

AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF RELATIVE AGE AT SCHOOL ENTRY
ON NORTH CAROLINA STUDENTS - A PREDICTOR OF FUTURE OUTCOMES

A dissertation submitted

by

ROBERT ALLEN MURRAY

Submitted to the Graduate School

Appalachian State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

August 2008

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

Reich College of Education

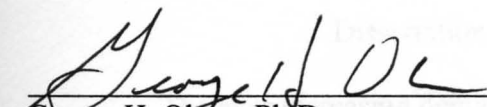
AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF RELATIVE AGE AT SCHOOL ENTRY
ON NORTH CAROLINA STUDENTS – A PREDICTOR OF FUTURE OUTCOMES

By

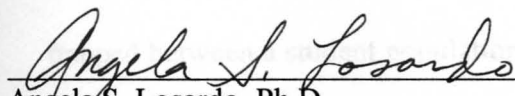
ROBERT ALLEN MURRAY

August 2008

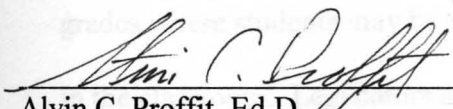
APPROVED BY:



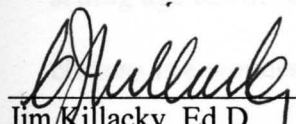
George H. Olson, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee



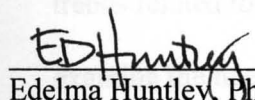
Angela S. Losardo, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee



Alvin C. Proffit, Ed.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee



Jim Killackey, Ed.D.
Director, Doctoral Program



Edelma Huntley, Ph.D.
Dean, Research and Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF RELATIVE AGE
AT SCHOOL ENTRY ON NORTH CAROLINA STUDENTS
A PREDICTOR OF FUTURE OUTCOMES (August 2008)

Robert Allen Murray, B.S. Western Carolina University

M. A. Gardner Webb University

Dissertation Chairperson: George Olson, Ph.D.

The ever increasing demand on schools to produce students that can compete in today's world economy is growing at an alarming rate. Educators find themselves trapped between a student population that is more diverse than ever and a national push for high stakes testing. The process of "pushing" down the curriculum into the lower grades where students may be very young is changing the face and climate of instruction in the classroom. Legislators and educators must embrace the relative age dilemma when setting age cut-off dates for starting school. Helping students become 21st century citizens is a wonderful goal; however, the relative age question must be addressed for success to occur. Through an analysis of a two cohorts of students, this study analyzed trends related to the relative age of starting school. The purpose of this study was to examine the need for a change to the starting age for school. A study of approximately 90,000 students was used to gather insight into the outcomes of students based on age at the start of formal schooling.

Throughout this study a search was done to find a relationship between age at school entry and success in schools. Success was measured by analyzing reading and math achievement scores for a cohort of students from the third grade in 1995 through the fifth grade and a second cohort of students from the sixth grade in 1998 through the eighth grade. The small but significant difference found between the oldest group and youngest group in the third grade persisted through the eighth grade. The descriptive tables, the ANOVA tables, and the figures when analyzed together provide a thorough picture of achievement for a cohort of North Carolina students based on relative age.