Exploring the Relationship between Connectedness and Language Acquisition for Middle School English Language Learners

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DISSERTATION DEFENSE

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INTRODUCTION

❑ Research supports link between connectedness and social and academic outcomes for students

(Cosentino de Cohen, Deterding, & Clewell, 2005; Epstein, 1976)

❑ Avoidance versus Anticipation

(Balfanz, 2009)

❑ Investment in future of education and students identified as English Language Learners (ELL)

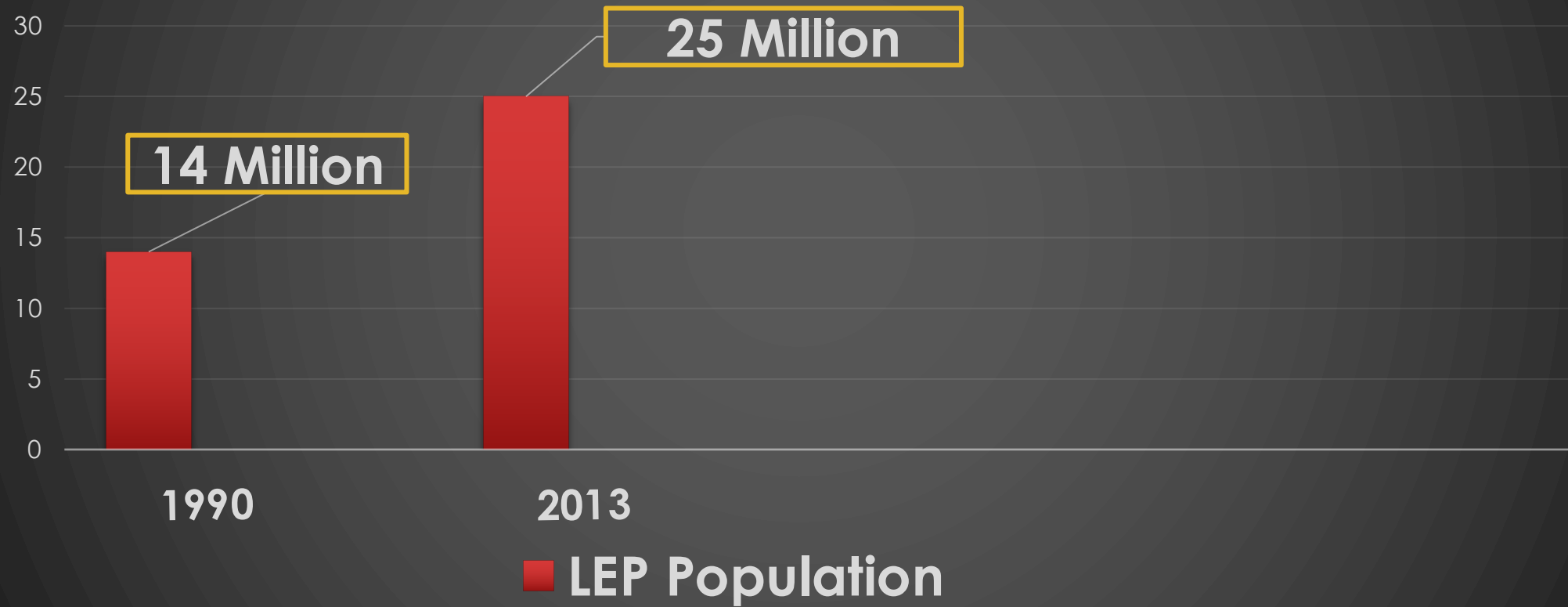(Szapocznik & Coatsworth, 1999)

❑ Children who are English Language Learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing segment of the school-aged population

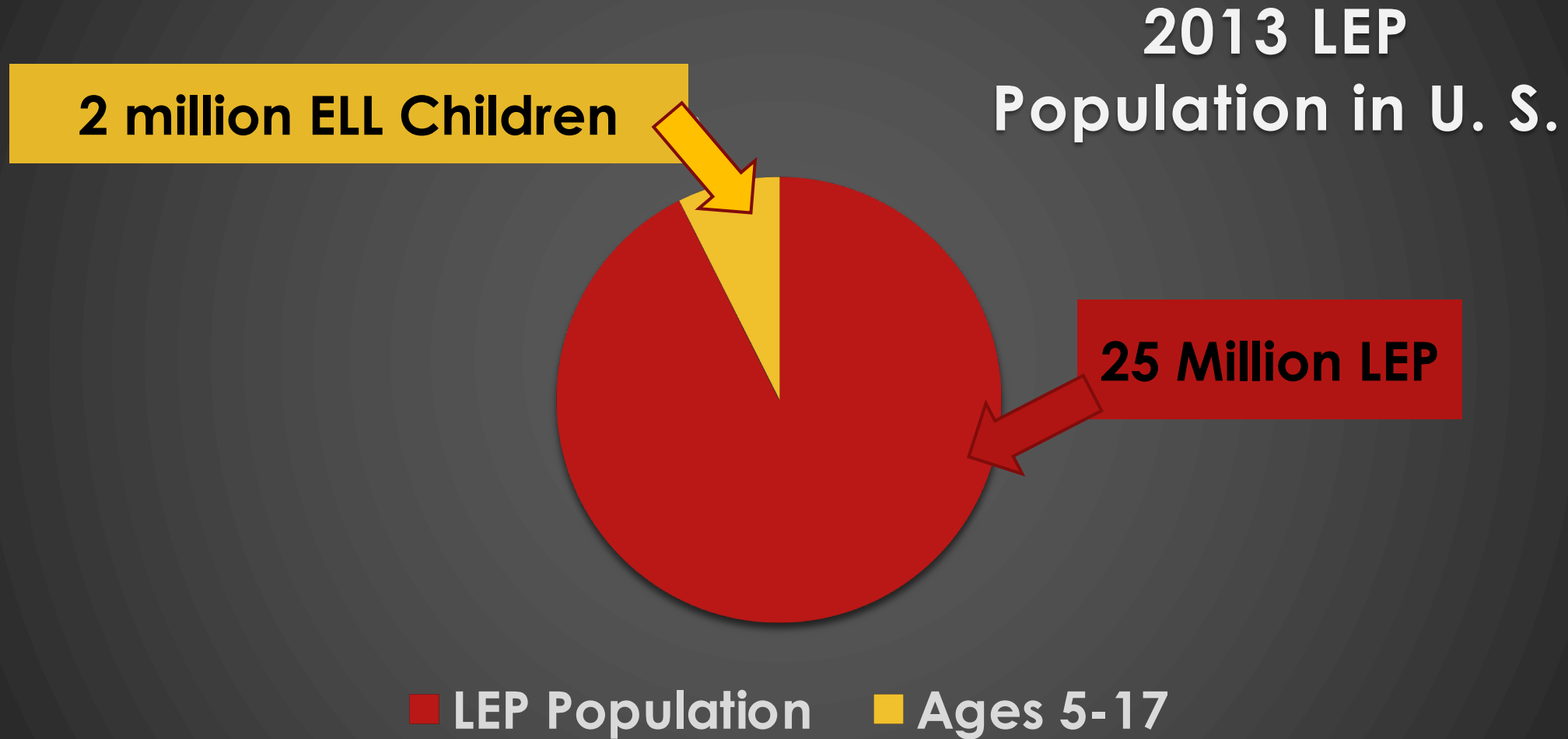(National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2004)

Introduction

Limited English Proficient Population Growth

25 Million

14 Million

30
25
20
15
10
5
0

1990   2013

■ LEP Population

(Migration Policy Institute [MPI], 2015)

Introduction

2 million ELL Children

2013 LEP Population in U. S.

25 Million LEP

LEP Population ■ Ages 5-17

(Zong & Batalova, 2015; Migration Policy Institute [MPI], 2015)

Introduction

2013 Public School Enrollment in U.S.

4.85 million ELLs

55.4 Million Students

K-12 Enrollment ELL Students
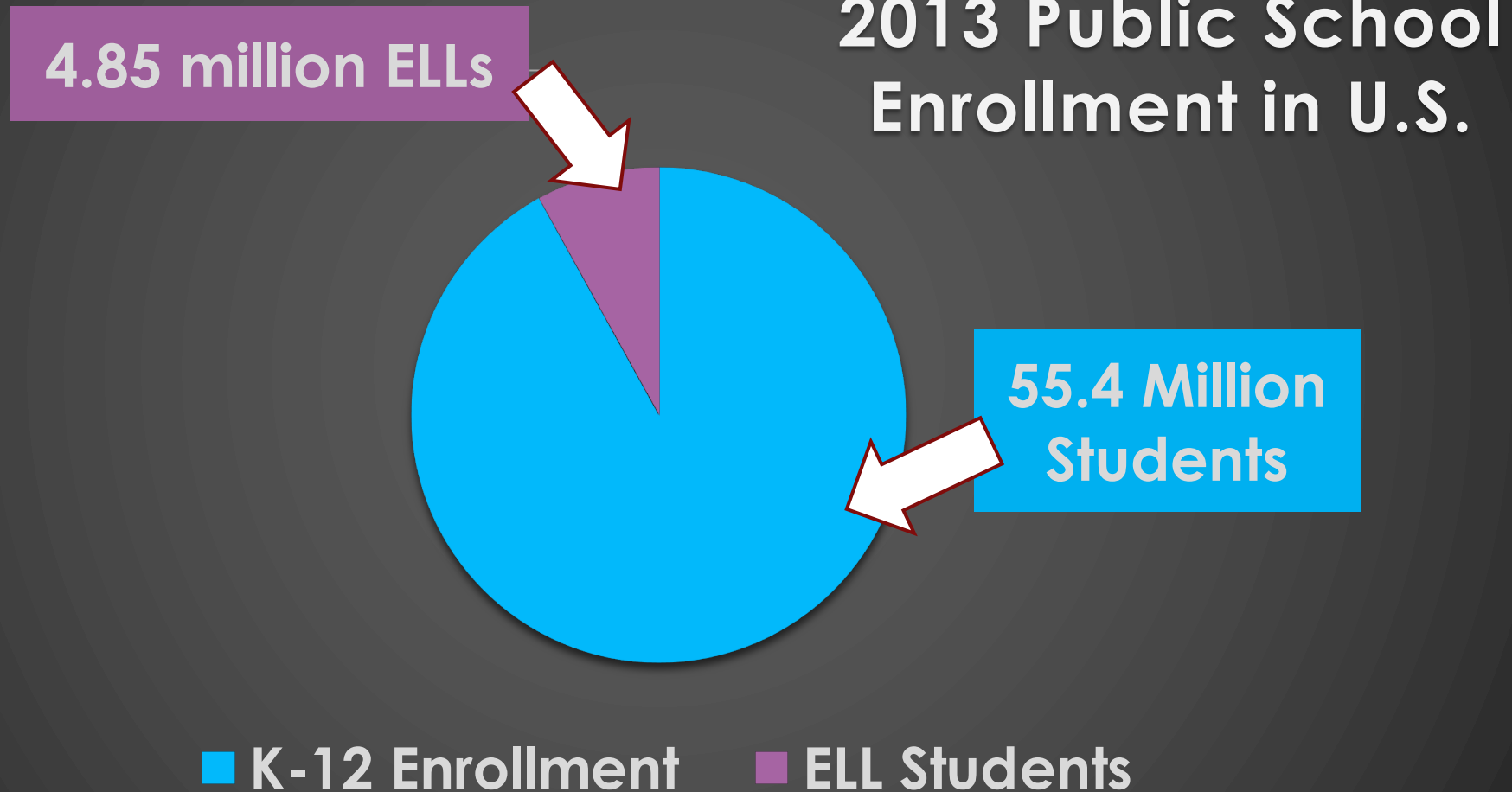
(Zong & Batalova, 2015)

Problem Statement

❑ Issues unique to ELL students:

   ❑ Stress at home

   ❑ Consistently low test scores

   ❑ High drop-out rate

    (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008; Murnane, Maynard, and Ohls, 1981; Thomas & Collier, 2001)

❑ By 2030, ELL students comprise 40% of K-12 population

    (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2001)

Problem Statement

❑ Midwest School District enrollment and ELL enrollment

    ❑ 1995 = 17,801 students

         = 120 ELL students

         = .67%

    ❑ 2015 = 29,558 students

         = 3,129 ELL students

         = 10.58%

(Midwest State Department of Education, 2014)

Problem Statement

❑ As the ELL population increases, more attention needs to be placed on the unique academic and social-emotional difficulties these students encounter in school.

❑ However, "…the relationship between academic self-beliefs and achievement for ELLs is not well understood…" (p.8)

(Niehaus & Adelson, 2014)

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between middle-school English Language Learners' (ELLs) level of language acquisition and their sense of connectedness in order to recommend strategies for educators to help ELLs discover their place in the social and educational culture surrounding them at school.

Literature Review

❑ Connectedness provides comfort, well-being, reduced anxiety, stability, mutual trust, closeness, and dependency

(Byers, Goossens, Vansant, & Moors, 2003)

❑ Connectedness is a key component for ensuring positive youth development (PYD)

(Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009)

❑ Connectedness indicates the level of life satisfaction during adolescence. This assessment is critical to adolescents' social and psychological development; along with their physical health.

(Bonny, Britto, Klostermann, Hornung, & Slap, 2000; Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, & Zumbo, 2011)

Literature Review

❑ Connectedness increases student motivation and academic growth.

(Kiefer, Ellerbrock, & Alley, 2014)

❑ Schools become brokers of these relationships between cultures

(Banks, 1993)

❑ In middle school, students living in high poverty environments are put on the path to high school and career options are chosen.

(Balfanz, 2009)

Literature Review

❑ 23.6% Hispanic Families live below the poverty line

(DeNavas-Walt, & Proctor, 2015)

❑ Students relate sense of connectedness at school and with peers to their expectation for success.

(Balfanz, 2000)

❑ Connectedness is the key reason English Language Learners continue coming to school and continue trying to learn English.

(DeNavas-Walt, & Proctor, 2015)

Literature Review

❑ The field of language acquisition is relatively new

<div align="right">(Valdes, 2000)</div>

❑ Timelines and stages of learning a language are relative and flexible but not always sequential.

<div align="right">(Collier 1987; Cummins, 1981)</div>

❑ Language acquisition is influenced by SES, exposure to vocabulary, and parental education

<div align="right">(Ovando , 2003)</div>

Literature Review

❑ Early adolescents marks beginning of decline in academic performance

(Eccles & Midgley, 1989)

❑ ELLs report disengagement with academics because of lack of positive relationships with teachers and peers

(Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000)

❑ 18-24 year old High School drop outs = 28% Hispanic, 20% Black and American Indian, and 16% White

(National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015)

❑ From 1987-2007, Latino population in public schools increased from 11% to 22%

(National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009)

Research Questions

❑ **RQ1**: What is the relationship between the language acquisition level of English Language Learners and their level of connectedness to **family**?

❑ **RQ2**: What is the relationship between the language acquisition level of English Language Learners and their level of connectedness to **friends**?

❑ **RQ3**: What is the relationship between the language acquisition level of English Language Learners and their level of connectedness to **school**?

❑ **RQ4**: What is the relationship between the language acquisition level of English Language Learners and their level of connectedness to **self**?

Study Significance

❑ Many studies addressed issues of student belonging and motivation, but none considered the variable of language acquisition

(Matthew & Ewen, 2006)

❑ Children who spend one year living in poverty make up 70% of all students who do not graduate

❑ 70% of ELL students are considered low-income

(Hernandez, 2012)

Study Significance

- ELL population is changing
  - Immigrant versus foreign-born
- Type of ELL support programs
  - Immersion, sheltered, transitional
- Student variables and academic success
  - Time in country
  - Age of entry

(Banks, 1993; Johnson, 1981; NCES, 2009; Ruiz de Velasco & Fix, 2000)

Design

❑ Applied research study

❑ Quantitative approach

❑ Two survey instruments

  ❑ Individualized Developmental English Activities Proficiency Test (IPT)

  ❑ The Hemingway: Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (MAC)

Design

Ethnic Identification of Midwest School District Student Population in 2016

7% African American

4% Asian

15% Hispanic

69% Caucasian
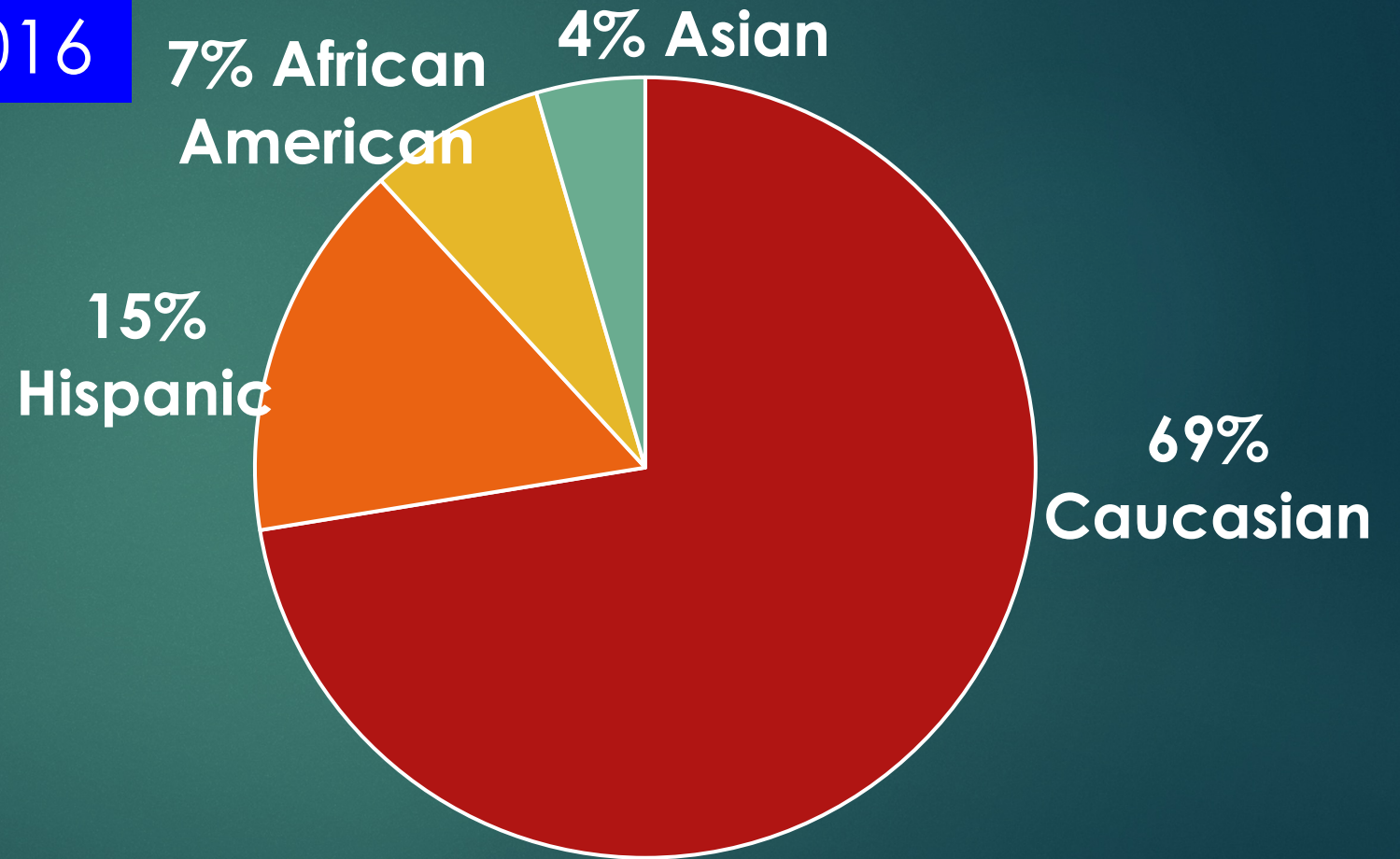
(Midwest School District, 2016b)

Legend: ■ Caucasian ■ Hispanic ■ African American ■ Asian

Design

❑ Midwest School District

❑ 35 elementary, 9 middle, and 4 high schools

❑ Graduation rate = 93%

(USD 233 annual report, 2016)

Design

- ❑ Teacher training and script

- ❑ IRB permission

- ❑ Permission from school district

- ❑ Each student assigned an identification number

- ❑ IPT scores and Connectedness scores recorded

- ❑ No compensation or coercion

Participants

❑ **Population** = ELL middle schools students (grades 6-8)

❑ **Sample** = All ELL students attending four middle schools with an active status (n = 263)

❑ **Participants** = 6th -8th grade students attending ELL classes at least once a day (n = 126)

❑ All participants were identified as limited English proficient **(LEP)** at varied levels

(Collier 1987; Cummins, 1981)

Participants

- Male = 44.4%

- Female = 55.5%

- Hispanic = 87.3%

- Living with both parents = 73.8%

Participants

- <u>Language Acquisition Designations</u>
  - **Non-English Reader** = 39 students / 31%
  - **Limited English Reader** = 78 students / 62%
  - **Competent English Reader** = 9 students / 7%
- <u>Ethnic Identification</u>
  - **Hispanic** = 111 students / 87%
  - **Other** = 6 students / .05%
  - **Black** = 5 students / .04%
  - **Asian** = 4 students / .03%

Instruments Utilized

❑ Individualized Developmental English Activities Proficiency Test (IPT)

  ❑ 1976

  ❑ Validity determined through Dalton's studies

  ❑ Amoni and Dalton created secondary version

  ❑ Measures oral, written, and reading skills

  ❑ 3 Versions

    ❑ IPT 1 = Grades K-3, **IPT 2** = Grades 4-6, **IPT 3** = Grades 7-12

  ❑ 2 Forms = C and **D**

(Amori & Dalton, 2004; SG Consulting, 2009; Stansfield, 1990)

Instruments Utilized

❑ IPT 2

   ❑ Archival data

   ❑ 91 Questions measuring ability to read in English

   ❑ Raw score determines placement

Designation	IPT 2 (Grades 4-6)	IPT 3 (Grades 7-12)
Non-English Reader (NER)	0-31	0-27
Limited English Reader (LER)	32-45	28-42
Competent English Reader (CER)	46-53	43-55

(Amori & Dalton, 2004; SG Consulting, 2009; Stansfield, 1990)

Instruments Utilized

- The Hemingway: Measurement of Adolescent Connectedness (MAC)
  - 5th edition
  - 4 Subgroups
    - Family = 21 statements
    - Friends = 26 statements
    - School = 16 statements
    - Self = 15 statements
  - Demographics collected = gender, ethnicity, living situation, and grade
  - Completed during the school day with ELL teacher

Instruments Utilized

❑ MAC

   ❑ Self-report survey

   ❑ Likert scale (1 = *not at all true*, 5 = *very true*)

   ❑ 78 statements measured adolescents' degree of caring for and involvement in specific relationships

   ❑ Each subgroup included at least one reverse-scored item

   ❑ Internal consistency and test-retest reliability for subgroups and scales were strong

(Karcher, Holcomb, & Zambrano, 2008; Karcher & Sass, 2010)

Findings

❏ Bivariate correlations within the Pearson Analysis to discover positive and/or negative correlations between variables

❏ Results generally demonstrated positive, weak correlations within all three grade levels.

❏ Two negative correlations were discovered

❏ One statistically significant correlation was found

Findings

❑ A weak, positive correlation between sixth graders' level of connectedness to **self** and level of language acquisition. This finding was statistically significant (p = .037).

❑ A weak, negative correlation between seventh graders' level of connectedness to **school** and level of language acquisition was not statistically significant *(p = -.061)*.

❑ A weak, negative correlation between eighth graders' level of connectedness to **friends** and level of language acquisition was not statistically significant *(p = -.095)*.

Findings

- ❑ Eighth grade consistently had the lowest mean score for connectedness in all four subgroups

- ❑ Sixth grade consistently had the highest mean score for connectedness in all areas except family

- ❑ One-Way ANOVA and Post Hoc analysis did not reveal any statistically significant differences between grades and levels of connectedness within the subgroups

Correlation of IPT and Connectedness According to Grade Level

	6th Grade n=51	7th Grade n=45	8th Grade n=30
Family			
Pearson Correlation	.064	.100	.023
Sig. (2-tailed)	.655	.512	.906
Friends			
Pearson Correlation	.128	.065	-.095
Sig. (2-tailed)	.372	.672	.619
School			
Pearson Correlation	.175	-.061	.069
Sig. (2-tailed)	.219	.691	.719
Self			
Pearson Correlation	.292	.185	.200
Sig. (2-tailed)	.037**	.223	.289

Conclusions

❑ Unable to find statistically significant results to support a strong relationship between language acquisition and ELL middle-school students' level of connectedness to family, friends, school, and self.

❑ The consistency of weak, positive correlations provide support for research concerning student buy-in and commitment to learning. When students feel connected beyond the curriculum, they will continue to push themselves academically and socially.

Implications

❑ Schools, governments, and society-at-large cannot avoid the reality of living in a linguistically-diverse social environment.

❑ Awareness within the realm of educational policies concerning connectedness might have a positive impact on funding, programming, and cultural awareness concerning student needs and possibly negative outcomes for students unable to connect beyond the classroom during middle school.

Implications

❑ Highest number of ELLs in public school

❑ Highest drop out rates among minority groups

❑ Education is a key element to helping students escape poverty and limited career opportunities

❑ Programs and teacher training to help students connect with teachers, peers, and schools will help education remain a priority for ELL students.

Limitations

- ❑ Cannot be generalized to other ELL sites

- ❑ Format of IPT did not allow for comparisons across grade levels

- ❑ IPT available was old version

- ❑ Some statements for the MAC included instructions to leave blank if statement did not apply – impacting overall score

- ❑ Administration of both tests were completed at four different locations by four different teachers

Recommendations

❑ Larger sample size with larger variety of linguistic groups

❑ Surveys given at only one location

❑ Utilize mean score within grade level for blank responses for MAC

❑ Updated IPT with scaled scores

❑ Reevaluate seventh and eighth graders when they are juniors and seniors to see if connectedness played a role in graduation and if language improved along with connectedness

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Meet Yasmin

I Know what I Know thank to someone and her name is Johnson I am not goint o lie Mrs. Yager, Mrs Roberts, and Mrs. Boyington they help me to but not like you and I can tell you thank avery day if I have to all my life maybe some time I get mad but you don't care if I get mad you just try to make me to a better person and I apreshea that.

Thank you

Mrs. Johnson
for all the thing
that you do with me

maybe your not gointo
belief this I LOVE you
Thank you agaon.