciplinary referrals.

When looking at the data for the entire student population at Abraxas High School, suspensions per student changed very little between the 2003-2004 school year (traditional calendar) and the 2009-2010 school year (year-round calendar). The first real significant difference can be seen when the suspension rate was at its lowest at .13 per student in 2007-2008. This year was critical because Abraxas had completed its fourth year on a year-round calendar. At this time, a larger percentage of students, primarily seniors, could have been on a year-round calendar since their freshman year. During the first year on a year-round calendar, the suspension rate actually increased to .56 suspensions per student. Suspensions were as low as .13 per student and as high as .56 per student in 2004-2005, with an average of .40 suspensions per student. There have been an average of 1.5 referrals per student per year since Abraxas converted to a year-round calendar. The last year the school was on a traditional calendar there was an average of 3.7 disciplinary referrals per student. The disciplinary referrals have been cut in half, as low as 1.25 per student per year to a high of 1.70 referrals per student.

Sixty-two percent of the parents surveyed agreed that their children made improvements in behavior issues while at Abraxas High School. The researcher concurs with this parent analysis, because another 15% of the parents were neutral on the subject of student improvement while 8% disagreed with the statement. When discussing student discipline with the assistant principal, he clarified that the special education students do take up approximately 40% more time than the entire population of the school. He reiterated that the special education students know they can only be suspended for a certain number of days and cannot be taken out of the school system based on suspensions and discipline referrals.

There was no specific data relating to how many students were repeat offenders or how many students had little or no disciplinary referrals. When data were analyzed, truancy, technology issues, and defiance accounted for over 60% of all discipline referrals at Abraxas. With the exception of the graduation rate, it appeared that there was a correlation between attendance, discipline referrals per student, and credits earned. When attendance at the school increased, the disciplinary referrals decreased and the credits earned per student increased. Conversely, as the attendance decreased, disciplinary referrals increased and the credits earned decreased.

Abraxas has a zero tolerance for gangs, drugs, and weapons on campus. The researcher witnessed the principal, assistant principal, and teachers address the dress code: no student can wear more than two pieces of clothing with the same color that could represent gang colors or affiliation. During the site visit, the researcher met and spoke with the school resource officer. His role at Abraxas was explained and as was how his involvement at the school and community ensures a safer environment for all students. Gang related activity and violence at Abraxas appears to be down. Having a school resource officer present could be a big deterrent for this.

While the researcher was conducting the site visit, it was apparent that the faculty members and the administrators were very diligent about being in the courtyard at the beginning of school, at the change of every class, and after school. These times are very crucial because students can interact with anyone at the school during them. Even if rival students are split apart into all different classes, they still would have the opportunity to confront each other during the school day. It was interesting for the researcher to note that, in 2007, when on-line and cyber classes were introduced into the curriculum at Abraxas, the disciplinary referrals were at their lowest. However, technology issues are one of the top three reasons for a student to be written up

today. It is the researcher's opinion that the students must always be working and cannot be left with idle time too long, no matter what type of calendar the school follows. This is an issue that is constant over the learning platforms.

When discussing the disciplinary referrals of students with learning disabilities, the assistant principal appears to be in a difficult situation. Special education students know they can only be suspended for up to a total of ten days, whereas regular education students do not have a defined number of days. The school has become creative with the consequences when a special education student has reached the allotted days used for suspensions. As stated earlier, this usually means placing them into another program within the Abraxas school system such as the Basic Education or One Room Schoolhouse program where students need to earn their way back into the regular education classes. Although the discipline referrals and suspensions per student have decreased for the students with learning disabilities from 2003 to 2010, it cannot be shown statistically that year-round school has made the positive impact on the discipline referrals and suspensions at Abraxas High School.

Impact of Year-Round School on Credits Earned per Student

There have been no studies found by the researcher relating to year-round school and credits earned by students. Credits earned were one of three criteria used by Abraxas High School when reporting data to the Alternative Schools Accountability Model and the California Department of Education. Success of the school is based on the accomplishment of the three criteria. Although the state has 13 areas to choose, each alternative school statewide chooses three. The last year the students were on a traditional calendar, each student at Abraxas High School earned an average of 13.54 credits. After four years on a year-round calendar, the students averaged 33.30 credits per school year. Again, this is critical in that this is the first year when the

majority of the seniors could have been part of the year-round calendar for their entire tenure at Abraxas. After the 2009-2010 school year, the students at Abraxas High School had an average of 30.10 credits earned.

From 2003 to 2010, there was an average increase of 55% in the credits earned per student per year. One factor attributed to this was the introduction of on-line classes into the curriculum at Abraxas High School during the 2007-2008 school year, which was the year that had the greatest number of credits earned per student. Additionally, students have the ability to work during the intersessions. During these times, they can finish coursework that was not completed during the regular quarter or they can begin a new course. Whether online or during the intersessions, students work at their own pace to finish incomplete work or to get a head start on new material or credits.

As in the discipline section above, there appears to be a direct correlation between student attendance, discipline referrals, and credits earned. It did not matter what the enrollment was; there appeared to be a proportional amount of disciplinary referrals and credits earned based on the attendance data. The data on this section is still inconclusive and should be investigated further.

Impact of Year-Round School on School Climate

When the parents were surveyed and interviewed, a common thread that appeared was that they liked their children having shorter summer breaks. Parent #1 stated that her son “is going to school all year without the long summer break. Traditional schools have too long off in the summer and he would tend to get bored.” While the faculty members looked at this as less time to review material that was already taught, the parents looked at this as less time for their

children to get in trouble. The parents also overwhelmingly stated that the teachers at Abraxas truly cared about their students. Teachers were communicating with the parents and keeping them informed of their child's status. The parents, in general, are supportive of the year-round school at Abraxas. They realize that the teachers are doing everything they can to help their children be successful and graduate from high school. Parent #11 said he likes "the attention that is given to my child because of the small class size and schedule allows him to be successful as a student." Many parents like that their children have a different schedule than their old friends at their previous high schools. Sometimes the outside influences get in the way of a student's success within the classroom. The parents feel that the school climate is very conducive to learning and know that the faculty enjoys teaching their children. The parents are very supportive of what the teachers and administration are doing for their children at Abraxas High School in helping them to become successful and graduate. Parent #4 stated that, "the teachers take a personal interest in their students and care about them." Parent #8 said, "the willingness of administration to work with students scheduling" to individualize student learning.

Faculty and administration have both expressed a positive reaction to school climate. Teachers became excited when they talked about their experiences at Abraxas High School. They are very passionate about teaching at Abraxas and a number of them stated that, "they couldn't see themselves teaching on a traditional calendar ever again." The teachers believe strongly in the concept of the year-round philosophy and the administrators at Abraxas High School are supportive of them. The teachers have a genuine desire for their students to be successful. Faculty at Abraxas have many roles and strive to get the very most out of each student with whom they come in contact. There is a mutual respect between the faculty members

and students, and it is evident that the students respect the faculty members for the job that they do in educating them and preparing them to be successful in life.

The data attained about the beliefs of teaching and learning at Abraxas High School show that the faculty members have an impact on students with learning disabilities. When the data show that 93% of the faculty members believe that students with learning disabilities at Abraxas can achieve the goals that are set for them, it is obvious that they are very committed to working with the students so that they have every opportunity to succeed. Faculty member #9 said, “the individualization of instruction has made the greatest impact on student achievement. Each student can learn in the best mode of instruction for them.” Most teachers at Abraxas would not want to teach at any other school; they are very committed to the YRS philosophy and believe in the merits of what the program has to offer. Faculty member #3 said, “they keep anecdotal records of students, and the faculty may discuss them in small groups or at a faculty meeting. Telling the other faculty members about the good things that happen to their students helps keep teachers energized and motivated. It makes it all worthwhile.” When the faculty members were asked about whether the instruction at Abraxas prepares the students for the future, 79% were very positive in their responses while 21% were neutral on the response. Although not one faculty member gave a negative response, the researcher was surprised to get a 21% in the neutral category. None of the other responses had as high a neutral response. When the researcher looked at who gave the neutral responses, it was from faculty members and special education teachers, and it was in all the experience levels of teaching as well. There appears to be no specific reasoning as to why there was such a high neutral response rate.

Both faculty members and parents have a responsibility for the success of the students. The students make a conscientious decision to attend Abraxas and know there was no other

option for them. Faculty and administration work very closely with the students to ensure that they are successful. Although the ultimate responsibility lies with the student, the faculty member is there to guide and assist each student they contact. The parents can be assured that everyone at Abraxas has the success of their children at the forefront. Using the analysis from the qualitative data of the parent and faculty surveys and interviews, it appears that school climate is an integral part of the success for students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School.

Impact of Year-Round School on Teaching Experience

Although this was not in the initial study, teaching experience at Abraxas High School appears to play an integral part in the school's success. Seventy-two percent of the faculty members had taught more than five years at Abraxas High School while 43% had more than ten years teaching at the school. This study supports Sanders' (2002) study that the years of teaching experiences and longevity of teachers raises the achievement level of students leading to a higher graduation rate. Of the faculty members interviewed, most would not go back to teaching in a school with a traditional calendar. They believe strongly in the year-round calendar for the students they are teaching. The only teachers who have left Abraxas did so because of retirement.

Eighty-five percent of the faculty members are proud to be teaching at Abraxas High School and 15% were neutral in their response. According to studies, teachers who work in year-round schools do not appear to experience the same level of job-related stress and burnout as those in schools with traditional calendars; these teachers are more motivated and enthusiastic throughout the year (Shields & Oberg, 2000b). Walking around the Abraxas campus, the researcher noticed that morale among the staff was always high. It was apparent that most faculty enjoyed going to and being at work. Everyone was very positive to the students from the time

they entered the campus; students were greeted by name and often someone in security would ask a student what they thought about the basketball game the night before. It was apparent that students come first at Abraxas. Teachers were working with students before school started, during the homeroom period, between classes, during the lunch break, and any other free time that was available. When walking from one class to the next, it was not uncommon to hear a teacher ask a student how his night or weekend went. The rapport that most teachers have with their students shows their genuine concern for them. It is the opinion of the researcher that the year-round program at Abraxas is affected by the experiences and dedication of the staff as much as or more than YRS has affected the staff. The researcher has found no studies linking teacher experience directly with year-round school.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study involved the size of the both respondent groups. Abraxas has a total faculty of 20, of which 70% (14) responded to the on-line survey even after a follow-up invitation. Eleven of the faculty respondents took part in the interviews (55% of the total faculty). Even though the information received was very beneficial to the study, the small group size may have skewed the percentage results greatly.

The researcher was not given direct access to the parents of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School. The school has approximately 245 students with 17% (42 students) of the population having a learning disability. However, the researcher was only given access to 17 parents. The researcher does not know if this was the entire population of students with learning disabilities or a sampling of students. The principal of Abraxas High School sent e-mails directly to the parents for the initial survey.

The lack of hard data for the special education students made the analysis more difficult and is considered a limiting condition. However, the California Department of Education does not require schools like Abraxas to collect and maintain specific data on special education students. Instead of AYP, Abraxas is measured on the Alternative School Accountability Model. The school chooses which three criteria out of 13 they want to be measured on. Abraxas chose the graduation rate, attendance rate and average credits earned. As far as special education is concerned, the only hard data required is whether a student is or is not a special education student. The data gathered for the special education students in this study were from the 38 year experience of the assistant principal in charge of attendance, discipline, and graduation requirements in conjunction with the special education department chair at Abraxas High School. However, it was very difficult to get accurate results, even with very educated reasoning for the percentages given. The special education population is very critical, and keeping data on these students would benefit the school and the district when making both short term and long-range goals for them.

The initial study included viewing and analyzing student IEPs. The researcher wanted to see how the IEPs changed, if at all, from before the students entered Abraxas High School and the years following their enrollment. Due to confidentiality and other reasons, the researcher did not view them. An analysis would be beneficial for the school in regards to how the IEPs may have changed as a result of year-round schooling.

Another limitation is that this study was a case study on one year-round school. This is the only high school in the district that is on a year-round calendar. In addition, the school is an alternative school and is a continuation school, which means that students can attend Abraxas High School for an additional school year. Students at this school are pulled from six other high

schools within the Poway Unified School District and are there for a variety of reasons, including truancy, expulsion, and/or academics. The results from this study may not be typical of those at other year-round high schools in the state of California or elsewhere.

The last limitation deals with the special education students themselves. Student IEPs were not viewed to see if there were any changes due to the YRS. Due to confidentiality and the difficulty of receiving permission from parents, analysis of the IEPs was not an option. Viewing the IEPs of students prior to moving to Abraxas, and comparing them after a minimum of one year on a year-round calendar may have shed some light on other issues and barriers students face on a year-round calendar or how beneficial YRS can be.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study several recommendations can be presented.

1. **A study on the relationship between the year-round calendar and the different types of school days at the high school level.** It is apparent that at Abraxas, the year-round calendar is successful. How effective is the block schedule in comparison to a traditional six to eight period day in relation to the graduation rate, attendance, credits earned, and parent and faculty member satisfaction? How does this affect students with learning disabilities? With so many different variables, how can schools best service the students in a year-round setting?
2. **A study of all the alternative schools in California comparing those on a year-round calendar with those on a traditional calendar.** In California, every school district is required to have an alternative program in place. To be compliant, the schools

must meet or exceed the minimum requirements in at least three indicators of the Alternative Schools Accountability Model (ASAM). Abraxas has received three California Model School awards. What are other schools doing to address the success of students with learning disabilities on all types of school calendars?

3. **A study of the cost analysis of having a year-round school in comparison to student achievement.** What is the cost per student at the year-round school versus the cost per student at a comparable traditional high school? If the year-round school is more expensive, does the increase in student achievement justify the expense?
4. **Because most of the teachers at Abraxas High School have been teaching for more than five years, a study on teacher effectiveness related to years of teaching experience could be looked at more extensively.** Multiple studies have shown that student achievement has increased after a teacher has been teaching for a few years (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Wayne and Youngs, 2003). What is the correlation between years teaching and student achievement? Are other factors involved with the success of a student?
5. **A study to examine data from formative assessments to determine the impact of summer learning loss.** Although there have been numerous studies about summer learning loss, the data are still inconclusive (Cooper et al., 1996; Cooper et al., 2003; Ross et al., 2003). There needs to be longitudinal data at numerous schools and between types of school calendars. How much time is spent reviewing learned material at the beginning of each school year? How much of the curriculum is not taught due to the loss of time spent reviewing after the summer break?

6. **A study to examine more closely the effect of time on learning for children at-risk.**

Students from low socio-economic backgrounds, minorities, and students with learning disabilities have been shown to be at risk of failing. Students at Abraxas High School are there for a variety of reason such as drugs, alcohol, transgender issues, truancy, behavior and other issues. These students come from the entire spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds from low-income housing to multi-million dollar homes. Additional studies are needed that relate to time on learning with these students and whether a year-round program would be the best solution for their needs.

7. **A study to examine how alternative schools are meeting the needs of all the**

students they service. What actions are alternative schools taking to make sure all students who enter their programs have a high chance of success?

8. **A study of the California Alternative Schools Accountability Model (ASAM).** Is the

ASAM the best model to measure study success and the success of a school program?

How can school data be different than data pulled from the Department of Education's website? What makes the reporting for an alternative school different from a regular school?

9. **The Balanced Calendar or Year-Round School option needs to continue to be**

explored. There are many studies that produced inconclusive results. How beneficial is a balanced calendar for "at-risk" students, students with learning disabilities, and regular education students?

Reflections

My interest in year-round education was sparked when my nephews moved from a traditional school in Pennsylvania to a year-round calendar in Vista, California. Over the years, I became intrigued and began attending conferences at the National Association of Year-Round Education in San Diego, California. I chose Abraxas High School for this study because I have always been interested in alternative education, for its proximity and convenience to my family in California, the years it has been on a year-round calendar, and the type of students this school services. As I studied Abraxas High School, it became apparent to me why this school was chosen as a model school for California. More than anything, the dedicated staff members and administrators want their students to be successful. The relationship they have with the students at this alternative school is nothing short of exemplary. Faculty members are not only their teachers, but are also counselors, mentors, and disciplinarians. The graduation rate at Abraxas has been on the rise and the credits earned per students are increasing as well. The attendance rate at the school needs to be addressed, even though for state reporting purposes it is satisfactory.

Schools across the country must continually look for ways students can be successful and become productive members of society. Everyone has a responsibility for the education of our youth. Not every student can sit in a traditional classroom setting and be successful. We must look for ways that are adaptive and creative for some of the most challenging students.

Today's youth are continually multi-tasking: doing school work and listening to music and surfing the Internet. Students in most schools today are actually taking a step back in time. Year-round schools are taking steps to give students ample time, opportunities, and resources to become successful. As school boards and communities demand higher levels of achievement from

the nation's schools, educators and parents must change from business as usual and challenge the wisdom of maintaining that long summer of forgetting (Ballinger, 1999). Abraxas High School is integrating technology into the classrooms by offering online and independent study classes both on and off campus. Students can also take advantage of building a computer.

In many cases, students still who attend year-round schools attend the same number of days as their counterparts on a traditional calendar; however, the weeks of instruction on a year-round calendar are spread out with more frequent breaks in order to have a more continuous flow of learning. Frequent breaks are beneficial to both students and teachers. Educators on a year-round calendar have fewer absences, exhibit less stress and teach more effectively knowing that an extended break is within nine weeks, and with shorter breaks comes less review (Chaika, 1999). Students with learning disabilities experience the same types of issues as the regular education students along with additional difficulties.

Educators in schools with an alternative calendar believe the scheduling positively impacts their plans for instruction and strengthens the curriculum, making them reflective practitioners (Shields & Oberg, 2000). An alternative calendar provides for increased professional development opportunities with the possibility of having multi-day trainings every nine weeks if needed. Research has shown that the more education teachers acquire, which includes advanced degrees, the more effective they are in the classroom (Kupermintz, 2003).

The *No Child Left Behind* legislation has challenged many districts to raise the performance level of their students (NCLB, 2003). Abraxas High School has a percentage of "at-risk" students and students with learning disabilities. Research has suggested that these factors can be positively influenced through the use of more frequent breaks. Having shorter, more

frequent breaks keeps students interested, and therefore they perform better (Rasmussen. 2000). Alternative calendars may not only alleviate teacher and student burnouts, but they may allow more effective time to help students who are falling behind through the use of intersessions. A traditional calendar only allows for make-up work or remediation during summer school, even though immediate feedback is necessary to help a child learn. Waiting until summer gives the students more time to learn the skill incorrectly and to defeat their self-esteem. Intersessions provide an opportunity to help support the struggling students during the school year (Cohen, 2003). Abraxas's use of the intersession is for students to finish any work that may not have been completed during the regular quarter or to begin a new unit and get a jumpstart on new material. Intersessions can be utilized by all levels of students, not just those who are having difficulties. At-risk and students with learning disabilities at Abraxas are given many opportunities to be successful. According to Kneese (2000), at-risk students who attended a year-round school made significant gains in reading and mathematics versus their traditional school counterpart. At-risk and students with learning disabilities need their education to be continued and not be interrupted by long breaks. If the student's home environment is not conducive to learning, regression occurs.

Many English as second language students are not exposed to English during the entire summer break, and those types of gaps cause a delay in learning for the next year (Chaika, 1999). For most at-risk students it may take a month or more to review what was taught the previous school year, which results in wasted time.. Students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School are a group that greatly benefits from an alternative calendar. These students comprise 17% of Abraxas's population. Special education teachers work extensively with the learning

support students and the regular education teachers. On a year-round calendar, the summer break is shorter and gives the students less time to regress.

Intersession opportunities are not the only benefit to a year-round calendar. Because breaks are shorter and less time is needed for review, more content can be successfully covered in a year, which would benefit the students at Abraxas High School. The continuous cycle of learning attributed to a year-round calendar often allows for additional days of learning. Even though there may be a few hundred dollars increase for a student in a year-round school, fewer students will be failing which would reduce the cost of retaining a student (Chaika, 1999). Less money being spent and more content covered has amounted to higher test scores, lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, lower absenteeism, fewer acts of vandalism, and better self-esteem in six Arizona schools (Davies & Kerry, 1999). In the study conducted at Abraxas High School, most of the variables listed were also apparent.

Besides raising the achievement level of students, an alternative calendar can improve the morale of students. The more frequent series of breaks included in an alternative calendar tends to enhance students' learning experiences and alters their beliefs about learning in general (Chaika, 1999). Students seem to be more refreshed and more relaxed when they return from each break. Those taking intersession classes return with more self-confidence, better self-esteem, and a much better attitude toward their schoolwork (Cohen, 2003).

The results of this study are still inconclusive as to how year-round school affects students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School. Abraxas is a very unique high school that not only operates on a year-round calendar, but it is also an alternative school that utilizes block scheduling. From the researcher's observations, the strength of Abraxas is with the faculty,

staff and administration. The study did show that there was a positive impact as it related to the regular education students; however, there were a lack of data on students with learning disabilities and when the non-qualitative data were collected from the assistant principal, there still was no statistical significance on the graduation rate, attendance rate, average credits earned and discipline. Although the results were not what I had expected, it is apparent to me that the year-round system at Abraxas does play an integral part of the success of the entire school. Many other factors play into the success of the school including individualized learning programs and creative attendance factors. From the researcher's observations, the greatest strength of Abraxas is the dedicated and caring faculty, staff, and administration who have a high commitment to education and the success of their students. Educators across the country need to look for ways for students to be successful in the classroom and beyond. Faculty need to be more creative with how to get students to learn and not all students learn in the traditional classroom with 30 students sitting in rows listening to a teacher lecture. Many students today need more of a stimulus and alternative modes of instruction to be successful. It is my opinion that year-round schools are a very pliable option to what districts need for students to be successful today. The results of this study, although inconclusive, have generated a multitude of questions for future studies.

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APPENDIX A

Approval Letter for the Parent Survey & Interviews

From: Royna Lattimore [royna.lattimore@wheelersburg.net]
Sent: Sunday, December 12, 2010 9:48 PM
To: John Pfeiffer
Subject: RE: Thesis Survey & Questions

Hi Mr. Pfeiffer,

Yes, you have my permission.

Thanks,
Royna Lattimore
School Psychologist

From: John Pfeiffer [pfeifferj@parklandsd.org]
Sent: Saturday, December 11, 2010 10:28 AM
To: rlattimore@scoesc.org; Royna Lattimore
Cc: jpfeiffer@enter.net
Subject: Thesis Survey & Questions
Good Morning Ms. Lattimore,

I am a doctoral student at East Stroudsburg University of PA. My dissertation is titled, "The Effects of Year-Round School on Students with Learning disabilities." As I was researching on the internet, I came across your thesis. I was wondering if I could use your Parent Survey. I know I have to get permission and I would be adapting it to the year-round school rather than the summer program. I do believe your questions are very good.

If I can have permission to use your survey, with modifications, I would give you credit in my dissertation as well. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

John Pfeiffer, Jr.
Instructional Supervisor - Parkland High School
Allentown, PA

APPENDIX B

Approval Letter for the Faculty Survey & Interviews

From: Anne Wilson
Sent: Friday, December 10, 2010 8:30 AM
To: John Pfeiffer
Subject: Re: Dissertation Study

Dear John,
Thank you for contacting me. I can grant permission to use/modify the surveys and interview questions from my dissertation as long as you properly credit my work as a citation in your dissertation.

Good luck and congratulations for being at this point in the process!

Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to help.

Sincerely,
Anne

Anne Shaloka Wilson, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
Public Schools of Brookline
333 Washington Street
Brookline, Massachusetts 02445
617-730-2410

APPENDIX C
Letter to the Associate Superintendent

Dr. Mel Robertson – Associate Superintendent
Poway Unified School District
15250 Avenue of Science
San Diego, CA 92128-3406

Dear Dr. Robertson,

I am a doctoral student at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, I am interested in conducting a study within your school system to determine the impact of year-round school on students with learning disabilities. I would like to survey the faculty and parents of those students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School. The returned survey will be anonymous and confidential. I have spoken to the principal and assistant principal at Abraxas High School and they seem enthusiastic with this study.

Along with the survey, I would like to have interviews with any staff members and parents who were surveyed. All participants are adults and only student records on attendance, academics (GPA & State Test Results) and discipline will be used for quantitative data analysis. I am requesting your permission to conduct this study at Abraxas High School and will provide your office and the participating school with copies of the final report. This should be helpful in providing information that could benefit the district and assist others.

At the conclusion of each interview, I will be giving all faculty and parent participants, \$10 gift cards to a local food market for participating in the interviews and also providing the faculty and staff at Abraxas with trays of fruit, cheese and snacks for their participation.

Please feel free to contact myself or any member of my doctoral committee if you have any questions or concerns regarding my study.

Sincerely,

John Pfeiffer, Jr.
Doctoral Student
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

Contact info:

John Pfeiffer, Jr.

610-849-6044

jpfeiffer@enter.net

Dr. Douglas Lare (Chair)

570-422-3431

dlare@po-box.esu.edu

Dr. Valeri Helterbran

724 357-2400

Dr. Joyce Burgener

570-422-3780

APPENDIX D
Faculty Survey Letter

January 15, 2011

Dear Faculty Member:

I am a graduate student at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania conducting research in order to fulfill requirements for the doctorate of education. I have received permission from your superintendent and principal to conduct a study to evaluate the effect year-round school has on students with learning disabilities. I am interested in exploring how faculty perceive the school. The data collected will be used for dissertation research at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania and a report given to the superintendent of Poway Unified School District and the principal at Abraxas High School.

As part of the evaluation, I am interested in obtaining feedback from faculty members. I invite you to share your feedback in the attached survey. Please complete the survey on-line at _____ or return the paper & pencil copy to the designated box located in the main office. The data collected from this survey will be completely anonymous and confidential. It will be coded so that you cannot be identified by the data. I would greatly appreciate your participation. Please complete and return the survey as soon as possible. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time and in no way will affect your standing at Abraxas High School. After 7 days, there may be a follow-up/reminder e-mail for the survey. Additionally, faculty in responding to the surveys will be asked to participate in a short 10 – 15 minute follow-up interview. Faculty choosing to participate will receive a \$10 gift card to a local grocery store. At the conclusion of the interviews, refreshments will be made available for faculty and staff at Abraxas for participating in this study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of my dissertation committee which consists of Dr. Douglas Lare, Dr. Joyce Burgener, or Dr. Shala Davis at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, or Dr. Valeri Helterbran at Indiana University of Pennsylvania if you have any questions (please see contact information below).

Sincerely,

John Pfeiffer, Jr.
Doctoral Candidate, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

Contact info:

John Pfeiffer, Jr.	610-849-6044
Dr. Douglas Lare	570-422-3431
Dr. Shala Davis,	570-422-3336
Dr. Joyce Burgener	570-422-3780
Dr. Valeri Helterbran	724 357-2400

APPENDIX E
Parent Survey Letter

January 28, 2011

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania conducting research in order to fulfill requirements for the doctorate of education. I have received permission from your superintendent and principal to conduct a study in order to evaluate the effect year-round school has on students with learning disabilities. I am interested in exploring how parents perceive the year-round school calendar at Abraxas.

A questionnaire packet is being sent to all parents at Abraxas who have children with learning disabilities. The purpose of this survey is for me to accurately represent the thinking of parents of children with learning disabilities attending Abraxas High School. Similar surveys are being sent to all the teachers at Abraxas. Along with this letter you should find a copy of the Parent's Survey, a Written Comments Form, a stamped return envelope, and a stamped return postcard. I invite you to share your feedback on the attached survey. The survey may be completed on-line at _____ or return the completed paper & pencil copy in the self addressed stamped envelope. The survey should take approximately 10 – 15 minutes to complete. The data collected from this survey will be completely anonymous and confidential. Whether you complete the survey on-line or by pencil and paper, please drop the return postcard in the mail separately to have your name removed from the second mailing list for forms not returned. It will be coded so that you cannot be identified by the data. I would like to urge you to complete the enclosed survey. This will assure that future decisions are made upon the best information available. Your input is truly valued.

The results of the data collected from this survey, interviews and test scores will be shared with district and building administration and should be made available after May 30, 2011. *Will you please help me gain a complete picture of the school by responding to the survey instruments and returning them along with the enclosed comments sheet by January 6, 2011.* Parents will also be asked to participate in a short follow-up interview. At that time parents participating will be compensated with a gift card from a local grocery store. As stated previously, participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of my dissertation committee which consists of Dr. Douglas Lare, Dr. Joyce Burgener, or Dr. Shala Davis at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, or Dr. Valeri Helterbran at Indiana University of Pennsylvania if you have any questions (please see contact information below).

Sincerely,

John Pfeiffer, Jr.
Doctoral Candidate, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

Contact info:

John Pfeiffer, Jr.	610-849-6044	or jpfeiffer@enter.net
Dr. Douglas Lare	570-422-3431	
Dr. Shala Davis,	570-422-3336	
Dr. Joyce Burgener	570-422-3780	
Dr. Valeri Helterbran	724 357-2400	

APPENDIX F

Parent Follow-Up Letter

February 4, 2011

Dear Parent(s):

On or about January 29, 2011, you received a survey of to evaluate the Year-Round schooling at Abraxas High school. Our records indicate that we have not received the return postcard or e-mail from you indicating that you had mailed the survey back to our office. Your opinions are valued and we would like to know what your satisfaction is of the year-round program and Abraxas. We want to receive as much feedback as possible so the final report is a true depiction of the school.

We have received more answer sheets than return postcards so some parents may have inadvertently forgotten the postcard. If you have mailed in your survey answer sheet, thank you and we do not need any further response from you at this time. If you had forgotten to complete your survey form. It is not too late. Please complete the survey form within the next two weeks and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. The results of this survey and study will be given to administration to assist them in planning and decision-making for the future. Your opinion matters and we appreciate your taking the time to complete the survey.

Please help us make Abraxas High School even better in the future. Some of the responses to date have been enlightening and wonderful. Maybe your responses will be something we haven't considered. We will close out this part of our survey on February 28, 2011. Enclosed is an additional survey and a self-addressed stamped envelope. If you have any questions please call (610)849-6044 and leave a message for me or e-mail at jpfeiffer@enter.net. I will return all calls and e-mails.

Sincerely,

John Pfeiffer, Jr.
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX G

Research Study Explanation

Dear Faculty Member or Parent,

The purpose of this survey is to assess your opinion of year-round school as they pertain to students with learning disabilities at Abraxas High School and to provide information to be used in future planning. In order to assure anonymity, the data, including any written comments, will be summarized and made part of a written report that will be given to the school leaders. No individual responses will be identified.

You are being asked to take part in a study to determine the perceptions and opinions of teachers and parents regarding the year-round school calendar. The survey will take about 10-15 minutes and can be completed at anytime on-line. This research will be important in discovering the effect of year-round education on students with learning disabilities as perceived by teachers and parents in conjunction with academic achievement, attendance and discipline records.

Completing this anonymous survey will cause little or no risk to you. The survey has been designed to protect your privacy. You will not put your name on the survey. Also, no teacher will ever be mentioned by name in a report of the results. Your participation is voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer. In addition, you may stop participating in the survey at any point without penalty.

Your study results will be maintained in the strictest of confidence. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the researcher's residence for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, ESU IRB, and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

If you have any question, you may call John Pfeiffer, Jr. at 610-849-6044 or by e-mail at jpfeiffer@enter.net. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Shala Davis at 570-422-3336 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant. If you are not willing to take part in the survey, please disregard the e-mail with the link on Zoomerang. Your participation is very important to the success of this study, and we certainly appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

John Pfeiffer, Jr.
Doctoral Student
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

APPENDIX H

TEACHER SURVEY

Please circle your responses to the following questions. All responses will remain confidential and your effort is greatly appreciated.

1. How are you involved in providing special education services in your school?

- a. General Education Teacher
- b. Special Education Teacher
- c. Administrator

2. How long have you worked at Abraxas High School?

- a. < 1 Year
- b. 1 – 2 Years
- c. 3 – 5 Years
- d. 5 – 10 Years
- e. > 10 Years

Beliefs About Teaching and Learning at Abraxas High school *Use the following scale in responding to the following questions:*

1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree
(circle one response).

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. The students with learning disabilities can achieve the goals that have been set for them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Abraxas High School sets high standards for academic performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Learning at this school is fun. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Students respect others who get good grades. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Students seek extra work so they can get good grades. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Abraxas high School has an atmosphere in which students learn effectively. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Teachers at this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

11. I am proud to be a teacher at Abraxas High school.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Students try hard to improve on previous work.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The learning environment is orderly and serious.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Instruction at Abraxas High School is preparing students for the future.	1	2	3	4	5

Teacher Opinions About Year-Round Schooling *Use the following scale in responding to the following questions:*

1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree
(circle one response).

15. promotes effective teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
16. enables students to overcome learning problems.	1	2	3	4	5
17. helps students to improve test scores.	1	2	3	4	5
18. makes it difficult for students to hold jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
19. allows families opportunities to take vacations.	1	2	3	4	5
20. presents obstacles for single parents.	1	2	3	4	5
21. allows students to take enrichment classes during inter-sessions.	1	2	3	4	5
22. leads to greater retention of learned material.	1	2	3	4	5
23. reduces the amount of time spent in class review.	1	2	3	4	5
24. reduces student stress.	1	2	3	4	5
25. is based on information about how students learn most effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
26. keeps students engaged in learning during the entire year.	1	2	3	4	5
27. motivates students to attend school.	1	2	3	4	5

Performance of Students with Learning disabilities

28.Has NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and AYP (Adequate yearly Progress) requirements helped your school's students with learning disabilities/

- a. YES
- b. NO

29.Does your school currently have students with learning disabilities performing below state standards?

- a. YES
- b. NO

30.If students with learning disabilities performed below the state standard, did you or your school undertake specific actions or interventions to address the poor performance of those students?

- a. YES
- b. NO
- c. NOT APPLICABLE

31. What measures have been taken to address the performance of students with learning disabilities to achieve at a higher level? (Please check all that apply)

- a. INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES
- b. STAFF CHANGES
- c. ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES
- d. CURRICULUM CHANGES
- e. NOTHING
- f. NOT APPLICABLE
- g. OTHER

32. To what do you attribute the improvement of your students with learning disabilities? Check all that apply.

- a. SPECIFIC ACTIONS OR INTERVENTIONS
- b. STUDENT POPULATION CHANGES
- c. STAFF CHANGES
- d. STUDENTS ATTENDING ON A YEAR-ROUND CALENDAR
- e. STATE'S RECALCULATION OF AYP
- f. CHANCE
- g. OUR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES SUBGROUP HAS NOT IMPROVED
- h. OTHER

33. Please explain your interventions or changes from the question above.

34. What data are used to measure the progress or performance of your students with learning disabilities? Please check all that apply.

- a. STANDARDIZED TESTS
- b. TEXTBOOK TESTS
- c. TEACHER-MADE TESTS
- d. PORTFOLIOS
- e. CURRICULUM BASED MEASUREMENT ASSESSMENT
- f. PROGRESS MONITORING
- g. OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY BELOW

35. Do special education and general education teachers in your school collaborate?

- a. YES
- b. NO

36. If special education teachers and regular education teachers collaborate, how do they do so?

- a. CO-TEACHING
- b. COMMON PLAN TIME
- c. COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION
- d. GRADE LEVEL MEETINGS
- e. NOT APPLICABLE
- f. OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY

INTERVIEW

As part of the evaluation, I am interested in obtaining feedback from faculty members. I invite you to share your feedback in a one-on-one interview during the week of February 1, 2011 when I will be in Poway. If it is more convenient, I would be happy to conduct the interview by telephone. At the conclusion of the interview, you will receive a gift card from a local grocery store for your participation in this study. The data collected during this session will be completely anonymous and confidential. It will be coded so that you cannot be identified by the data.

I would greatly appreciate your participation.

This is the end of the Faculty Survey.

Thank you for your participation. Without you, this study would not be complete.

APPENDIX I

PARENT SURVEY

Please circle your responses to the following questions. All responses will remain confidential and your effort is greatly appreciated.

1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

1. I would like my child to continue attending Abraxas HS in the future.
1 2 3 4 5
2. I would recommend the YRS program at Abraxas to other parents with children having learning disabilities..
1 2 3 4 5
3. My child has improved his/her ability to get along with other students.
1 2 3 4 5
4. My child enjoyed participating in the Year-Round program at Abraxas High School.
1 2 3 4 5
5. My child made new friends through the Year-Round program.
1 2 3 4 5
6. I am pleased with how staff worked with my child with learning disabilities.
1 2 3 4 5
7. My child has benefited from the year-round calendar.
1 2 3 4 5
8. My child's teachers seemed to make learning exciting and fun.
1 2 3 4 5
9. The staff at Abraxas HS truly cared about my child.
1 2 3 4 5
10. My child was safe at the school.
1 2 3 4 5
11. Staff at Abraxas High School take prompt action when problems occur.
1 2 3 4 5
12. Staff is willing to talk to me if I have any concerns/suggestions.
1 2 3 4 5
13. I have participated in activities with my child at school.
1 2 3 4 5
14. I am satisfied with the special education program at Abraxas HS.
1 2 3 4 5
15. My child made improvements in academic achievement while at Abraxas HS.
1 2 3 4 5

16. My child made improvements in attendance while at Abraxas HS.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

17. My child made improvements in discipline while at Abraxas HS.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

18. There is an open line of communication between myself and the staff at Abraxas High School..

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

19. How much academic progress do you feel your child has made while at Abraxas High School?

- 1=much less than at a traditional calendar school year
- 2=less than at a traditional calendar school year
- 3=similar to a traditional calendar school year
- 4=more than at a traditional calendar school year.
- 5=much more than at a traditional calendar school year

20. Please indicate your level of involvement in your child's program.

- 1=none
- 2=receiving information with staff
- 3=giving information to staff (i.e. phone calls, meet with teacher)
- 4=giving and receiving information with staff
- 5=participating in decisions with staff

INTERVIEW

As part of the evaluation, I am interested in obtaining feedback from randomly selected parents. I invite you to share your feedback in a one-on-one interview during the week of February 1, 2011 when I will be in Poway. If it is more convenient, I would be happy to conduct the interview by telephone. At the conclusion of the interview, you will receive a gift card from a local grocery store for your participation in this study. The data collected during this session will be completely anonymous and confidential. It will be coded so that you cannot be identified by the data.

I would greatly appreciate your participation.

This is the end of the Parent Survey.

Thank you for your participation. Without you, this study would not be complete.

APPENDIX J
Interview Invitation Letter for Parents

(DATE)

(CONSTITUENT NAME)

(CONSTITUENT ADDRESS)

Dear (CONSTITUENT NAME):

I am a graduate student at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania conducting research in order to fulfill requirements for the doctorate of education. Abraxas High School has agreed to participate in this study in order to evaluate the effect year-round school has on student achievement of a certain population of students. I am interested in exploring how parents perceive the school. The data collected will be used for dissertation research at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania.

As part of the evaluation, I am interested in obtaining feedback from randomly selected parents. I invite you to share your feedback in person or in a one-on-one telephone call. The data collected during this session will be completely anonymous and confidential. It will be coded so that you cannot be identified by the data.

I would greatly appreciate your participation. Please let me know if you will be able to participate by e-mailing me at jpfeiffer@enter.net and placing **INTERVIEW** in the subject line. All parents participating in an interview will be given a \$10 gift card to a local food market.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, Dr. Douglas Lare or Dr. Shala Davis at East Stroudsburg University if you have any questions (please see contact information below).

Sincerely,

John Pfeiffer, Jr.
Doctoral Candidate, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

Contact info:

John Pfeiffer, Jr.	610-849-6044	jpfeiffer@enter.net
Dr. Douglas Lare	570-422-3431	
Dr. Shala Davis,	570-422-3336	

RSVP Abraxas Interview Participation

TO: John Pfeiffer, Jr. – Researcher

FROM: _____

🍏 Yes, I will participate in an interview.

The best time to contact me to schedule an appointment is _____
e-mail _____ or phone _____

🍏 No, I cannot attend.

APPENDIX K
Interview Invitation Letter for Faculty

(DATE)

(CONSTITUENT NAME)

(CONSTITUENT ADDRESS)

Dear (CONSTITUENT NAME):

I am a graduate student at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania conducting research in order to fulfill requirements for the doctorate of education. Abraxas High School has agreed to participate in this study in order to evaluate the effect year-round school has on student achievement of a certain population of students. I am interested in exploring how faculty perceive the school. The data collected will be used for dissertation research at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

As part of the evaluation, I am interested in obtaining feedback from randomly selected faculty members. I invite you to share your feedback in a one-on-one interview on (DATE), from (TIME) to (TIME) at (LOCATION). If it is more convenient, I would be happy to conduct the interview by telephone. You'll receive a gift card from a local grocery store for your participation in the interview. The data collected during this session will be completely anonymous and confidential. It will be coded so that you cannot be identified by the data.

I would greatly appreciate your participation. Please let me know if you will be able to participate by e-mailing me at jpfeiffer@enter.net and placing **INTERVIEW** in the subject line. All faculty participating in an interview will be given a \$10 gift card to a local food market.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, Dr. Douglas Lare or Dr. Shala Davis at East Stroudsburg University if you have any questions (please see contact information below).

Sincerely,

John Pfeiffer, Jr.

Doctoral Candidate, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

Contact info:

John Pfeiffer, Jr. 610-849-6044 jpfeiffer@enter.net

Dr. Douglas Lare 570-422-3431

Dr. Shala Davis, 570-422-3336

RSVP Abraxas Interview Participation

TO: John Pfeiffer, Jr. – Researcher

FROM: _____

🍏 Yes, I will participate in an interview.

The best time to contact me to schedule an appointment is _____
e-mail _____ or phone _____

🍏 No, I cannot attend.

APPENDIX L
INTERVIEW SCRIPT – PARENTS

1. What do you like best about the Year-Round program at Abraxas HS?
2. What do you like least about the Year-Round program at Abraxas HS?
3. What would be your suggestion for improving the year-round program at Abraxas HS as it relates to students with learning disabilities?
4. What instructional programs do you believe have made a difference in improving student achievement of your child at Abraxas?
5. How do you believe the instructional programming at the school provides flexibility to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities?
6. If possible, please elaborate about the actions or interventions that have been taken for the students with learning disabilities at Abraxas or specifically with your child.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

APPENDIX M

INTERVIEW SCRIPT - FACULTY

1. Please elaborate about your thoughts on the actions or interventions that contribute to student achievement, attendance and discipline of your school's students with learning disabilities.
2. Tell me more about the measures that you or your school has taken to address the performance of students with learning disabilities.
3. Please explain the academic instructional setting for students with learning disabilities in your school.
4. Please explain how you measure student progress and your data collection process.
5. Please explain the collaboration between general education and special education teachers in your building.
6. Please elaborate about the actions or interventions that have been taken for the students with learning disabilities in your class or your school.
7. What instructional programs do you believe have made a difference in improving student achievement of students with learning disabilities at Abraxas?

What particular elements of the program made it effective?

8. How do you believe the instructional programming at the school provides flexibility to meet the needs of a variety of learners, especially those with learning disabilities?
Please explain.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!