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Winthrop University

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# Graduate Students Use Psychology Statistics Training to Aid School District

## Quick Facts

- Last fall, graduate students in faculty member Matt Hayes' psychology statistics class analyzed test scores of a sample of 4,389 elementary students and found that third graders in at-risk groups who had participated in the district's pre-kindergarten program tested significantly higher in reading than those who didn't receive any early education training.
- Results of the graduate students' work will be presented to the Rock Hill school board at a future board meeting.



Matt Hayes

ROCK HILL, S.C. - Winthrop University **school psychology graduate students** recently helped the **Rock Hill school district** evaluate the effectiveness of its early childhood education initiatives.

Last fall, graduate students in **faculty member Matt Hayes'** psychology statistics class analyzed test scores of a sample of 4,389 elementary students. They found that third graders in at-risk groups who had participated in the district's **pre-kindergarten program** tested significantly **higher in reading** than those who didn't receive any early education training.

Results of the graduate students' work will be presented to the Rock Hill school board at a future board meeting.

"This partnership is good for our students and for the Rock Hill school district. Right now, education is alarmingly underfunded, which puts a lot of pressure on school districts to demonstrate that their programs are effective and worth the money," **Hayes said**. "Studies like this provide in-depth, objective evaluation, giving school district administrators good data that will enable them to make decisions informed by the facts."

This project enabled the graduate students to use their training to examine a **real world situation** and gave more meaning to their studies, said **Joe Prus**, the chair of the **Department of Psychology**. He and Hayes approached district leadership with the idea of partnering on a research or evaluation project. This is the second year for such a partnership.

"Advanced statistics is very challenging" **Prus** said. "Our department's partnership with Rock Hill school district helped the district bring added resources to an important effort, while at the same time providing our students with a meaningful way to apply what they learned."

With the national emphasis on **early education initiatives**, including from the Obama administration, Winthrop educators said this project seemed like a good fit.

The **Rock Hill school district** makes its pre-kindergarten programs available for children who meet **multiple at-risk factors** that include poverty, single parent homes and homes where English is not the native language.

**Rock Hill school officials** said the Winthrop graduate students were able to devote additional time and resources to analyze the results and to reflect on the findings from an objective point of view. "Their analysis will be used as a template for annual monitoring of the program and the results will be summarized and included in a variety of reports," said **Harriet Jaworowski**, associate superintendent

for instruction and accountability.

Pleased with the **graduate students' thoroughness** and **professionalism** in presenting the data, **Jaworowski** added that the project provided a baseline for additional evaluation of the early education programs. "We look forward to future opportunities that benefit both organizations and ultimately the educational community," she said.

Hayes said the statistics course is taught every fall and he anticipates working with the **Rock Hill school district** on similar projects in the future.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at [longshawj@winthrop.edu](mailto:longshawj@winthrop.edu).

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