

PREDICTING PERFORMANCE ON A SOCIAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT: A
CORRELATIONAL STUDY

by

David Gibson Hamilton

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to determine the predictive relationship between the performance on a middle school Civics practice assessment and performance on the State of Florida Civics assessment. In the current public-school environment across the United States, using high-stakes assessments to measure student performance is the norm. This quantitative correlation study strives to determine if locally developed benchmark assessments accurately predict student achievement on school high-stakes social studies state-mandated assessments. Using post hoc data from 355 middle school students ranging from 12 to 14 years old from a suburban Central Florida charter school who were administered a computer-based Civics practice end-of-course assessment in late March with state testing settings. The 65-question instrument was scored, and the results indicate that 88% of the students passed with a 3 or higher on a 5-point Likert scale. The State of Florida Civics assessment was administered computer-based in May approximately 8 weeks after the practice assessment. This study utilized bivariate regression analysis due to its predictive nature application and was determined to be the best fit to determine the correlation between the predictor and criterion variables. The study found a statistically significant relationship between student performance on the practice EOC assessment and the state Civics EOC assessment. Recommendations for further research include replicating this study to additional schools and districts. There is an additional need for further research on the Florida middle grades science and U.S. history assessments to predict the relationship between student performance on practice science and U.S. history assessments and student performance on the state science assessment and the state U.S. history assessment.

Keywords: civics, end-of-course exam, data-driven instruction, performance, success, teacher assessment, unintended consequences.

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Dedication

This manuscript is dedicated to my family, my friends, and my colleagues, who encouraged and asked questions and spurred me on toward completion. I am truly humbled by your support and encouragement, and I promise to pay your gifts forward to others.

Thank you.

To the Lovely Mrs. H., I love you. Always and forever.

Proverbs 3:5,6 reminds us, “Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and lean not upon your own understanding; in all of your ways acknowledge him, and he make your paths straight” (New International Version, 1997). Psalm 121 reminds us that we can depend on God for help, even when our journey is long. Verses 1 and 2 “I lift my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth (New International Version, 1997). This has been a long and incredible journey, only possible by God’s grace and my reliance on Him. May it continue to be so.

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Thank you to my good friends and mentors. Your words of wisdom and encouragement have impacted me in ways you can never understand, nor can I adequately explain. I appreciate your willingness to give your time and talents to help a fellow struggler down the road. It is both inspiring and speaks volumes to your character. I will strive to be worthy of your time and talents and work to pay it forward. Thank you.

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Thank you to my colleagues and former troopers from The Park, CW, and MCS. You are incredible educators with gifts beyond measure. Keep loving kids and challenging them to do more than they thought possible. They will come through. You made me want to be a better educator because you are incredible. "Yes, 100% Student Success is a Doable Goal!" Thank you for inspiring the "Old Man" to work harder and to try to do it better. You are awesome. I greatly value your friendship and leadership. Press on.

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List of Abbreviations

Civics Education Initiative (CEI)

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Depth of Knowledge (DOK)

End-of-Course Exam (EOC)

English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors (FASSS)

Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT)

Florida Department of Education (FLDOE)

Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship (FJCC)

Florida Standards Assessment (FSA)

Liberty University School of Education (SOE)

National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Pinellas County School Board (PCSB)

Progress Monitoring Exams (PME)

University of Central Florida (UCF)

University of Florida (UF)

University of South Florida (USF)

Western Governors University (WGU)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study aims to determine if there is a predictive relationship between the performance on a middle school Civics practice assessment and performance on the state of Florida Civics assessment. Public school students in Florida are tasked with taking multiple high-stakes assessments throughout their elementary, middle, and high school years. Their performance on these assessments is utilized to drive education decisions for the students, schools, and districts. Chapter One explores the background of high-stakes assessments in social studies, student motivations, and utilizing data to drive instruction to improve student performance. This introductory chapter will describe the research purpose and problem that guides current research, the significance of the study, and the research question, which will guide the methodology and data analysis. Key definitions are included to guide understanding of the basis of this research study.

Background

The federal government of the United States continues to invest billions of dollars into public schools with the hopes of showing improvement after multiple initiatives from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), yet student performance on multiple measures of success remains unchanged (Heflin, 2021; Klein, 2016). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 ushered in a culture of high stakes assessments to measure student progress over core benchmarks and standards (Ferrero, 2021; Heflin, 2021; Martin, 2018; Sears, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Common Core

Standards are the set of academic standards in reading/language arts/literacy and mathematics for what every kindergarten through 12th grade student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade level to be considered college or career-ready (Heflin, 2021). Under the direction of Governor DeSantis the Florida Department of Education has moved away from Common Core Standards towards B.E.S.T. (Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking), which includes ELA standards and a booklist that spans K-12, embeds Civics books and readings into ELA and eliminates math standards outside the norms (FLDOE, 2021i).

Social Studies is a late arrival to the high stakes testing in education with the advent of the Civics EOC for 7th graders and U.S. History EOC for high school students in 2014 (FLDOE, 2021a). High stakes testing for math and ELA has been ongoing in Florida since 1998 with FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test), administered to students grades three through eleven (FLDOE, 2021b). High stakes testing is defined as when results are used to make essential decisions that immediately affect students, teachers, and schools (Lewis, 2020; Patterson, 2019). The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act mandated that all students be tested in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school (Basile, 2019; Ferrero, 2021; Heflin, 2021; Kessler, 2018; Sears, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Student success on these assessments, especially in high school, was a fundamental requirement for high school graduation or possible retention in the lower grades (FLDOE, 2021b).

Ollila and Macy (2019) found that one of the unintended consequences of the NCLB of 2001 is the steady decline in the amount of time teachers spend on social studies in the elementary grades. At the elementary level, Civics concepts are introduced and learned, and students begin to apply these concepts daily (Ollila & Macy, 2019). The advent of increased high stakes assessments in the middle and upper grades in social studies has necessitated a strong

introduction of social studies curriculum in the primary grades. It is an importance for elementary students to create and developing a foundation of citizenship and an introduction to critical historic documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the fundamentals of the U.S. Constitution for later learning to build upon. This movement towards increased social studies instruction in the elementary grade levels should pay dividends as that foundation of core concepts is further developed in middle and high school (Masyada, 2021; Ollila & Macy, 2019).

Civics in Florida came about with the passing of the Sandra Day O'Connor Act in 2010 (Koo, 2011; Masyada, 2021). Civics in Florida was implemented to combat the concerns that there are students and an electorate, Florida residents 18 years and older who vote and do not adequately understand their role as active citizens (FLDOE, 2021f). One reason the Civics program in Florida began was because of the presidential election of 2000; candidates for president, Governor George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore, along with the rest of the United States, were waiting for over 5 weeks while the state of Florida tried to decide how to count the votes in Palm Beach County (Dudley, 2001). The voters of Palm Beach County failed to adequately mark their ballot, leading to new terms such as "hanging chads" becoming part of the vernacular (Elving, 2018). There was a Supreme Court challenge, *Bush v. Gore*, where the court ruled that it was being asked to do something courts do not do, which makes election law, and the court's ruling stated that task would be better handled by the Florida legislature (Oyez, 2021). Ultimately, Governor Bush prevailed by 537 votes, captured Florida's 25 Electoral College Votes, and became the 43rd President of the United States (Elving, 2018). The chaos from this election was further noted by society's lack of understanding of the American Justice System and democracy, and thus a greater need for Civics education (Pettis, 2014).

The Sandra Day O'Connor Act is named after the first female Supreme Court Justice in the United States, Sandra Day O'Connor (iCivics, 2022). Justice O'Connor, in her retirement, has been a champion for Civics education in the United States (Arizona Governor, 2020). This act in Florida, per the legislation, mandates that all middle grade students pass a comprehensive Civics exam worth 30% of their final grade to matriculate to high school. This act establishes a curriculum of 40 benchmarks and 4 reporting categories: Origins and Purposes of Law and Government; Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities of Citizens; Government Policies and Political Processes; Organization and Function of Government (FLDOE, 2021a; Koo, 2011; Masyada, 2021). The challenge for educators and students is that in this climate of high-stakes testing, this Civics exam is a one-and-done activity (Masyada, 2021). When the instruction leading up to the high-stakes testing is data-driven, students have a better opportunity to identify their needs for remediation before testing to perform to their best abilities (Cai et al., 2020). This is assuming that their educator has successfully applied the data, and is technologically, statistically, and pedagogically aware (Dunn et al., 2013). It is important to note that the legislation creating this Civics Act passed both chambers of the Florida Legislature unanimously (FLDOE, 2021f).

Historical Overview

As NCLB has led to increased accountability measures, along with CCSS changes, states have increased rigor in the courses with high stakes assessments, accelerating data-driven instruction practices (Cai et al., 2020; Martin, 2018). The underlying reasoning is that better instructional decisions can be made regarding best practices when there is sound data (Cai et al., 2020). Multiple districts are utilizing progress monitoring exams (PMEs) to drive these instructional practices; however, the unintended consequences of various assessments such as testing fatigue can impact student motivation and results (Martin, 2018). Testing fatigue is the

reality that students stop taking the tests seriously after so much high stakes testing (Martin, 2018).

Christensen's research into disruptive theory in education reveals that students come to school for two reasons: 1) to feel successful 2) to see friends (Christensen et al., 2017; Flavin, 2021; Likar & Trcek, 2020). As educators, this social driver as a primary motivator for student learning is rarely at the forefront of our decisions to guide student learning. When the utilization of data to drive decisions regarding student learning is employed, educators often fail to take into consideration the role of the stakeholders in these decisions, namely our students and teachers and how these decisions ultimately impact them (Christensen et al., 2017) As we consider these truths and our understanding of the use of data in becoming disruptive in our schools, i.e., the increased use of technology and innovations in education delivery, this data-driven focus may hurt students' self-efficacy (Christensen et al., 2017; Hamilton & Reeves, 2021). This has been especially true in the COVID era to our most vulnerable and lower social strata students and families navigating remote learning (Naz et al., 2021).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has caused states to make difficult decisions regarding when to assess students and cancel these assessments (FLDOE, 2021c; Solochek, 2020). The questions of these assessments' effectiveness and long-term and short-term impacts on students and faculty have been debated since the legislation was passed in 2001 (Duffy et al., 2009). When NCLB was passed and signed into law by President George W. Bush, it was heralded as a great example of bi-partisan legislation that improves schools and student outcomes (Klein, 2015). In December of 2015, President Barack Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which limits much of the Federal government's impact on education policy

and gives states more authority over education decisions and thus increases local control of the schools (Klein, 2016).

Society-at-Large

The Spring of 2020 saw schools face challenges few could fathom as COVID-19 spread as a pandemic across the county. Some schools remained open, students navigated the new protocols well, others remained locked down, and students remained home and learned online (Muldoon, 2021). As schools made the decisions to close and or quarantine students based on COVID-19 protocols, Muldoon (2021) states that school leader transparency around data-driven decision-making was a key to successfully navigating competing stakeholder interests and the importance of making decisions on facts and not gut decisions. Sinclair (2019) wrote that the educator's intended consequence often becomes the learner's unintended consequence. This means the intended outcome is often missed. The truth of all history is that the final result of political activity often bears a minimum relation to what was initially intended (Smith, 2021; Weber, 1996). The truth in the research as to the "why" students come to school was lost for many students due to these data-driven decisions related to COVID-19 (Christensen et al., 2017; Muldoon, 2021).

As school districts and teachers rely more and more on PMEs to gauge student readiness to successfully navigate these high-stakes assessments, even in the era of COVID, the PMEs must reflect the benchmarks so that they are a fair measure of student achievement and guide instructional best-practice (Herman, 2017; Martin, 2018). The data from these PMEs must be reliable and valid tools to drive instruction and predictive results on future high-stakes summative assessments (Martin, 2018). Districts and schools continue to utilize these results to drive funding for programs and gauge teacher effectiveness, increasing the pressure for success

for all stakeholders: students, teachers, and school-based administrators (FLDOE, 2021d; Lewis, 2020).

Practice makes perfect, or so we have been told from day one. If you want to improve, you practice. From surgeons to athletes and anyone working to develop a more robust skill set, we dedicated practice makes a difference (Estrella, 2012; Moulton et al., 2006; Seitz, 2017). We desire excellence in those professionals we seek for treatments, such as doctors and surgeons, and we hope for this performance standard in our students. With high stakes assessments becoming the norm, the challenge is preparing our students for success. Teron (2019) found that locally developed assessments in the ELA arena for middle grades students have positive impacts on students, especially those students with differing ability levels and lower socioeconomic status. The results specifically demonstrated a positive effect and more than half of the school year of growth. The critical aspect of this is the need for the locally developed interim assessments to be valid and reliable measures of student performance in that they align with curriculum and state benchmarks. The struggle stems from districts and schools using commercially available assessment resources that do not align with the benchmarks and curriculum used by the schools and thus do not provide reliable results and are poor practices (Stefancik, 2019; Teron, 2019).

Stefancik (2019) further found that the debate regarding educational testing and its purpose continues to be a concern for all stakeholders. Some of the district or locally developed assessments are being criticized and are seen as a part of the “over-testing” trend in education. The struggle for schools and teachers is the concern that students may be burned out on testing and thus less than motivated to perform their best. This further leads to the problem of the loss of

data these locally developed assessments provide to best support students on the state mandated assessments (Stefancik, 2019; Teron, 2019).

Theoretical Background

Constructivist theory is the basis for the Civics curriculum used in many Florida schools created by the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship (FJCC) and is the basis for the benchmarks and Florida EOC assessment (FJCC, 2022; FLDOE, 2021a; Humphries, 2012). Constructivism builds upon the idea students learn best by experiencing and interacting with the emphasis on collaboration. This is a cognitive learning theory in that students construct their knowledge. Knowledge is constructed or built upon other expertise and life experiences. These insights students develop become foundations for continued learning (Perry, 1999; WGU, 2020).

Instead of describing some reality or truth, constructivism describes how students or learners engage with objects in the environment and grow knowledge or learn from them (Humphries, 2012). Constructivism is ultimately based on the foundation that education is suitable for students and society and good for our Republic, and it operates from that foothold that seeks to understand how people best make sense of these experiences in and out of the classroom (Humphries, 2012). Constructivism is a theory about experience and learning, and as such, it is a theory based on research and practice. This experience guides the generation of knowledge, both formal and informal, and informs the processes and procedures of educators as they lead their students and classrooms (Humphries, 2012). In this way, constructivism implies that learning is knowledge students construct through these experiences. The 40 Civics benchmarks build upon these ideals (FLDOE, 2022b). See Appendix B for a complete list of models.

Edgell (2020) conducted research that examined the shift from Florida's former FCAT assessments to the FSA assessments. The focus was on proficiency rates between third graders' ELA (English language arts) scores and math scores between Title 1 public elementary schools and non-Title 1 public elementary schools and found that deficiency rates decreased under the FSA assessments in both ELA and math. This means that more students, regardless of school background, are having success on the new FSA assessments (Edgell, 2020). There is a possibility that these recent successes are related to more teachers utilizing data-driven instruction.

Brown (2021) looked at Florida statewide science exams for 5th and 8th graders with results indicating a decrease in student performance from 2019 to 2021, which is attributed to COVID-19 pandemic when students moved towards a hybrid learning mode. In the 5th grade assessments, students dropped from a 53% passing rate in 2019 to a 47% passing rate in 2021. The 8th grade assessments demonstrated a similar trend, with 45% passing in 2021 compared to 48% in 2019. There were no Florida statewide assessments in 2020 due to COVID-19 (Brown, 2021; FLDOE, 2021c).

Bocel (2021) looked at math assessments and predictive variables for 8th grade students at a Florida charter school on statewide assessments across race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Utilizing a multilayer linear regression analysis, the results showed that performance was significant between midyear assessments (PMEs) and state end of the course exams (EOCs). The results were substantial for 8th grade algebra, geometry, and general math scores. There were no significant differences based on race, gender, or socioeconomic status (Bocel, 2021). These results highlight the importance of the predictive relationship between progress monitoring and statewide assessments.

Martin (2018) used post hoc data to establish the predictive relationship between district based PME assessments and the Florida assessments for mathematics and ELA grade 10 FSA. This study examined correlational relationships between the PME benchmark assessments and the Florida assessments. The results indicate strong and moderately strong correlations between the results of the PME assessments and the FSA assessments (Martin, 2018). Even though research has shown the importance of PME assessments informing data-driven instruction, there is a gap in the literature regarding a predictive relationship between the performance on a middle school social studies practice review and performance on the state of Florida social studies assessment. There is a need to study the predictive relationship between PME exams and the FSA assessments in social studies 6-12 (Bocel, 2021).

Problem Statement

Although many studies are looking at Florida assessments and academic disciplines of math, ELA, and science, there is minimal research looking at Florida assessments and social studies. Schools and districts do not know if their locally developed benchmark assessments accurately predict student achievement on the Florida state assessments for social studies (Lee, 2021; Martin, 2018). In the current environment of high stakes testing, the results of these assessments are used to drive student course progression, school grades, and faculty evaluations. Students must pass the Civics EOC in 7th grade or an equivalent exam before the completion of 12th grade to graduate from a Florida Public School or State University (FLDOE, 2023a; FLDOE, 2023b). The need for accurate data regarding the predictability of these PME assessments and the State of Florida assessments is paramount for all stakeholders (Herman, 2017; Martin, 2018; Marzano, 2018).

Numerous research studies have looked at data-driven instruction and the utilization of that data to drive instructional decisions to bring about the best outcomes for stakeholders, but few have focused on the predictability of that data toward future results on high-stakes assessments (Edgell, 2020; Herman, 2017; Martin, 2018). While there is substantial and significant research regarding ELA, science, and mathematics, there is limited research and knowledge regarding middle school social studies (Bocel, 2021; Lee, 2021). The literature gap arises in social studies, high stakes testing, and the predictive relationship between the data and student outcomes (Bocel, 2021). The goal of this research is to determine if there is a predictive relationship between scores on a practice Civics assessment and the statewide Civics assessment for 7th grade middle students (Bocel, 2021; Mulhall, 2018).

Furgione et al. (2018) called for additional research regarding the Florida Civics EOC assessment as the growth for standardized assessment hits all core education subjects. There is little to no research regarding the Florida Civics EOC assessment. Their research focused on the entire state, and now they are calling for more precise studies of districts and schools regarding the Civics EOC assessment and student performance (Furgione et al., 2018). While their focus was the entire state of Florida, with data broken down by race, gender, and socio-economic status, the results indicate the following. That white students are outperforming their Hispanic and African American peers. These results lead to questions regarding the validity of the exam and the need for additional studies with future research focusing on more generalized themes on a smaller scale (Furgione et al., 2018). There is a gap in the literature regarding the effectiveness of progress monitoring assessments and their relationship to performance on state mandated end-of-course assessments. The problem is that the literature has not fully addressed the effectiveness

of progress monitoring assessments and their relationship to performance on state mandated end of the course assessments.

Purpose Statement

This quantitative predictive correlation study aims to determine if locally developed benchmark assessments accurately predict student achievement on middle school high-stakes social studies state mandated assessments. The variables are the Predictive variable: score on the practice assessment. The Criterion variable: score on the statewide assessment. Student performance on the practice assessment predicts student achievement (score) on the Florida State mandated EOC assessment is the question being considered. The middle grades Civics assessment is a State of Florida mandated exam which counts for 30% of the student's course grade (FLDOE, 2021e). This exam impacts students, schools, and educators because the data generated by these assessments impact educator evaluations (FLDOE, 2021d; Marzano, 2018). Data from PME assessments are used to drive student instruction and remediation. However, there are questions related to the predictability of the data as it relates to student performance on the high-stakes Civics Florida mandated assessment (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2019; FLDOE, 2021d; Martin, 2018). The population for this study was 360 middle school students ranging from 12 to 14 years old from a suburban Central Florida charter school who were enrolled in a yearlong Civics class.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will add relevance to the currently available literature and impact the best practices of local districts. First, it may validate the predictability and strength of the relationship between district developed PME Civics assessments and the State of Florida Civics assessment (Bocel, 2021; Lee, 2021; Martin, 2018). Districts may use this data to instill more

robust and rigorous PME Civics assessments to increase teacher efficacy (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2019). This study provides district, local school, and teacher leaders data-driven results that can improve best practices, increase their effectiveness in teaching Civics, and improve student outcomes on the state mandated EOC assessment.

A 2018 study on high stakes testing in Civics found that teachers value the prestige of being part of the EOC conversation. The concern these educators raise is that instead of teaching to students' mastery of the material, they are teaching to a pacing guide, which is driving the classroom culture. These teachers face increased pressure to cover the curriculum and raise test scores. This study calls for more research in the Civics EOC and driving instructional best practices, which this study seeks to do (Mulhall, 2018).

The results may also help drive teacher best practices regarding using the data to drive instruction. If students and teachers are aware of areas needing remediation, curriculum changes and planning can be made to affect student outcomes best. By utilizing data to drive instruction, significant student remediation on key benchmarks can occur and provide more opportunities for student success, which drives student motivation to attend school (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2019; Christensen et al., 2017). Building upon the work of Bocel (2021), Martin (2018), Mulhall (2018), and Edgell (2020), this study provides new insights and growth regarding the predictability of district developed Civics assessments and their relationship to student success on the mandated Florida Civics assessment (Bocel, 2021; FLDOE, 2021d; Lee, 2021).

Research Question

RQ1: Can the performance on a locally developed Civics assessment predict a student's performance on the statewide Civics assessment?

Definitions

1. *Common Core State Standards* - A set of academic standards in reading/language arts/literacy and mathematics for what every student in grades kindergarten through 12th grade should know and be able to do in the stated subject areas at the end of each grade to be considered college or career ready (Heflin, 2021).
2. *Data-driven instruction* – Data-driven instruction is the practice of educators using data gleaned from summative and formative assessments for remediation and drive instruction so that students may be successful in mastery of course material (Cai et al., 2020; Dunn et al., 2013).
3. *Disruptive Innovation theory* - Applying economic theory to education to further harness the use of technology to improve the instruction and delivery of education (Christensen et al., 2017).
4. *End-of-Course Exam - EOC* - The comprehensive exam that measures a student's performance for mastery of the taught material (FLDOE, 2021c).
5. *Florida Department of Education - FLDOE* - FLDOE is the policy making body of the Florida government responsible for the standards and content for Florida schools (FLDOE, 2021d).
6. *No Child Left Behind Act - NCLBA* - NCLBA is the Federal legislation passed in 2002 that instituted high stakes testing in math and reading for grades 3-8 and 1 year of high school to assess student's abilities to read and do math (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).
7. *Performance* - The ability of a student to achieve a grade of 3 or higher on the Civics EOC exam and demonstrate satisfactory achievement (FLDOE, 2021e).

8. *Progress Monitoring Exams* - Summative assessments developed by schools and districts to gauge student mastery of material covered throughout instruction: 9 weeks or a semester. The data received from these assessments are used to drive remediation and future instruction (Conoyer et al., 2020).
9. *Sandra Day O'Connor Act* - Named for the former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, this act is the foundation for Civics education across the United States, which includes ideals on citizenship, the rule of law, and our foundational documents, including the Declaration of Independence, The U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights (FLDOE, 2021f).
10. *Unintended consequences* - Unintended Consequences is the opposite outcome of what was intended based on the decision which was made. An example would be the NCLBA, which caused social studies education in elementary schools to be sacrificed so that more focus could be placed on reading and mathematics instruction (Reardon et al., 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A literature review examined Civics education in Florida and nationally, the drivers of this movement, and the Sandra Day O'Connor Act. High stakes testing and student motivations were also considered due to the No Child Left Behind legislation and the advent of high stakes testing across the core curriculum and the impact these assessments have on students. This chapter examines literature relevant to the research topic. First, the focus is on the theoretical framework of constructivist theory, which provides a philosophical explanation regarding experiential student learning. Further emphasis looks to Civics in Florida, the motivations of students impacted by the school climate of high stakes testing as mandated by federal legislation, and the impact this has on stakeholders. In conclusion a synthesis of theories and ideals regarding student performance on high stakes testing was completed. The literature review will demonstrate a gap in research on high stakes testing in Civics in Florida.

Theoretical Framework

There are a multitude of educational theories which researchers and educators have written and promoted to best impact student learning. Constructivism is one such theory and was selected as a basis of this study because it is an approved framework for student learning and achievement in Florida public schools. The constructivist approach to student learning focuses on principles and methods of instruction designed to generate knowledge and meaning from interaction between experiences and ideas (FLDOE, 2022a). These constructivism ideals require that schools and educators develop curriculum which challenges students to consider new ways of thinking to grow their knowledge (Schunk, 2016). John Dewey, who lived from 1859 to 1952, is viewed as the father of the constructivist theory. Dewey focused on a new curriculum instead

of the traditionalist views of reading, writing and arithmetic and shifted towards broad sets of learning activities: doing and making, history and geography, and science (Guttek, 2013). The ideal being that students learn best from experience.

This shift in thinking by constructionists from the assumptions that classic information processing theorists hold regarding learning and understanding fail to be supported by evidence found as students and individuals interact with the world around them. These assumptions include thinking resides in the mind rather with interactions with others and situations; some learning and thinking are uniform across situations; some individuals and situations foster and develop higher order thinking than others; experiences and innate abilities creates opportunities to think and growth than just formal situations (Schunk, 2016). The constructivists fail to accept these assumptions because the evidence indicates that thinking and learning occur are constructed by individuals as a function of these situations (Bredo, 1997; Schunk, 2016). This shift in thinking further builds upon the idea that constructivism is an explanation about the nature of learning as opposed to a theory (Schunk, 2016).

These ideals regarding constructivism build further upon the idea that knowledge is not imposed from outside of people but is formed within based on their beliefs and experiences. These truths which are constructed, developed, and fostered, are truth to them and not necessarily anyone else. With knowledge based on individual's beliefs and experiences, all people have different life experiences which impact their knowledge acquisition (Schunk, 2016). This leads to the key belief that constructivism causes people to be active learners and develop knowledge for themselves (Schunk, 2016; Simpson, 2002). When applied to curriculum and instruction in a classroom setting, these beliefs foster a multiple perspective learning

environment where learners are actively involved with content from manipulation of materials, social interactions, and interactions across disciplines (Schunk, 2016).

Part of this learning experience Dewey espoused is centered on the idea of collaboration with students working together to solve problems (Guttek, 2013; Perry, 1999). This experience was not tied to the classroom but outside the building as well and is connected to Plato's ideas that education is such a powerful force it could not be relegated to the school's four walls. Education is such a great cultural force that it had the possibility of creating a great American democratic community. If learning was only relegated to the schoolhouse walls our lives and world would be a much dimmer existence (Guttek, 2013).

Social interactions have a value in the constructivists framework which focuses on the acquiring of skills and knowledge. This knowledge is formed inside an individual and is unique to the individual as they experience these events in context. This ideal is further demonstrated based on the belief that people are active learners and develop knowledge through interacting with an integrated curriculum through a multiple perspective construct (Schunk, 2016). Followers of these constructivist views believe that students learn best when the classroom environment is relatively stable, that there is a continued cognitive structure, in which learning is built upon this prior knowledge (Perry, 1999; Piaget, 1968).

The constructivism system has grown in its application with the belief that knowledge is formed through connections which are made by learners as they interact with people, ideas, and life experiences (Schunk, 2016; Srivastava, 2021; Xu, 2019). They place a high value on the social interactions which spur on the acquiring of skills and knowledge. This knowledge is formed inside an individual and is unique to the individual as they experience these events in context. This ideal is further demonstrated based on the belief that people are active learners and

develop knowledge through interacting with an integrated curriculum through a multiple perspective construct (Schunk, 2016).

Piaget's theory of cognitive development is founded on some of the basic tenants of constructivism. From the developmental processes Piaget highlights the ideal of equilibration which is part of the motivational construct behind cognitive development. Piaget further builds upon the stages of development: Sensorimotor birth to 2 years old; Preoperational ages 2 to 7; Concrete operational age 7 to 11; Formal operational ages 11 to adult. Concrete operational and Formal operational build upon constructivism ideals and are facilitated in their growth due to educational experiences from attending school and peer interactions (Flavell, 2020; Schunk, 2016).

Vygotsky's constructivist social cultural theory puts more emphasis on the social environment's roles and development of learning in children and students (McLeod, 2018; Schunk, 2016). The major focus of the social interaction piece is fundamental as is Vygotsky's processes, and he believes that role of the community is fundamental to defining what is learned (McLeod, 2018). In a shift from Piaget, Vygotsky believes social learning comes before development. Where Piaget believes there is little importance to the sociocultural aspect, Vygotsky believed there was a strong connection. Piaget focus is on cognitive constructivist and Vygotsky's focus is social constructivist (McLeod, 2018). This plays out and expresses itself well within the framework and focus of the FJCC and FLDOE in their curriculum and benchmark development as their assessments (Humphries, 2012).

Perry (1999) accepted the ideas of Piaget that learners adapt and develop new information by creating cognitive structures, however differed from Piaget in that he believed that gender, race, culture, and socioeconomic class have a greater influence on learning than just

cognitive structures. These outside influences are what students bring to school every day and cause students to construct their learning experiences based on these factors. Consider a lecture in which three students take away a different key aspect from the lecture based on their individual learning experiences. Student 1 is looking for just the right information to generate the correct answer, while student 2 is looking for clues to seek the correct answer on his own, and student 3 is seeking to frame the correct answer based on the context of their experience. All of these experiences will lead students to construct various meanings related to the content. The constructivist aspects of Civics in Florida challenges students to solve problems, to seek information, and build upon that content (FLDOE, 2022a). From this foundation, the goal is for students to have the tools to generate the correct responses to assessment questions (Masyada, 2021).

Related Literature

Extensive research has been conducted regarding Civics in Florida, high stakes testing, achievement rates, and student motivations. These factors all play a role in student success on the State Civics EOC assessment. Humphries (2012) study on novice Civics teachers, Mulhall (2018) study regarding high stakes testing on instructional choices, Carey (2017) study of teaching Civics in a climate of high stakes testing, and Furgione et al. (2018) study of the Civics end-of-course assessment touched on these themes among others. There are multiple studies looking at ELA, Science, and Math high stakes assessments and student performance, but there is limited research on Social Studies and Civics. The related literature will reveal the importance of exploring predicting student performance on Civics EOC assessments and these relationships.

Civics in Florida

As stated in Chapter 1 Civics in Florida came about from the passing of the Sandra Day O'Connor Act in 2010. This legislation requires that Civics be taught during the middle grades of public schools in Florida, and it is primarily taught in 7th grade. The legislation also stated that there be an end-of-course exam which must be passed to matriculate to high school and that this exam would count for 30% of the students' final course grade (Masyada, 2021). Civics was now at the forefront of the high stakes testing which was already occurring in ELA, Math, and Science.

These assessments are necessitated due to the NCLB legislation, ESSA, and CCSS which married Federal school funding to student performance on high-stakes testing (Heflin, 2021; Klein, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The results from these exams have implications for both students and schools. The student's success or failure on the exam impacts their final grade for a yearlong course in Civics. For middle schools and school districts, performance on these exams account for 14.5% of the final school grade, which can impact funding per student and course offerings for the coming school year. Teachers in Florida receive bonuses in the form of A+ money when the school earns an 'A' grade (FLDOE, 2021a; FLDOE, 2023d). This mandated comprehensive assessment is administered in the late spring of each school year where there are anywhere from 52 to 55 multiple choice questions, 48 of which are scored, which the students have 160 minutes to complete. The Florida Department of Education scores 48 of the questions with 4 to 7 questions being practice questions for the coming year's exams, and students do not know which questions are counted and which are samples. The FLDOE keeps this information private due to the secure nature of the EOC exams (FLDOE, 2021a).

The Civics curriculum in Florida is driven by constructivist ideals due to the application aspects of the learning and assessment required by the state of Florida (FLDOE, 2022b). The Civics EOC assessment requires students to apply the knowledge to solve the problems presented rather than just rote memorization of facts (Furgione et al., 2018). Constructivism is a theory on which PME and EOC exams are built, even though the exam is a criterion referenced exam. Florida school districts have developed PMEs assessments to cover benchmarks coordinated with curriculum pacing guides which mirror the FDOE EOC in question construction and content. The FLDOE with partners such as the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship (FJCC) has developed the EOC to cover all 40 Civics benchmarks and provides clarification statements, content limits, stimulus attributes and content focus (FJCC, 2022; FLDOE, 2022b; Lake County School District, 2022a). The questions which are developed are divided between low, medium, and high complexity, and roughly 65% of them have a stimulus associated with them. Most of the questions are classified as medium level complexity. This constructive aspect requires students to demonstrate and apply knowledge to successfully answer the multiple-choice questions (FLDOE, 2022b).

The Florida EOC Civics assessment is developed to challenge students to successfully navigate, and answer questions aligned with Civics content measuring one benchmark, and the questions appropriateness regarding to content experience and difficulty, as well as cognitive development and reading level. The assessment is built on a constructivist's framework utilizing Webb's depth of knowledge (DOK) levels. The reasoning for classifying test items by DOK levels of complexity allow for the assessment to require students to recall, understand, analyze, and do and it is built upon the foundation of knowledge the student acquires from matriculating through the yearlong Civics class. The cognitive complexity of the multiple-choice test items

may be affected by the distractors, the grade level of the assessment, and that a high level of cognitive complexity of the topic covered by the benchmark. While one benchmark may be a low-level question for one version of the exam, the same benchmark may be at a higher cognitive complexity level on the other version while still asking a similar question (FLDOE, 2022b).

The complexity of the Civics assessment questions is divided into low, moderate, and high complexity. Low complexity assessment questions may require students to solve a one-step problem. Moderate complexity usually requires multiple steps, and high complexity items require students to analyze and synthesize information to successfully complete the question. Figure 1 includes a low complexity question, while Figure 2 contains a medium complexity question, and Figure 3 contains a high complexity question. All Civics assessment questions are built upon the Florida Civics Benchmarks. See Appendix B for a complete list of the Civics benchmarks.

Figure 1

Example of a Low Complexity EOC Question

Benchmark SS.7.C.1.3

Describe how English policies and responses to colonial concerns led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence.

Which document addressed colonial concerns about English policies?

A. Declaration of Independence

B. Mayflower Compact,

Figure 1 continued

C. U.S. Constitution,

D. Bill of Rights

Note. The correct response is A – the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence listed the colonists’ concerns about English policies and the impact of those English policies on the lives of the colonists (FLDOE, 2022b; FJCC, 2022).

Figure 2*Example of a Medium Complexity EOC Question*

Benchmark SS.7.C.1.3

The quotes below are from historical documents. “From imposing taxes on us without our consent”

Source: Declaration of Independence. “All bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives” Source: Article I Section 7 U.S. Constitution.

What is the relationship between these concepts?

- A. Both declare to the world why the colonists wanted freedom from England.
- B. Both represent actions taken by the colonists to enforce English policies.
- C. Both are in response to English policies imposed upon the colonists.
- D. Both are responses by England to actions of the colonists.

Note. The correct response is C. Both are in response to English policies imposed on the colonists.

Both quotes reflect policies imposed on the colonists by the English including taxes enacted without the consent of the colonists. The House of Representatives (elected directly by the people) is the consent of the colonists. The House of Representatives (elected directly by the people) is responsible for introducing tax bills (FLDOE, 2022b; FJCC, 2022).

Figure 3*Example of a High Complexity Question*

Benchmark SS.7.C.1.3

Why did Parliament eventually repeal the Stamp Act, which taxed goods such as newspapers and playing cards?

- A. The colonists established a blockade against British goods.
- B. The colonists were able to produce their own goods.
- C. The colonists started destroying British goods.
- D. The colonists began boycotting British goods.

Note. The correct response is D – the colonists began boycotting British goods. The colonists boycotted British goods which eventually led Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act (FLDOE, 2022b; FJCC, 2022).

The Civics EOC questions, especially Level 2 and Level 3 questions require students to build upon their background knowledge to successfully answer the questions and solve the problems (FLDOE, 2021a). By successfully analyzing and navigating the stimulus provided within the EOC questions students are actively utilizing problem solving skills and demonstrating knowledge of the concepts. These exam questions challenge students to demonstrate their learning and knowledge. These are not questions one can easily guess the correct answer or eliminate detractors like matching questions. Students are required to build directly upon the foundational framework of knowledge gleaned from their Civics coursework to successfully navigate these assessments (FLDOE, 2021a). This further demonstrates the core ideal of constructivism that learning is an active process and not a passive activity (Perry, 1999).

Achievement rates for the Florida Civics EOC are good if you consider 71% passing rate good. The downside of this is 29% of the middle school students in Florida did not successfully pass the EOC with a 3 or higher on a 5-point Likert scale. The 71% passing rate is, however, a 10% growth from 2014 (Masyada, 2021). Part of the growth is related to more schools and districts putting emphasis on preparing for high-stakes assessments through following curriculum pacing guides and utilizing data-driven instruction gleaned from the PME data (FLDOE, 2022a; FJCC, 2022; Lake County School District, 2022a; Pinellas County School Board, 2020).

In 2022 the results of the Florida Civics EOC demonstrated 5% gains in the statewide average from 64% in 2021 to 69% passing the assessment in 2022 with a Level 3 score or higher on 5-point Likert scale (FLDOE, 2022c). In all, some 211,119 students took the exam with 1,757 students taking it a second time in either middle or high school. Some counties in Florida showed strong declines attributed to the COVID pandemic, such as Bradford County, a rural county in the North Central part of Florida demonstrated a 16-point decline from 63% passing to a 47% passing rate. Another rural county in the North Central part of Florida, Suwanee County showed a gain from 59% in 2021 to 71% in 2022 in the successful passing rate of a 3 or higher. Most Florida counties demonstrated modest gains from 1% to 5% points over the 2021 to the 2022 school years (FLDOE, 2022c). Overall, coming off a pandemic year, students continue to strive and perform well on the Civics EOC (Masyada, 2021).

Student Motivations

Motivation is defined by Schunk (2016) as the process of instigating and sustaining goal-oriented behavior. The idea that motivation is a key component of learning is seen in the process of students setting goals and behaviors to attain their goals. The role of motivation in driving

student success is not a new concept, and research has found that students who set better learning goals, implement more effective learning strategies monitor their progress, expend more effort and set more challenging pursuits when the current goals are achieved (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). Willis-Frye and Willis-Frye (2015) wrote in their book of four key components to learning: choice, effort, grit, and motivation. Choice is that hardwired component which has evolved overtime from life and death decisions to impacts in the classroom where students have more choices, they stay more engaged in what is being taught. When effort is considered, it is about the journey, not the destination that the learner grows and navigates. With every single step forward, students move towards attaining their goals.

Grit is defined as resilience and persistence in the face of challenges. It is the intrinsic attribute that causes students to dig in and press on. President Calvin Coolidge famously stated that “Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not, the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan ‘press on’ has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race” (Beling et al., 2018, p.1).

The fourth ingredient which impacts learning is motivation. In motivation, the dopamine neurotransmitter which is released into the brain as learning occurs and as the brain becomes addicted to dopamine continually seeks more learning. Educators encourage this growth in motivation as they show more interest in their students, and their lives. Some students are more intrinsically motivated to acquire new knowledge, and as we unlock motivation in our students, they will grow in their successes (Bogacz, 2020; Willis-Frye & Willis-Frye, 2015). Bogacz (2020) further stated that as dopamine is released in the brain the student computes the desired

reward and the reward expected from their current actions, and that this is seen in learning. The key to student learning is finding out what motivates them, intrinsically or extrinsically, to want to help motivate students to desire to learn (Willis-Frye & Willis-Frye, 2015). For students to be successful in Civics high stakes assessments, there is little doubt that motivation and grit play key roles as students and teachers navigate these exercises (Carey, 2017).

In Christensen et al. (2017) book *Disrupting Class* regarding disruptive innovation theory in applying these ideas to education discusses many aspects of life which students could hire for the job that schools offer. Students are primarily hiring schools to help them feel successful and to see friends, and education is a byproduct of these other primary needs. When we consider the other opportunities in the community there are for students to hire to do that job, examples include: Athletics and other extracurricular activities; Cars to drive around town in; Negative influences such as dropping out of school, gangs. These other competing factors require educators to find opportunities to motivate students so that they can have these needs for success and social interactions met in the classroom. The need to provide students opportunities to experience success is a critical construct of education. These ideals of students hiring outside activities to do the job of education go hand in hand with the constructivist view of students building on their successes and Schunk and Zimmerman's (2012) views on the role of motivation impacting self-regulated learning.

The motivation and the understanding of the development of competences in the domains of literacy, mathematics, science, and the social sciences are all tied to constructivism. When we consider and build upon the ideals that students come to school for social interactions and to feel successful, the connection between motivation and constructivist theory is apparent (Christensen et al., 2017; Schunk, 2016). The foundational blocks supplied in constructivism build upon

multiple learning styles as students construct their own knowledge which is true of all cognitive learning theories. Building upon student success and experience, the data-driven instruction which PME's provide educators are paramount to contributing to student success in these processes and high-stakes assessments (Bertrand & Marsh, 2021; Borden-King et al., 2020; Schunk, 2016).

The importance of students being successful is a major factor in learning. Students can and will be more motivated when they are well prepared for assessments, both formative and summative (Gutek, 2013; Kulasegaram & Rangachari, 2018). In this era of high stakes testing and data-driven instruction it is imperative to provide students with every tool available to be successful. As accountability has increased, teachers and administrators have utilized data-driven instruction and instructional decisions as a tool to drive increased student outcomes on assessments (Bertrand & Marsh, 2021). In this push for higher scores on assessments, Bullough (2020) argued that we are losing the intellectual teacher who possesses an inventive mind who loves to ponder the best way to motivate students whether through criticism, new ideas, and or experiment with educational aims which may go beyond the standardized test mastery.

Student motivation based on grade inflation creates a false narrative for students to build their educational pursuits upon. The idea of grade inflation and the everyone gets a gold star mentality plays out in the statement President George W. Bush made regarding this movement as the "soft bigotry of low expectations." If the student's grade fails to represent their success in the learning process, teachers are only setting students up for future failures (Kulasegaram & Rangachari, 2018; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). The challenge of this process is seen in the contrast between the highly motivated student and less motivated student. The student who is highly motivated and earns a high grade is more likely to feel satisfied and ready to take on

harder tasks than the student who is less motivated and does not perform as well. Motivational process plays a key role in student success (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012).

One driver of students feeling successful occurs when students are challenged to achieve and push themselves further than they originally thought possible (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). Gershenson (2020) found that when students have a more demanding and rigorous teacher, their performance on standardized tests increases. The effect of the rigorous teacher in math class causes students learn more by being challenged to think and perform. The results of the study indicate a demanding teacher's influence lasting 2 years past the end of the math class (Gershenson, 2020). However, we also see high school math students who did not pass the end-of-course exam the previous year who are offered the opportunity to retake the class through self-guided instruction based on their own progress of mastering the material presented via Algebra Nation demonstrating significant gains as self-directed learners. These students who put forth the time and effort are shown to have higher success rates in passing the EOC in Algebra 1 (Leite et al., 2019).

The Florida Civics initiative builds upon these ideals of rigorous expectations and content which challenge students to learn to think and apply the concepts being presented in the curriculum to ultimately succeed in passing the Civics EOC (FJCC, 2022; FLDOE, 2021g). Bonotti and Zech (2022) found that often in civic education some societies focus more on teaching political parties and the mechanics of government while overlooking public virtues which drive everyday human interactions. The constructivist view expressed in Florida benchmarks strives to incorporate both civic knowledge and action so that students are engaged inside and outside of the classroom (FJCC, 2022). These ideals continue to be evident as Florida students in high school and middle school exercise their political voices in protesting issues they

disagree with by walking out of class in peaceful protest of legislation to speaking out on school shootings (Vera & Alvarado, 2022).

Katz (2022) found that middle school students at Jewish day schools who were interviewed regarding their understanding and making connections with Holocaust education and these connections to views of democratic civic engagements. They made the case for the need of greater understanding between student's knowledge and appreciation for the themes of the Holocaust and the universal messages of tolerance and understanding of other cultures which is a theme of civics. These Holocaust themes are a key part of the Florida Standards in both the Civics and ELA standards for middle grades (CPalms, 2022). The importance of teaching these standards with fidelity across all Florida public and charter middle schools has been ongoing for multiple years (FDOE, 2022a). The significance of teaching this topic with fidelity seems even more pressing as we learn of many mainstream celebrities and political leaders caught in anti-Semitic rants and discourse namely due to their own lack of knowledge or bigotry (Zitner, 2022).

Cramer and Fons (2020) made the connections between immigration, the drive for citizenship and the role of civics education in these processes. As undocumented immigrants enter the United States, and they begin their path towards citizenship, one of the primary drivers of that process is the civics class where individual freedoms and rights are taught. Those foundational freedoms found and espoused in the Bill of Rights are known around the world as the U.S. continues to expand its sphere of influence. History tells us of instances such as this where Vietnamese Boat People trekking to the United States, the protests which erupted in Tiananmen Square in China in the 1980's, and as hundreds of thousands of people migrate through Central America towards the Southern border of the United States in hope of a brighter future (Brady et al., 2022; Hackman, 2022). The story of the United States is that these Civics

ideals are spread through word of mouth, textbooks, written letters, and throughout the history of our involvement in world affairs as a nation. Cramer and Fons (2020) found that most of the textbooks used in Civics classrooms promote the perspective that those students in the class are already citizens and not seeking citizenship, when in fact there are many people in the student populations who come from varied immigrant backgrounds who are disconnected from that citizenship security. It is imperative that educators know their students to make the most vital connections in teaching the content.

Another group who struggles to make the connections espoused in the Bill of Rights and the U.S. Constitution are those students who come from poverty backgrounds seen in many inner-city areas as well as areas that are seeing many undocumented immigrants (Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020). The importance of assimilating into the community and becoming a contributing member of society is not lost on these groups. The calls for immigration reform, especially for those classified as “Dreamers,” those young people who were brought to the United States in their childhood years but had no true legal status because their parents failed to come legally (Kidder, 2022). The effort to pass a Federal Dream Act or other Federal immigration law reforms continues to be a struggle due to political polarization. This polarization shows itself when politicians and voters are more apt to vilify opposing political parties than solve issues facing the country (Kidder, 2022). Based on the Constitution, there are three ways for someone to become a U.S. Citizen: 1) Law of Soil – you are born in the United States or U.S. Territory; 2) Law of Blood – you are born to a parent (primarily your mother) who is a U.S. Citizen anywhere in the world; 3) The Naturalization Process – you complete the 6 step process to attain citizenship (FJCC, 2023; Hart, 2009).

The 6 Step Naturalization process ties to constructivism in that a process builds upon these foundational steps. The first step is immigration, which means that immigrants arrive in the United States with a legal visa. The second step is permanent residency. The immigrant applies for permanent resident status. The third step is the application process. This process requires the legal resident who has been in the United States for a minimum of 5 years legally to apply for citizenship. The fourth step is an interview to determine the immigrant's background and time in the U.S. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services conduct this process and includes an F.B.I. background check. The fifth step is to successfully pass a test in English on Civics, which includes U.S. History questions and essential knowledge citizens should know. The sixth step is a Ceremony where these new citizens take the Oath of Allegiance and receive their Certificates of Citizenship (FJCC, 2023; Hart, 2009). See Appendix H for a further explanation of the Naturalization Process.

Naturalized Citizens possess all of the rights and, responsibilities, and obligations of Citizens by Law of Blood and Law of Soil, except they cannot run for President of the United States (FJCC, 2023; Hart, 2009). These obligations and citizenship responsibilities are core values espoused in the Florida Civics curriculum (FJCC, 2022). The obligations of citizens are those "have to" items we are required to do under the law, and if we fail to do them, there are penalties involved. Some of these obligations are jury duty, paying taxes, obeying the laws, and males 18-25 must register with the Selective Service to defend the nation. Responsibilities of citizenship are those things we should do for the common good to make our communities and spheres of influence more positive. These responsibilities of citizenship include volunteering, voting, attending civic meetings, petitioning the government, running for office, and community service. These are the core values that citizens of the United States pledge and promise to do by

being a U.S. Citizen or going through the naturalization process and taking the Oath of Allegiance.

Recent studies by the Christensen Institute regarding student motivations and disruptive innovation point toward the importance of building relationships with students, especially in the advent of online classes and learning (Fisher, 2020). While technology has driven the delivery of educational content these past few years, the transformative piece is in the connection that is built between students, teachers, mentors, and peers. The technology offers the connection, yet it does not provide the relationship that occurs in the school setting. Economists and sociologists have identified this as social capital, the value building relationships generates (Fisher, 2020).

The power of connections in the business and academic community is well known. Whether it is providing an introduction or reference for a job opportunity, most educators have experienced firsthand these connections. Students, too, can benefit from these opportunities both in the short and long term. Relationships impact everything from students' grades to their persistence to graduate college. Most jobs and opportunities come from the benefits of these relationships (Fisher, 2020). With the power of these relationships driving student motivations and successes, the importance of helping students best succeed at their endeavors and high stakes testing is paramount (Christensen et al., 2017; FLDOE, 2021a;).

High Stakes Testing

Social Studies and Civics are late arrivals to the high stakes testing arena in education. High-stakes testing is when results are used to make essential decisions that immediately affect students, teachers, and schools (Au, 2009). Due to these high stakes' tests in reading and math, numerous educators across the country reported a reduction in the amount of time given to social studies instruction. Many researchers believe that a factor driving student success on these high

stakes assessments is background knowledge, which is acquired at the elementary level driving the need for increased social studies instruction at the elementary or primary level (Carey, 2017; Hill-Anderson et al., 2012; Masyada, 2021; Renter et al., 2006).

There are various factors that impact student performance on high stakes assessments. These include background knowledge, socioeconomic status, the experience of the teacher, school climate, student motivation, data-driven instruction. The challenge schools face is mitigating these components or aspects so that students may be successful, considering the influence these factors have on the results of these assessments and thus impact stakeholders, students, teachers, and schools, among others. There have been numerous studies concerning ELA, math, and science performance on EOC assessments but not very much on social studies, namely due to social studies late arrival to the high-stake testing arena (Edgell, 2020; Gershenson, 2020; Hemelt & Swiderski, 2021; Lo & Kisa, 2021).

Humphries (2012) asserted that civic education is a primary purpose of schooling in America and that preparing students for their role as adults as engaged citizens in their communities is essential for our collective success as a country. Unfortunately, the shifts to high stakes assessments due to NCLB, CCC, and ESSA social studies education in the elementary grades where these values are instilled have gone from a priority to a passing thought (Masyada, 2021). Lo and Kisa (2021) found that middle school was a good time to introduce civics content because students are very receptive to that civic-mindedness outlook. They also found that there is already a gap in civic knowledge due to the low priority of social studies in the primary grades. One concern about the civic engagement gap occurs among students by race, socioeconomic status, and gender. Additional concerns have been voiced regarding teaching

civic-mindedness as an application or merely as a subject matter to help address and narrow these achievement gaps seen by demographic differences (Furgione et al., 2018).

History tells us that civic education was once a thriving and critical piece in the education puzzle. Clark (2021) points to this truth in his book *Local civics with a national purpose: civic education origins at Shortridge High School* that, how two teachers drove civics education at their high school in Indianapolis, Indiana. Clark (2021) focuses on how the colleagues at this school, Arthur Dunns and Laura Donnanher, with their collegial outlook towards curriculum development, changed civics education in the United States. Their work greatly impacted progressives and early constructivists in their move to make civics education and extracurricular activities, i.e., community service, and activities outside of the classroom, more meaningful for students.

Contemporary thinkers question whether we are doing enough within the Civics curriculum to create strong local, national, and global citizens. Jackson (2019) stated that education is about living in society and the world. Some of the images we see in the world are starkly different than what we see in our local communities, yet we have a responsibility as citizens of the world to act. Kennedy (2019) has taken a more pragmatic view in that he questions global events that suggest civics education needs to be reframed. These include Brexit in England, the election of a right-wing populist president in the United States, and the rise of anti-democratic governments in Europe. These are complex topics for teachers, students, and schools to take on, especially when students are more concerned with social media and their motivations for being in school (Christensen et al., 2017).

The high stakes testing piece of the puzzle has been a driver of many of the decisions in the classroom because the results hold significant meaning for the students, teachers, and the

school (FLDOE, 2021d). Florida is bucking the trend that many states are following in requiring students to pass a high stakes assessment based on the United States Citizenship and Immigration exam to graduate high school and state funded colleges and universities (Carey, 2017). The Florida EOC assessment requires students to apply what they have learned to answer these questions successfully. Note that this assessment is typically administered to 7th graders and counts for 30% of their final Civics course grade, yet success in middle school on this assessment will count for high school and college (Carey, 2017; FLDOE, 2023e). The Florida high stakes assessment is a great contrast to the assessments developed in Pennsylvania which are locally developed by educators in the schools (Pixabay, 2021). This trend allows the teachers to format the assessment as they best see fit to meet their students' needs where the Florida EOC assessment is a secure assessment in that teachers are forbidden from seeing test questions or content (FLDOE, 2021h; Pixabay, 2021).

California is moving towards a locally developed assessment in Civics which is focused on student success. This is especially true for ESOL students in that California desires that this population be prepared to participate in society as workers, parents, and community members (Howard, 2021). This is in great contrast to Florida where all students are mandated to take the exam, regardless of language status. If a student is enrolled in the course, the expectation is they will test or their lack of score will be counted against the student and the school where it is expected that 95% of the students enrolled will take the assessment (FLDOE, 2021h). Florida's position stems to be one of if the student is enrolled in school and present, they will be assessed. Due to push back from the community and schools, the state has become somewhat less Draconian in that if a student is ill, or becomes ill during the assessment, they are allowed to stop the exam and complete it during the testing window (FLDOE, 2023a).

Helping students to be successful in this high-stake assessment culture requires educators to wear many hats. Educators in Florida utilize multiple tools to help students navigate these assessments. These include teaching to student mastery of content over pacing guides, bootcamps, and tutoring to try and make sure their students are well prepared for the EOC assessments. Teachers are using a variety of instructional resources to cover the assessed benchmarks such as Quizlets, review questions, and content videos. Some teachers have fostered an open classroom culture where students are encouraged to express their opinions, and these students are found to be more engaged in the learning. Of the 411 teachers surveyed, close to half responded they were not able to cover all the 40 benchmarks with fidelity, and that over two-thirds of the teachers report that multiple benchmarks are very difficult to teach. Civics' teachers stated that there are many students who have variety of needs which makes the learning environment challenging, and thus meeting student's needs becomes a priority over content. Those benchmarks that teachers and students seem to struggle with the most include: Evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of U.S. citizens, and determine methods of active participation in society; Demonstrate understanding of the principles, functions, and organization of government; Demonstrate understanding of the origins and purposes of government, law, and the American political system (Jacques, 2016).

Historically since the beginning of Florida Civics EOC testing in 2014, there have been a series of benchmarks that students struggle with from across school districts and the state. There has been much speculation among Civics educators as to whether it is a failure to align the curriculum with the content being assessed or is it the way these questions on this content are being worded or asked (FJCC, 2022). The vocabulary and concepts are difficult to comprehend, and it is assumed by the state that these students understand these terms and their meanings.

These benchmarks which students struggle with include those found in the first reporting category, The Origins and Purposes of Laws and Government: 1.1, 1.7, and 1.8. Those benchmarks which challenge students in reporting category three, Government Policies and Political Processes include: 2.9, 2.10 and 4.3. Category 4 benchmarks found to be challenging from the Organization and Function of Government include: 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 (FJCC, 2022; PCSB, 2020). Category 2, Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities of Citizens includes benchmarks students tend to strive in because the content is familiar and one reinforced across the elementary curriculum (FJCC, 2022; PSCB, 2020). See Figure 4 for a breakdown and description of the benchmarks. See Appendix B for a complete list of Benchmarks.

Figure 4

Civics Benchmarks Students Historically Struggle with the EOC.

Category One: The Origins and Purpose of Government

SS.7.C.1.1 Recognize how Enlightenment ideas including Montesquieu's view of separation of power and John Locke's theories related to natural law and how Locke's social contract influenced the Founding Fathers.

SS.7.C.1.7 Describe how the Constitution limits the powers of government through separation of powers and checks and balances.

SS.7.C.1.8 Explain the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists regarding the ratification of the Constitution and inclusion of a bill of rights.

Category Three: Government Policies and Political Processes

SS.7.C.2.9 Evaluate candidates for political office by analyzing their qualifications, experience, issue-based platforms, debates, and political ads.

Figure 4 Continued

SS.7.C.2.10 Examine the impact of media, individuals, and interest groups on monitoring and influencing government.

SS.7.C.4.3 Describe examples of how the United States has dealt with international conflicts.

Category Four: Organization and Function of Government

SS.7.C.3.1 Compare different forms of government (direct democracy, representative democracy, socialism, communism, monarchy, oligarchy, autocracy).

SS.7.C.3.2 Compare different forms of government (direct democracy, representative democracy, socialism, communism, monarchy, oligarchy, autocracy).

SS.7.C.3.3 Illustrate the structure and function (three branches of government established in Articles I, II, and III with corresponding powers) of government in the United States as established in the Constitution.

Note. Category Two: Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities of Citizens does not include any benchmarks which students underperform. For a complete list of benchmarks, see Appendix B (Pinellas County School Board, 2020).

Building upon the idea that educators are struggling to connect with certain benchmarks as are students, a 2021 study reported on the need for educators to look for ways to connect with younger students to expand Civics education and learning opportunities. The four keys found to make the best connections with students include: The importance of adults to guide their learning; The significance of developmentally matched activities; Opportunities for growth with the marginalized youth in service and leadership; Providing opportunities for students to have a civic purpose in serving the community. Their research concludes with the decree that communities are crying out for the benefits solid civics' education provides the students and thus

its added benefit to the community (Bauml et al., 2021). These ideals go hand in hand with the belief that the foundational Civics understanding must be instilled in the younger elementary Social Studies curriculum (FJCC, 2022).

Research has been trying to make sense of high stakes testing in Civics in Florida and the impact these assessment requirements have on educators and their students. Civics education in Florida is the critical component of the middle school curriculum due to the results of the EOC assessment counting for 30% of the student's final grades. These assessment scores further impact the school's grades and teacher evaluations. The bottom line is that now Civics is tested so now Civics is taught. The new normal is that Civic teachers have now joined the club of high stakes testing with math and ELA teachers, and the results of their students' assessments impact all stakeholders (Carey, 2017).

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis recently praised Florida Civics and U.S. History teachers for their student's increased success on EOC assessments for the 2022 school year. Governor DeSantis along with Florida Education Commissioner Manny Diaz emphasized the growth in student's scores in Civics by 5%points and U.S. History growth by 2%points from 2021 Spring assessments. The increase in scores is attributed to the overhaul of the Civics curriculum and requiring Civics literacy exams, encouraging debate teams in high school, and rewarding teachers for getting additional training. Governor DeSantis claims that this shift in Civics and U.S. History is promoting accuracy over ideological agendas (Powers, 2022).

The Civic Education Initiative (CEI) has sought to narrow the gap between disengagement and political knowledge of students. One of their concerns is the potential for marginalized students to be underrepresented in the political arena. A focus of legislation for many states has been the new requirement that to graduate high school, you must pass a

citizenship test based on the 100 basic facts from the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. These 100 facts are fairly easy to memorize and do not require application of knowledge as does the Florida Civics EOC due to its constructivism foundation (Brezicha & Mitra, 2019; FLDOE, 2022a).

Even with the many concerns related to CEI, in Florida we have seen firsthand what a robust Civics middle school curriculum can accomplish in teaching students to be effective and engaged. The February 2018 shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School galvanized many of the students to exercise their First Amendment Rights and protest gun laws. These students were articulate, were engaged, and were effective in speaking to the issues facing them and their community (Brezicha & Mitra, 2019; FDLE, 2019). Florida has moved forward and passed a CEI requirement for graduation from all public high schools. The Florida Civics Literacy Exam is based on content from the middle school curriculum (FLDOE, 2022a).

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), who are part of Tufts University, has been partnering with Florida Joint Center for Citizenship (FJCC), University of Central Florida (UCF), University of Florida (UF), University of South Florida (USF), FLDOE, and Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors (FASSS) to create the Florida Partnership for Civic Learning which is working to narrow the achievement gaps seen in Civics EOC assessment scores (2015). The research indicates that there is a connection between students' EOC scores and the students' literacy score. There is thus a need to strengthen Civics' literacy in K-7 grades to improve EOC performance (CIRCLE, 2015; FJCC, 2022). In as much as the Civics EOC is a constructivist assessment which requires the application of knowledge to solve the questions there is also the literacy factor to consider. This means that Civics' teachers are also literacy teachers as well as social studies teachers (FJCC, 2022).

One push by CIRCLE which is occurring in Florida schools has been the inclusion of the 6 Essential Practices for Civic education. These include providing instruction in government, history, law, and democracy. Incorporate discussion of current, local, national, and international issues and events in the classroom. Design and implement programs that provide students with the opportunity to apply what they learn through community service. Offer extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to be involved in their communities. Encourage student participation student government. Encourage students' participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures (Carey, 2017; CIRCLE, 2015).

There are many outside influences which have an impact on a student's EOC assessment performance. Students throughout Florida are assessed on their knowledge of Civics and government, and these scores may be influenced by outside variables outside of students' control. These variables include such items as where they live and the school they attend, their demographics, socioeconomic status, literacy skills, attendance record, and other factors. Because there is an incomplete record of what the student knows due to the lack of assessment on actionable content such as service projects or experiencing the responsibilities of citizenship, there is an incomplete picture on the Civics assessment data and there is a need for further analysis and research (Furgione et al., 2018).

Bennett (2020) stated the importance of teaching student's real content at an early age. By starting early and teaching historical documents, schools are teaching these students to reason and to think. Florida is doing this the right way; in that they have a comprehensive Civics curriculum. This curriculum states standards that need to be addressed in elementary, middle, and high school and now with the comprehensive Civics exam to graduate high school and

Florida universities, these skills are even more important (Blankley, 2022). This shift in curriculum is part of Florida's plan to be a leader in Civics education nationally (Najarro, 2022).

Najarro (2022) further wrote in Education Week that Florida's new standards seek to instill strong feelings of patriotism. There are questions being raised to whether these standards and ideals will catch on in other states. Florida Governor DeSantis is very pleased with the results these changes to the civics standards seem to be having in the schools. As Civics test scores rise, these results seem to indicate a positive trend as seen in the state testing of middle and high school students on these standards (FLDOE, 2022c; Powers, 2022).

There are some who see Florida Governor Ron DeSantis moves in the Civics arena as a part of his push towards a presidential run in 2024. Even the Florida legislature made a change to state law which would allow the sitting governor to run for higher office without having to resign. The loosening of this qualification first occurred in 2008 when then Republican Governor Charlie Crist was being considered as a Vice Presidential running mate of Arizona Senator John McCain (Downey, 2022). Governor DeSantis continues to make moves that strive to embolden him with the strong right movement in Florida and the United States who will guide the Republican Party nomination process by continuing to challenge anything that he qualifies as "woke" or "corrupting of" the educational process in Florida (Norton, 2023). The contradiction between teaching students to think and solve problems as Civics does seem to be opposition to these latest moves by the FLDOE and the Florida government driving and guiding these decisions (Gancarski, 2022; Norton, 2023).

Another trend impacting social studies and Florida Civics is the debate initiative which is a key part of the new social studies standards for 2023 and 2024 school years. This new debate initiative is a key piece in Governor DeSantis Civics curriculum which is tailored to increase

student participation in the democratic process (Targeted News Service, 2022). After successful pilot runs in limited counties in 2021 and 2022, the trend is that all Florida county schools will be participating in this project through their Civics and high school Social Studies classes. Bonotti and Zech (2022) stated the importance of creating well rounded students and future citizens through the opportunities provided via strong Civics education.

Education is central to creating well-informed citizens capable of participating in social and political life. However, civic education in some liberal democratic societies has often focused on teaching students the mechanics and structure of party politics, overlooking many of the public virtues that help to sustain democratic life (Bonotti & Zech, 2022). The challenge which seems to have been compounded by the COVID lockdowns has been the loss of civility in politics and everyday life. This lack of civility has always had undercurrents in society but seems to be more front and center now than ever before. This is evident in lawlessness of some societal groups, pushes to defund the police, and even in the rhetoric found in political campaigns where negative campaigning is now front and center (Relman, 2020).

The push for Civics education is not just a quality desired by the United States but is also being seen around the world in developing countries (Alemayehu et al., 2021). In Ethiopia in secondary school, students are being offered Civics and ethical education with the main objective to produce citizens who are competent and rational. Results indicate that teachers' beliefs drive the curriculum adoptions and implementation. For these initiatives to be more widely accepted and put into practice, more professional development emphasizing reflective practices will improve the outcomes for the students to achieve these Civic based educational goals (Alemayehu et al., 2021).

Feitosa (2020) in a study of civics education and civic duty looking at data from 23 countries investigating civics education and voter turnout found that increased voter turnout occurs based on educational classrooms learning environments. Political scientists have told us over the years that low or unequal voter turnout can lead to disparities in representation in government from issues addressed and agendas put forth (Dassonville et al., 2017; Feitosa, 2020). President Obama in 2009 famously stated that “elections have consequences” (Newsmax TV, 2022). This means that although we have seen voter turnout decline in several countries, in countries where civics courses are emphasized, along with active learning strategies, and open classroom environments have the strongest and increased voter turnout due to the emphasis on civic duty (Feitosa, 2020).

Florida appears to be on the right track if the goal is to produce a more informed and politically active electorate (Brezicha & Mitra, 2019). Education is central to creating well-informed citizens who are actively engaged in both social and political components in their communities (Bonotti & Zech, 2022). Evidence of the success of these endeavors is evident in the political participation of Florida students and their exercise of their constitutional rights such as peaceful protest and freedom of speech (Vera & Alvarado, 2022). Part of this success in engaging students outside of the classroom has been through teachers utilizing iCivics in their classrooms as a supplemental resource which emphasizes student engagement outside of the classrooms by taking on social and political issues to bring about change (iCivics, 2022).

Many states are looking to revise and rewrite their assessment methods, and additional research is needed to support these efforts. There is a shortage of research on Florida's Civics EOC assessment. Standardized testing is often scrutinized as a poor measure of student achievement for it does not consider demographic differences and understanding how disparity

shows itself on these assessments continues to be a concern. This current quantitative, non-experimental study was designed to identify varying trends within the Civics EOC assessments results for 2013 through 2016 (Furgione et al., 2018).

The results of this study indicated that there is a disparity in performance on the Civics EOC between white students, who are outperforming all of their peers, both Hispanic and African American. Gender results indicate white and Hispanic females are outperforming their male counterparts, but not by significant margins. African American females outperform African American males for all years reviewed on average. The greatest disparity occurred between those students deemed economically disadvantaged, who on average performed 20% less than students who were non-economically disadvantaged (Furgione et al., 2018).

The bias displayed in this review of the Florida Civics EOC assessment shows there is a gap in the performance between students based on race and economic status. These results impact students, schools, and teachers because of the 30% impact on a student's final course grade, school grades, and teacher evaluations (FLDOE, 2021a; Furgione et al., 2018). There is a need for more research on the Civics EOC assessment which helps students, schools, and teachers to be more successful in their educational goals. There is a shortage of research on Florida's Civics EOC Assessment and a need for further study (Furgione et al., 2018).

Mulhall (2018) in her study on the perspectives of Florida middle school Civics teachers and the impact of high-stakes assessments found that while Civics teachers appreciate the increased prestige the Civics EOC has brought to Social Studies, the increased pressure to meet pacing guide expectations to prepare students for the EOC made for many shortfalls in the classroom. These include a shift from student-centered learning to content-driven classes with a focus on benchmarks and loss of choice for students and educators. There were numerous

recommendations based on the results of the study. These include a longitudinal study focusing on student engagement and assessment success; studies driven towards increasing student success on assessments; more student engagement and experience learning; focus on elementary programs with rigorous Social Studies content.

Summary

Student performance on high stakes assessments has been a driver in education reform since the arrival of NCLB, ESSA, and CCSS (Klein, 2015, 2016). Extensive research has been conducted working to identify and drive student success in ELA, math, and science EOCs, but not social studies or Civics. Learning theories have been studied and student motivations for education have been considered. The constructivist views have impacted and continue to impact Civics curriculum and EOC assessment construction and development (FJCC, 2022). The gap in the literature exists in the need for additional studies between PME Civics assessments and the relationship between Florida state Civics assessments (Bocel, 2021; Furgione et al., 2018; Martin, 2018; Mulhall, 2018). The bottom line is student success and how do we help our students to be successful when these high-stakes assessments impact them both directly and indirectly.

Middle school and 7th grade in particular is a pivotal year in a student's education journey. Grades and test scores drive many future options especially when you consider that these scores help determine what high school course offerings, magnet programs, and advanced placement courses students qualify for. This is due to 8th grade grades and assessment results coming out at the end of the Spring semester and during the Summer when those decisions have already had to have been made regarding placements for the coming school year (Lake County School District, 2022b). Providing students with the best information and choices is paramount

for them to be successful in their education endeavors. Understanding how students may be best prepared and improve their success on these assessments is a key component in their higher learning journey (Lake County School District, 2022b).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental, correlation design study is to investigate the predictive relationship between student performance on a Civics end-of-course practice assessment and student performance on the state of Florida Civics End-of-Course assessment. Archival data collected through a web-based online practice Civics assessment administered in a middle school and the results of the State of Florida Civics assessment were analyzed via bivariate correlational statistics. Chapter 3 covers the setting, participants, instruments, measures, research design, and data analysis are discussed.

Design

The design selected for this research study was a non-experimental, quantitative, correlation design (Lee, 2021; Warner, 2021). The nonexperimental nature of this research is utilized because there is no manipulation of an independent variable in this study (Gail et al., 2007; Warner, 2021). The use of quantitative research is appropriate because this study is gathering numerical data and is subjecting it to statistical analysis (Gail et al., 2007). The reason for selecting correlational research design was to examine the relationship between the predictor variable: performance or score on a practice assessment; and the criterion variable: performance or score on the state-mandated assessment. Utilizing a correlational design was appropriate because the study investigated the relationship between variables (Gail et al., 2007). Correlational research allowed the study to examine multiple variables, combined and separately, affect and outcome. This design also understood the strength of the relationship being studied. The emphasis of this study was on the predictability of the criterion, student performance on the state-mandated assessment, as measured by the performance on the practice assessment (Gail et

al., 2007; Lee, 2021). A correlation statistic is utilized to determine the strength of the relationship in predicting performance between the two variables. Quantitative data will be gathered, and analysis will be through the utilization of bivariate correlational statistics to measure the strength of the relationship between student performance on the practice assessment and the state Civics assessment.

This study was conducted utilizing archival data generated from two groups of 7th grade students' performance on a social studies practice assessment and their performance on the state-mandated end-of-course assessment approximately 8 weeks later. The data utilized was generated during the Spring of 2021 and Spring of 2022 school years from a charter school in Central Florida. Convenience sampling was utilized due to the researcher's relationship with the school and the researcher understands that the results of the study will be generalized (Gail et al., 2007). The students' range in age from 12 to 14 and are approximately 47.3% male, and 52.7% female (Lake County School District, 2021).

Research Question

The issues to be addressed in this study stem from the fact that schools do not know if district or locally developed benchmark assessments are accurate measures of predicting student performance on high-stakes or EOC assessments (Martin, 2018; Marzano, 2018). The purpose of this quantitative correlational study is to determine the relationship between performance on a practice Civics EOC and the performance on the State of Florida Civics EOC. The following questions are being considered:

RQ1: Can the performance on a locally developed Civics assessment predict a student's performance on the statewide Civics assessment?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis for this study is:

H₀1: There is no significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable, the score on the statewide assessment and the predictor variable, the score on the practice assessment.

Participants and Setting

The participants of this study will consist of 7th grade students from a semi-rural school district in Central Florida who attend a charter school and have taken Civics in the 2020 - 2021 or 2021 - 2022 school year. The students' range in age from 12 to 14 and are approximately 47.3% male, and 52.7% female (Lake County School District, 2021). They are all enrolled in a 7th grade Civics course. This study will be conducted utilizing de-identifiable archival data generated from these two groups of 7th grade students' performance on a social studies Civics practice assessment and their performance on the state-mandated Civics end-of-course assessment approximately 8 weeks later. The data to be analyzed will have been generated during the Spring of 2021 and Spring of 2022 school years.

Population

The population for this non-experimental, quantitative correlation study are 7th grade students from a semi-rural Central Florida county who attend a public charter school. The student's range in age from 12 to 14 and are approximately 47.3% male, and 52.7% female (Lake County School District, 2021). The demographics of the school indicate that student body is approximately 54.4% White, 5.4% Multiracial, 29% Hispanic, 6.4% African American, 3.7% Asian, .9% Native American. There is not enough data to classify any as homeless, though 50.8% are considered Economically Disadvantaged. The ELL population is 2.4%, 10.5% of the

students have Disabilities, and 1.1% are classified as a Military Family (Lake County School District, 2021).

Convenience sampling is utilized due to the researchers' relationship with the school. This sample suits the purpose of this study, and the researcher understands that the results may generalize to this population. Gail et al., (2007) makes the point that utilizing convenient samples are valid and that it is better to utilize a convenient sample than not conduct a study. Due to the size of the population of approximately 360 students, there are enough data points to have a significant sample that exceeds a n of 66 when assuming a medium effect size with a statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level (Gail et al., 2007; Lake County School District, 2021; SOE, 2022).

Participants

The participants of this study were drawn from a de-identifiable data set sample of 7th grade students from a semi-rural school district in Central Florida who attend a charter school and have taken Civics in the 2020-2021 or 2021-2022 school years. Specifically, the participants in this study completed the Civics practice EOC assessment and the State of Florida Civics EOC assessment during their 7th grade school year. All students completed a district developed Civics practice assessment in late March or early April. These same students completed the state mandated Florida Civics EOC assessment approximately 6 weeks later. Both assessments were administered under state testing conditions (FLDOE, 2021h).

Setting

The setting for this study is two middle school Civics units in a Florida charter school. Both the practice Civics assessment and the State of Florida Civics EOC assessment were administered under state testing protocols. Students were divided into 10 testing groups. Students

with accommodations, 504 plans and IEPs, were tested according to their plans and accommodations were provided. The exams, which are secure tests, were administered following Florida Department of Education protocols (FLDOE, 2021h). The exams were computer based and accessed via Chromebook. The middle school building was locked down and all other students were held in their classrooms to minimize noise and distractions. The practice EOC was administered in late March of 2021 and late March of 2022. The State of Florida EOC in May 2021 and May 2022 following a schedule set by the State of Florida and Lake County Schools (Lake County School District, 2021).

Students are allotted 160 minutes to complete the Civics EOC. After 80 minutes, a 10-minute break is allotted for students to stand and stretch (but not talk). The second 80-minute cycle begins and after 160 minutes, if a student needs more time, they are allowed more time to finish the exam through the end of the normal school day. If the student needs to leave school, and they have begun the exam, the exam must be completed before they leave campus or it will not be scored (FLDOE, 2021h).

Instrumentation

The practice Civics EOC is a 65 item multiple-choice instrument which consists of questions of varying degrees of difficulty which mirror the construction of the State of Florida Civics EOC in the difficulty and level of questions (FLDOE, 2021h; Lake County School District, 2021). The instrument consists of 15% - 25% Level 1 questions (low difficulty), 45% - 65% Level II questions (medium difficulty), and 15% - 25% Level III questions (high difficulty). Between 60% and 75% of the questions have a stimulus associated with the question. Stimuli include graphics, passages to read, charts or graphs to interpret to answer the question correctly (FLDOE, 2021a).

The State of Florida Civics EOC is a secure instrument which is constructed following the same scope and sequence. The exam consists of 52 to 56 items, depending on the version the student was randomly assigned to take (FLDOE, 2021h). Due to the secure nature of the State of Florida Civics EOC, just general information regarding its construction, question types, and degree of question difficulty is known. Florida teachers are prohibited by FLDOE protocols from reading or knowing question content (FLDOE, 2021h). A Civics EOC Test Item Specifications book was produced which provides sample questions and defines the content and format of the test. This book provides the general guidelines for the development of all assessment questions for the Civics EOC including limits on what will and will not be assessed (FLDOE, 2022a).

School District Practice Civics EOC Instrument

The purpose of the School District Practice EOC assessment is to assess the 7th grade Civics student's performance and readiness to successfully complete the State of Florida Civics EOC and to identify patterns across student learning that can inform curriculum and instructional planning (Lake County School District, 2022c). The practice EOC has been developed by the district and covers all 40 of the State of Florida Civics benchmarks (See Appendix B for a description of the benchmarks). It is scored on a 5point Likert scale with 5 indicating mastery of the material, 4 indicating proficient of the material, 3 being satisfactory, 2 being below satisfactory, and 1 being inadequate (FLDOE, 2021a). The Likert scale has been interpreted to mean - 5 is an 'A' - 70% and above; 4 as a 'B' and 56% to 69%; 3 is a 'C' - 40% to 55%; 2 as a 'D' - 26% to 39%; 1 as a 'F' - 25% and below (Lake County School District, 2021). This is a computer-based instrument.

The Lake County Assessments (LSAs) were developed with the goal of providing educators with evidence of student learning. Warner (2021) stated that a good measure should be

reasonable reliable and that it should yield consistent results, and low reliability indicates the scores yield excessive measurement error. Cronbach's alpha is an internal consistency reliability coefficient that uses the mean of inter-item correlations to determine the reliability and consistency of an assessment. Scores range from 0 to 1, with an understanding that Cronbach's alpha of .70 and .80 is an acceptable level of reliability. Scores ranging from .81 to .90 is good and any scores above .91 is excellent. The LSA Civics Practice Assessment has a Cronbach's alpha of .83 which is in the good range (Teron, 2017; Warner, 2021).

The School District Practice Civics EOC consists of 65 multiple choice questions covering all 40 of the Florida Civics benchmarks. This practice exam is approximately 10 to 12 questions longer than the State of Florida Civics EOC. There is one correct answer for each question and there are four distractors - A,B,C, or D. Over 60% of the questions contain a stimulus which is used to correctly answer the question (Lake County School District, 2021). The grading scale for this exam mirrors the Florida State Civics EOC assessment. See Appendix C.

The National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) reviewed and verified the reliability of the Lake County Schools Practice Civics Assessment. The reliability refers to the consistency in which students will earn a certain score (Warner, 2021). The NCRTI report from 2018 states that the Lake County School's Practice Civics Assessment indicate a strong positive correlation that exceed .70 in reliability to scores earned on the Florida Civics assessment. This .70 score is considered convincing evidence of reliability to expected performance by students' scores on the Lake County Civics assessments and the Florida Civics assessments (Lake County School District, 2022c). The Lake County Schools division of Accountability and Assessments constructs the questions and content of the assessments to best mirror the content of the State of

Florida Civics EOC instrument (Lake County School District, 2022c). Teron (2017) in his study of LSA Civics interim assessments to reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of .8352. This means that LSA Civics assessment is reliable and has internal consistency.

Teron (2017) reported that the LSA Civics practice assessment was also a valid measure of student performance. However, no white paper or study was gleaned to support this assertion. With no way to adequately verify the construct validity of the LSA Civics practice assessment, it was determined that a criterion validity statistic would be calculated. Criterion validity is defined as assessing whether a test reflects a certain set of abilities (Laerd Statistics, 2023; Shuttlesworth, 2023). To assess the criterion validity, a Pearson's r was run to assess the relationship between the LSA Midyear assessment percent scores and LSA practice EOC assessment percent scores. Preliminary analysis showed the relationship to be linear with both variables normally distributed as assessed by the scatter plots and Normal Q plots (practice assessment and the LSA midterm practice assessment. A $n = 81$ were selected. There was a strong positive correlation with Pearson's $r = .745$ at the $p = .01$ level 2-tailed. This means there is a positive correlation between the two assessments and the LSA practice EOC assessment has criterion validity (Teron, 2017; Warner, 2021). See Table 1, Table 2 and Appendix I.

Table 1

LSA Practice EOC Assessment Validity

Correlations		LSA Practice EOC 2021	LSA Midterm 2021
LSA Practice EOC 2021	Pearson Correlation	1	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001

Table 1 continued

	N	81	81
LSA Midterm 2021	Pearson Correlation	.745**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	81	81

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note. The correlations between the LSA Midterm assessment and the LSA Practice assessment shows a strong positive correlation at .745 indicating significant validity by the National Center on Response to Intervention.

Table 2

LSA Practice EOC Assessment Reliability

Reliability		Scale: All Variables	
Case Processing Summary		N	%
Cases	Valid	81	57.0
	Excluded ^a	61	43.0
	Total	142	100.0

^a Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N
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Table 2 continued

.793	.854	2
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Note. The Cronbach's alpha score of .793 indicates the internal consistency of the assessment and shows it to be reliable.

The scores of the Florida Civics Assessment are based on the following Achievement Levels. Level 5 is considered mastery, and that it is highly likely the student will excel in the next grade or course. Level 4 is considered proficient, and the student is likely to excel in the next grade or course. Level 3 is rated satisfactory, and the student may need extra support for the next grade level or course. Level 2 is rated below satisfactory, and the student is likely to need substantial support for the next grade or course. Level 1 is considered inadequate, and the student is highly likely to need substantial support for the next course (FLDOE, 2023c). Civics scores on the Florida Statewide Assessment range from 325, the lowest 1, to 475, the highest 5 (FLDOE, 2023c). (See Appendix E for more scoring detail and explanation).

The practice instrument was administered following FLDOE protocols and time limits. Students were placed into their established testing groups by homerooms and 504 and IEP accommodations, i.e., small groups, read aloud, text to speak, extended time, etc. Students were provided a Chromebook computer, blank notepaper, and a pencil. Students were seated in the testing rooms with a minimum of 3 feet between each desk. Teachers were provided a script with detailed instructions that followed the FLDOE script. All cellphones, smartwatches and headphones or earbuds were collected and powered down. Chromebooks were placed in a lockdown mode to prevent students from switching screen to screen and monitored via Go Guardian. Students were given 120 minutes to answer 65 questions. Test for 60 minutes, a

5minute break, and then test for 50 minutes, 10minute warning given, and then the testing time ends at 120 minutes (FLDOE, 2021a). See Appendix A for a complete script.

The scoring procedure for the Practice Civics Assessment was completed via the Google Test form in that there was 1correct answer for each question. Once all students had completed the assessment, scores were released. Each question was worth 1 point each for a total of 65possible points earned. Percentages were created and followed the Florida Civics EOC assessment cut scores. A 5point Likert scale developed by the FLDOE was followed. See Appendix C and E for a complete breakdown of the scoring models (FLDOE, 2021h; Lake County School District, 2022a).

State of Florida Civics EOC Instrument

The State of Florida Civics EOC is a secure assessment developed by the FLDOE. The Florida Civics EOC has been developed by the state and covers all 40 of the State of Florida Civics benchmarks. The state of Florida Civics grading scale, which is a 5point Likert scale, was followed: Mastery - Level 5 scores 70% and higher; Proficient - Level 4 scores 55% to 69%; Satisfactory - Level 3 - 40% to 54%; Below Satisfactory - Level 2 - 26% to 39%; Level 1 - Inadequate - 25% and below (FLDOE, 2021a). The Likert scale has come to reflect: 5 = A grade, 4 = B grade, 3 = C grade, 2 = D grade, 1 = F grade. The State of Florida Civics EOC counts for 30% of the student's final grade for social studies for the school year (FLDOE, 2021h).

The Florida Civics EOC consists of 52 to 56 multiple choice questions depending on the version of the test randomly assigned. Of the 52 to 56 questions on the exam, only 48 are scored, 12 questions for each of the four categories. The Civics EOC is divided into 4 versions, A,B,C, or D and are assigned to students randomly. It covers all 40 of the Florida Civics benchmarks. This is a computer-based exam and there is one correct answer for each question and there are

four distractors - A,B,C, or D. Over 60% of the questions contain a stimulus which is used to correctly answer the question (FLDOE, 2021h). This is a secure assessment, that is only those students who take exam are allowed to see and read the questions. All Certified Teachers in Florida are forbidden from reading or discussing specific EOC question content. The FLDOE does release test specifications and content limits. The test construction is related to the test specifications released by FLDOE (2021a). The actual questions and content are not disclosed.

The purpose of the state of Florida Civics EOC assessment is to measure students' achievement of Florida's education standards. These assessments support instruction and student learning, and the results help stakeholders determine whether educational goals are being achieved (FLDOE, 2018a). The state of Florida Civics EOC assessment has been found to be both reliable and valid. This is indicated by the IRT Marginal Reliability score of .92 (FLDOE, 2018a). This means that while no academic assessment can measure student performance with perfect accuracy, an instrument that is reliable will have some students who will score higher than their true ability and some students will score lower than their true ability. This assessment, however, has been found to have a small error of measurement in these areas and is defined as reliable. The state of Florida Civics EOC assessment has a reliability rating of .92 (FLDOE, 2018b). The score interpretations from this assessment are viewed as having strong validity in that: the assessment aligns with the Florida standards; the construction of the assessment follows the test blueprint; all questions were reviewed for item bias, content fidelity, and appropriateness (FLDOE, 2018b). The Civics EOC is a measure of a students' achievement in the yearlong Civics class (FLDOE, 2018a). This is indicated by a Classification Accuracy Index with an overall score of .721, cut 1 and 2 scores .930, cut 2 and 3 scores .910, cut 3 and 4 scores .933, and cut 4 and 5 .951. This means that the overall cut scores accuracy rates are much higher

denoting the degree to which we can reliably differentiate student's performance with levels close to .9 (FLDOE, 2022e). The Civics EOC reliability coefficient based on the Cronbach's Alpha which is the most common measure, it was calculated on the State of Florida Civics EOC as .91(FLDOE, 2022e). This is viewed as being reliable (Warner, 2021). See Appendix F for complete Reliability and Validity statistics. Appendix F provides Reliability and Validity statistics for the Florida Civics EOC assessment.

EdInstruments is a part of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University and is developing a library of educational measurement tools to be a resource for scholars, educators, schools, districts, and the general public (2022). Edinstruments in 2016 reviewed the data for the Florida Civics EOC to determine the psychometrics measurements for validity and reliability of the instrument, and how well the instrument measures the construct, students' performance on the Florida Civics EOC. This criterion referenced study for the 52 to 56 item multiple choice exam found that of the $n = 176,261$ students who took the exam 123,839 passed with a 70% achievement level or higher (FLDOE, 2022d). EdInstruments (2022) found the Florida Civics EOC both reliable and valid. Content Validity in that the Florida Civics EOC is an accurate measure of student learning. Reliability in that the Florida Civics EOC is a consistent measure of student learning (EdInstruments, 2022).

Procedures

Correlational research studies can collect and analyze previously collected data sets (Creswell, 2018; Lee, 2021). With this study, previously reported quantitative data sets were collected from a controlled source, a public charter school in Central Florida. The specific data types were student's raw scores on a practice Civics end-of-course exam and the raw scores on the State of Florida Civics end-of-course exam. These quantitative data sets were appropriate for

correlational research because they allowed the study to examine the predictive relationship between the performance on the practice exam and the results on the State Civics EOC (Lee, 2021).

The first process is to complete IRB and CITI training through your institution to complete this study successfully and ethically. See Appendix D for IRB approval. No data should be gathered until all IRB approvals have been secured. Permission Request letters to the school indicating the request to use data from the District Practice Civics assessment scores and the State of Florida EOC assessment scores which is controlled by the institution, i.e. the school. All data will be scrubbed of any identifying information and will be kept secure in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's office and on a password protected database. See Appendix G for permission letters.

The State of Florida Civics EOC will be administered per State of Florida exam protocols within the announced window of testing dates in May of 2021 and May of 2022. Our goal is to test 100% of our students. The exam will allow for 160 minutes for testing, and if a student requires extra time, they are allowed to continue working for the remainder of the school day (FLDOE, 2021a). The school has recognized the importance of students taking practice exams to build up stamina and confidence and will continue to do so for the coming school year. The state mandates the dates or testing window for the EOC exam, and students who miss the test date have up to 2 weeks to complete the exam before the testing window closes (FLDOE, 2021a).

The State of Florida Civics EOC Data is not released until later in the school year, usually the first to middle of June. Due to COVID protocols, it was delayed until late July for 2021. When that data is released, it will be made de-identifiable and will be stored in a password protected data base and any hard copies will be kept in a locked file cabinet per IRB guidelines.

When the study is completed, all data will be shredded and disposed of via IRB guidelines. The script used to administer the practice assessment is located in Appendix A.

The State of Florida EOC data is released via a secure website from 4 to 8 weeks after the completion of the exam. Averages are given for the State of Florida, the district, and then individual schools. Scores are further broken down by individual students. Individual score reports are provided showing which of the 4 reporting categories students scored the most correct out of 12 questions per category. The categories include: 1) Origins and Purposes of Laws and Government; 2) Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities of Citizens; 3) Government Policies and Political Processes; 4) Organization and Function of Government. Because the exam is a secure test, students and teachers only know their performance in a category and not which questions were correct or missed. A complete breakdown of Benchmarks and Topic categories can be reviewed in Appendix B (FLDOE, 2022b; Florida Joint Center for Citizenship, 2023).

The data for this study will be post hoc de-identifiable data. All data will be kept secure and under password protected documents. Part of this study will make use of post hoc data via the Civics EOC results from the State of Florida and the Practice Civics EOC assessment. All this information is gathered as a regular part of the education process. The demographics information regarding the school population is available via the Florida Department of Education and the School Improvement Plan (FLDOE, 2022c; Lake County School District, 2021).

Data Analysis

The variables in this study were the score on the practices assessment, the predictive variable, and the score on the statewide assessment, the criterion variable. Bivariate regression was the statistics to be utilized in the data analysis. Bivariate regression is a statistical approach that is used for this study which uses a predictor variable to predict the outcome of the criterion

variable (Gail et al., 2007). Utilizing a bivariate regression was also appropriate in this non-experimental study that did not manipulate the variables and causal inferences were not made (Lee, 2021; Warner, 2021). A bivariate regression data analysis was selected because there was one predictor variable being used to investigate their effect on the one criterion variable (Lee, 2021; Warner, 2021).

There are seven assumptions which must be met for the proper statistical procedure to be a bivariate regression. The first assumption is that the criterion variable, the student performance on the state mandated assessment can be predicted on a 0 to 100 scale. The second assumption is that the predictor variable, student performance on the practice assessment will be measured at a continuous level. The third assumption is that there is a linear relationship between the criterion variable and the predictor variable which can be visualized by using a scatterplot to check for linearity. The fourth assumption is that there will be no significant outliers. An outlier is an observed data point that is very different from the value predicted by the regression equation, and on a scatterplot that is a data point vertically far away from the regression line. The outlier would have a negative effect on the regression analysis, which would in turn reduce the predictive accuracy. The fifth assumption states you should have independence of observations, which can be verified using the Durbin-Watson statistic. Durbin-Watson statistic can range from 0 to 4, and through our analysis we are looking for a value of approximately 2, which indicates that there is no correlation between residuals. The sixth assumption states that the data should show homoscedasticity which is where variances along the line of best fit remain similar as you move along the line. The seventh assumption states that there is a need to check that the residual errors of the regression line are normally distributed. The histogram or a Normal P-P Plot will be

utilized. SPSS Statistics is designed to run these processes and provide data outputs (Laerd Statistics, 2023; SOE, 2022).

The output from the Linear Regression analysis will include the R value, the R square, and the Standard Error of the Estimate. Based on the number, the R and the R square will either indicate a high or low degree of correlation. There may also be a moderate level of correlation if the number is in the middle. The R^2 indicates the total variation in the criterion variable, which can be explained by the predictor variable, student performance on the practice assessment (Laerd Statistics, 2023).

An ANOVA will be calculated, reporting how well the regression equation fits the data and predicting the criterion variable, performance on the state EOC Civics assessment. An alpha level of 0.05 will be used to determine statistical significance, $\alpha = .05$ (Gail et al., 2007). The statistical significance can be determined by looking at the Sig. column and seeing the strength of the $p < .05$, and whether or not this is a statistically significant predictor of the outcome of the criterion variable, performance on the State Civics assessment (Laerd Statistics, 2023). The coefficients provide the necessary information to predict performance on the State mandated assessment and based on the practice assessment performance. Positive correlations will indicate a predictable relationship between student performance on the practice Civics assessment and the State of Florida EOC assessment. The strength of the correlations will indicate the strength of the correlation (relationship) between the two instruments (Warner, 2021). On the basis of the sign for r , we know whether or not the X, Y relationship is positive or negative. The interpretation of the absolute values for r for the effect size of medium is based on the $n = 360$ participants. A statistical significance test and confidence interval (CI) for r will be run. The bivariate

regression analysis provides an equation corresponding to a line that predicts the Y scores from X scores (Warner, 2021).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter will provide the results from the data analysis. This chapter starts by reviewing the research question and the null hypothesis. Then, the chapter presents the descriptive statistics, followed by the linear regression analysis. The researcher conducted a bivariate linear regression analysis to investigate the predictive relationship between student performance on a practice assessment and student performance on the state EOC Civics assessment. A bivariate linear regression is a statistical approach that uses one predictor variable to predict the outcome of the criterion variable. This process also provided the correlation between the criterion variable and the predictor variable. The descriptive statistics report data such as mean and standard deviation for the criterion variable, performance or score on the state-mandated assessment, and the predictor variable, performance or score on a practice assessment. The findings from the bivariate linear regression address the research question and the null hypothesis. Assumption tests are summarized in the tables and figures. The statistical output from the bivariate linear regression displays the alpha level for statistical significance the correlation coefficient. The researcher used detailed statistics to report whether to reject or fail the null hypothesis.

Research Question

RQ1: Can the performance on a locally developed Civics assessment predict a student's performance on the statewide Civics assessment?

Null Hypothesis

H₀1: There is no significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable, the score on the statewide assessment and the predictor variable, the score on the practice assessment.

Descriptive Statistics

Using convenience sampling, 355 students practice assessment and State EOC assessment scores were analyzed. All 355 students completed both assessments. The students were all in 7th grade in a Central Florida Charter Public Charter School and ranged from 12 to 14 years old. The scores covered the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. Table 1 provides the range in scores and performance levels of both assessments.

Table 3

Description of Assessments Frequencies Means

Correlations	LSA Practice EOC 2021 & 2022	State of Florida EOC 2021 & 2022
<i>N</i>	355	355
Scores	36.83	32.72
Percentages	56.68	68.23
Performance Levels	3.32	3.90

Note. The scores for the LSA Practice EOC are out of a possible 65. The scores for the State of Florida EOC are out of a possible 48. The percentages for both LSA Practice EOC and the State of Florida EOC are out of 100. The performance levels are based on a 5-point Likert Scale with 5 being the highest level and 1 being the lowest and follows the same band scores for each level.

Table 4 describes the sample by reporting the mean, standard deviation, and median data

for the predictor and criterion variables. The data represent assessment scores for the 2020 - 2021 and 2021 - 2022 school years.

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Median of Criterion and Predictor Variables

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>
LSA Practice EOC Assessment	355	36.83	8.97	34.90
Florida EOC Assessment	355	32.72	8.00	32.72

Results

Data Screening

The researcher extracted de-identifiable post hoc data from a convenience sample of practice assessment scores and state of Florida EOC assessment scores and downloaded the data to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The data was reviewed multiple times to ensure the accuracy of the correct information being utilized. The data sets include all 355 students who completed both the practice assessment and the state of Florida EOC assessment from 2020 to 2022. No data was omitted. The practice assessment scores, and the state of Florida EOC assessment scores were imported into IBM SPSS, and the statistical software was used to finalize the datasets. Data screening was conducted by producing a scatterplot to check for extreme outliers. The researcher did not identify any extreme outliers.

Assumptions Testing

A bivariate linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive relationship between student performance on a practice Civics assessment and student performance on the state EOC Civics assessment. A bivariate linear regression was used to test

the null hypothesis. Bivariate linear regression requires that the assumption of no bivariate outliers. To test this assumption, a scatterplot was created for the pair of variables, student performance on the state EOC Civics assessment and student performance on the practice Civics assessment. Examination of the scatterplot shows that the assumptions of linearity and no extreme bivariate outliers are tenable for the null hypotheses. The assumption of bivariate normal distribution was also met for the null hypotheses as illustrated in the cigar shape data points observed in the scatterplot. Figure 1 provides the scatterplot for the various scores.

To test the assumption of independence of observations, the Durbin-Watson statistic was calculated. Durbin-Watson statistic can range from 0 to 4. The value for this study was 2.240 which indicates there is no autocorrelation between residuals. The value of 2.240 is between 1 and 3 demonstrating the independence of observations (Laerd Statistics, 2023). See Table 5.

To test the assumption of no significant outliers, Casewise Diagnostics was used to highlight any cases where the case's *standardized residual* is greater than ± 3 standard deviations. Two cases were identified as being potential outliers. Case 238 was identified as being -3.450 and case 351 as -3.668. Both of these cases were close to the ± 3 standard deviations and are shown in Table 6.

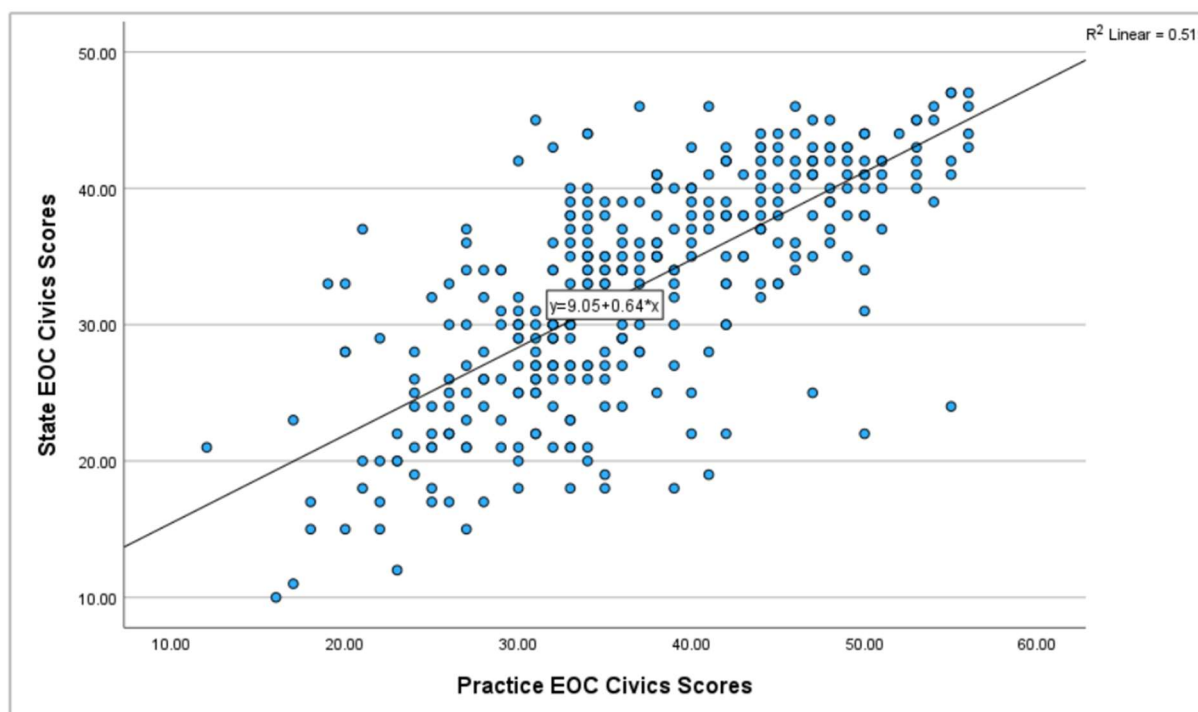
To test the assumption of homoscedasticity, the data was analyzed, and a scatterplot of the data was produced to determine if the residuals were evenly distributed across the range of the predicted values. The scatterplot indicates that the data is mostly homoscedastic with the line of fit showing a slight rise and decrease across the X axis. Figure 2 shows the assumption of homoscedasticity.

The normality of residuals was analyzed, and a scatterplot of the data was produced to determine if the residual scores are normally distributed. The data are aligned along the diagonal line indicating they are normally distributed. See Figure 3.

Figure 5

Scatter of State Civics EOC Scores vs Practice EOC Civics Scores

Simple Scatter with Fit Line of State Civics EOC Scores by Practice EOC Scores



Null Hypothesis

A bivariate linear regression was run to test null hypothesis which states there is no significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable, the score on the statewide assessment and the predictor variable, the score on the practice assessment. The regression equation for predicting overall comprehension score is, $Y = 0.643X_{\text{practice eoc score}} + 9.048$. The 95% confidence interval of this slope was 6.591 to 11.505. Table 5 provides a summary of the regression analysis for the variable predicting student EOC performance. Accuracy in predicting

comprehension, $R = 0.72$, is moderate. Table 5 showed that the bivariate correlation coefficient, $R = .720$, $R^2 = .519$, and adjusted $R^2 = .517$. This means that the Practice EOC assessment can predict 52% of the variation in scores on the State Civics EOC assessment.

Table 5

Bivariate Linear Regression Model Summary

<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>	<i>Durbin-Watson</i>
.720	.519	.517	5.561	2.240

Figure 6

Assumption of Homoscedasticity Scatter of State Civics EOC Scores vs Practice EOC Civics Scores with Loess line

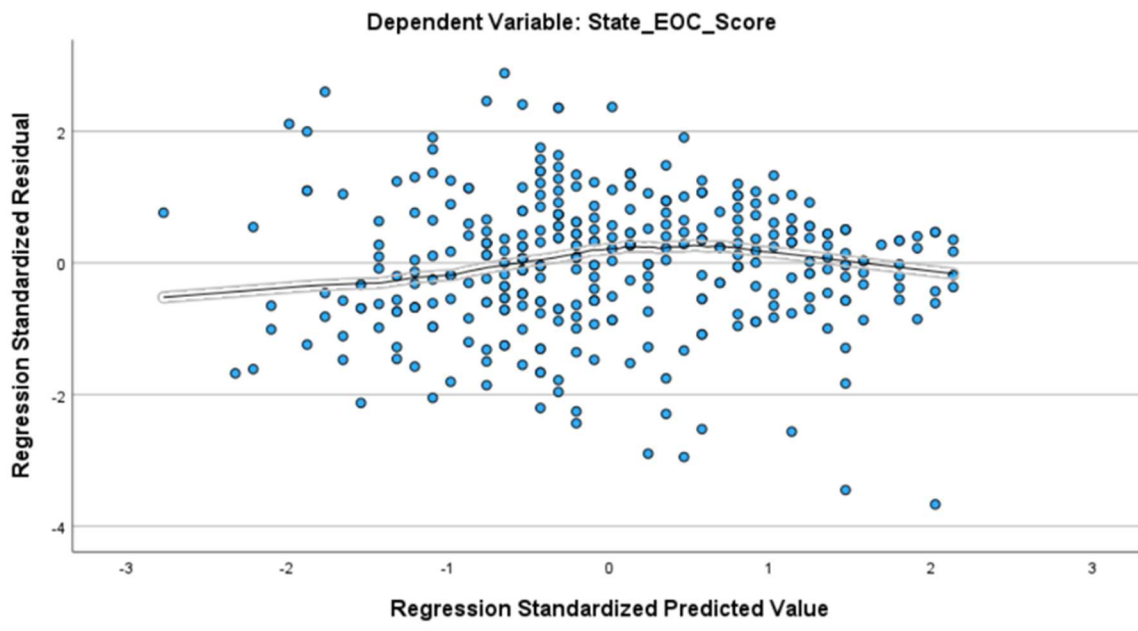


Table 6

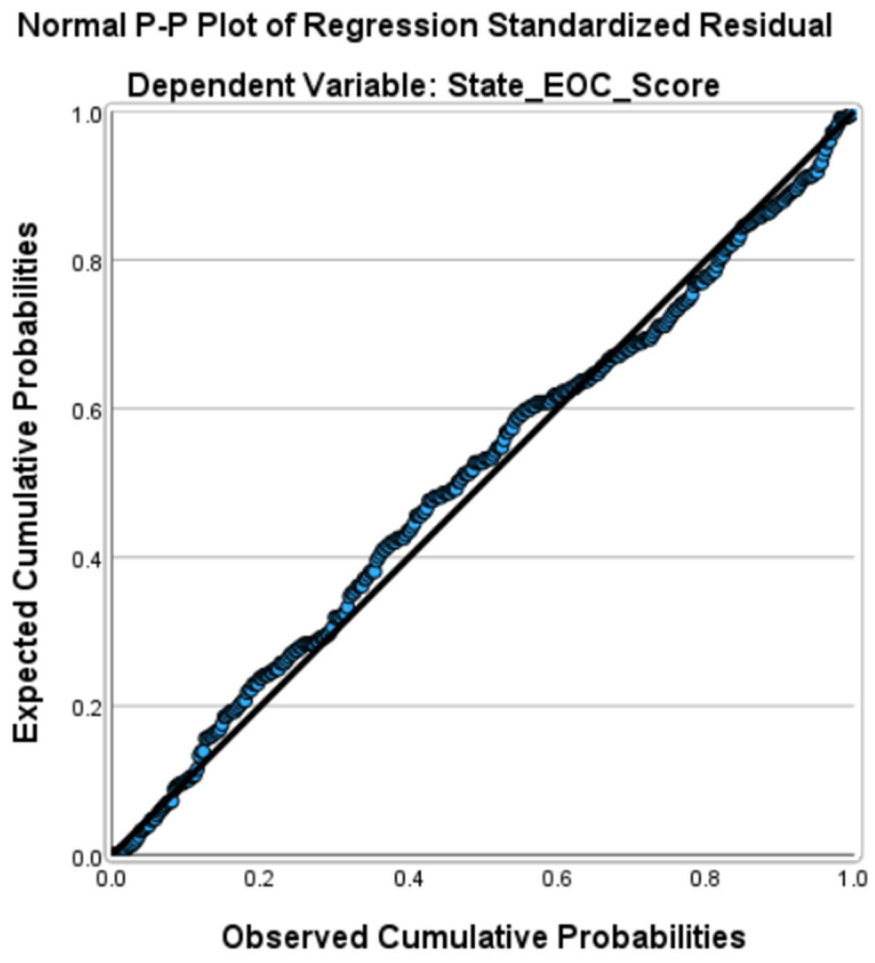
Casewise Diagnostics Summary

Case Number	Std. Residual	State EOC Score	Predicted Value	Residual
238	-3.450	22.00	41.186	-19.186
351	-3.668	24.00	44.400	-20.400

Criterion Variable: State EOC Score

Figure 7

Assumption of Normal Distribution of Originals



The results show further that the overall regression model is a good fit because the predictor variable, performance on the practice Civics assessment, statistically significantly predicted performance on the State Civics EOC assessment: $F(1,353) = 380.524, p < .001$. Table 7 includes the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) output, which shows the alpha is less than .05.

Table 7

Analysis of Variance Output

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Regression	11769.117	1	11769.117	380.524	<.001
Residual	10917.830	353	30.929		
Total	22686.946	354			

The ANOVA output demonstrates that the model is statistically significant, the model summary indicates that performance on the practice EOC Civics assessment predicts student performance on state Civics EOC assessment 52% of the time. The squared multiple correlation coefficient signals the quality of the model's fit, and $R^2 = .519$ means that more than 48% of the variance in the model remains unexplained. The coefficients show how the performance on the State EOC assessment is impacted by the predictor variable when all else is held constant.

Table 8 shows the performance on the practice EOC assessment scores have an alpha below .05 at $p < .001$, which means the practice EOC Civics assessment performance does have a statistically significant impact on the state EOC Civics assessment. The practice EOC Civics assessment as a statistically significant predictor, $p < .001$, the unstandardized coefficient, $B =$

.643, this means that 64% of the student's scores increased from the practice EOC assessment to the state EOC Civics assessment.

Table 8

Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	9.048	1.249		7.244	<.001	6.591	11.505
Practice EOC Score	.643	.033	.720	19.507	<.001	.578	.708

The bivariate linear regression had an alpha below .05, $p < .001$. Based on this outcome, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis because the model was statistically significant. The magnitude of the was above a moderate influence, with an $R^2 = .519$. This leaves 48% of the variability of the model outcomes to other factors and unexplained.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This chapter will begin by discussing how the results from the study support or contradict other studies and theories. Following that discussion, the study's implications will explain how the study has contributed to existing knowledge predicting student performance on high stakes assessments. Following this area, the study's limitations will be addressed. This chapter will conclude by providing recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative, predictive correlational study was to examine the relationship between student's performance on a practice EOC Civics assessment and their performance on the State Civics EOC assessment. The research question asked if a predictive relationship existed between the performance on a locally developed Civics assessment predicting a student's performance on the statewide Civics assessment? The study's findings showed a statistically significant relationship with a $p < .001$ between students' performance on the locally developed practice Civics assessment and the statewide Civics EOC assessment. The bivariate linear regression determined $R^2 = .519$, which indicates a medium effect size. This means that 51.9% of the time, the variability in student performance can be predicted by the locally developed practice assessment. The results show that .643 or 64.3% of the students' scores increased from the locally developed practice Civics EOC assessment to the state Civics EOC assessment.

The findings of the study support the findings of Stefancik (2019) whose study looked at utilizing locally developed assessments to predict student performance on statewide mandated science assessments. Stefancik believed that state level student testing in Florida is not ending,

and that we must leverage this state testing climate to our, i.e., the local schools and districts, advantage. By accurately predicting student performance, district and local school leadership can monitor student growth to best support teachers and students. Stefancik (2019) study accomplished two goals in that it provides teachers with reliable ways to evaluate student learning and help prepare students for the EOC assessments. The second goal was to provide quality data to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional framework and materials for science.

The findings of this study support the Stefancik initiatives by predicting student performance with statistically significant data and by providing a framework for teachers, local schools, and district leaders to best evaluate student performance. The data generated by these practice assessments allow these stakeholders to assess their individual learning gains so that students have more opportunities for success on the State EOC assessments. Stefancik (2019) focused and conducted his study on the foundation that high-stakes testing in Florida public schools is not going away. To best help all stakeholders navigate this new normal, well-aligned progress monitoring assessments need to be utilized. This study accomplishes that goal by providing data indicating that the Civics practice assessment predicts student performance on the Civics EOC assessment with statistical significance.

Theoretical Frameworks

Constructivist theory centered on the ideas of Dewey, Vygotsky, and Piaget, which states that students learn and generate knowledge from their interaction with experiences and ideas, served as the theoretical framework for this study (FLDOE, 2022a). The constructivist theory states that students are active learners and develop knowledge through interacting with a multiple perspective construct (Schunk, 2016). The Civics EOC assessment requires students to apply

their background knowledge in order to navigate the assessment successfully. While questions from the EOC are norm-referenced multiple choice questions with varying degrees of difficulty, over 65% of the questions have a stimulus students must interact with successfully to answer the questions. These stimuli include images, passages from documents, graphs, and charts, which students must apply their background knowledge and then correctly interpret the information to answer the question (FLDOE, 2021a).

The findings of this study support these constructivist ideas in that from the Practice Civics EOC assessment to the State Civics EOC assessment 64.3% of the students improved their performance. The Practice Civics Assessment predicted with an $R^2 = .519$ or that the Practice Civics Assessment had a prediction rate of 52%. Students were able to build upon their prior experiences within a high-stakes testing environment and demonstrate their knowledge on the Civics EOC. The constructivist influence is a key part of the foundation of the Civics EOC state and practice assessments (FLDOE, 2022a).

Predicting Performance

The findings of this study also support the work of Teron (2019), whose study looked at predicting student performance via locally developed interim assessments in ELA. While Teron focused on formative assessments, this study utilized a summative assessment to gauge students' readiness for the mandated state Civics assessment and found that 64.3% of the students improved their performance. These results, as do those of Teron, contribute to the research on interim assessments, informing stakeholders of the efficacy of the assessments and informing educators on the type of assessments to utilize (Teron, 2019).

The study that Furgione et al. (2018) completed focused on student performance on the Civics EOC assessment with a statewide data set of scores from 2013 to 2016. This study

particularly focused on student proficiency rates by race, gender, and socioeconomic status. The population for this study over three years included $n = 542,353$. The current study, which utilized convenient sampling from one charter school with de-identifiable data over 2 years, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, had a $n = 355$ and did not consider proficiency rates based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Compared to Furgione et al. (2018), the students are similar in age, 12-14 years old in the current study.

While Furgione et al. (2018) found disparity in performance based on demographics. These findings indicate that females outperform male students. Caucasian students outperform African American, and Hispanic students. Students who were labeled socioeconomically disadvantaged were 20% less proficient than their non-economically disadvantaged peers. The current study focused on predicting student performance and utilized de-identifiable post hoc data. The study does not look at the gender, socioeconomic status, or race of the students being tested.

While Furgione et al. results were looking at disparities in student performance, when considering the demographics of the current study, a generalized snapshot indicate a population in which the students range in age from 12 to 14 and are approximately 47.3% male, and 52.7% female. The racial demographics indicate that the student body is approximately 54.4% White, 5.4% Multiracial, 29% Hispanic, 6.4% African American, 3.7% Asian, .9% Native American, and 50.8% are considered Economically Disadvantaged (Lake County School District, 2021). The students in the current study had a passing rate on the Civics EOC assessment in excess of 92% over the 2 years studied. These results are specific to this data set and should not be generalized. Speculating as to why the current school population demonstrated high Civics EOC

passing rates over 2 years of data studied lends credibility to the study's limitations to this particular school, which is also similar to the results of Mulhall (2018).

Mulhall (2018) mixed-methods study found that Civics teachers were pleased by the increased recognition the EOC assessment provides due to the “testing status” of their subject area. These teachers are also gaining valuable instructional time, access to additional resources, and additional professional development. Due to the increased difficulty of the EOC, students are developing stronger critical reading and thinking skills that carry over to additional subjects. Mulhall calls for more specialized research in Civics, which the current study accomplished. However, the current study did not look at teacher efficacy, testing status, professional development, or the use of these critical skills across additional subject areas.

Current research explains that both students and teachers are working towards a shared goal: success on these high-stakes assessments (Edgell, 2020; Furgione et al., 2018; Mulhall, 2018; and Teron, 2019;). The findings from the study support this research because the practice EOC assessment showed statistical significance in predicting student performance on the state EOC assessment. An additional factor which may impact student performance is the idea that teacher efficacy has an student performance on high-stakes assessments as stated by Gershenson (2020). The current study does not consider teacher efficacy as a factor in student performance,

Implications

This study shows that a relationship exists between student performance on a practice Civics EOC assessment and student performance on the state Civics EOC assessment. The study uses one theoretical framework, constructivism, that informs the relationship between student outcomes on the Civics assessment. The results demonstrated that performance increased from

the practice EOC assessment to the state Civics EOC assessment for 64% of the students. Within constructivist theory, students built upon their previous success and improved their outcomes.

This study adds to the existing knowledge base because it provides context for predicting student performance on a high-stakes assessment. Many studies focus on math, ELA, or science assessment performance, but few focus on social studies and Civics and how to predict student outcomes, specifically achieving a passing score – a 3 or higher – on the assessment which impacts middle school directly, and can impact high school, and college student outcomes by counting as a passing score for future assessments. While the study demonstrated a positive correlation and moderate predictive variability, the 64% performance improvement for students is important to note.

The current literature lacks many contexts for predicting student success on high-stakes assessments, specifically in social studies and Civics. This study looked at student performance on a practice Civics assessment, and then the performance on the state Civics EOC assessment was discovered to have a statistically significant connection. The positive correlation and predictive variability was relatively strong, the study provided enough information for additional studies to be conducted in more detail to better understand the relationship between student performance on the practice assessment and the state Civics EOC assessment.

This study narrows the gap by providing a statistically significant predictable relationship between student performance on a practice Civics EOC assessment and the state Civics EOC assessment. The research predicting student performance in math, science, and ELA was calling for additional studies in the social science arena. This study builds upon the work of others while demonstrating that predictable relationship between the practice and state Civics assessment. This

study provides enough information for additional studies to be conducted in more detail to better understand the relationship and student performance on the state Civics assessment.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, the study examined student performance on Civics assessments for a two-year period. The validity of the study could be stronger if a longer span of time is examined. An additional limitation of the study is that it had an $n = 355$ students drawn from a convenient sample. A larger sample population would also strengthen the validity of the study. The study examined one school's data. By examining multiple schools' data, the findings from the study would be stronger in scope and the results could be more generalized to other schools. The study's findings may have been strengthened if a mid-term progress monitoring assessment was utilized as an additional predictor variable along with the practice assessment and then the state Civics assessment, the criterion variable. Finally, correlational research does not reveal causal relationships. Studying predicting student performance on high-stakes assessments with controlled variables more certain relationships between variables may be seen in the study. These limitations may have weakened the validity of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted at the local level to impact stakeholders i.e., students, teachers, school and district leaders, in order to help improve student performance on a high-stakes assessment that has implications in middle, high school, and college. Recommendations for future research include:

1. Expand the current study to multiple schools within the district or across multiple districts to gauge the predictability of practice Civics EOC assessments and the state Civics EOC assessment focusing on additional variables such as gender, race, and SES;

2. Conduct research focusing on predicting student performance on the U.S. History EOC assessment in both middle and high school;
3. Conduct research focusing on predicting student performance on the science EOC assessment in 5th grade and 8th grade;
4. Conduct research focusing on the STAR test alignment and predicting student performance on the FSA in math and reading;
5. Expand the current study looking at the predictability of locally developed progress monitoring exams, practice assessments and student performance on the state EOCs in math, science, and social studies for middle grades and high school across multiple schools and student populations.

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APPENDIX A: Script Civics Practice Assessment

Practice Civics EOC Assessment

Teacher Provides: Laptop, Paper, Pencil

Provided for teachers: Script with instructions. Timesheet for the start, break, and end of test.

Script

Today, you will be taking the Civics Practice EOC test. The only materials on your desk should be your pencil, paper, and computer.

You may not use any electronic devices including cellphones, smartwatches, headphones/earbuds, or any other devices. You may not switch between screens or browse the internet during the test. If you are found doing any of these things, your test will be invalidated.

Today, you will only have 120 minutes to answer 65 questions. We will take a short break after 60 minutes. On the real Civics EOC day you will have 160 minutes to complete the test.

Go to Google Classroom, click on your Civics Course, click on Classwork, click the Practice Civics EOC Test. Do NOT begin the test!

At the top, please type your first and last name. Next, use the dropdown box to choose your Civics teacher. Then, use the next dropdown box to select your class period.

Now, read silently as I read the Testing Rules. You may not have a cellphone or smartwatch on or in your possession during the test. Do not talk to other students or make any disturbances. Do not look at another student's test materials. Do not ask for or provide any help in answering any test questions. Use only your planning sheet for taking notes. Do not have access to any electronic device during the test and during breaks.

Click an answer to acknowledge that you understand these testing rules and that if you do not follow these rules, your score may be invalidated.

Now you may begin.

After 60 minutes take a 5 minute break: Stop. You may stand and stretch, but do not talk or look at another student's computer screen, device, or worksheet.

After 5 minute break: Now be seated you have 60 minutes to complete this test, and I will let you know when there is 10 minutes left. Make sure you are on the question where you left off. You may continue working.

At the end of 120 minutes: Stop. If you have not done so submit your test now. Log off and close the laptops. Remain quiet as I collect the laptops and other materials. Remember, to kindly respect the other classes that may still be testing.

Appendix B Florida Civics Benchmarks

Category One: Origins and Purposes of Laws and Government

SS.7.C.1.1 Recognize how Enlightenment ideas including Montesquieu’s view of separation of power and John Locke’s theories related to natural law and how Locke’s social contract influenced the Founding Fathers.

SS.7.C.1.2 Trace the impact that the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Mayflower Compact, and Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” had on colonists’ views of government.

SS.7.C.1.3 Describe how English policies and responses to colonial concerns led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence.

SS.7.C.1.4 Analyze the ideas (natural rights, role of the government) and complaints set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

SS.7.C.1.5 Identify how the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to the writing of the Constitution.

SS.7.C.1.6 Interpret the intentions of the Preamble of the Constitution.

SS.7.C.1.7 Describe how the Constitution limits the powers of government through separation of powers and checks and balances.

SS.7.C.1.8 Explain the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists regarding the ratification of the Constitution and inclusion of a bill of rights.

SS.7.C.1.9 Define the rule of law and recognize its influence on the development of the American legal, political, and governmental systems.

SS.7.C.3.10 Identify sources and types (civil, criminal, constitutional, military) of law.

Category Two: Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities of Citizens

SS.7.C.2.1 Define the term “citizen,” and identify legal means of becoming a United States citizen.

SS.7.C.2.2 Evaluate the obligations citizens have to obey laws, pay taxes, defend the nation, and serve on juries.

SS.7.C.2.3 Experience the responsibilities of citizens at the local, state, or federal levels.

SS.7.C.2.4 Evaluate rights contained in the Bill of Rights and other amendments to the Constitution.

SS.7.C.2.5 Distinguish how the Constitution safeguards and limits individual rights.

SS.7.C.2.14 Conduct a service project to further the public good.

SS.7.C.3.6 Evaluate Constitutional rights and their impact on individuals and society.

SS.7.C.3.7 Analyze the impact of the 13th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th amendments on participation

SS.7.C.3.12 Analyze the significance and outcomes of landmark Supreme Court cases including, but not limited to, *Marbury v. Madison*, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Gideon v. Wainwright*, *Miranda v. Arizona*, *in re Gault*, *Tinker v. Des Moines*, *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmer*, *United States v. Nixon*, and *Bush v. Gore*.

Category Three: Government Policies and Political Processes

SS.7.C.2.8 Identify America’s current political parties, and illustrate their ideas about government.

SS.7.C.2.9 Evaluate candidates for political office by analyzing their qualifications, experience, issue-based platforms, debates, and political ads.

SS.7.C.2.7 Conduct a mock election to demonstrate the voting process and its impact on a school, community, or local level.

SS.7.C.2.10 Examine the impact of media, individuals, and interest groups on monitoring and influencing government.

SS.7.C.2.11 Analyze media and political communications (bias, symbolism, propaganda).

SS.7.C.2.12 Develop a plan to resolve a state or local problem by researching public policy alternatives, identifying appropriate government agencies to address the issue, and determining a course of action.

SS.7.C.2.13 Examine multiple perspectives on public and current issues.

SS.7.C.4.1 Differentiate concepts related to United States domestic and foreign policy.

SS.7.C.4.2 Recognize government and citizen participation in international organizations.

SS.7.C.4.3 Describe examples of how the United States has dealt with international conflicts.

Category Four: Organization and Function of Government

SS.7.C.3.1 Compare different forms of government (direct democracy, representative democracy, socialism, communism, monarchy, oligarchy, autocracy).

SS.7.C.3.2 Compare different forms of government (direct democracy, representative democracy, socialism, communism, monarchy, oligarchy, autocracy).

SS.7.C.3.3 Illustrate the structure and function (three branches of government established in Articles I, II, and III with corresponding powers) of government in the United States as established in the Constitution.

SS.7.C.3.4 Identify the relationship and division of powers between the federal government and state governments.

SS.7.C.3.5 Explain the Constitutional amendment process.

SS.7.C.3.8 Analyze the structure, functions, and processes of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

SS.7.C.3.9 Illustrate the law making process at the local, state, and federal levels.

SS.7.C.3.11 Diagram the levels, functions, and powers of courts at the state and federal levels.

SS. 7.C.2.6 Simulate the trial process and the role of juries in the administration of justice.

SS.7.C.3.13 Compare the constitutions of the United States and Florida.

SS.7.C.3.14 Differentiate between local, state, and federal governments' obligations and services.

(Florida Joint Center for Citizenship, 2023)

Appendix C: Grading Scales for the Civics Practice EOC

The Civics Practice EOC consists of 65 items.

5 = 46 to 65 items correct – 70% and above

4 = 36 to 45 items correct – 56% to 69%

3 = 27 to 44 items correct – 40% to 55%

2 = 17 to 26 items correct – 26% to 39%

1 = 0 to 16 items correct – 25% and below

The 5 score correlates to an 'A', 4 to a 'B', 3 to a 'C', 2 to a 'D', and 1 to a 'F' grade.

Appendix D: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 26, 2024

David Hamilton
Hoiwah Benny Fong

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY23-24-760 PREDICTING PERFORMANCE ON A SOCIAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT:
A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

Dear David Hamilton and Hoiwah Benny Fong,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study/project is not considered human subjects research because it will not involve the collection of *identifiable*, private information from or about living individuals (45 CFR 46.102).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

For a PDF of your IRB letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at [\[REDACTED\]](#)

Sincerely,

[\[REDACTED\]](#)

Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix E: Civics Achievement Levels and Cut Scores

Level 5	Mastery - highly likely the student will excel in the next grade or course
Level 4	Proficient - likely to excel in the next grade or course
Level 3	Satisfactory - may need extra support for the next grade level or course
Level 2	Below Satisfactory - likely to need substantial support for the next grade or course
Level 1	Inadequate - highly likely to need substantial support for the next course

Florida EOC Assessment Achievement Levels

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Civics	325-375	376-393	394-412	413-427	428-475

(FLDOE, 2023c)

Appendix F: Florida State Civics EOC Reliability and Validity Scores

Note: Reliability refers to multiple reliability estimates that are reported including stratified-coefficient *alpha*, Feldt-Raju, and marginal reliability. Included is conditional standards error of measurement (CSEM) and classification accuracy results (FLDOE, 2022f).

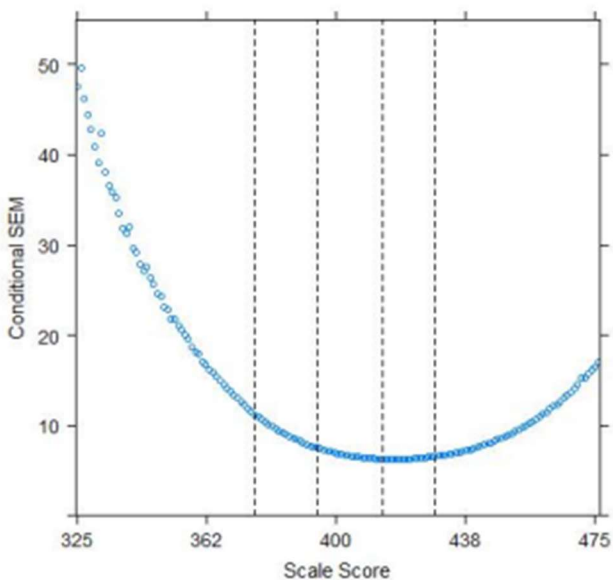
Reliability

Civics Item Types: Multiple Choice 48 (4 to 8 additional questions included)

Reliability Coefficients

		Cronbach Alpha	Stratified Alpha	Feldt-Raju
Civics	Online – Core 100	0.91	-	-
	Online – Core 200	0.91	-	-
	Online – Core 300	0.91	-	-
	Online – Core 400	0.91	-	-
	Accommodated	0.88	-	-
Civics		Marginal Reliability		
	Online – Core 100	0.82		
	Online – Core 200	0.82		
	Online – Core 300	0.83		
	Online – Core 400	0.84		

Conditional Standard Error of Measurement Civics



(FLDOE, 2022f)

Reliability of Achievement Classification

	N	Average Theta	SD of Theta
Civics Core 100	70,591	-0.03	1.23
Civics Core 200	46,225	0.17	1.20
Civics Core 300	46,140	0.15	1.21
Civics Core 400	36,980	0.18	1.21

Classification of Accuracy Index

	Overall Accuracy Index	Between Cut 1 and Cut 2	Between Cut 2 and Cut 3	Between Cut 3 and Cut 4	Between Cut 4 and Cut 5
Civics Core 100	0.721	0.912	0.910	0.933	0.951
Civics Core 200	0.728	0.930	0.919	0.926	0.941
Civics Core 300	0.730	0.931	0.921	0.926	0.942
Civics Core 400	0.730	0.935	0.923	0.925	0.940

Note: Validity evidence reported here supports the appropriate inferences from Florida Statewide Assessment scores that shows how the test forms were constructed to measure Florida Standards with a significant number of items following the assessment blueprint. Evidence is provided regarding the internal relationships among subscale scores to support their scores and to justify item response theory (IRT) measurement model. Evidence includes Pearson correlations, confirmatory factor analysis, and an assumption of unidimensional IRT using the Q₃ statistic (FLDOE, 2022f).

Validity: EOC Q₃ Statistic

Course	Unconditional Observed Correlation	Minimum	Q ₃ Distribution			Maximum
			5 th Percentile	Median	95 th Percentile	
Civics	0.159	-0.080	-0.039	-0.011	.014	.206

(FLDOE, 2022f)

Appendix G: Request to Utilize Data and School Approval to Utilize Data

David Hamilton

June 2, 2023

[REDACTED], Principal and CEO
Charter School
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is Predicting Performance on a Social Studies Assessment: A Correlational Study. The purpose of my research is to see if student performance on a practice Civics EOC assessment can predict performance on the State Civics EOC assessment.

I am writing to request your permission to use de-identifiable post-hoc archival data from the 7th grade Civics Practice assessments from 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, and de-identifiable data from the State Civics EOC assessment data from the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. The data, when retrieved, will be stripped of any identifiable information to maintain student confidentiality.

The data will be used to see if there is a predictable relationship between student performance on the Practice Civics EOC assessment and State Civics EOC assessment. Results from this study will be used to guide teacher and student preparation for the Civics EOC to better ensure student success on the State assessment.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, a permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

David Hamilton
Graduate Student
Liberty University

June 6, 2023

Mr. David Hamilton
Graduate Student
Liberty University

Dear Mr. Hamilton,

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Predicting Performance on a Social Studies Assessment: A Correlational Study, I have decided to grant you permission to retrieve and utilize Civics archival data from the 2020 – 2023 School years.

It is understood that the data will be de-identifiable.

The school is requesting a copy of the results upon study completion.

We look forward to learning what this study reveals regarding our student's performance on the Civics assessments.

Sincerely,

██████████

Principal and CEO

██████████

Charter School

Appendix H: Naturalization Process for U.S. Citizenship

The Naturalization Process for Becoming a U.S. Citizen

Step 1) The individual is 18 years old or older.

Step 2) The individual must have been a legal resident of the United States for the last 5 years.

Step 3) The individual must file a petition for naturalization (formal application process).

Step 4) Must pass a exam that shows they can read, speak and write English, and have knowledge of U.S. History and Civics.

Step 5) Must be able to prove they are of good moral character and pass an FBI background check.

Step 6) Two U.S. citizens must confirm that the individual is a good citizen and that they will be loyal to the United States.

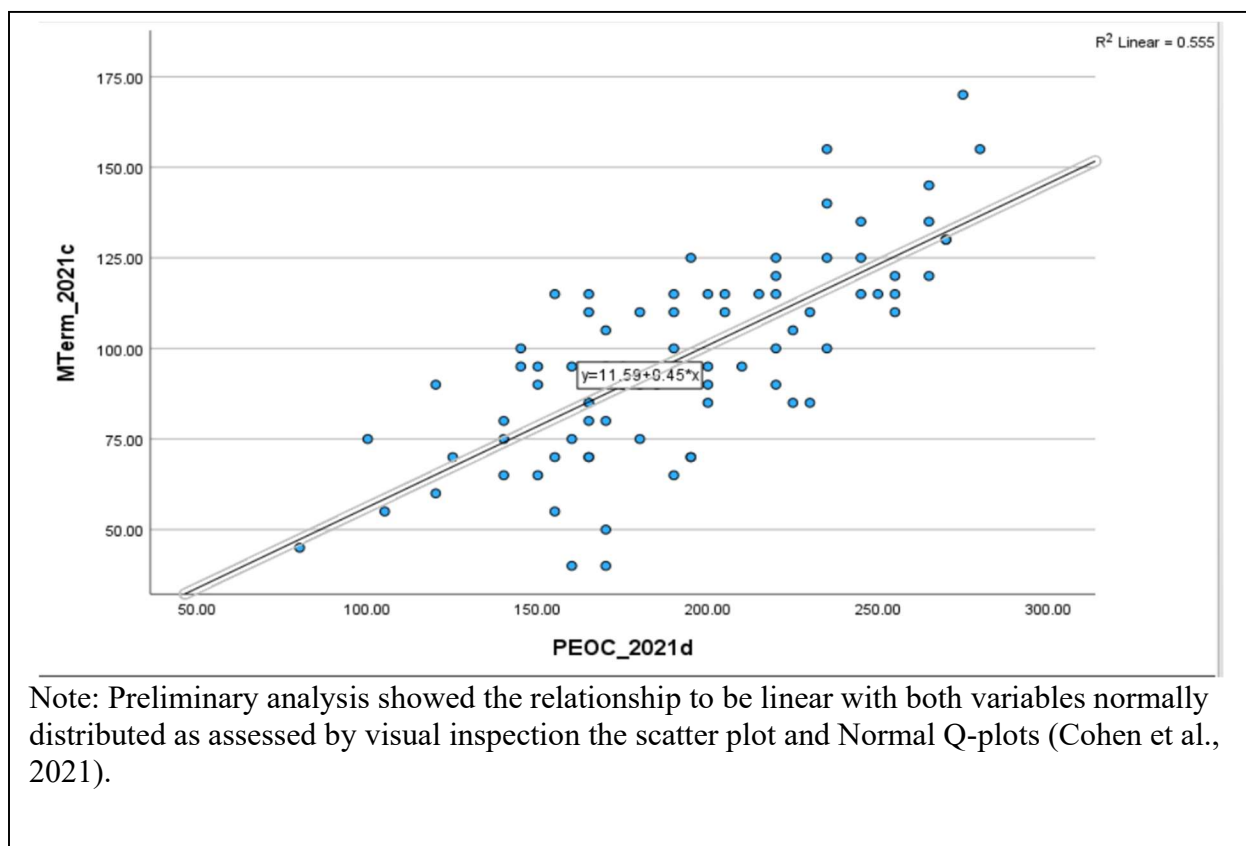
Step 7) Attend a Citizenship Swearing-In Ceremony and Take the Oath of Allegiance

Alternative Paths to U.S. Citizenship

- 1) Children of a Naturalized Citizen under the age of 18 automatically become U.S. Citizens when a parent completes the naturalization process. Think "Law of Blood."
- 2) By serving in the U.S. Military, individuals will have the 5 years wait time cut to 3 years.

Note: Naturalized U.S. Citizens have all of the rights and responsibilities of U.S. Citizenship except the ability to run for President of the United States. That right is reserved for Citizens born in the United States via Law of Blood or Law of Soil (FJCC, 2023).

Appendix I Criterion Validity of the LSA Practice Assessment



Correlations

		PEOC_2021d	MTerm_2021c
PEOC_2021d	Pearson Correlation	1	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	81	81
MTerm_2021c	Pearson Correlation	.745**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	81	81

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: The correlations between the LSA Midterm assessment and the LSA Practice assessment shows a strong positive correlation at .745 indicating significant validity by the National Center on Response to Intervention.

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	81	57.0
	Excluded ^a	61	43.0
	Total	142	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.793	.854	2

Note the Cronbach's alpha score of .793 indicates the internal consistency of the assessment and shows it to be reliable.

Appendix J: Florida Department of Education Copyright Approval

Greetings,

Thank you for contacting the Office of Assessment in the Florida Department of Education.

All Florida statewide, standardized assessment materials are for the purpose of assisting the public. The reproduction of those materials in conjunction with any product for commercial use—either directly or indirectly—is not permitted. Therefore, as long as your dissertation will not be published for profit, you are welcome to use the items, but they may not be used if it becomes a for-profit publication.

Best,



Office of Assessment | FDOE
325 W Gaines Street, Tallahassee, FL

