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# Parental Satisfaction with Marshall University Summer Enrichment Program Evaluation: Completers vs. Non-Completers

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PARENTAL SATISFACTION WITH MARSHALL UNIVERSITY SUMMER  
ENRICHMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION: COMPLETERS VS. NON-  
COMPLETERS

A Program Evaluation submitted to  
the Graduate College of  
Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Education Specialist

School Psychology

by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine if completion of the Marshall University Summer Enrichment Program (MUSEP) of 2011 had an effect on parent satisfaction. Parents of the students who attended the program answered survey questions pertaining to their satisfaction with the program, services they participated in during the program and reasons why, if they failed to complete the program. The results revealed completion of the program had no effect on parental satisfaction. Further analysis of the data revealed several reasons why students did not complete the MUSEP. The two most significant reasons were prior obligations and vacations.

## **Chapter One: Review of Literature**

Everyday parents all over the world wake their children up and get them off to school. Whether that school is home school, private, parochial, or public school; parents want their children to be successful at learning. Every parent hopes to see the day their child graduates from high school even if their child is top of the class, middle of the road, or struggles just to make it to school every day. The distressing actuality is, each nine seconds in America, a student drops out of school (Martin & Halperin, 2006). Globally, the United States stands seventeenth when comparing high school completion statistics (Monrad, 2007).

### **School Dropout (Non-Completion)**

A California Dropout Research Project was conducted with a review of 25 years of literature by Rumberg and Lim (2008), their statistics and research of American Youth Forum both discovered that about one third of all students that enter the ninth grade fail to graduate. The review was supported by 203 studies in print that investigated an array of national, state and neighborhood information to categorize statistically significant predictors of high school dropout. The investigation recognized two categories of predictors that a student would eventually complete or not complete high school. There were factors related to personal character traits and factors related to the traits of their families, schools, and neighborhoods (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Several personal character traits that can be predictors of not completing school are as follows: poor educational performance, behavior problems, negative attitude, and background (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Monrad, 2007; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Numerous concerns both in and out of school including delinquency, not coming to school, and

abuse of substances are also strong predictors a student may not complete school. Poor educational performance has been extensively acknowledged in the literature as a strong predictor of dropping out. With that being said, the review of literature indicates educational achievement tends to be more of an indicator than test scores in forecasting which students will leave school without graduating (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Research has also recognized that the lowest achieving readers are in jeopardy of not completing high school (Monrad, 2007). Students achieving in the lowest quartile are three and a half times more likely not to complete high school than the top achieving students, and 20 times more prone to drop out than top achieving students (Monrad, 2007). Many educators believe retaining those students will give them another year to gain the lacking skills or another year to catch up to their more mature peers. The reality is, the most researched factor of dropout predictors in the literature, is retention in one or more grades. Consistent with previous research on school dropouts, students in alternative programs are also believed to be at risk of educational failure, as suggested by various risk factors including disruptive behavior, poor grades, suspension, and truancy (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002).

The need for programs to aid in the reduction of dropout rates is unmistakable. Research suggests that many dropout prevention programs center predominantly on students' shortcomings instead of making school engaging and relevant to students (Shannon, Bylsma, & Washington Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006). The research suggests in order to make school more attractive and engaging to students the following is needed; provide academic tutoring, have students become involved in a program that promotes bonding between students and staff, help

students envision and commit to futures that they consider achievable, and give students a chance to be involved in their schools, have all lead to success in lowering dropout rates (Shannon, Bylsma, & Washington Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006; Somers, 2009). Similarly, early involvement of parents in academic interventions and programs has been evident in aiding the reduction of future student dropouts (Somers, 2009).

### **Enrichment Programs**

Programs to reduce academic difficulties and result in reduced dropout rates include interventions designed to aid those struggling academically. Dating back to the 1960s, academic enrichment programs, as we know them today, began as private interventions to public education (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002). The majority of these private unconventional education interventions were in urban and suburban areas (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002; Raywid, 1994). In urban areas, the interventions largely focused on establishing alternatives for those who did not prove successful in public schools. Primarily, those interventions assisted lower socio-economic students from minority backgrounds. In suburban areas, state-of-the-art ideas lead to reinvention of the education system (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002; Raywid, 1994). The remarkable increase in the accessibility of these academic enrichment programs in the United States, over the past numerous decades, represents a continuing need for such programs and for evaluations to ensure their effectiveness.

**Effective Summer Programs.** During the summer, when students are at home watching television, playing video games, going to the swimming pool or taking vacations, they are at risk of losing some of the knowledge they gained during the school

year. While many summer programs have been proposed there are certain characteristics which comprise an effective summer program. An effective program accelerates achievement rather than permitting students' knowledge to slip away over the summer and complements the knowledge obtained throughout the school year. Additionally, an effective program can employ positive youth development practices, creates surroundings in which students feel respected and fairly treated, provides situations for peer interactions, and individual and academic success (Bell & Carrillo, 2007; Borman, Goetz, & Dowling, 2009; Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable, Tonelson, 2006). Successful programs begin with a personal-effective focus (i.e., teaching interpersonal relations, providing individual counseling), with a later shift to an academic focus with interventions such as tutoring and specialized courses (Lehr, Hansen, Sinclair, & Christenson, 2003). Programs and practices designed to prevent dropout have been implemented in schools across the country for decades. These practices vary and include counseling services, mentor programs, tutoring, attendance monitoring, and after-school programs (Lehr et al., 2003). Regrettably, the scope to which these interventions are intended for learners is unclear, and closer examination suggests many of these programs and practices lack research or evaluation data documenting effectiveness (Lehr et al., 2003). Programs dedicated to thorough evaluation and program improvement gather feedback, assess improvement, report development, and strive to improve the quality of their services (Bell & Carrillo, 2007).

### **Program Completion**

While effective programs have been developed, dropout continues to be a problem. There has been research to study what factors predict program completion. In 2003,

research that addressed dropout or school completion by Lehr et al. reviewed 45 prevention and intervention studies (conducted between 1983 and 2000).

A comprehensive systematic review of published literature, identified that participation in decision making regarding the program, a supportive environment, a feeling of engagement in the program, positive relationships with peers, families, and personnel, and the setting of high standards and expectations of participants, are all factors shown to influence completion of programs (Bennett, 2003; Neumann & Rodwell, 2009; Reio, Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2009; Ruebel, 2001; Somers, 2009). One of the most important factors that can influence an individual to complete a program is parents. Ultimately, if a parent is satisfied with the experience their child is involved in, it would make sense they would encourage their child to complete what they have started.

### **Parental Satisfaction**

Parental relationships are a factor in student completion of programs. Studies have shown a correlation between parents' satisfaction and positive results for children and families (Summers, Hoffman, Marquis, Turnbull, Poston, 2005). Despite differences in terminology and emphases, literature consistently finds that parents who are satisfied with programs, have several variables in common including; good academic achievement of children, quality relationships with school personnel, positive recollections of school experiences, high involvement with child's school, and attendance of children in special schools (Gibbons & Silva, 2011; Goldring & Shapira, 1993; "Parents' Satisfaction With Schools", 2006; Raty, 2010; Summers et al., 2005).

Parental satisfaction has long been utilized to evaluate the MUSEP dating back to 2003. Lattimore began the trend which was continued in 2005 by Wartenburg, and then

again in 2009 by Legg, to determine if parents were satisfied with the program.

According to the Lattimore (2003) study, the most significant predictor of parent satisfaction was the perception of care for their child by the staff at the program. The Wartenburg (2005) study also examined parental satisfaction in the MUSEP; however, the most significant predictor of parent satisfaction in her study was an affirmative to the question, "I would recommend the Summer Enrichment Program to other parents".

Results of the Legg (2009) study also determined parents were satisfied with the 2007 and 2008 MUSEP. When Legg performed further analysis and eliminated academic progress, parent involvement was found to be the best predictor and satisfaction with staff to be the second best predictor of parent satisfaction (Legg, 2009). None of the studies found academic progress to be a predictor of parental satisfaction.

### **Marshall University Summer Enrichment Program**

This study will also evaluate parental satisfaction of the MUSEP. The MUSEP 2011 was held at an urban middle school in West Virginia. The program was offered for students from Kindergarten through middle school and ran in the summer for four days a week, for 5 weeks. During the first two days, there was an orientation to prepare for students, at which time assessments were implemented to determine placements for students based on reading and math levels.

The program provided Marshall University graduate students a clinical field experience leading to certification or licensure in the following areas: Special Education, Counseling, School Psychology, and Reading. Classrooms contain multi-age, multi-ability students along with full inclusion of students with special needs. Instruction is hands-on with emphasis on best practices. Children enrolled in the program are engaged in learning through a multitude of creative hands-on activities. One of the program's

essentials and for the success of students involved and the program is the high student to adult ratio (Krieg, Meikamp, O'Keefe, Stroebel, 2006).

### **Need for Study**

While several studies have been conducted on parent satisfaction with the MUSEP, no one has evaluated the parental satisfaction of students who did not complete the program. Other studies sent home parent surveys the last week of the MUSEP to children who were still attending the program. This study will evaluate the satisfaction of completers and non-completers to determine if there is any difference between these groups. To date, there is no literature found, to suggest a relationship of program non-completion and parental satisfaction. The MUSEP is one of numerous programs to help enrich the lives of students academically, socially, and behaviorally. There is a need to evaluate programs to ensure they provide services, to help with the dropout epidemic which faces not only the entire nation and the schools, but summer programs as well. As a result of the lack of research which pertains to parental satisfaction and the completion of programs, this study will attempt to establish if there is a relationship between students who did not complete the MUSEP 2011 and parental satisfaction. The current study will also explore factors for not completing the program.

### **Statement of the Hypothesis**

Hypothesis: there is a relationship between student completion and parent satisfaction.

Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between student completion and parent satisfaction.

## **Chapter Two: Method**

### **Participants**

Participants of the study included 143 parents of students who attended the MUSEP 2011. A total of 99 (69%) parents participated in the survey. Of those, 99 parents, 73 (74%) completed information included in the survey which pertained to their child completing (55 students) or not completing (18 students) the MUSEP 2011. The participants of the MUSEP included students ranging from Kindergarten through middle school, male and female, coming from diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic status. Also included, are children with special needs, medical conditions, and varying abilities.

### **Instrumentation**

The present study incorporated the survey originally used in the Lattimore study (Lattimore, 2003), the Wartenburg study (Wartenburg, 2005), and again in the Legg study (Legg, 2009), to eliminate redundant questions and include questions which pertain to new studies, such as, "I participated in the following services...?", "I found the following services to be helpful...", and "My child did not complete the program because...?" to determine if these were factors in parent satisfaction of the Marshall University summer program. The survey was comprised of 22 questions with 18 Likert scale questions (1-15 is the DV), 3 multiple choice (number 21 is IV in this study) and 1 open-ended question (See Appendix A).

To determine internal consistency, a Cronbach's Alpha was conducted on the dependent variable. A score of .926 indicated the dependent variable was a reliable measure for determining parental satisfaction.

**Procedure**

An explanation of the objective, instructions for completing the survey, and a link to the survey on Survey Monkey were first emailed to 143 parents of children who participated in the 2011 program, on August 10, 2011. A follow-up email, as a reminder for completion of the survey, was sent out on August 27, 2011. Due to the limited number of completed surveys received by September 10, 2011, the researchers divided and called the entire list of parents. If they had not previously completed the survey when they received it by email parents were asked the questions and information was inputted to Survey Monkey by the researcher. Consent was designated by voluntary participation.

### **Chapter Three: Results**

In order to determine parental satisfaction with the MUSEP, results of questions 1 through 15 were combined from the parental satisfaction survey. A total of 99 out of 143 (69%) parents participated in the survey. Of those 99 parents, 73 (74%) completed information included in the survey which pertained to their child completing or not completing the MUSEP 2011. This functioned as the dependent variable for this study. The determining factor of the independent variable was parents who reported their child did (55) or did not complete (18) the MUSEP.

#### **Dependent Measure**

After the duration of the MUSEP 2011, 73 surveys were taken by parents whose children attended the program. A range of 15 to 75 accounted for the sum of scores of the dependent variable, parental satisfaction. The mean score of 65 revealed a high level of overall parental satisfaction.

#### **Independent Measure**

Results of an independent samples *t*-test did not support the hypothesis and indicated there was no difference in parental satisfaction between children who completed the program and children who did not complete it. These results were determined by calculating an independent samples *t*-test comparing the mean score of parents who reported their child did not complete the program (absent more than 5 days) to the mean score of parents who reported their child completed the program (were not absent more than 5 days). The mean of the parents who did not complete ( $m = 64.61$ ,  $sd = 8.33$ ) was not significantly different from the mean of those who completed the program ( $m = 66.90$ ,  $sd = 8.68$ ).

## **Chapter Four: Discussion**

This study was conducted to determine if there is a relationship between program completion of the MUSEP and parental satisfaction. There was not a relationship between program completion and parental satisfaction. Overall, parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the MUSEP 2011. The satisfaction reported was comparable to that of the previous years (Lattimore, 2003; Legg, 2009; Wartenburg, 2005). This analysis showed that parents do not remove their children because they are unsatisfied with the program.

An in-depth analysis of the reason parents listed for not having their child complete the program were transportation issues (6%), illness (6%), the program asked their child not to return (6%). The top reasons for not completing the program were too many other obligations (38%) and vacations (44%) (See Figure A).

### **Limitations**

A limitation of this study was the format of questions 19, 20, and 21 being check all that apply choices. The selection that was being used as the “dependent variable” was not independent of the others being used as “independent variables”. When a parent selected the choice for dependent variable, this logically excluded selecting any of the “independent variables” choices. To prevent this in future studies; the questions should be presented in a yes or no format, which would enable further data analysis.

### **Recommendations**

A recommendation for future evaluations of the MUSEP is to determine if the satisfied parents of returning students are more satisfied than those who have only attended the program once. Furthermore, another recommendation would be, having a

parent indicate vacation plans when completing the intake form for enrollment. Children who would be able to attend the entire program would be prioritized over others who can only attend part of the program.

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Appendix A  
Parent Satisfaction Survey

**1= Strongly Disagree**

**2=Disagree**

**3=Neutral**

**4=Agree**

**5=Strongly Agree**

1. My child enjoyed participating in the program.
2. I am pleased with how staff worked with my child during the program.
3. My child was safe at the school.
4. The staff in the program truly cared about my child.
5. The staff took prompt action when problems occurred.
6. The staff were willing to talk to me if I had any concerns/suggestions.
7. My child's teachers seemed to make learning exciting and fun.
8. My child has benefited from the program.
9. My child has improved his/her ability to get along with other children.
10. I noticed an improvement in my child's behavior.
11. My child improved in reading skills during the program.
12. My child improved in math skills during the program.
13. I am satisfied with the program.
14. I would like my child to attend the Summer Enrichment Program again.
15. I would recommend the Summer Enrichment Program to other parents.
16. As a parent, I felt I was involved in my child's program.
17. I was aware of the parent training sessions.
18. The parent training sessions were helpful.

19. I participated in the following... (Check all that apply)

- Parent Training Sessions
- Meeting with staff about the problem I am having with my child
- Parent conference to review my child's psychological evaluation
- I did not participate

20. I found the following services to be helpful... (Check all that apply)

- Parent Training Sessions
- Meeting with staff about the problem I am having with my child
- Parent conference to review my child's psychological evaluation
- N/A

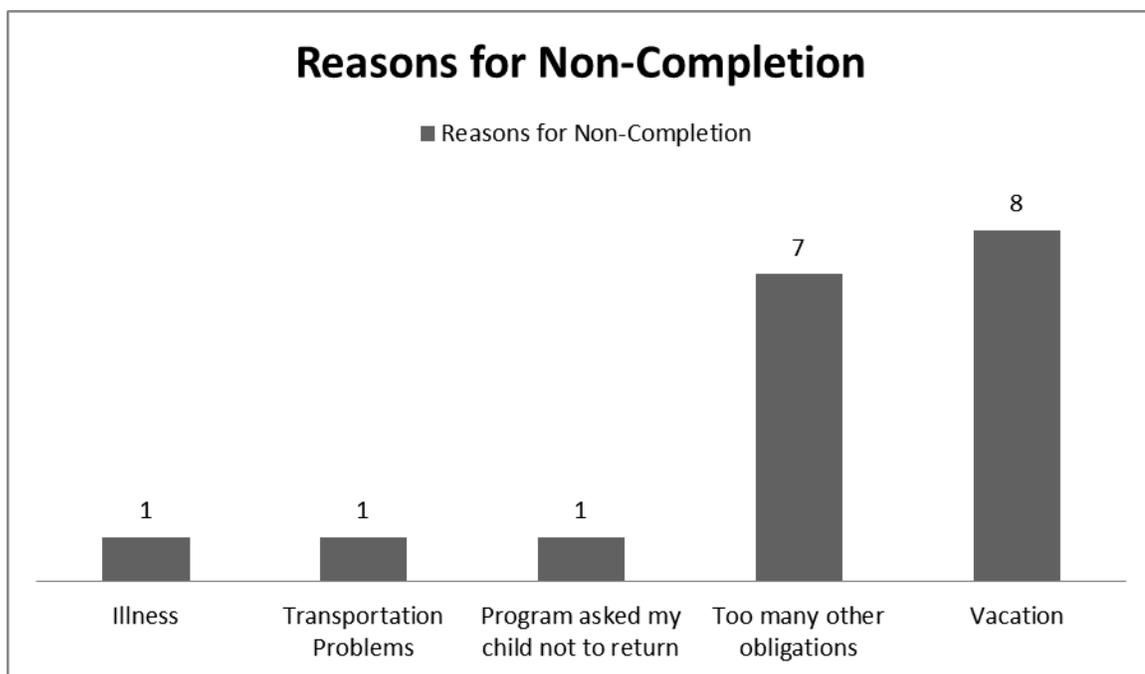
21. My child did not complete the program (was absent 5 or more days) because...

(Check all that apply)

- This question does not apply to me (My child was not absent 5 or more days).
- I was dissatisfied with the program/ the program did not meet my expectations
- I had too many other obligations/ commitments
- My child refused to return
- The location was problematic
- Other: (Please specify)

22. In order to improve the program I would suggest:

Figure 1



Total number of non-completers = 18