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Identifying Factors Contributing to Differences in Success Rates Among Three Montana TRIO Upward Bound Programs

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Identifying Factors Contributing to Differences in Success Rates Among
Three Montana TRIO Upward Bound Programs

By Ismael Esai Longoria

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Abstract

TRIO is a federally funded program put into place to assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds reach postsecondary education. Southwest Montana TRIO assists Helena High School, Capital High School, Anaconda High School, and Butte High School. Helena, Anaconda, and Butte share similar demographics. Because of this, one might expect that the academic success rates would be fairly similar. My research indicates there are in fact significant differences. In order to best assist the schools assisted by Southwest Montana TRIO it is important to understand why differences are taking place. By using the U.S Department of Education standards to back this up and using and using mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative research the differences were more easily identified. These differences could be attributed to measurable aspects such as financial stability, families academic history, and the lack of a consistent program coordinator. Differences could also be attributed to nonmeasurable aspects such as personal struggles, lack of motivation, or if a student is only incentive driven meaning they are only involved with the program for the many perks that come along with it.

My research indicates that all of these factors partly contribute to a student's success in achieving TRIO's goals, or failing to do so. Each student faces struggles often only known to them. Knowing this, it is up to the people of TRIO to adapt and find the next route of action to take with each student in order to help them find their success. It is up to those people to make the difference and having a great understanding that struggles happen.

Introduction

TRIO-Upward Bound is a federally funded academic outreach program which provides academic services to at-risk and potentially first generation college students from disadvantaged backgrounds across the United States. In Southwest Montana TRIO-Upward Bound serves high schools in Butte, Anaconda, and Helena, Montana. Each of these areas have significant numbers of disadvantaged students wanting to pursue a higher education. These students rarely have the means to accomplish their goals without support. Each high school has its strengths and weaknesses contributing to the overall success of their TRIO programs. As my research indicates, each also faces unique challenges. .

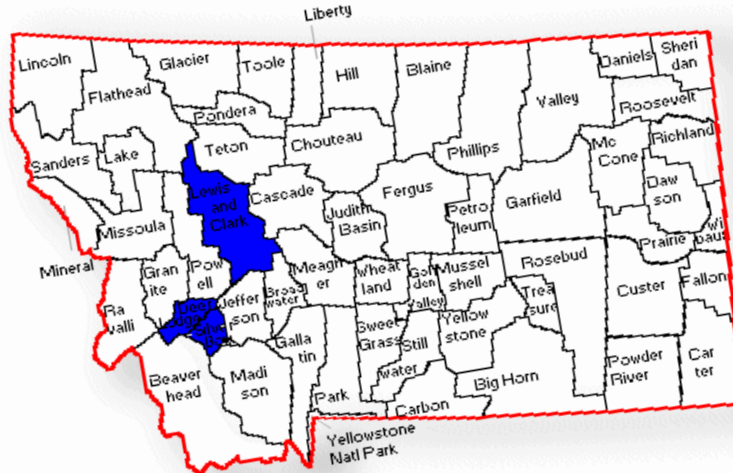
These challenges are not often taken into consideration when evaluating high school students. Often it is very cut and dry and the blame often falls on the student. This blame falls more times than not is credited to the students lack of work ethic or their intelligence level. Taking the time to understand that the challenges faced by the high school demographic is a key part in assisting Southwest Montana TRIO and its students. These students come from areas that are often associated with crime, low income individuals, and an overall reputation of not having academically successful individuals. Being able to gain the understanding needed to help TRIO students is vital to helping them achieve their postsecondary academic aspirations. Taking the time to evaluate each one of these schools is important for TRIO but even more so for its students.

The success of each program can be measured through success rates and the individual experiences of the students. In order to properly evaluate the differences we must examine the goals of the grants that fund the programs, success rates, personal experiences of TRIO participants, and through an evaluation of my time spent within the program. With this

information, I believe that TRIO and its programs can be seen as a beneficial and successful student outreach program that is assisting students with disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve a higher education rather than it just being another college prep program. With this information the directors and leaders of Southwest Montana TRIO and its programs may be able to see what they are doing well and what they could possibly improve on in order to better benefit the students that are a part of their programs.

The main high schools that are a part of Southwest Montana Trio are Helena High, Capital High, Anaconda High, and Butte High school. Each school is assigned a program director who is required to meet a certain criteria and implement a plan to help their respective students succeed during the school year while also preparing them for higher education. These programs include, but are not limited to: 1) study groups, 2) 1 on 1 tutoring, 3) grade checks, 3) and providing a place for them to study and do homework.

Although each school has similar tactics to help their students, there are still many differences among them. Having a better understanding of where each school struggles would allow TRIO and its employees to make a difference and help each school in ways appropriate to that particular school. By evaluating the success rates of each school, evaluating and comparing the demographics of each school, evaluating my personal experiences and gaining a better understanding of what programs benefit students the best we will be able to see what it will take to help reduce the amount of differences in each school and see what is working best for TRIO and its programs.



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TRIO's History

TRIO and its programs were established in 1964 as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "war against poverty." LBJ believed the *Educational Opportunity Act of 1964* provided a great opportunity to establish the experimental program known as *Upward Bound*, and a year later *Talent Search*.

These programs can now be found across the United States. It is the largest college prep program that assists first generation college students. With its efforts it has helped many students achieve their postsecondary goals along with assisting them through the process. Having a program like TRIO in the U.S. has been essential to helping at-risk students better themselves and their community. Being able to help the future generations of our country is a role that many often overlook, that is why TRIO has taken the stage in assisting first generation college students

and why it has shown to be not only successful but very helpful to the students who take part in the program.

The mission of TRIO is, “to empower scholars to: Develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and attributes to complete a post-secondary education. Achieve maximum academic success and career readiness. Graduate as skilled, self-actualizing professionals and global citizens who lead through best practices and lifelong learning.”

These goals are targeted to those students who may be at a disadvantage, most often financially. When TRIO began its establishment its main focus was on students who may have not had the funds to be successful academically, while that is still a major part it also focuses on students who are first generation college students. With this target demographic in mind, TRIO has been able to establish itself as a beneficial college readiness program as there are currently over 312,000 students enrolled in TRIO programs.

TRIO's Purpose

It is clear that those involved with TRIO want to do whatever it takes to provide these children the opportunities needed to succeed in the classroom and ultimately pursue a higher education. In order to achieve this mission and its goals, those who work for TRIO must commit their time and efforts to do whatever it takes to give these children what they need to succeed. By offering in school tutoring, study groups, college prep activities, summer programs, and so much more, these students are being given the chance to better their education while also learning strategies to take into college with them. Overall the goal of TRIO and its programs is to prepare these students for higher education and by doing so they will have a better chance at a successful

college experience. These students come from backgrounds that have never really given them the tools they needed to be successful. It is TRIO's job to help them in every way they can.

While evaluating the schools that take part in Southwest Montana TRIO it is important to remember the goals of the program and what they are striving for. In Helena High, Capital High, Butte High, and Anaconda High school there are over 250 children taking part in the upward bound program offered by TRIO. The goal of upward bound is to increase the amount of students that are taking part in post secondary education. This could be a trade school, 2 year program, or a 4 year program. TRIO wants to see their students achieve things that no one thought would be possible simply because of the circumstance they come from. It is believed that this particular demographic would not meet the standard that is often required to get into a higher education program.

With all this in mind we turn our attention to the schools assisted by Southwest Montana TRIO and the programs offered. Each school is assisted in the same way but for some reason we can clearly see trends that the success and overall achievements of each school vary. If this variance is evaluated, compared and contrasted, and assessed then the goals and mission of TRIO and its programs would be better met. Each student should be given the same opportunities and resources as the other schools, even with this taking place we still see differences in overall success rates for each school. It is vital to finding what is causing these differences and taking the necessary actions to make the changes needed to help these students. The purpose of this study is to assist those involved in helping these students have a better understanding of what needs to be done to meet the mission of TRIO. Southwest Montana TRIO and its programs have a track record of showing positive outcomes in its students that take part in it. Even with these positive success rates it is important to be that much better for these students. By evaluating

programs as a whole the reasoning for the differences will bring to surface what else can be done to help each student and school the way they need. Taking the time to dive deep into the success rates of each program is an essential part of knowing what is working and what is not. This information can then be used to assist each program to the best of their ability.

Identifying The Problem

TRIO and Upward bound strive to give students the best possible educational experience with the intentions of preparing them for college. With this in mind there are 6 things that are evaluated in order to see if the programs being offered are assisting the overall success in the schools it is offered. Those 6 objectives are academic performance- grade point average, academic performance on standardized testing, secondary school retention and graduation, secondary school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, and postsecondary completion. These factors all play a role in evaluating the overall success of each school. By evaluating these aspects it will show what is working and what is not working in each school along with having a better understanding of where struggles may stem from.

There are clearly issues in the overall success rates at Butte High compared to Helena High, Capital High, and Anaconda High. In a majority of these objectives we can find significant differences in data analysis. Finding the objectives with discrepancies that feed into the overall success rates will better allow the staff of Southwest Montana TRIO to make needed adjustments to programs offered in each school along with how to better help these students in specific areas of education. Many of the students are doing very well and take full advantage of these programs offered by TRIO but some still seem to struggle. Knowing why these struggles take place especially at Butte High. Just because Butte High can be identified as the school that is

struggling the most of the ones stated there are still things across the board that can be identified as having an effect on the overall success rates of each school.

The problem is clearly what is causing such a large difference in success rates between Butte High and other schools assisted by TRIO. These discrepancies can be found through evaluation of TRIO's extended data regarding success in the 6 objectives they are evaluating each year. Information regarding the differences between each school can also be found through an evaluation of the Upward Bound grant proposal for all schools along with the grant proposal for math-science at Butte High. These numbers will allow us to see how students are doing in school along with evaluating the demographic that is being assisted. It will be found that the demographic of Butte along with not having a consistent program coordinator like other schools is the main cause of struggles at Butte High.

Demographics

As stated before the target demographic for TRIO is those who come from a challenged background. The challenges that are faced by these students are often ones that are out of their control such as financial stability and not having a family history of individuals who attended college. A majority of the students in TRIO do not have the finances to attend college along with having the motivation needed to pursue postsecondary education. These factors are the ones that help decide which students would best be fit for TRIO and what it has to offer. These individuals must be motivated to do their best in any and all educational settings along with hopes and dreams to attend some sort of postsecondary education program. 29% of students that are part of TRIO in Southwest Montana earn GPAs of 2.5 or lower and remarkably of those 29% of students 75% of them come from families that can identify as low income. It is clear that

struggles at home can lead to struggles in the classroom. 19% of high school students across the country live in poverty which is very interesting to see compared to the 13.2% of people who live in poverty in Montana. These students have so much going on at home and worries of what their next meal may be that it is very difficult for them to often focus in class. Seeing this poverty along with other circumstances is a great way to look into what discrepancies are evident between the students who live in Helena, Butte, and Anaconda.

Along with these financial struggles the students that take part in there are many other factors students have to deal with. A large portion of students have other struggles at home such as single parents, abusive homes, foster care, parents with their own struggles, and much more. All these factors take a toll on the mental state of students in TRIO. This personal information is not documented and taken into consideration when recruiting students and also their overall success but it is clear that this can lead to struggles in the class room. 18.8% of high school students in America battle with some sort of mental health issues. These mental health issues can stem from many things in life. The students of Helena, Anaconda, and Butte all have their own issues at home. Personal experience with these students during my time as a graduate research assistant allowed the opportunity to connect with these students on a deeper, more personal level. Hearing the variety of things students have to endure in their home lives it is no surprise that their academic struggles.

When evaluating success rates in students across the schools served by TRIO it was essential to keep in mind about these other struggles. It is not factual evidence but these are factors that are known to play a role in academic success for students. The struggles that are faced by these students when it comes to finances and other outlying factors truly do show struggles in the overall success of the students of TRIO. After diving deeper into databases of

success rates of TRIO over the past few years a lot of significant evidence can be found regarding how these factors affect the students.

It is evident that there are many struggles faced by high school students across the United States. Each morning they wake up they are taking on different challenges in their own respected challenges. At-risk youth can be defined as a student who requires temporary or ongoing support in order to succeed academically. The amount of at risk students that can be found not only across our country but in Montana is extremely high. They are in need of extra effort in order to make sure they are able to get the same opportunities as those students around them. Title 1 is a program in place used to help public schools meet educational needs. 79% of students in Montana schools we enrolled in schools that had title 1 were present and over 80% of schools (Arntzen). This evidence shows that there is a need for assistance throughout schools in Montana. It is no secret that the schools that are a part of the northwest Montana TRIO branch fall into this category. The students at these schools are clearly in need of assistance to succeed not only in highschool but in post secondary education. According to US news the national graduation rate was 88% in comparison to the Montana average of 90% (Kerr). However we do see that some of the schools represented by Southwest Montana TRIO fall below this average. In order to understand why this may be happening one must first understand what it means to come from these areas.

According to the census bureau In the United States an average of percent of individuals who are categorized as low income is around 11% but in Montana it is over 13%. This clearly puts a stress on the overall academic success of students in the classroom. Diving deeper into each respected area it was seen that Butte Montana has a low income rate of 23%, Helena 14%, and Anaconda a high of 27% (Insert Source). All these numbers are much higher than the

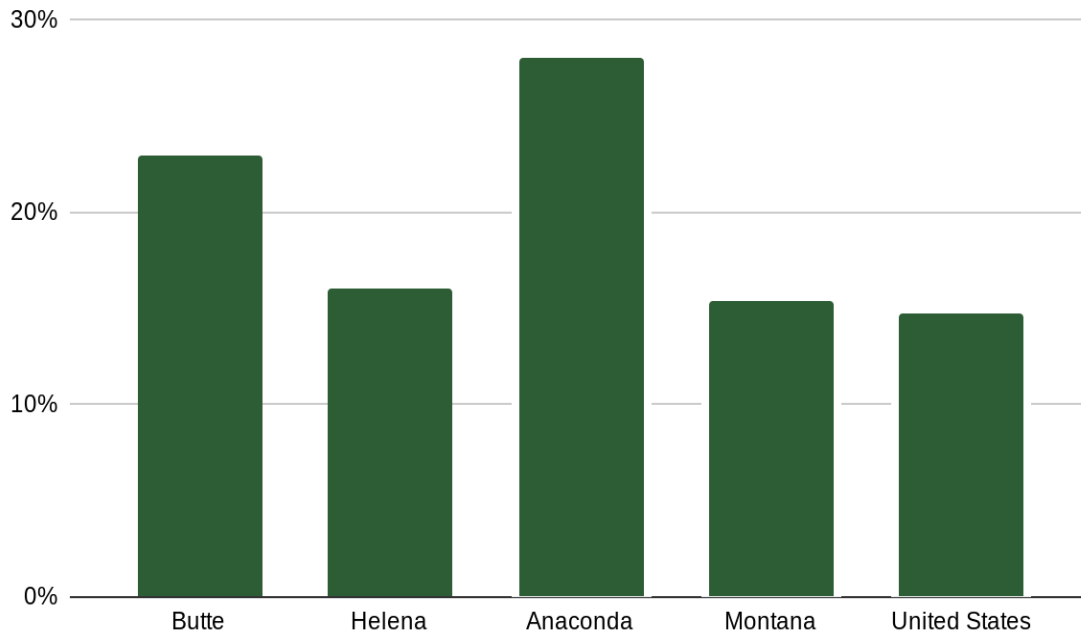
national average so to no surprise we see why our target schools are in desperate need of TRIO's support. It was found that only 20% of students who come from low income families attend a postsecondary education (Smith). TRIO is striving to assist these students and give them the chance to achieve something that many do not think they will. Seeing these numbers would immediately allow an individual to see that the struggles for these students are real and any assistance that can be provided is beneficial to their overall success.

While evaluating each school it is clear to all that each have their own diverse struggles. These struggles vary for multiple reasons, income, crime, and even the amount of individuals in their respected areas that have been able to complete a bachelor's degree. Along with personal struggles we know that outlying factors can have a direct impact on an individual's academic success. Although a study at Northwestern stated there is no direct relationship between crime and overall academic performance it is very clear to those who work with students that it takes a toll on their overall performance. Jenifer Heissel said, "Past research has found a link between violent crimes and performance on tests, but researchers haven't been able to say why crime affects academic performance (2017). In the represented communities it has been found that many things that contribute to falling into a low income category are present therefore relating to the difficulties faced by students. These students do not necessarily lack the intelligence as their peers but rather come from different environments that have contributed to their everyday academic struggles and the likelihood of them continuing to a postsecondary education.

To no surprise, all of our target areas suffer from poverty. The national average is right around 12% while Montana as a state is above this average at 13%. When Looking directly at each town the numbers are shocking. The town with the lowest poverty rate is Helena which is

still above the state average at 14%. Butte and Anaconda are well above the national average and state average, Butte with 23% of its population and Anaconda at 28% categorized as low income.

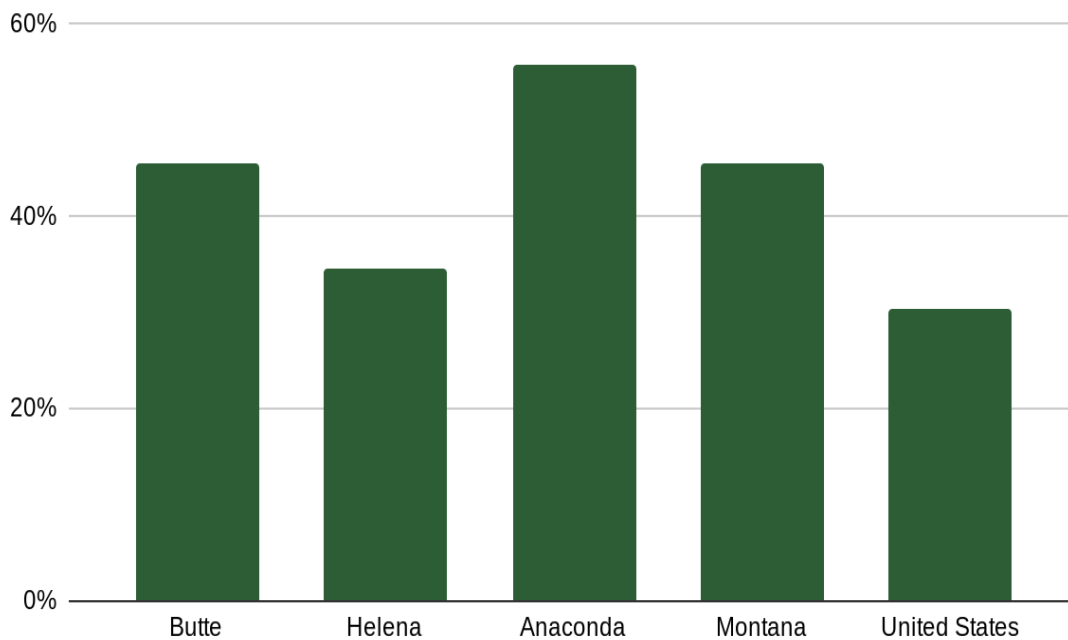
Percentage of Low Income Families



Along with these low income rates we see a large percentage of students taking part in free and reduced lunch. This of course has a direct correlation to the income rent of their homes. Having the uncertainty of when your next meal may be has shown to lead to depression, anxiety, and withdrawal which have all shown to have a major impact on students and their ability to perform in the classroom (Walthouse). The national average of students receiving free and reduced lunch is 31%. This is well below the average in the state of Montana. 44% of students in Montana are receiving free and reduced lunch. The only city represented that falls below this average is Helena which is still above the national average at 33%. Again, Anaconda and Butte rank 1 and 2 in the highest average of students receiving free and reduced lunch, Butte being 47% and

Anaconda at 53%. It is clear that the students of Butte High, Anaconda High, Helena High, and Capital are often struggling to make ends meet. This can definitely be identified as a stressor that can play a role in the success of them academically.

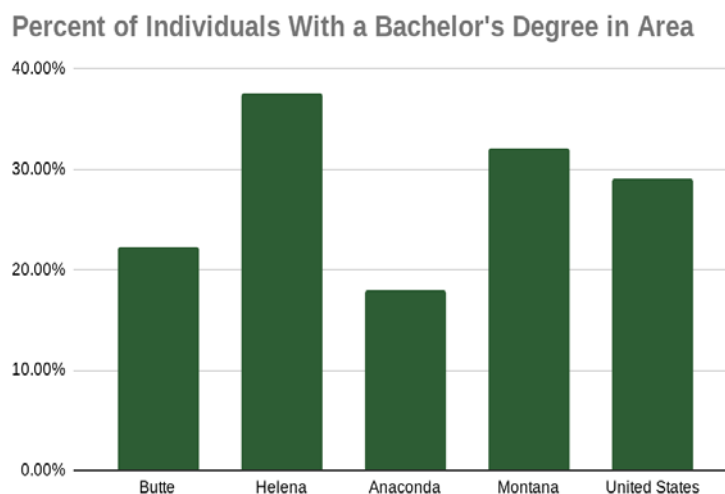
Percentage of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch



The steps that needed to be taken in order to pursue a postsecondary education is not a short list. Another major factor that plays a role in the likelihood of success for these students to pursue postsecondary education is crime. All the areas represented have a very high crime rate not only for the state but for the country. In the US there is an average of 37 crimes per 1,000 people. It is very surprising to find that the town represented with the highest number of low income individuals has the lowest crime rate at only 36 crimes per 1,000 people. It was also interesting to find that the city with the lowest number of low income individuals has the highest crime rate, that being Helena at 48 crimes per 1,000 people and not too far behind them was

Butte at 47 crimes per 1,000 individuals. It was found that states with higher levels of educational attainment also have crime rates lower than the national average and states with higher college enrollment rates experience lower violent crime rates than states with lower college enrollment rates (Education & Crime). It is no surprise that the amount of crime in these areas play a role in the mental state of the students represented by southwest montana TRIO. This also plays a role in the academic history of each family and also the mental state that these students can be found in.

Each family has their own diverse history of education. Only about 7% of individuals who come from households with individuals who did not obtain a bachelor's degree attempt to complete a bachelor's program. Only 23% of those individuals complete their program (Bird). This can be seen in the national average of individuals with a bachelor's degree falling just under 29% which is lower than the Montana average. The Montana average being 31% and Helena being well above this average at 37%. When evaluating Butte and Anaconda we see that a majority of the students in represented areas fall well below the average, Butte at 22% and Anaconda at 17%. So, it is clear why a program like TRIO is needed in these areas to assist the amount of first generation students coming from these areas. Their family history should not define who they are and should only motivate them to better themselves in order to live the lifestyle they may seek.



Data Analysis

When taking the time to evaluate the targeted areas it is very interesting to stop and see the differences and similarities of the schools. Anaconda, Butte, Helena High, and Capital High school have all shown that they are in need of TRIO and the programs it has to offer. 20% of the families in the targeted areas are below the poverty line which leads to nearly 35% of those children having to be placed on free and reduced lunch. These at home financial struggles are the main reason that these students are involved in TRIO and have the hope to further their education past high school. 76% of students in the targeted areas are considered 1st generation college students which is almost 12% higher than the state average. Of these students 29% of them are struggling to reach a GPA over 2.5 and of these students 75% are identified as low income. The purpose of TRIO is to find potential 1st generation college students that may be in need of a little more push or assistance and that is exactly what is needed in these areas.

Helena High and Capital High school can often be overlooked as being in an area that struggles with poverty. There are many people in this area that are well off and do not have the day to day struggles like the people of Butte and Anaconda may have to battle. There are only about 16% of people living in poverty in this area compared to the nearly 30% in Anaconda but this is still above the national average of 14.8%. The best way to evaluate this data is that there is no real middle class in Helena. You either have it or you don't and those who don't are the ones in need and are the students who can lean on TRIO to help them reach their academic dreams and goals. The dropout rate in Helena is over 2% higher than the state average which has led to

only about 20% of TRIO eligible students enrolling in post secondary education immediately after high school. There are many struggles that can be found within the Helena schools all that have the potential to be solved through commitment from coordinators and members of TRIO. Making sure that these students are aware of their potential and motivating them is the most important thing to do with these students and is often the hardest thing to do.

The reputation of Butte is no secret. Most who call Butte home are aware of the stereotypes and opinions that are spread about it throughout the state and at times across the country. Butte is one of the poorest cities in all of Montana. It has one of the highest incarceration rates, highest unemployment rate, and a big toxic pit that many are aware of. With all this there are still many students in the area with hopes and dreams to continue their education past high school even though 77.8% of adults in Butte do not have a bachelor's degree. With these thoughts and opinions there comes a lot of truth, truths that affect the children of this town. In Butte there are 3 times as many children that are homeless or in foster care than compared to the rest of the state which plays a role in average attendance being around 83% to the state average of nearly 94%. The students of Butte are in desperate need of motivation in the classroom because oftentimes they are not receiving it at home. There are only about 2% of TRIO eligible students taking advantage of rigorous courses such as math and science in comparison to the state average of 3% at Butte High. Of these TRIO eligible students at Butte High only about 71% of them are on track to graduate on time which is well short of the state average of 86%. The students of Butte High deal with personal struggles that often can not be analyzed that clearly play a factor in their expectations, dreams, and goals as students. Helping them in the classroom will help them in their overall life success.

Of the schools in the target areas Anaconda High shows that they are battling poverty to a greater extent than Helena and Butte. With 28% of families identifying as low income and over 55% of students being on free and reduced lunches there is a clear struggle to meet day to day life expectations for the people of Anaconda. Even with the struggles we see that Anaconda High is able to show numbers that communicate some success in the classroom. Of the target areas Anaconda shows the lowest dropout rate at 3.8% which is still above the state average of 3.4%. Along with this we see at Anaconda High that only 25% of students have a GPA of 2.5 or lower which is below the 29% average of the target area. Although poverty has hit this town hard as of recently it is still committed to helping its students succeed. The success of students at Anaconda High is evident and allows TRIO to see what things are working in the classroom for these students.

When evaluating these programs and the success taking place in their schools among TRIO students it is best to evaluate them based on the U.S. Department of Education Standards. These are the standards that must be met in order to receive federal funding. There are 6 standards as listed:

- Academic Performance- GPA

81% or higher will have a GPA of 2.5 or better

- Academic Performance on Standardized Tests

65% of students will score proficient on standardized test

- Secondary School Retention and Graduation

95% of students will continue high school or complete high school degree

- Secondary School Graduation (Rigorous Secondary School Program of Study)

28% of students enroll and complete rigorous coursework

- Postsecondary Enrollment

60% of students enroll in college right away or at least defer offer to following academic year

- Postsecondary Completion

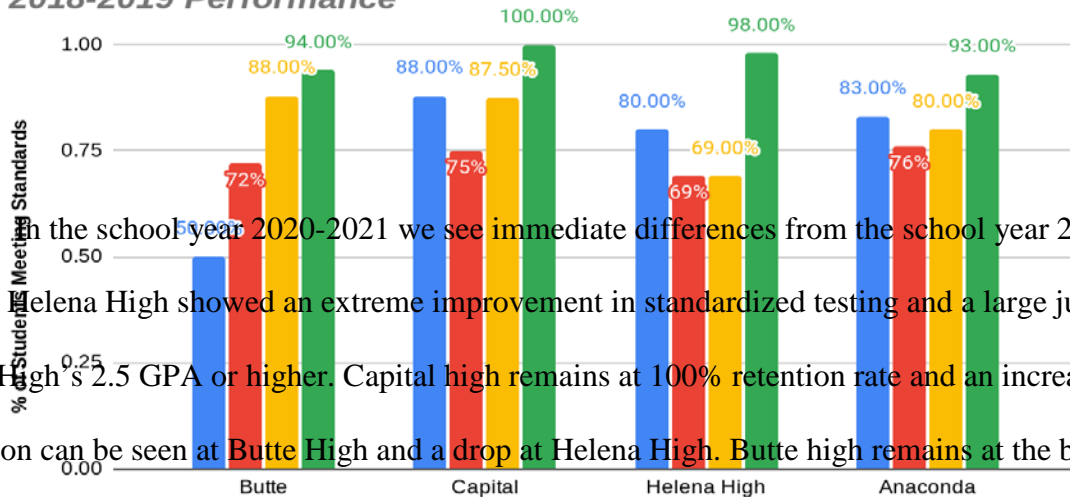
26% of students education degree or certification within 6 years

Each of these standards is part of a criteria that each school is evaluated on at the end of each year. By evaluating these standards there is a chance to see where each school is successful or struggling. In order to best see how each school was performing academically the 4 requirements being evaluated are academic performance, standardized math test scores, standardized reading test scores, and retention rate. Those requirements being that 81% or higher have a GPA of 2.5 or better, that 65% of students score proficient on math and reading standardized testing, and 95% of students continue high school or complete their high school degree.

Evaluating the school years 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 there were many differences that could be seen in the 4 standards and how each school was performing. Keeping in mind the demographics of each city these schools are located in, it is very interesting to see the overall success of each. In the school year 2018-2019 only Helena and Anaconda were able to meet the GPA requirement and they were also both able to meet the standard for math and reading testing. Anaconda had the lowest retention rates among schools at only 93% and Helena had a 100% retention rate. Butte high posted the highest percentage of individuals to pass the standardized

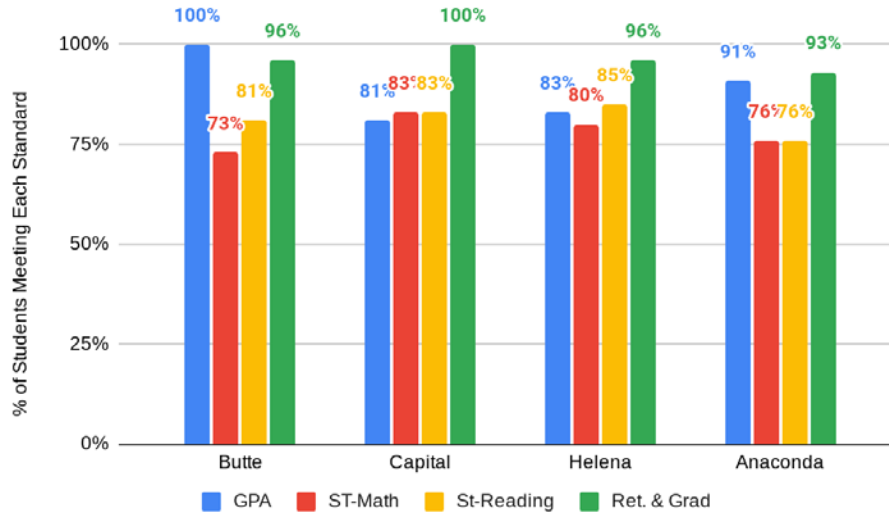
reasoning test and Helena High did not meet the requirements for standardized testing or GPA. This can all be seen in the figure below.

2018-2019 Performance



In the school year 2020-2021 we see immediate differences from the school year 2018-2019. Helena High showed an extreme improvement in standardized testing and a large jump in Butte High's 2.5 GPA or higher. Capital high remains at 100% retention rate and an increase of retention can be seen at Butte High and a drop at Helena High. Butte high remains at the bottom of the list for overall retention rate. To no surprise there is variation from year to year. Each group of students will represent different outcomes each year and this is taken into consideration when evaluating these results. Below is a figure representing the years 2020-2021.

2020-2021 Performance



Immediately one begins to wonder why there are so many differences among students who come from such similar backgrounds and demographics. From an outsider perspective one may think that because these students seem to all fall into similar categories their performance in the classroom would reflect more similarities. A study performed at the University of Kansas found that in simple terms, “students do not predict the singular, best way to teach them. A single student may learn best with one approach in one subject and a different one in another. The best approach for them may even vary day-to-day (2021).” Along with these learning style differences there are clearly many personal differences that each of these students endure at home.

Personal Reflection

Being a very small part of TRIO gave me a chance to see what took place behind the scenes and on the surface. With this little insight I was able to stop and evaluate each program to see what differences may have arisen along with what may have been causing these differences among each program. Although Southwest Montana TRIO identifies as a team we were all aware that we took on different challenges each time we worked with students and took on any thing that may have been thrown at us. Within each program, each of the coordinators knew what it took to find success in each of their students but they also knew each year would bring new diversity which would ultimately lead to new challenges. In my professional opinion the main causes of differences in success rates between Butte High School, Anaconda High School, Helena High School, and Capital high school are personal struggles, motivation, confidence, financial stability, family history, the lack of consistent program coordinator, consistent program coordinators, and some may be incentive driven. Some of these factors can be measured and some can not but all were evident during my time with TRIO and I can confidently say that they all played a role not only in the everyday success of the students but the overall success.

The measurable factors such as financial stability, family history, and program coordinator consistency are factors an outsider may be able to come in and identify immediately. When looking at financial stability we are aware that the students represented often come from low income backgrounds solely based on the information provided by them along with the demographic information that had been uncovered. Having to worry about financial funds adds stress and other mental factors that have been identified as contributors to struggles in the classroom. Not knowing what mental state they are in because of this stress caused by finances is not measurable but we know it plays a role and that this factor is out of their control. Just like

their family history. We know all of the students are first generation college students, therefore, the academic history of their family can be measured but the overall culture of the family can not be measured. Again all playing a factor. Lastly, the consistency of a program coordinator. At Anaconda High they have had the same coordinator for over 20 years and in Helena their coordinator has been there for nearly 10. This has allowed the foundation to be laid for future TRIO students. Both those coordinators have created bonds with their students that will last a lifetime. Butte High has not been as fortunate. They have had 3 coordinators in the last year. This has not allowed Butte to create the bonds and culture the other schools have. All of these things have led to the differences that can be identified in the programs.

Obviously things like motivation, personal struggles, and if a student is only incentive driven can not be measured. That does not mean they were not very present within each school and students. Overall motivation is something that is hard to find in any high school student let alone one that may come from the demographics we assist. Not having that constant drive within is hard to find when you aren't surrounded by it and it is safe to say these students don't have too many individuals at home pushing them to succeed to their fullest academically. It is also no secret that there are many amazing incentives that come along with being a part of TRIO. The students get to attend a variety of college visits, shadow in STEM settings, stipends while traveling, and so much more. When students find this out they often join the program to be a small part of this. Many of these students have never left their respected town let alone been able to travel the northwest to see new places with no money out of their pockets. With their everyday struggles at home it is no surprise that some take advantage of this. From abuse to broken homes. Lack of guidance and criminal activity, these students all have something different going on at home that they have to battle. This is and never will be measurable. Knowing that they are

battling things at home educators and support must be aware that each day the student that may show up might not be the same as yesterday. This is a very difficult role to take on but one individual must step up and take on.

Conclusion

The nontraditional aspect of this “research” is the heart that it takes to honestly evaluate a program like this. This program is all heart. There are not many people in this world that take the time to show compassion for those who need a little more help or may not have the needs to be successful. By having this kind of heart, individuals take the time to see what they can do to better the lives of others. Wanting to do this is not something that you develop over a lifetime, more times than not these individuals are born to do this. These individuals are special and at times are what makes the world a better place. By taking time to evaluate Southwest Montana TRIO there has been support offered to them in order for these individuals to better themselves in order to be that much better for these kids.

Final conclusions about why there are differences among these schools comes down to a few variables. Personal struggles, lack of culture, and just the fact that every child is different. These are the factors that can be credited for the differences among these schools because they are what seemed to appear most often and also showed why their academics struggled at times. We will never fully understand what a high school is going through in their personal lives and how that may impact them mentally. These are challenges we will see till the end of time and ones we must adapt to. With the lack of a positive environment at home many hope to see one at school. Without a consistent program coordinator in place the culture they seek can not be built

therefore leading to a lack of trust in the program and overall a negative perception at school. As stated before, every child is different. Each day they will be different. We are not sure what may have taken place hours before their standardized testing or what environment they have at home when trying to complete homework to up their GPA. Each student has their own battle they are fighting in their personal lives which leads to them sometimes losing their academic battle.

Every child matters. In order to find success in the classroom this must be the focal point. Understanding that each child is different and just because they may be struggling or not wanting to complete their work does not mean they deserve less attention. TRIO knows this and is taking it into their own hands to help these specific students succeed. They all come from different backgrounds that have not necessarily set them up for success but they want to better themselves in order to find their own success someday. Knowing how to handle each student in their own special way is the challenge that will always be faced. Helping and guiding each one in a way that is best suited for them is what will help lead them to success not only in academics but in life. There will always be differences, simple as that, but how willing individuals are to adapt to these differences and challenges is what will decide if these students will have the chance to be who we know they can be.

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