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A Case Study: The Effects of Stakeholder Perceptions and Perceived Student Self-Efficacy on the Transition from Middle School to High School

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A Case Study: The Effects of Stakeholder Perceptions
and Perceived Student Self-Efficacy on the Transition from
Middle School to High School

By
Frank E. Wilson, Jr.

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
In Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University
2011

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Frank E. Wilson, Jr. under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

A Case Study: The Effects of Stakeholder Perceptions and Perceived Student Self-Efficacy on the Transition from Middle School to High School. Wilson, Jr., Frank E., 2011: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Transition/Middle School/High School/Stakeholder/Perception/Ninth Grade

High dropout rates and low on-time graduation rates across the United States suggest that for many students proper transitioning is not taking place from middle schools to high schools. This study was designed to examine what measure perceptions and expectations held by students, faculty, and parents dealing with transition from middle school to high school had on the ability of students to successfully make this transition. In addition, the researcher sought to determine the extent student self-efficacy had on individual students successfully making the transition from middle school to high school in regards to core academic performance, behaviors, and attendance.

The transition from middle school to high school is one of the most critical transition periods in a student's educational journey. Evidence shows that more students drop out between the ninth- and tenth-grade year than any other. The literature concerning the area of transition from middle school to high school offers reasons why students fail to transition and what steps can be taken to circumvent the loss of these students prior to graduation. It was the researcher's hope that by looking at stakeholder perception toward ninth-grade expectations and student perceived self-efficacy, this study would yield insight into what further steps could be taken to help all transitioning first time ninth graders to succeed and remain on track for on-time graduation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Transitioning from middle school to high school is often a difficult period of adjustment for many students and can result in a period of declining motivation and underachievement (De Mesquita, Courtney, & Woods, 1992). This problem tends to be universal and affects all levels of students making the transition from middle school to high school. For a few, the transition from middle school to high school can be a fresh start and provide positive impacts in both academic and social experiences (Mizelle, 2005). For a great many students, however, this time of change is faced with heightened anxiety, feelings of isolation, and detachment (Blyth, Simmons, & Carlton-Ford, 1983; Hertzog & Morgan, 1997; Mizelle, 2005). Difficulty in transitioning from middle school to high school can be seen by the sheer numbers of growing ninth-grade classes and subsequent dropout rates.

Wheelock and Miao (2005) addressed the problem of growing ninth-grade numbers across the United States in their article *The Ninth Grade Bottleneck*. They stated that if students were progressing on time through their academic grades, then the numbers for eighth- and ninth-grade students enrolled should be very similar in size across the country from 1 year to the next. According to their research, 13% more students were enrolled in ninth grade in 2001 than in the eighth grade the previous year. Subsequently, the number of students enrolled in the tenth grade compared to the number of previous year ninth-grade students constricts even further, thus creating this ninth-grade bulge (Haney et al., 2004; Wheelock & Miao, 2005).

Other research shows that over the past 30 years, the number of students in the ninth grade has more than tripled. In 2007, reports showed that over 4.2 million students

were enrolled in the ninth grade or about 23% of all students in the United States (Williams & Richman, 2007). Research shows that in schools where transition programs are fully operational, dropouts average only about 8%; while in schools with no transitioning program, they average 24% (Reents, 2002). The United States's graduation rate has steadily decreased since the 1990s. According to Barton (2005), an average of nine out of 10 students who entered high school prior to the 1990s graduated; since that time only one out of every three students who enter high school graduate.

The ninth-grade year is, for many reasons, one of the most important academic years for most students. Not only does this year mark the transition for most students into a high school setting, but the ninth-grade year also serves as a catapult for future academic and educational experiences. Students are often asked to make decisions during this academic year that can have lasting effects on their career and life paths. Literature findings indicate that the amount of success or failure that students encounter during their ninth-grade year may determine whether or not they go on to graduate from high school (Legters, 2005).

In recent years, federal legislation has been adopted to hold schools more accountable for all students. These new accountability standards have forced schools around the nation to find ways to increase student success and learning experiences. Many districts and schools have realized the importance of the ninth-grade year in determining the likelihood of a student's propensity to graduate. Schools and districts across the country have, therefore, devised methods, programs, and strategies to improve the transition process from middle grades to high school.

Society can no longer ignore the problems associated with students who fail to transition from middle school to high school. Data indicate that the largest number of

dropouts occurs between the ninth- and tenth-grade school years (Wheelock & Miao, 2005). Evidence shows that most of the students who drop out prior to receiving a high school diploma more often than not become a drain on society. Those who drop out prior to graduating from high school are often designated as contributing to higher crime rates, higher levels of poverty, and welfare dependency. The importance of finding ways to increase the successful transition from middle school to high school can be found and supported in literature that dates back over 30 years. The resurgence of new studies and literature available on this topic is an indication that this is a problem not yet solved, nor is it one educators can continue to ignore.

Conceptual Framework

The successful transition of students from middle school to high school is a problem facing the entire United States; these problems are neither just realized nor unique to any one area of the country. The literature pertaining to this topic covers several areas of discussion from environmental struggles within the new high school setting to physical and emotional changes students face during the transition from middle school to high school. Researchers have looked at student behavior, student perception, and past academic achievement as ways of finding solutions for this difficult transition phase.

The literature indicates there are no shortages for explanations as to why the ninth-grade year is so pivotal and difficult for students transitioning from middle school to high school. At the age most children transition from middle school to high school, they are not only being forced to contend with a change in school environment but also in physical, emotional, and psychological changes that adolescents experience around this time (Hughes, Copley, & Baker, 2005). The lives of students transitioning from middle

school to high school are often in constant crisis. The constant seeking to fit in or belong to a social group while pulling away from their familial unit can cause turmoil (Kagan & Segal, 1991).

The differences associated between middle schools and high schools in size, academic rigor, and social structure often lead to difficulties in transitioning for students (Kerr, 2002). Students are faced with the task of adjusting to older students, a wider, more diverse group of teachers and teaching styles, and increased social and academic pressure (Lampert, 2005). Ultimately, the larger the school setting, the more impersonal the environment often becomes, which can lead to the larger chance for anonymity by the student and less personal contact with peers and teachers (Blyth et al., 1983; Mizelle, 2005).

The transition from middle school to high school is difficult for most all adolescents regardless of risk factors. According to Roderick (1993), course failures immediately following the transition period from middle school to high school are not limited to students that show prior low academic achievement but can be an issue for all ninth graders. However, much literature is devoted to studying students who are labeled at-risk or who are seen as most likely to have problems transitioning from middle school to high school. The literature gives explicit examples of at-risk factors that can intensify the difficulty of transitioning from middle school to high school for some students. At-risk students often have been identified as students who have shown specific behaviors prior to or once reaching high school transition. Ninth graders traditionally show signs of falling behind academically, and as many as 60% of at-risk students will either not graduate with their class or not graduate at all (Green & Scott, 1995). Attendance problems, disciplinary infractions, poor grades, and lack of social and behavioral skills

are often associated with at-risk students as well (Jerald, 2006; Lane, Pierson, & Givner, 2004; Wehlage, 1986; Williams & Richman, 2007).

Researchers Nancy Mizelle, Jay Hertzog, Nettie Legters, and Jacquelyn Eccles are just a few who have devoted multiple studies and articles dealing with problems associated with transitioning from one academic setting to another. Their works, along with others, have helped identify multiple areas for current and future research into ways to ease or progress the transition of students not only from middle school to high school but also through all levels of academic transition. With the number of students who fail to complete high school on time or at all, it is clear that the answer to making sure all students transition successfully from middle school to high school requires additional studies and research to help solve this continuing problem within our nation.

Problem

A rural ninth through twelfth grade high school in northern South Carolina has taken steps to increase the successful transition of first time ninth graders entering into their school. Inconsistent graduation rates, retention rates, dropout rates as well as failure to consistently achieve Adequate Yearly Progress as set forth by the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation have prompted such actions by this school.

According to data retrieved from this school's 2002-2009 yearly state report cards, this school has failed to meet adequate yearly progress 4 of the 6 years that these measures have been formally applied.

The school in question has only met the requirements for achieving adequate yearly progress in the 2003-2004 and 2007-2008 academic school years. Disturbing inconsistencies in this school's graduation rates, dropout rates, and the percentage of students who are older than usual for a particular grade level have given reason to suspect

that students are not successfully making the transition from middle school to high school within this particular setting. Table 1 shows the inconsistencies of this school's achievement in the areas of adequate yearly progress (AYP), graduation rate, retention rate, older than usual for grade rate, and dropout rate.

Table1

State Report Card Data from 2002-2009

Year	AYP	Graduation Rate	Retention Rate	Older than Usual for Grade Rate	Dropout Rate
2002	N/A	N/A	12.9%	6.0%	3.2%
2003	N/A	76.6%	N/A	6.7%	3.1%
2004	Yes	71.4%	11.9%	6.0%	4.9%
2005	No	70.0%	11.7%	7.1%	5.0%
2006	No	71.3%	8.6%	6.8%	3.0%
2007	No	62.8%	9.1%	2.9%	3.9%
2008	Yes	77.1%	6.5%	5.5%	9.6%
2009	No	78.1%	6.7%	7.1%	6.3%

Note. AYP is defined as adequate yearly progress.

Table 1 gives evidence to the inconsistencies between graduation rates and dropout rates at this school. Looking at these two categories, the reader can see that the highest graduation rate of 78.1% was in 2009, yet the school failed to meet AYP and showed increases in both retention rates and older than usual for grade-level categories. In 2009, the school in question reduced its dropout rate from the previous year from 9.6% to 6.3% but still remained much higher than schools with comparable students across the state. However, in looking at the year 2007 when the graduation rate was at its lowest point of 62.8%, the dropout rate was at one of its lowest points of 3.9%. These

inconsistencies and fluctuations are a clear indication of an existing problem in students fully making a transition from middle school to high school.

The school has taken several measures to improve the success rate for first time ninth graders making the transition from middle school to high school. Among these actions is the development of a ninth-grade building which is located directly behind and connected by a covered walkway to the main building. The purpose of this building is to offer a smaller environment for first time ninth graders in order to acclimate them with the new social and academic rigors of high school. All ninth-grade level core academic classes as well as lunch are offered in this building; ninth-grade students do, however, enter the main campus building to participate in elective classes. Another step this school has taken is to have double blocked English and math classes for all ninth-grade students as well as some tenth-grade students who may have just met the minimum requirements in English and math during their ninth-grade year. This effort was instituted to enhance both English and math scores on end-of-course exams as well as increase the likelihood of students' first time passage of the state mandated High School Assessment Program (HSAP) test required for graduation in South Carolina. Although some improvements have been made, there is enough evidence as provided in Table 1 to suggest that many ninth-grade students entering this school are not fully making the transition successfully. The inconsistency in graduation rates as well as in retention rates and constant fluctuations in dropout rates are reasons to question what is happening to students in the ninth grade. Another alarming indication is the fact that, on average, over 64% of those students retained in this school were classified as ninth graders.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The success students encounter during their first year of high school is directly

linked to the probability of their graduating from high school (Legters, 2005). Students who fail to transition well from middle school to high school contribute to high dropout rates, low on-time graduation rates, and overall low achievement in American high schools (Herlihy, 2007). The purpose of this study was to examine what measure perceptions and expectations held by students, faculty, and parents dealing with transition from middle school to high school had on the ability of students to successfully make this transition. The researcher considered the perception and expectations of these stakeholders in regards to behaviors, skills, current programs, and supports to determine what was interfering with students' abilities to successfully transition from middle school to high school within this district. In looking at the transition from middle school to high school, the researcher felt it was important to include perceived student self-efficacy in determining individual student success in transitioning from middle school to high school by first time ninth graders. This research study was designed to answer the following research questions in regards to students making a successful transition from middle school to high school:

1. As perceived by first time ninth-grade students, which discrepancies exist between desired and actual characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school?
2. As perceived by ninth-grade faculty, which discrepancies exist between desired and actual characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school?
3. As perceived by first time ninth-grade student parents, which discrepancies exist between desired characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school and their actual participation in these areas?

4. When considering student transition from middle school to high school, to what extent does perceived student self-efficacy determine successful transition in regards to core academic performance, behavior, and attendance?

Demographics

The target population for this study included first time ninth-grade students entering a rural ninth through twelfth grade high school in northern South Carolina, the faculty and staff that directly worked with and oversaw these students on a day-to-day basis, and the parents and/or guardians of these students. Participants from this target population were chosen in two ways. First, the student and parent participants were chosen randomly from those that met the researcher's specified criteria of being labeled first time ninth graders or parent or guardian of a first time ninth grader. Those that were chosen from this group were asked to participate in completing surveys. Secondly, all faculty members that dealt with first time ninth graders on a day-to-day basis were invited to participate in this research study through responding to surveys.

Also included in this study was a second target population of randomly selected students in the remaining tenth- through twelfth-grade classes, the parents or guardians of these students, and teachers who taught a minimum of three tenth-grade level classes. These participants were asked to participate through the completion of surveys as well. The purpose of including students from higher grade levels in this second target population was to determine the perspective of students that have completed the ninth grade successfully as to what they felt helped them while going through the ninth grade and what other assistance could have been offered to first time ninth graders. By including teachers that taught a minimum of three tenth-grade level courses in the second target population, the researcher hoped to obtain the perspective of what was being done

correctly for ninth graders to prepare them for the next grade level and what suggestions for improvements could be made.

In obtaining participants for the first target population, the researcher attempted to use 25% of all qualified first time ninth graders, 25% of parents or guardians of all qualified first time ninth graders, and 100% of all faculty that dealt with first time ninth graders on a day-to-day basis. In obtaining participants for the second target population, the researcher attempted to use 5% of the remaining student population and their parents or guardians and 100% of those teachers that met the required minimum of three classes daily of tenth-grade subject matter.

Researcher's Organizational Ties

The researcher has been a faculty member of the school being studied for the past 8 years. During the researcher's tenure, he has taught all grade and difficulty levels offered at this school. At the time of this study, the researcher remained in the field of classroom instruction. The researcher made a conscience effort to remain unbiased in this study, having no preconceived transition programs or strategies in mind for implementation. The researcher hopes to use data collected by this study to help develop and implement a fully functioning transitioning program for this school and district, which will hopefully increase the success rate of all first time ninth-grade students and, in return, raise the overall graduation rate for this school and district while decreasing the overall dropout rate.

Limitations and Delimitations

As with all research studies, some limitations existed that were out of the researcher's control and others that were subject to delimitations set by the researcher. The limitations of this study were the population size from which the researcher had the

opportunity to pull the random population samples. Also, out of the control of the researcher was the number of responses he received from those randomly selected to participate. The delimitations set by the researcher for this study were as follows: 1) students taken from the ninth grade sample were limited to first time ninth graders only; 2) parent or guardian participants for the first target population were chosen randomly from those who met the qualification of having at least one first time ninth grader enrolled; and 3) faculty participants for the first target population were chosen by those housed in the ninth-grade building on a daily basis.

Other delimitations of this study were in accord with the selection of the second target population that entailed the following: 1) student participants were chosen at random from those that met the qualifications of having completed the ninth grade successfully and progressed to a higher grade level; 2) parent or guardian participants of the second target population were directly related to the student participants within this population sample; and 3) teachers selected for the second target population had to have taught a minimum of three tenth-grade level classes on a daily basis to be included.

Definition of Terms

The following are the definitions of terms that will be used within the scope of this research and study.

Transition. Movement from one academic grade level or setting to another.

First time ninth grader. A student who is enrolled in the ninth grade for the first time after successfully completing the eighth grade.

At-risk. Refers to behaviors or students who exhibit behaviors that might interfere with the successful transition from one grade level to another or the successful completion of high school.

Graduation rate. A percentage compiled by taking the number of students beginning the ninth grade divided by the number of students that graduate 4 academic years later.

Dropout rate. Percentage of students who drop out of school per academic year.

Retention rate. Percentage of students that are retained or fail to meet the requirements for placement in the next grade level each academic year.

Perception. Belief or beliefs held concerning the expectations or skills needed to successfully complete a task.

Self-efficacy. A sense of confidence regarding the performance of specific tasks (Jinks & Morgan, 1999).

Organization of Remaining Study

The remaining parts of this study are organized by chapters. Chapter 2 is a detailed literature review on topics associated with transitioning from middle school to high school. The literature review helped identify common problems associated with transition and outlines common components of successful transition programs. The literature review also further discusses the topics listed in the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used by the researcher to obtain data for this study as well as detailed information of the instrumentation used in data collection. The researcher uses Chapter 4 to provide data analysis and report findings as related to the research questions. Finally, in Chapter 5, the researcher gives recommendations for future studies that may help expand the scope of research available on the topic of transitioning from middle school to high school or help answer new questions that may arise from this study.

Summary

Transitioning from one academic setting to another is part of the natural progression of steps one must take in their journey through education. The data show that the transitioning from middle school to high school is one of the most difficult transitions students are required to make and that the number of students who fail to make this transition successfully has grown significantly in the past decades. A significant drop in the number of students who finish high school and a tremendous rise in the number of dropout rates across the nation give reason to be concerned.

Over the past 3 decades, the questions that surround student transitioning within academic settings have led to a sizable amount of research and literature concerning students' abilities to transition from one grade to another. Recent legislation, like No Child Left Behind (2001), which demands accountability for all students and teachers, has brought issues surrounding why students have a difficult time making the transition from middle school to high school back to the forefront. These new accountability standards and a changing globalization of economies and job markets indicate that the problems of students making successful transitions at all academic levels can no longer be ignored.

This study was designed to help answer questions surrounding the transition from middle school to high school. In completing this study, the researcher hoped to examine what measure perceptions and expectations held by students, faculty, and parents dealing with transition from middle school to high school had on the ability of students to successfully make this transition. In addition, the researcher also sought to determine the extent student self-efficacy had on individual students successfully making the transition from middle school to high school in regards to core academic performance, behaviors,

and attendance. The researcher hoped that this study would expand the body of literature on the topic of transition and give rise to similar studies that can help alleviate the number of students who fail to successfully transition from middle school to high school and ultimately fail to graduate from high school.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Concerns or problems surrounding the task of transitioning from middle school to high school are neither just recently realized nor unique to the author's study. A review of the literature dealing with transitional issues from one school setting to another spans close to 3 decades and is becoming increasingly more common with newer and tighter government mandates for accountability. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) legislation introduced under President George W. Bush holds districts and schools accountable for the learning and development of all students. When it comes to high schools, the plans for meeting the requirements under NCLB (2001) are fairly clear; high schools must get on-time graduation rates up while simultaneously reducing the dropout rate (Bryant, 2008).

Background

Our nation's graduation rate has steadily decreased since the 1990s. Prior to this time period, nine out of 10 students graduated from high school; only one out of three currently do (Barton, 2005). During the 1970s, the United States was ranked number one relating to quality and quantity of education. By 2007, the U.S. had fallen to 18 out of 23 industrialized nations (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). Research shows that students who drop out often become a strain on society. According to Levin (2005), 75% of state prison inmates, 60% of federal inmates, and 70% of jail inmates are high school dropouts. With the constant change from industrial to service industry jobs, high school dropouts will qualify for less than 15% of all available jobs in the future. Evidence of the strain high school dropouts place on the American economy suggests that the over 1.2 million dropouts that should have graduated in 2008 will cost the United States more than \$319 billion in lost income across their lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

The literature illustrates the universality of problems associated with incoming high school students who fail to adjust to their new environment (Monahan, 1992). Transition phases are often a difficult time in one's life. The stresses and challenges that come from these times of adjustment can cause developmental problems or crises (Akos, 2002). Much of the literature gives emphasis to urban areas that face the crisis of student dropout and high school completion problems. Issues facing more suburban students have been overshadowed or even completely ignored. According to Clark (2007), no freshmen are exempt from the transition or its negative effects, regardless of urban or suburban setting.

For many reasons, the ninth grade is the most essential year for high school students. Not only does it mark the transition into high school for most students, but it also usually plays a large role in future educational experiences. According to Fulk (2003), the ninth-grade year is the first time many students have to earn passing grades in core classes. The ninth grade is also the first time students earn credits that count toward graduation over 4 years; many ninth graders fail to realize the importance of doing well to gain these credits (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2004). The amount of success one encounters during his or her first year of high school has been directly linked to the probability of their graduating (Legters, 2005). Haney et al. (2004) likened the ninth-grade year to a key valve in what they call the *education pipeline*. Students who fail to transition well from middle school to high school contribute to high dropout rates, low on-time graduation rates, and overall low achievement in American high schools (Herlihy, 2007). Research shows that more students fail the ninth grade than any other. Ninth graders often account for the lowest grade point averages, the most missed classes, the majority of discipline referrals, and the most failing grades than any other grade in

high school (Fritzer & Herst, 1996). Problematic school transition results in negative student outcomes (Ruiz, 2005). Also indicated is that students who are promoted to the tenth grade but lack needed skills or are *off-track* as identified by lack of credits, attendance, or failing grades during their ninth-grade year are less likely to reach graduation on time or at all (Williams & Richman, 2007).

Statistics show that students who eventually drop out prior to graduating exhibit a sharper decline in grades and attendance in the ninth grade than those who complete high school. On-track students are more than 3.5 times likely to graduate from high school in 4 years than those students that fall off track in the ninth grade. The ability to stay on track their ninth-grade year is a more accurate predictor of graduation than the student's middle school achievement test scores or background characteristics (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

Problems Associated with Change

The comprehensiveness of literature dedicated to this topic indicates there are no shortages for explanations as to why the ninth-grade year is so pivotal and difficult for students transitioning from middle school to high school. During this transitional period from middle school to high school, most children are at an age where they are not only being forced to contend with a change in school environment, but also in physical, emotional, and psychological changes (Hughes et al., 2005). These students often perceive their lives to be increasingly stressful and in constant crisis. They are constantly seeking to fit in or belong to a social group while wanting to claim a sense of independence by pulling away from their familial unit. This constant struggle to achieve belonging and independence simultaneously can cause turmoil (Kagan & Segal, 1991). The differences associated between middle schools and high schools in size, academic

rigor, and social structure are often cited as road blocks that lead to difficulties in transitioning for students (Kerr, 2002). Students enter an environment where they must now adjust to older students, a wider more diverse group of teachers and teaching styles, and increased social and academic pressures (Crosnoe, 2009; Lampert, 2005). The larger the school setting, the more impersonal the school environment often becomes, which can lead to the larger chance for anonymity by the student and less personal contact with peers and teachers (Blyth et al., 1983; Mizelle, 2005).

Many times moving from middle school to high school can be very exciting for some students, but more often, the case is a time filled with anxiety and stress for many adolescents (Hertzog & Morgan, 1997). Transitioning from middle school to high school not only forces students to acclimate to a new physical environment but also to a new social structure and new peers (Mizelle, 2005). High schools typically tend to be much larger than middle schools and offer more opportunities to encounter diversity and competition among peers. In some studies students have been asked about their perceptions of high school. According to Mizelle (1995), the eighth-grade students he studied were both excited and concerned about making the move to ninth grade; however, he found that most of these students reported their fears unfounded once becoming adjusted to ninth-grade life.

Students making the transition from middle school to high school have become accustomed to being the oldest, most experienced students in their school and are faced with starting at the bottom again as freshmen, being the youngest and newest to the school. According to Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman, and Smith (2001), this experience, known as *role loss*, where students are no longer the best athlete or smartest in their class, can be quite stressful. Making the move from middle school to high school

is more than just a change in physical locations; it is a change in environment, new expectations, procedures, and greater challenges (White-Hood, 2001). These new environmental and social changes often intensify feelings of isolation and anxiety and can lead to disengagement and a decreased sense of belonging to the school by the student (Blyth et al., 1983; Kerr, 2002). Providing students transitioning from eighth to ninth grade with a sense of belonging to the school can reduce the risk of dropouts (Reents, 2002; Wheelock & Miao, 2005).

Relationships

The shift from middle school to high school usually entails a shift from instruction focusing on nurturing the whole child to a more content specific form of instruction that can further intensify student anxiety (Herlihy, 2007). Literature indicates that the teacher plays a major role in the ability of students to successfully transition from middle school to high school. The teacher often becomes a student's primary contact within a high school. The teacher also reflects the school's ability to meet and be responsive to the student's needs (Fraser & Wahlberg, 1991).

Gillock and Reyes (1996) showed that a student's perception of his/her teacher greatly affected his/her self-perception and his/her academic performance. Many times students moving from middle school to high school have difficulty making the transition because they do not realize what is expected of them. If teachers do not explicitly give their expectations to incoming students or if expectations of teachers are substantially different from one class to another at the high school level, adjusting and meeting expectations will be more challenging and difficult for students (Lane et al., 2004). Teachers also have voiced concerns for those students moving from middle school to high school settings. Often cited are the student's lack of knowledge about high school

earned credit policies, academic expectations, and the attendance policies, which often differ greatly from those of middle schools (Smith, Akos, Sungtaek, & Wiley, 2008).

Another major component of relationships in dealing with transition from middle school to high school is peer relationships. Studies have shown that peers and the social support of peers play a major role in influencing day-to-day behaviors and feelings of adolescents toward the value of school and how well they may perform or transition overall (Adeyemo & Troubeli, 2008; Hughes et al., 2005; Mizelle, 2005). Those children who are more socially skilled and can make friends more easily, cooperate with others, share, and exhibit proper behavior tend to have higher academic achievement (Adeyemo & Troubeli, 2008).

At-Risk Factors

The transition from middle school to high school is difficult for most all adolescents regardless of risk factors. According to Roderick (1993), course failures immediately following the transition period from middle school to high school were not limited to students that showed prior low academic achievement but were an issue for all ninth graders. Of students who are retained only once throughout Grades K-12, only 40% actually graduate. The percentages of students who graduate after being retained twice through Grades K-12 are even bleaker with only 10% completing school (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999).

Much literature deals with explicit examples of at-risk factors that can intensify the difficulty of transitioning from middle school to high school for some students. At-risk students can be identified as students who have shown specific behavior and social problems prior to or once reaching high school transition. All ninth graders traditionally show signs of falling behind academically during the initial transition period. However,

some students do not readjust as quickly during this transition phase. It is estimated that as many as 60% of at-risk students will either not graduate with their class or not graduate at all (Green & Scott, 1995).

Behaviors associated with at-risk students are as simple as attendance problems (Johnson, Markle, & Harshbarger, 1986). Low attendance for students during the first 30 days of the ninth grade is a better predictor that they will drop out prior to high school graduation than age, test scores, or academic achievement (Jerald, 2006). Absences by students have shown to have negative effects on a student's achievement, promotion, graduation, and future employment potential (DeKalb, 1999). Poor grades and frequent discipline problems have been associated with at-risk students as well (Wehlage, 1986; Williams & Richman, 2007). Research also indicates that students who are deficient in academic, social, and behavioral skills or whose skill levels fall far short of normative levels are greatly at-risk (Lane et al., 2004).

The challenges for at-risk students are great, but pitfalls exist for all students transitioning from middle school to high school. High schools are generally more competitive. Good grades are stressed and become more important (Eccles, Midgley, & Adler, 1984). Teachers' expectations are usually higher for their students, and often students are given more homework than in middle schools. The overall curriculum is usually more challenging at the high school level; at the same time, students often are overwhelmed by newfound freedoms and decision-making opportunities that may have a great impact on their future (i.e., course selection, extracurricular activities) (Mizelle, 2005). At this time of transition from middle school to high school, students are often asked to make increasingly difficult and sophisticated decisions at younger ages with little information for making those decisions (Dedmond, 2006). Most often students

entering into high school are expected to have developed an efficient learning style along with good study and organizational skills. High schools often assume that students can take responsibility for their own learning and decisions affecting their academic track (Clark, 2007).

The list of indicators as to how students will transition from middle school to high school is too great to list. Other factors not mentioned above but covered within the literature are the quality of a student's social environment and how attached they feel to school (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999; Lampert, 2005). Student self-perceptions and academic self-concepts play major roles in the success of transitioning as well (Beane, 1994; Byne, 1996). Research has shown that students who exhibit characteristics of greater positive expectations of success often experience greater adjustment during times of transition (Bullis, Davis, Bull, & Johnson, 1997; Carlson, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2004; Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, & Hunsberger, 2000). Some evidence shows that parents' perceptions of what their child can do or should do have strong effects on their child's perceptions and, thus, their academic success (Eccles et al., 1990; Jacobs & Eccles, 1992).

Indicators such as the extent to which students faced earlier academic transition periods can be predictors of how well students make the transition from middle school to high school (Blyth et al., 1983). The number of academic transitions may also play a part in how well students transition from middle school to high school. Alspaugh (1998) showed that, in general, the fewer academic transitions a student encountered, the better the student performed. The depth of social supports available from teachers and peers, along with the presence of adaptive coping strategies, are determinants as to how well one may transition from middle school to high school (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999).

According to various literature, identifiers such as race, socioeconomic levels, gender,

parental support, and living parameters (i.e., urban or rural) can have an effect on how well students transition (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; EPE Research Center, 2006).

Student Perceived Self-Efficacy

Another area of literature that pertains to this study is the area concerning student perceived self-efficacy and the role it plays in a student's academic performance. Much has been written concerning self-efficacy in general since Bandura (1977) brought the concept to the forefront in his study, *Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*. Since its conception, researchers have tried to link student self-efficacy with academic performance in an attempt to understand reasons for student success or failure. Bandura himself has revisited the idea of perceived self-efficacy in numerous studies throughout the past 3 decades including ones that look specifically at student self-efficacy and academic achievement. Other leaders in this area are Barry Zimmerman and D. H. Schunk, both of whom have conducted numerous studies and contributed enormous amounts of time studying student motivation and efficacy as they apply to academic success.

Perceived self-efficacy has been defined by social learning theorists as a sense of confidence regarding performance of a specific task (Jinks & Morgan, 1999). Bandura (1986) described perceived self-efficacy as peoples' judgments toward their capabilities to organize and execute actions required to obtain specific tasks. He felt that it was less about the skills people actually possessed and more about the judgments of what they felt they could do with the skills they had. Those looking to find the answer as to why students are or are not successful in different academic situations have looked toward perceived self-efficacy as an underlying variable for academic success or the lack thereof.

According to Jinks and Morgan (1999), it would seem that students with high

self-efficacy will try different strategies and persevere in the classroom while students with low self-efficacy may shy away from difficult situations and give up on learning. A sense of high self-efficacy often leads students to be willing to take a risk in the classroom and use both successes and failures as learning tools, while a low sense of self-efficacy often contributes to higher levels of anxiety, perceived vulnerability, and negative thinking that often lead to low academic effort and performance (Adeyemo & Troubeli, 2008; Schunk, 1984). Most of the literature supports the general idea that higher self-efficacy often leads to more willingness to take risk while lower self-efficacy tends to keep people guarded regardless of situation. Researchers believe that the amount of self-efficacy directly influences the level of goal challenge and/or acceptable task difficulty people are willing to set for themselves, the effort they mobilize, and the persistence they show in the face of diversity (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

Evidence suggests that self-efficacious students participate in academic settings more readily, work harder, persevere longer, and handle difficulties with less emotional reactions than less efficacious students (Bandura, 1997). Student self-efficacy has also been found to be directly correlated to student intrinsic interest and correlates greatly with the direction students follow academically as far as attempted classes and chosen college majors (Zimmerman, 2000). Although most research usually looks at perceived student self-efficacy in relation to a specific core subject matter, some evidence suggests that perceived self-efficacy can be generalized across different situations and academic areas (Bong, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000).

Many researchers are quick to point out that self-efficacy should not be confused with outcome expectations. Outcome expectancy is more of a belief that a certain

behavior will lead to an expected outcome while an efficacy expectation is the conviction to be able to execute the behavior needed to achieve the outcome (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1989, 1997; Jinks & Morgan, 1999). Students can have a high sense of efficacy about their knowledge in a particular subject matter, yet because they may believe that the teacher does not like them, they may have a low outcome expectation for the class (Jinks & Morgan, 1999).

The theoretical structure that the literature offers concerning perceived self-efficacy is that individuals with higher levels of efficacious beliefs are more likely to cope better with stressful and rigorous situations and settings. With this in mind, the researcher feels that the importance of perceived student self-efficacy must be evaluated in regards to its relationship to students making a successful transition from middle school to high school. Research has shown that student perceived self-efficacy can be directly related to higher academic achievement in general (Bandura, 1997; Bong, 2004; Schunk, 1984; Zimmerman et al., 1992; Zimmerman, 2000). The researcher believes that the evidence offered in these numerous examples indicates a reasonable assumption in questioning whether perceived student self-efficacy plays a direct role in successful student transition from middle school to high school. Successful transition from middle school to high school only lends to the validity and just cause for this study.

Successful Components

Equally important as the indicators of risk and hindrances to students making a successful transition from middle school to high school is what the literature states as ways to increase and ensure successful transitioning for these students. The literature stresses the importance of strategic transitional programs that provide extensive interactions across the school building and create a sense of community to ease the

academic and social transition (Durant, 2009; Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenberg, 2008; Smith, Akos, Sungtaek, & Wiley, 2008). A leader in the secondary reform effort came to the forefront when the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 2004) released *Breaking Ranks II*, which listed several recommendations for all high schools to ensure successful transition programs. Suggestions made in this publication focused on schools developing goals, development of separate physical space for ninth graders, double doses of English and mathematics over the course of the ninth-grade year, development of a meaningful and rigorous curriculum, an atmosphere of support for all stakeholders at all levels, stakeholder buy-in, and lastly school-based assistance teams (NASSP, 2004).

The movement from small to large high schools came as a result of being more economically sound. With these changes came several unintended consequences, like lost relationships between students and the school which lead to increased truancy, discipline problems, and increased dropout rates (Bryant, 2008). Larger school districts often have lower student achievement, higher dropout rates, and the least favorable student-teacher ratio (Cotton, 1996). In response to such trends, many secondary schools across the nation have restructured the typically large setting of high school and adopted single grade academies to help with middle school to high school transition (Kerr, 2002).

Research has supported that downsized school models have had a positive impact on student outcomes (Ruiz, 2005). According to a report published by Northeast and Islands Regional Laboratory at Brown University (2001) as read in Clark (2007), studies show that smaller schools can be linked to positive outcomes. Attendance rates, disciplinary actions, school loyalty, alcohol and drug use, and overall satisfaction with the school are all affected by school size. Studies also indicate that it is important to

encourage students to interact with fellow ninth-grade students and to partake in different school activities, which can help alleviate feelings of isolation and anonymity (Hughes et al., 2005). Mendez (2004) warned that smaller size does not mean better if the smaller schools just become miniature replicas of the larger schools. According to Scott (2006), some schools with freshmen academies have found that their students basically have 2 freshmen years, 1 in the ninth grade, and then again when introduced to the rest of the school in tenth grade. For some students, the academy setting is useful during the first few months of the ninth-grade year to help in the initial transition but not needed in the second semester or else it becomes too much like remaining in middle school (Durant, 2009).

Important to the success of any ninth-grade transitioning program is curriculum, accountability, and quality control (Zsiray, Larsen, & Liechty, 1996). Hertzog and Morgan (1998), along with others, suggested that making purposeful connections with transitioning students is a must and should be built into all transition programs. Some researchers suggest that collaboration between personnel from both the eighth- and ninth-grade schools is important for successful student transitioning (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Mizelle, 1999; Monahan, 1992). However, Schiller (1999) stated that communication between schools can be more harmful than helpful because information passed back and forth may hinder a student's progress at the next level as teachers' expectations and perceptions of students are passed on. To include and encourage participation in transition programs from all levels of the organization as well as treating transitioning students in a normal, socially supportive way is important (De Mesquita et al., 1992; Smith et al., 2008).

Successful transition programs often have well-designed curricula and high

quality instruction in core areas such as math and English which many incoming ninth-grade students lack (Smith, 2007). Herlihy (2007) stated that smooth transition from middle school to high school required allowing struggling students to catch up while also challenging and engaging them in learning. Personalization of instruction, varying strategies, and added structural and personal supports throughout their entire ninth-grade experience are good indicators of successful programs as well (Herlihy, 2007; Smith, 2007).

Many successful programs offer a student orientation program prior to the start of school for incoming ninth-grade students. They also allow for communication between the school, parents, and the community to let them know what is expected and what can be expected, as well as programs that are available at the school (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Monahan, 1992). Mizelle (2005) suggested that effective transition programs include activities that allow students to learn about the new high school as well as help students develop social supports. Students entering a new school should be informed as to what to expect in regards to policy and academics. According to DeKalb (1999), transition programs should be aware of high school policies and the consequences of poor attendance. Research conducted by Pantleo (1999) also showed that when asked, students said that providing more opportunities to visit the high school, more information about co-curricular activities and information on study skills improvement, more help with schedule and class load preparation, and more time with their teachers would have been helpful in the transition period between eighth and ninth grade.

According to the literature, key to the success of any ninth-grade transitioning program is the teachers that are in place. One major problem pointed out by the literature is that despite the intensified academic challenges faced by ninth graders, they are often

more likely to receive the most inexperienced or uncertified teachers within a school (Neild & Farley, 2005). Teachers should have a strong desire to work with challenging students, as well as be competent in material and instructional strategies (Hughes et al., 2005). Teachers who can build authentic connections with their students and form positive relationships have shown great success in helping students transition more successfully (Owens & Konkol, 2004). Durant (2009) observed that students felt a good advisor/advisee program between teachers and students improved their attitudes and behaviors toward school, and in general helped with the transition into high school.

The importance of most transitioning programs is that they help protect students from getting lost in the move from middle school to high school. Students who are exposed to full or partial transition programs achieve higher academically (Clark, 2007; Cognato, 1999). Clark (2007) also reported that students exposed to at least a partial transition program had better attendance statistics, which is a leading indicator for successful ninth-grade completion. Not all research supports partial programs. Hertzog and Morgan (1999) claimed that 40% of ninth graders fail their first year when exposed to none or only partial transition programs.

With all the changes transitioning students are facing in their move from middle school to high school, one common element in successful transitioning programs is stability and structure. Alterations or changes in ninth-grade schedules can have a great impact on students. Students can become hyperactive, defiant, and overly-stimulated when schedule changes occur. Transition programs and schools should make every attempt to avoid unnecessary changes to schedules (Hughes et al., 2005). Kerr (2002) looked at nine structural components across Maryland schools to see the effects that each had on helping ninth graders make the transition from middle school to high school. The

components examined were organizing students in small learning communities, interdisciplinary team teaching, homeroom advisors for students, heterogeneous grouping of students sharing common core curriculum, extended class periods, consistent student-centered instruction, extra periods, a study skills class specialized for ninth graders, and summer programs for entering ninth graders. The results maintained that the introduction of five or more of these structural changes would most likely decrease dropout rates (Kerr, 2002).

Research indicates that parental involvement in the transition process can contribute to the impact of ninth-grade achievement (Paulson, 1994). According to Mac Iver (1990), when parents become involved in the transition process for their ninth graders, they tend to stay involved throughout their high school existence. Also, when parents are involved in the transition process, students tend to be more academically successful, better adjusted, and less likely to drop out (Crosnoe, 2009; Horn & West, 1992). This information indicates the importance of involving parental and guardian support for any transition program. According to Crosnoe (2009), when schools make connections with families, it allows a flow of information in both directions. The school can provide information to parents as to expectations of the school and what they can do to help their child progress; the parents in return offer information to the school concerning their child's specific needs or circumstances.

Influencing Studies

In compiling this literature review there were several studies found that helped influence and guide the development of the researcher's study. The researcher felt it was necessary to briefly introduce and explain each of those studies to lend credibility and context to his own study. The studies to be discussed primarily researched perception of

stakeholders' perceptions, or areas of student self-efficacy.

In developing contextual and practical areas of study for stakeholder perceptions, two studies drew the most interest from the researcher in areas of subject and design: McLellan's (2004) dissertation study, *An Analysis of the Perceptions of Teachers, Administrators, and Students Toward Alternative High School Programs in Mississippi*, and Smith et al.'s (2008) research study, *Student and Stakeholder Perceptions of the Transition to High School*. Both of these studies sought to measure the stakeholder perception in order to offer suggestions to improve student academic success through programs or the transition into high school in general.

In her 2004 study, McLellan surveyed students, teachers, and administrators in the areas of perception of importance concerning key components in alternative high school programs compared with their perceived existence of key alternative program components within their individual alternative high school programs. The instrumentation used was a 40-question Likert scale survey addressing 10 major categories concerning alternative high school programs; these categories addressed areas in small class size, teacher expectations of student achievement, site-based management, positive student/teacher relationships, and positive self-concepts among others (McLellan, 2004). One hundred fifty-three Mississippi alternative high schools were included in the study; administrators were asked to complete a survey as well as randomly choose three teachers and five students to complete surveys and return them for analysis. McLellan (2004) stated that approximately 41% of those asked to participate responded to her request. The completed student, teacher, and administrative surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVAs or one-way analyses of variance, and Tukey HSD multiple comparison test (McLellan, 2004).

In her study, McLellan (2004) used a mean rating of 3.5 or greater as an indication of stakeholders in both areas of importance and existence. The data collected allowed her to conclude that students, teachers, and administrators each rated 36 of the 40 characteristics concerning importance for different key components in alternative high school programs as important. Also noted was that students were more likely to indicate importance with lower average means than both teachers and administrators (McLellan, 2004). In data collected to determine existence of such key components within the stakeholders own program, results were mixed based on the dropout rate of the school to which the participant belonged. Participants from schools with low dropout rates perceived existence levels were higher than schools with high dropout rates (McLellan, 2004).

These results led McLellan (2004) to conclude that there were fewer discrepancies in stakeholder perception of importance and stakeholder perceived existence in schools with low to medium dropout rates, whereas schools with high dropout rates often had large discrepancies between stakeholder perception of importance and perception of existence. She felt that such results could indicate that schools with low to medium dropout rates were more structurally sound and, since stakeholder perception from within these schools was higher, it could be concluded that these schools did indeed possess many of the key characteristics of successful alternative high school programs (McLellan, 2004).

In looking for areas of research addressing transition from middle school to high school, Smith et al.'s (2008) study of stakeholder perception concerning the transition to high school itself intrigued the researcher and allowed him to expand the scope of his own study. Citing many of the literature results already found by the researcher himself

concerning transition from middle school to high school, this 2008 study sought to achieve a better understanding of stakeholder perception toward the transition into high school, specifically students, parents, and faculty views of this transition period (Smith et al., 2008). The researchers used a mixture of Likert scaled surveys to obtain data from parents and students, and interviews and questionnaires to obtain data from school faculty members. Students were given pretransition and posttransition surveys to determine how their perceptions of transition differed once going through the process (Smith et al., 2008).

Smith et al. (2008) reported their findings as follows. Research question 1: Comparison of student to parent pretransition perceptions indicated students' pretransition scores were slightly lower than parents on academic subscales. Examination of the mean difference on specific items indicated some noticeable discrepancies; students had a much more positive outlook on freedom of academic plan and freedom to choose some classes. On the social subscale, students' aggregate scores were significantly higher than parents. Parents indicated a much higher anxiety about social issues while students were predominately excited about the increased social opportunities; the two groups did differ in their perceptions and concerns for safety (Smith et al., 2008). According to the researchers, students' pretransition scores were also slightly higher on the organizational subscales than parents. The main difference fell along the lines of perceptions of school size, lunch choices, getting lost, and navigating the school (Smith et al., 2008).

With research question 2, pre-post comparison of student perceptions of transition, the 2008 study indicated that students' mean scores on eighth-grade test academic subscale differed significantly from their ninth-grade experiences subscale. In

general, less academic concern was expressed by students posttransition (Smith et al., 2008). The data also indicated that eighth-grade social subscale test results were similar to those of the ninth-grade social subscale test as well as the eighth- and ninth-grade organizational subscale. The researchers did note that there was a large gap between the pre-post test results in areas of not feeling safe and not feeling accepted by other students (Smith et al., 2008). An important piece of information related by the researchers of the study was that pre-post test results indicated that eighth-grade students felt that their counselors offered significantly less support than those during the ninth grade once experiencing the transition; both tests indicated parents remained a positive support during both levels (Smith et al., 2008).

The last research question, school staff perceptions of the transition to ninth grade, indicated that school faculty were concerned with the students' lack of understanding in earning high school credit, overall academic expectations, and attendance policies (Smith et al., 2008). In interviewing the faculty in regards to helping students with the transition period, those interviewed consistently mentioned communication between teachers of different grade levels, i.e., eighth- and ninth-grade teachers in order to express and explain the progression of expectations to students (Smith et al., 2008). The researchers indicated that they hoped schools would use their study to help address the information gap between middle school and ninth-grade transition programs and in general strengthen transition supports for students moving from middle school to high school (Smith et al., 2008).

Two studies in the area of student self-efficacy that raised particular interest of the researcher were those completed by Bong (2004), *Academic Motivation in Self-Efficacy, Task Value, Achievement Goal Orientations and Attributional Beliefs*, and Adeyemo and

Troubeli (2008), *Self-Efficacy, Self-Concept, and Peer Influence as Correlates of Academic Achievement among Secondary School Students in Transition*. Both of these studies dealt with issues of student self-efficacy and the effect it had on academic achievement. Results from these studies helped to solidify the hypothesis held by the researcher, developed while researching literature on student transition, that consideration of student self-efficacy is instrumental when determining probable success rates for students making the transition from middle school to high school in order to design and implement needed transition support programs.

Bong (2004) concentrated her study on 389 female freshmen Korean students at an all-girls' school in South Korea in order to determine whether students who exhibit certain motivational beliefs in academic domains transferred those beliefs across other domains. She based her research on a previous study she had conducted in 2001 that alluded that self-efficacy beliefs do indeed generalize across multiple subject matters. The research was set up to measure areas of academic self-efficacy, task value, achievement-goal orientations, attribution, and motivational beliefs toward general school learning; data was collected in these areas using questionnaires addressing domains of Korean, English, and mathematics (Bong, 2004).

Bong (2004) reported that overall scales fell within reasonable range and demonstrated acceptable levels of consistency. She indicated that a significant finding in her study was that each motivational belief was associated with a different degree of generality across domains and contexts which she felt corroborated her earlier study (Bong, 2004). Conclusions were made to the assumption that academic self-efficacy beliefs in different subject matters were moderately correlated while ability attributions indicated a far greater distinction across the three subject areas. Bong (2004) then

stipulated that respondents believed ability in one academic domain did not have any implication in other specific domains. The data indicated that Korean high school students felt effort, or the lack thereof, far outweighed other assumptions in academic outcomes (Bong, 2004).

The second study that solidified the importance of student self-efficacy and the measure it possibly had on the transition from middle school to high school looked at self-efficacy, self-concept, and peer influence as they related to academic achievement among secondary students in transition (Adeyemo & Troubeli, 2008). The researchers chose a descriptive design that allowed them to interpret the facts of the survey without manipulating any variables. In conducting the study they hoped to make comparisons and evaluations on existing conditions while collecting factual information (Adeyemo & Troubeli, 2008).

Adeyemo and Troubeli (2008) randomly selected 300 senior secondary school students from six different schools in Yenagoa municipality in Nigeria. The researchers collected data with the use of three instruments: a student self-efficacy questionnaire, self-concept questionnaire, and a peer influence questionnaire. They also obtained academic results from first term examinations to measure academic performance. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the effect of the independent variables, i.e., self-efficacy, self-concept, and peer influence on the dependant variable of academic performance (Adeyemo & Troubeli, 2008).

Adeyemo and Troubeli (2008) concluded that all three of the independent variables had significant contribution to the prediction of students' academic performances. Their findings also indicated that, of the three, self-efficacy was the most potent contributor in the prediction of student academic success, stipulating that this

could be understood in the realization that more self-efficacious students were capable of adjusting to all academic situations with goals of high achievement (Adeyemo & Troubeli, 2008). Similarly, they pointed out that self-concept contributions to academic performance are understood through the point of view that those who think they can achieve will work hard to do so. Results for peer influence correlated to findings of a study done by Eccles et al. (1984) which suggested that those who associate with peers who endorse achievement may benefit from the positive behaviors of those peers in regard to their own achievement levels (Adeyemo & Troubeli, 2008).

Summary

The sheer amount of literature on transitioning from middle school to high school validates the idea that important issues surround this topic. The increase in the demand for accountability at this level and the dramatic increase in present research and literature suggest that many questions are still left unanswered as to what causes students to fail at successfully transitioning into high school. Although much literature is associated with offering solutions for making a smooth transition from middle school to high school, the fact that no one method can definitively offer a universal fix allows for and encourages further research to be carried out within this field of study.

The researcher determined several reoccurring themes which continued to resurface while conducting this literature review. Using these themes of problems associated with change, relationships, at-risk factors, student perceived self-efficacy, and successful components, the researcher formulated a conceptual basis to help design this study in answering research questions meant to identify and correct problems associated with students failing to transition successfully from middle school to high school. In answering the research questions designed for this study, the researcher hoped to measure

the significance that perceptions held by ninth-grade students, faculty, and parents in regards to which behaviors, skills, programs, and supports were needed in making a successful transition from middle school to high school had in relation to perceived existence of these characteristics within their school. The researcher also hoped to measure the significance that student self-efficacy had on an individual student's ability to successfully transition from middle school to high school.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

James Conant (1960) referred to the lack of consensus among educators as to the place the ninth grade held in the organization. Over 3 decades later, the proper place and care for ninth graders still baffles educators. The evidence that educators are not meeting the needs of ninth graders in the transitioning stage can be seen in that there is such a large dip in numbers of students that start the ninth grade across the U.S. compared to the number of students that enter into the tenth grade the following year. In 2003-2004, 4.19 million students enrolled in Grade 9 while figures for the following 2005-2006 school year showed the number of students enrolled in the tenth grade was around 3.75 million. This loss of almost 10.5% of students can be attributed to the number of ninth-grade students retained combined with the number who dropped out prior to entering the tenth grade (Williams & Richman, 2007).

This study was designed to examine what measure perceptions and expectations held by students, faculty, and parents dealing with transition from middle school to high school had on the ability of students to successfully make this transition. In addition, the researcher also sought to determine the extent student self-efficacy had on individual students successfully making the transition from middle school to high school in regards to core academic performance, behaviors, and attendance. In answering these questions, the researcher hopes to offer suggestions supported by both existing literature and the data collected as to which methods or strategies can be offered by schools to ensure that more students make a successful transition from middle school to high school. This research study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. As perceived by first time ninth-grade students, which discrepancies exist between desired and actual characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school?
2. As perceived by ninth-grade faculty, which discrepancies exist between desired and actual characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school?
3. As perceived by first time ninth-grade student parents, which discrepancies exist between desired characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school and their actual participation in these areas?
4. When considering student transition from middle school to high school, to what extent does perceived student self-efficacy determine successful transition in regards to core academic performance, behavior, and attendance?

Three of these research questions were answered by the analysis of data received pertinent to held perceptions by the stakeholders in regards to needed behaviors, skills, programs, and supports for first time ninth graders. Additional analysis was performed on data collected concerning the importance of student self-efficacy in regards to making the transition from middle school to high school. The purpose of these evaluations was to help identify which behaviors, skills, program components, and supports are deemed necessary or valuable in helping first time ninth graders transition from middle school to high school.

The researcher hoped that this study could offer suggestions to school districts everywhere in helping them reach the needs of all students transitioning from middle school to high school and could ultimately help schools design programs to increase successful transition while raising graduation rates and decreasing dropout rates. It is the

researcher's hope that this analysis will also help provide baseline data for future studies to be completed on other populations of ninth-grade students to help expand the understanding and knowledge available to helping students making the transition from middle school to high school.

Design

This study was designed as a mixed-method study with both quantitative and qualitative fields of data. The quantitative data was collected by the use of survey instruments with Likert scales; these surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics along with analyses of variance tests and multiple comparison tests to determine significant patterns of responses. Also, part of the quantitative piece was the correlation analysis between students' perceived self-efficacy and actual academic, behavioral, and attendance performances. This was measured by comparing student responses to the Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES) to actual academic, discipline, and attendance records. The qualitative data was collected by the use of open-ended questions included on the survey instruments. This data was analyzed by the researcher through the reporting of common themes or threads that showed up in the participants' responses.

Population and Samples

The population for this study came from a rural ninth through twelfth grade high school in northern South Carolina. The school's total student population averages approximately 2,100 students a year. The school being used in this study had approximately seven administrators, which included a building principal, five assistant principals, and one administrative assistant. This school employed approximately 130 teachers.

The population for this study was selected in two parts. The first population from which samples were taken was the students registered as first time ninth graders, parents or guardians of students registered as first time ninth graders, and all administrators and teachers that oversaw and taught first time ninth graders on a day-to-day basis. The second population from which samples were taken was students from the remaining student body in Grades 10 through 12 and teachers that taught a minimum of three classes of tenth-grade students on a daily basis.

The student and parent participants from the first population were chosen randomly from those that met the researcher's specified criteria. These subjects were asked to participate through responses collected in surveys. Secondly, all faculty members that dealt with first time ninth graders on a day-to-day basis were invited to participate in this research study through their responses to a survey. A sample from the second population was made up of randomly selected students in the remaining tenth-through twelfth-grade classes, the parents or guardians of these students, and teachers that taught a minimum of three tenth-grade level classes. These participants participated through the completion of surveys.

In conducting this study, the researcher used a sample size of the first population as follows: 25% of all qualified first time ninth graders, 25% of parent or guardians of all qualified first time ninth graders, and 100% of all faculties that dealt with first time ninth graders on a day-to-day basis. In obtaining a sample from the second population the researcher solicited responses from 5% of the remaining student population and their parent(s) or guardian(s), and 100% of those teachers that met the required minimum of three classes daily of tenth-grade subject matter.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The researcher answered research questions 1 and 2 by collecting data with the survey instrument marked Appendix A, Perceptions of the Ninth Grade. This instrument was adapted from one used by Dr. Kay M. Alford, or formally Kay M. McLellan in her 2004 dissertation, *An Analysis of the Perception of Teachers, Administrators, and Students Toward Alternative High School Programs in Mississippi*. The researcher received written permission from Dr. Alford, marked Appendix B, to modify and use the instrument as needed for his own research purposes. The survey instrument was validated through the means of having professors of education, Dr. Ron Nanney and Dr. Doug Eury, both of Gardner-Webb University, as well as master-level graduate students of education from Gardner-Webb University read and critique the 34 statements included in the instruments. All questions concerning the wording or validity of any statement were addressed either through rewording or the elimination of said statement. The survey included two sets of data, one being the perceived importance of each statement in their relation to the importance of having a successful ninth-grade year, and the other, the existence or evidence seen of each statement in place within the school being studied.

This survey instrument was comprised of 34 statements concerning various behaviors, conditions, curricula, and relationship criteria concerning their perceived importance by students, teachers, and administrators in relation to a successful ninth-grade year. The responses for both importance and degree of existence within the school were measured on two 5-point Likert scales. On the perceived importance part, the scale ranged from 1 being *not important* to 5 being *very important*. On the existence in the school part, the values of the scale ranged from 1 being *nonexistent* to 5 being *consistently exist*. Also, a section on this instrument was included for participants to list

or address any other components or criteria they felt were important for a successful ninth-grade year but were not addressed in the other 34 statements.

This survey was distributed to all of the registered first time ninth graders through their social studies classes; a random sample was then pulled from these respondents and used for analysis. One hundred percent of all ninth-grade teachers and administrators were invited to complete this survey instrument, which was placed in their school mailbox with a letter of purpose and instructions. The researcher used a mean rating of 3.5 or greater as an indicator of importance; a tally for each of the 34 statements was conducted for each group. The researcher also used a 3.5 or greater mean rating as an indicator of existence within the school setting. Again, a tally for each group was recorded for each of the 34 statements. The data received from this survey instrument was analyzed and reported using descriptive statistics. The researcher further subjected the data received to a series of one-way analyses of variance for all three groups to determine if any of the statements yielded a significant difference between groups. Those statements that indicated a difference were subjected to the Tukey HSD multiple comparison tests in order to determine the nature of differences.

Research question 3 was answered through the completion of a survey instrument marked Appendix C, Parent Perception Survey. This instrument was created using Dr. Cynthia Copeland's parent questionnaire used in her 2006 dissertation study, *The Perceptions of Middle and High School Transitions as Viewed by Students, Parents, Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators in Sumter School District Two*, as a guide for forming the researcher's own statements of importance. The researcher received written permission via email to use, in part only, Dr. Copeland's instruments with the understanding that they must be modified to fit the researcher's own course of study

(Appendix D). This survey instrument was also validated through the means of having professors of education, Dr. Ron Nanney and Dr. Doug Eury, both of Gardner-Webb University, as well as master-level graduate students of education from Gardner-Webb University read and critique the 25 statements included in the instrument. All questions concerning the wording or validity of any statement were addressed either through the rewording or elimination of said statement.

This instrument was comprised of 25 statements in regards to the parents' perceived importance to each statement in relation to their child having a successful ninth-grade year. The Parent Perception Survey collected two sets of data on two separate 5-point Likert scales. The first set of data collected the perceived importance of each statement and the second set of data collected the parents' actual participation. The scale values ranged from 1 being *not important* to 5 being *very important* for the first set of data, and from 1 *does not participate* to 5 *full participation* for the second set of data. This instrument also included a section where parents could list or address any other components or criteria they felt were important for a successful ninth-grade year but were not addressed in the other 25 statements.

This survey was distributed by mail to 25% of all parents or guardians of registered first time ninth graders which resulted in the mailing out of 128 survey requests. The survey was accompanied by both a letter of explanation and purpose along with a preaddressed, stamped return envelope. The researcher again used a mean score of 3.5 or greater for each of the 25 statements for indication of both importance and participation. The data received from this survey instrument was analyzed and reported using descriptive statistics.

The researcher further tried to answer research questions 1, 2, and 3 by surveying

a second population sample of 5% of the remaining student population in Grades 10 through 12, as well as 5% of the parents or guardians of these students, and 100% of those teachers who taught a minimum of three tenth-grade classes each day. This set of data was collected with the use of the instruments labeled Appendices E, F, and G. Appendix E, Students in Grades 10-12 Survey, consisted of fifteen 5-point Likert scale questions collecting two sets of data, one measuring perceived importance and the other measuring the respondent's perceived existence or perceived reception of the actions described in the questions; the survey instrument also contained five open-ended questions.

Appendix F, 10th-Grade Teacher Survey, consisted of fifteen 5-point Likert scale questions collecting two sets of data, one measuring perceived importance and the other measuring the respondent's witnessing of the actions described in the questions; the survey instrument also contained five open-ended questions. Appendix G, Parent of Students in Grades 10-12 Survey consisted of fifteen 5-point Likert scale questions collecting two sets of data, one measuring perceived importance and the other measuring the respondent's witnessing of the actions described in the questions; the survey instrument also contained five open-ended questions. For each of the three survey instruments used during this part of the study, the 15 Likert scale questions were phrased identically while the open-ended responses differed based on the group identity.

Each of these instruments were validated through the means of having professors of education, Dr. Ron Nanney and Dr. Doug Eury, both of Gardner-Webb University, as well as master-level graduate students of education from Gardner-Webb University read and critique the 15 scaled statements and five open-ended questions included in each instrument. All questions concerning the wording or validity of any statement or

question were addressed either through the rewording or elimination of said statement or question. The researcher used an average mean rating of 3.5 or higher for each of the 15 scaled statements as an indication of its importance and indication of actions witnessed or provided. The data received from these survey instruments were analyzed and reported using descriptive statistics. The researcher further subjected the data received to a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) for all three groups to determine if any of the statements yielded a significant difference between groups. Those statements that indicated differences when subjected to ANOVA were subjected to the Tukey HSD multiple comparison tests in order to determine the nature of differences. All open-ended response questions were analyzed for common threads and themes and were reported in narrative form.

Research question 4 was answered using the Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES) found in Appendix H. The researcher received permission via email to use this instrument from its creators, Dr. Jerry Jinks and Dr. Vicky Morgan, both from Illinois State University (Appendix I). The MJSES is designed to gain information regarding student efficacy beliefs and how they might relate to school success. This instrument consisted of 34 statements; 30 of the statements were rated on a 4-point Likert scale with values as follows: 1 being *really agree*; 2, *kind of agree*; 3, *kind of disagree* and 4, *really disagree*. Four statements were rated using choices representing letter grades A, B, C, D, or F in relation to academic grades in the four core areas. Thirty of the 34 statements fit into one of three subscales of either talent items, context items, or effort items; the remaining four statements had to do with grades received in each of the four academic core areas of English, math, social studies, and science.

This instrument was validated by its creators through field testing and item

analysis. Their procedures resulted in the 30-item scale with an overall reliability coefficient of .82. The subscale alphas were .78 for talent, .70 for context, and .66 for effort. The researchers included the remaining four items regarding academic performance to see if the scale and subscales correlated with the student's self-reported grades. Their analysis revealed that the overall scale and various subscales were moderately and positively correlated with self-reported grades (Jinks & Morgan, 1999).

This instrument was given to all registered first time ninth graders in their social studies class; a random sample was then taken from these respondents. Students chosen for this data collection were identified by student identification numbers only which were assigned by the ninth-grade guidance counselor prior to the distribution of surveys. The purpose of students being identified by number only was so that the researcher could correlate student instrument responses with academic, behavior, and attendance data for each participating student while protecting the student's full identity from the researcher and all other nonprivileged parties.

The data collected for the first 30 statements were analyzed and reported using descriptive statistics. The researcher further attempted to analyze the collected data by establishing a scale based on the numeric responses on the given Likert scale for positively toned questions versus negatively toned questions written for each of the three subscale areas addressed in the MJSES. The researcher used this scale to analyze the responses for each individual survey respondent to determine whether they had a high student self-efficacy versus a low student self-efficacy; this result was then compared to actual academic, behavior, and attendance records of the respondent obtained by matching student identification numbers given by student respondents to identification numbers provided by the school's ninth-grade guidance department.

Summary

This research study was carried out to determine the role that perceptions held by first time ninth-grade students, faculty, and parents have on the transition from middle school to high school. It was also designed to determine the role perceived student self-efficacy plays in the transitioning from middle school to high school. This study's mixed-method design allowed the researcher to look at both quantitative and qualitative data from a population sample of students, faculty, and parents from a rural ninth through twelfth grade high school in northern South Carolina. The researcher used analysis of variance along with correlation analysis to interpret the quantitative pieces of this study. All qualitative data was reported by the researcher in narrative form explaining any common themes or threads that came from participants' responses stemming from open-ended questions. The intent of the researcher was that in answering these research questions, this study would provide understanding and insight into the importance of the perceptions held by all stakeholders, as well as the importance of perceived student self-efficacy in regards to students successfully transitioning from middle school to high school.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Explanation of Results

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine what measure perceptions and expectations held by students, faculty, and parents dealing with transition from middle school to high school had on the ability of students to successfully make this transition. The researcher considered the perceptions and expectations of these stakeholders in regards to behaviors, skills, current programs, and supports to determine what was interfering with students' abilities to successfully transition from middle school to high school within this district. In looking at the transition from middle school to high school, the researcher felt it was important to include perceived student self-efficacy in determining individual student success in transitioning from middle school to high school by first time ninth graders.

Research Questions

This research study was designed to answer the following questions in regards to students making a successful transition from middle school to high school:

1. As perceived by first time ninth-grade students, which discrepancies exist between desired and actual characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school?
2. As perceived by ninth-grade faculty, which discrepancies exist between desired and actual characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school?
3. As perceived by first time ninth-grade student parents, which discrepancies exist between desired characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school and their actual participation in these areas?

4. When considering student transition from middle school to high school, to what extent does perceived student self-efficacy determine successful transition in regards to core academic performance, behavior, and attendance?

Results

The researcher answered research questions 1 and 2 by collecting data with the survey instrument marked Appendix A, Perceptions of the Ninth Grade. The survey included two sets of data, one being the perceived importance of each statement in its relation to the importance of having a successful ninth-grade year and the other, the perceived existence or evidence seen of each statement in place within the school being studied. Responses for each of the 34 statements for both importance and degree of existence within the school were measured on two 5-point Likert scales. On the perceived importance part, the scale ranged from 1 being *not important* to 5 being *very important*. On the perceived existence in the school part, the values of the scale ranged from 1 being *nonexistent* to 5 being *consistently exist*.

The researcher looked at the descriptive statistics seeking to define the average mean rating, standard deviation, and standard error for each of the 34 statements for all groups surveyed. An average mean rating of 3.5 or greater was used by the researcher as an indicator of importance. Descriptives for Measure of Perceived Importance for Students, Teachers, and Administrators, found in Appendix J, shows all 34 statements were perceived as important by all three groups with an average mean rating of 3.5 or higher. This data established that the concepts expressed in each of the 34 statements were felt to be important to students having a successful ninth-grade year by students, teachers, and administrators. Twenty of the 34 statements had an average mean from the three groups of 4.0 or higher for importance. The statement “Teachers believe students

can achieve” had the highest average mean of 4.48, while the statement “Peer group counseling sessions happen regularly” had the lowest average mean of 3.63. The data indicating all 34 statements in survey instrument Perceptions of the Ninth Grade were similar to findings in a 2004 study by Kay M. McLellan which studied the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators in regards to needed or important program components of alternative high schools in Mississippi. As previously stated, the survey instrument used by the researcher was modified from the one used by McLellan in the aforementioned study. McLellan’s (2004) results indicated that the stakeholders surveyed in the Mississippi study indicated 36 out of 40 statements were perceived as important or approximately 90% of the statements were perceived as important. This is just slightly less than the 100% perception of importance found in this study.

In determining the perceived existence within the school being studied, the researcher again used a mean rating of 3.5 or greater as an indicator of existence for each of the 34 statements. The data showed that students had a perceived existence of practice for only seven out of the 34 statements or just 21%, while both teachers and administrators each indicated that they perceived 20 or more of the 34 statements to exist in practice within the school. Teachers indicated existence for 23 of the 34 statements or 68%, while administrators indicated existence of 24 of the 34 or 71% of statements within the school being studied. Only 16 of the 34 statements were indicated to exist by two or more of the responding groups. Table 2 details the seven statements all three groups indicated existed in practice within the school.

Table 2

Descriptives for Measure of Perceived Existence by Students, Teacher, and Administrators

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teachers believe students can achieve	Student	105	3.72	1.221	.119	3.49	3.96
	Teacher	10	4.30	.675	.213	3.82	4.78
	Administrator	5	3.60	1.342	.600	1.93	5.27
	Total	120	3.77	1.193	.109	3.55	3.98
The administration believes in the abilities of the staff	Student	105	3.57	1.247	.122	3.33	3.81
	Teacher	10	4.40	.699	.221	3.90	4.90
	Administrator	5	4.20	.837	.374	3.16	5.24
	Total	120	3.67	1.218	.111	3.45	3.89
The curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society	Student	105	3.52	1.144	.122	3.30	3.75
	Teacher	10	4.30	.823	.260	3.71	4.89
	Administrator	5	3.80	.447	.200	3.24	4.36
	Total	120	3.60	1.118	.102	3.40	3.80
Individual counseling is available as needed	Student	105	3.93	1.303	.127	3.68	4.19
	Teacher	10	4.70	.483	.153	4.35	5.05
	Administrator	5	4.40	1.342	.600	2.73	6.07
	Total	120	4.02	1.270	.116	3.79	4.25
Students are provided extracurricular activities	Student	105	3.70	1.507	.147	3.40	3.99
	Teacher	10	4.20	1.476	.467	3.14	5.26
	Administrator	5	4.80	.447	.200	4.24	5.36
	Total	120	3.78	1.490	.136	3.51	4.05
Teachers provide opportunities for students to succeed	Student	105	3.51	1.442	.141	3.24	3.79
	Teacher	10	4.60	.516	.163	4.23	4.97
	Administrator	5	4.40	.548	.245	3.72	5.08
	Total	120	3.64	1.401	.128	3.39	3.89
There is communication between teachers and the administration regarding student progress	Student	105	3.59	1.246	.122	3.35	3.83
	Teacher	10	4.00	.943	.298	3.33	4.67
	Administrator	5	4.00	1.414	.632	2.24	5.76
	Total	120	3.64	1.228	.112	3.42	3.86

Note. A mean rating of 3.5 or higher was used to determine perceived existence.

Of the seven statements that were perceived to exist in practice within the school by students, teachers, and administrators, it is important to note that the students' average mean rating was lower than the other two groups average mean rating for six of the seven statements. This finding was also comparable with results found by McLellan (2004),

who found that student existence ratings were consistently lower than those of teachers and administrators. The statement “Teachers believe students can achieve” was the only statement to score lower by a group other than students with an average mean rating of 3.60 established by administrators. Also notable, the statement “Individual counseling is available as needed” was the only statement out of the 34 that had an average mean rating of 4.0 or higher for existence, compared to 20 out of 34 for importance.

The remaining nine statements which were perceived to exist by multiple groups were only perceived by teachers and administrators. These statements are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptives for Measure of Perceived Existence by Teachers and Administrators

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support	Teacher	10	4.30	.675	.213
	Administrator	5	3.60	1.140	.510
	Total	15	4.07	.884	.228
Administrators and teachers share common school goals and visions	Teacher	10	3.60	1.350	.427
	Administrator	5	3.80	1.304	.583
	Total	15	3.67	1.291	.333
Teachers have the freedom to make personal instructional decisions.	Teacher	10	4.00	.816	.258
	Administrator	5	4.00	.707	.316
	Total	15	4.00	.756	.195
Teachers regularly monitor and share student progress with students	Teacher	10	4.30	.675	.213
	Administrator	5	3.60	.548	.245
	Total	15	4.07	.704	.182
Teachers are provided with the materials needed in order to teach effectively	Teacher	10	3.70	1.252	.396
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245
	Total	15	4.00	1.134	.293
The administration sets a climate that supports teaching and learning	Teacher	10	3.90	1.287	.407
	Administrator	5	4.40	.548	.245
	Total	15	4.07	1.100	.284
Teachers regularly monitor and report student progress to parents	Teacher	10	4.30	1.059	.335
	Administrator	5	4.40	.894	.400
	Total	15	4.33	.976	.252
Students are diversely grouped for instructional activities	Teacher	10	3.80	1.398	.442
	Administrator	5	4.00	.707	.316
	Total	15	3.87	1.187	.307
Students and faculty feel safe within the school environment	Teacher	10	4.30	.823	.260
	Administrator	5	4.40	.548	.245
	Total	15	4.33	.724	.187

Note. A mean rating of 3.5 or higher was used to determine perceived existence.

Of the nine statements that both teachers and administrators indicated had a perceived existence within the school, seven of them had an average mean rating of 4.0 or greater. The statements “Teachers regularly monitor and report student progress to

parents” and “Students feel safe within the school environment” had the highest average mean rating of 4.33. With the average mean rating of 3.67, the statement “Administrators and teachers share common school goals and visions” was the lowest of the nine statements that indicated perceived existence from teachers and administrators.

Table 4 outlines the descriptive statistics for the seven statements perceived to exist within the school by teachers only. Of the seven statements perceived to exist within the school by teachers only, five directly related to relationships or interactions between teachers and students. The two other statements related to individual guidance and teacher relationships between each other.

Table 4

Descriptives for Measure of Perceived Existence by Teachers

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teachers are excited to work with ninth graders	Teacher	10	3.70	.823	.260	3.11	4.29
Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles	Teacher	10	4.10	.876	.277	3.47	4.73
Teachers provide positive feedback and reinforcement to students	Teacher	10	4.20	.789	.249	3.64	4.76
Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis	Teacher	10	3.80	1.033	.327	3.06	4.54
Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs	Teacher	10	3.50	1.581	.500	2.37	4.63
Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff	Teacher	10	3.90	1.101	.348	3.11	4.69
Faculty share ideas, resources, and strategies with one another	Teacher	10	3.80	1.229	.389	2.92	4.68

Note. A mean rating of 3.5 or greater was used to indicate perceived existence.

Table 5 outlines the four statements perceived to exist within the school by administrators only. Two of these four statements show that administrators feel students and teachers have stronger relationships than indicated by those groups, while the other two statements indicate that administrators feel that students and teachers both feel a sense of ownership in the school and curriculum, while those groups did not imply these feelings in their responses.

Table 5

Descriptives for Measure of Perceived Existence by Administrators

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
There is trust between students and teachers	Administrator	5	3.80	.447	.200	3.24	4.36
Teachers and students speak freely with one another	Administrator	5	4.00	.707	.316	3.12	4.88
Students speak positively about this school	Administrator	5	3.60	.894	.400	2.49	4.71
There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the ninth-grade program	Administrator	5	3.60	1.517	.678	1.72	5.48

Note. A mean rating of 3.5 or greater was used to indicate perceived existence.

Seven of the 34 questions from this survey instrument failed to indicate any perceived existence within the school by any of the three participating groups because each of these seven statements failed to produce the minimum mean rating of 3.5 as set by the researcher to indicate existence within the school. Table 6 shows the data collected for these seven statements. Of the seven statements, “Peer group counseling sessions happen regularly,” had the lowest total mean rating of 2.43, while the statement “Regular student attendance is important for academic success” had the highest with a 3.41. The data also show that of these seven statements the teacher group had the lowest mean rating for four out of the seven statements and tied for the lowest with administrators on another. The only statement that teachers had the highest mean rating out of these seven was the statement “The curriculum is individualized for each student,” with a mean rating of 2.80.

Table 6

Descriptives for Statements Lacking Perceived Existence by Students, Teachers, and Administrators

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Regular student attendance is important for academic success	Student	105	3.44	1.255	.122	3.20	3.68
	Teacher	10	3.20	1.033	.327	2.46	3.94
	Administrator	5	3.20	.837	.374	2.16	4.24
	Total	120	3.41	1.220	.111	3.19	3.63
Peer group counseling sessions happen regularly	Student	105	2.48	1.366	.133	2.21	2.74
	Teacher	10	2.10	1.449	.458	1.06	3.14
	Administrator	5	2.20	1.304	.583	.58	3.82
	Total	120	2.43	1.364	.125	2.19	2.68
Teachers and students have mutual respect for one another	Student	105	2.78	1.359	.133	2.52	3.04
	Teacher	10	2.70	1.337	.423	1.74	3.66
	Administrator	5	3.40	.548	.245	2.72	4.08
	Total	120	2.80	1.332	.122	2.56	3.04
Faculty work in teams to plan student instruction	Student	105	3.20	1.390	.136	2.93	3.47
	Teacher	10	2.60	1.647	.521	1.42	3.78
	Administrator	5	2.80	1.095	.490	1.44	4.16
	Total	120	3.13	1.402	.128	2.88	3.39
The ninth-grade program was organized based on faculty and staff input	Student	105	3.17	1.490	.145	2.88	3.46
	Teacher	10	2.10	1.912	.605	.73	3.47
	Administrator	5	3.20	1.924	.860	.81	5.59
	Total	120	3.08	1.559	.142	2.80	3.37
The curriculum is individualized for each student	Student	105	2.60	1.342	.131	2.34	2.86
	Teacher	10	2.80	1.033	.327	2.06	3.54
	Administrator	5	2.60	.894	.400	1.49	3.71
	Total	120	2.62	1.298	.118	2.38	2.85
Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction	Student	105	3.02	1.387	.135	2.75	3.29
	Teacher	10	2.80	1.033	.327	2.06	3.54
	Administrator	5	2.20	1.304	.583	.58	3.82
	Total	120	2.97	1.359	.124	2.72	3.21

Note. A mean rating of 3.5 or greater was used to indicate perceived existence.

In answering research questions 1 and 2, the researcher further subjected the data received from the survey instrument Perceptions of the Ninth Grade to a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) across all three groups included with this instrument to determine if any of the 34 statements yielded any significant difference between groups in the perception of importance. Each of the 34 statements from survey

instrument Perceptions of the Ninth Grade indicated a perceived importance from all three groups; however, once submitted to ANOVA, four of the 34 statements indicated a degree of significant difference between groups. Table 7 shows those statements that yielded a degree of significant difference between groups.

Table 7

ANOVA Results for Students, Teachers, and Administrators in Perception of Importance

Statement	Respondents	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers have the freedom to make personal instructional decisions	Between Groups	8.637	2	4.319	3.231	.043
	Within Groups	153.702	115	1.337		
	Total	162.339	117			
The administration sets a climate that supports teaching and learning	Between Groups	7.599	2	3.799	3.154	.046
	Within Groups	137.324	114	1.205		
	Total	144.923	116			
Faculty share ideas, resources, and strategies with one another	Between Groups	9.255	2	4.627	3.561	.032
	Within Groups	145.528	112	1.299		
	Total	154.783	114			
Students are diversely grouped for instructional activities	Between Groups	8.613	2	4.306	3.094	.049
	Within Groups	157.275	113	1.392		
	Total	165.888	115			

Note. Significance is shown at the 0.05 level.

As reported earlier, 27 of the 34 statements from the survey instrument Perceptions of the Ninth Grade indicated a perceived existence within the school by at least one of the three groups: students, teachers, or administrators. Each of the 34 statements for perception of existence were also subjected to a series of one-way analyses of variance to determine if any of the statements yielded a degree of significant difference. Once submitted to ANOVA, eight of the 34 statements indicated a degree of

significant difference between groups. Table 8 shows those statements that yielded a degree of significant difference between groups.

Table 8

ANOVA Results for Students, Teachers, and Administrators in Perception of Existence

Statement	Respondents	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support	Between Groups	13.538	2	6.769	4.306	.016
	Within Groups	183.929	117	1.572		
	Total	197.467	119			
Teachers accommodate students' individual learning styles	Between Groups	12.558	2	6.279	3.903	.023
	Within Groups	188.233	117	1.609		
	Total	200.792	119			
Teachers provide positive feedback and reinforcement to students	Between Groups	9.010	2	4.505	3.463	.035
	Within Groups	152.190	117	1.301		
	Total	161.200	119			
Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis	Between Groups	9.505	2	4.752	3.083	.050
	Within Groups	180.362	117	1.542		
	Total	189.867	119			
Teachers regularly monitor and share student progress with students	Between Groups	14.510	2	7.255	3.954	.022
	Within Groups	214.690	117	1.835		
	Total	229.200	119			
Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff	Between Groups	17.105	2	8.552	4.648	.011
	Within Groups	215.262	117	1.840		
	Total	232.367	119			
Teachers provide opportunities for students to succeed	Between Groups	13.763	2	6.882	3.663	.029
	Within Groups	219.829	117	1.879		
	Total	233.592	119			
Students and faculty feel safe within the school environment	Between Groups	18.933	2	9.467	4.237	.017
	Within Groups	261.433	117	2.234		
	Total	280.367	119			

Note. Significance is shown at the 0.05 level.

Each statement that showed a degree of significant difference from the ANOVA test for either perception of importance or perception of existence was subjected to the

Tukey HSD multiple comparison test in order to determine the nature of difference. The researcher found that of the four statements that showed a degree of significance for the perception of importance using ANOVA, only one statement showed a degree of significance when subjected to the Tukey HSD multiple comparison test. The statement “Teachers have the freedom to make personal instructional decisions” showed significant difference between student and teacher responses with a significance of .040. The researcher acknowledges that the severe unequal number of participants between groups may have contributed to inaccurate Type I errors, thus explaining why some of the statements which indicated significant difference using ANOVA did not reveal those differences when subjected to Tukey HSD multiple comparison tests. All eight statements for perception of existence that showed a degree of significance using ANOVA, also showed a degree of significance once subjected to the Tukey HSD multiple comparison test. Appendix K shows the results of the Tukey HSD multiple comparison tests.

Respondents from all three groups, students, teachers, and administrators for first time ninth graders who were given the survey instrument Perceptions of the Ninth Grade were given the opportunity to list any other components or criteria they felt were important for a successful ninth-grade year that were not addressed within the 34 statements of the instrument. Of the 105 student surveys randomly selected for inclusion in this population, 36 responded with additional statements. Approximately 33% of the students that responded with additional statements felt it was important for students to complete all work and study their material for class. Additionally, approximately 39% of students who responded with comments stated that regular student attendance and being on time to class were needed for ninth-grade success. Other repeated themes within the

student responses were the importance of following school rules, having competent teachers, and developing a welcoming environment for students. Each of these themes was reported by less than 1% of the students that made additional comments.

Of the five administrators that responded to the survey instrument, only one added any additional comments that they felt needed to be considered in the success of first time ninth graders during their ninth-grade year. The administrator that responded felt that it was important for faculty and staff to acknowledge and make accommodations for outside distractions that interfere with student success within an academic setting, i.e., hunger, housing situations, and domestic abuse. Four of the 10 ninth-grade teachers that responded to the survey indicated additional comments. Of these comments, one indicated a similar suggestion as the administrator's, that outside distractions needed to be accounted for, while the other comments centered on the importance of students and parents being made aware of needed graduation credits and their accumulation from the ninth grade on. The comments made by teachers were similar to results from a 2008 study on stakeholder perception by Smith et al. (2008); teachers in their study indicated concern for students' lack of understanding concerning earning credits, expectations, and attendance policies.

Research question 3 was answered through the completion of survey instrument marked Appendix C, Parent Perception Survey. This instrument was comprised of 25 statements in regards to the parents' perceived importance to each statement in relation to their child having a successful ninth-grade year. The Parent Perception Survey collected two sets of data on two separate 5-point Likert scales. The first set of data collected the perceived importance of each statement, and the second set of data collected the parents' actual participation. The scale values ranged from 1 being *not important* to 5 being *very*

important for the first set of data, and from 1 *do not participate* to 5 *full participation* for the second set of data.

This survey was distributed by mail to 25% of all parents or guardians of registered first time ninth graders which resulted in the mailing out of 128 survey requests. The researcher received 40 completed parent surveys for analysis from the initial 128 that were mailed out. In the analysis, the researcher again used a mean score of 3.5 or greater for each of the 25 statements for indication of both importance and indication of participation. The data received from this survey instrument was analyzed and reported using descriptive statistics.

All 25 statements measuring the perception of importance by parents of first time ninth graders scored an average mean rating of 3.5 or greater. Twenty-three of the 25 statements measuring perceived importance had an average mean rating above 4.0 with 18 statements scoring an average mean rating of 4.5 or greater. The statements “Aware of attendance requirements and child’s attendance record” and “Encourage your child to be successful” both had the highest average mean rating with a 4.90. The only two statements not to score an average mean rating above 4.0 for perception of importance by parents of first time ninth graders were “Participation in Parent Teacher Association” and “Make contact with all of your child’s teachers prior to the end of the first three weeks of school,” each scoring a 3.85. Descriptives for First Time Ninth-Grader Parents Perception of Importance in Appendix L show data for all 25 statements.

Using an average mean rating of 3.5 or greater to indicate parent participation for each activity described in the 25 statements from the survey instrument, Parent Perception Survey, the data showed that those that responded indicated participation in 22 of the 25 statements. Table 9 shows data for the three statements that failed to

indicate parent participation. Each of the three statements that indicated a lack of parent participation involved parent-teacher relationships or communication.

Table 9

Descriptives for Lacking Ninth-Grader Parent Participation

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Participation in Parent Teacher Association	40	1	5	2.65	.257	1.626
Have frequent contact with child's teachers	40	1	5	3.45	.229	1.449
Make contact with all of your child's teachers prior to the end of the first 3 weeks of school	40	1	5	2.83	.237	1.500

Note. Average mean rating of 3.5 indicates participation.

Of the 22 statements that indicated parent participation, 18 statements had an average mean rating of 4.0 or greater with the statement “Aware of attendance requirements and child’s attendance record” scoring the highest with 4.72. The lowest scoring statement of the 22 statements that indicated parent participation was the statement “Familiar with your child’s principal and guidance counselor,” with an average mean rating of 3.65. Descriptive statistics for each of the 22 statements that indicated parent participation are detailed in Descriptives for Ninth-Grader Parent Participation in Appendix M.

To determine the extent to which ninth-grader parent perception of importance correlated to ninth-grader parent participation, the researcher ran further descriptive tests in the form of cross-tabulation to determine where the percentages for each of the 25 statements fell. Using the results from perceived importance responses marked important, very important, and extremely important, along with participation responses

marked participated, participate often, and complete participation, the researcher found that 20 of the 25 statements from the survey instrument Parent Perception Survey indicated both perceived importance and participation at or above the 85% level.

Appendix N, Percentages for Ninth-Grader Parent Perceived Importance and Participation, shows the 20 statements whose percentage for both perceived importance and participation scored at or above 85%.

Statement two, participation in parent teacher association, was one of three statements that failed to indicate participation with an average mean rating of 2.65. Table 10 shows the results of the cross-tabulation for statement two. Note that although 33.4% of the respondents indicated that participation in parent teacher association was important, very important, or extremely important, 43.6% indicated no participation at all. Also noteworthy is that a little over 10% of the parents indicated that participation in parent teacher associations was not important or only somewhat important, as well as indicating no participation or only some participation.

Table 10

Cross-Tabulation of Importance and Participation for Participate in Parent Teacher Association

N= 39		Participate in Parent Teacher Association					
		NP	SP	P	PO	CP	Total
NI	Count	2	0	0	0	0	2
	% of Total	5.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	5.1%
SI	Count	2	1	0	0	0	3
	% of Total	5.1%	2.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%	7.7%
I	Count	6	0	3	1	1	10
	% of Total	15.4%	.0%	7.7%	2.6%	2.6%	25.6%
VI	Count	3	1	2	1	1	8
	% of Total	7.7%	2.6%	5.1%	2.6%	2.6%	20.5%
EI	Count	4	0	2	4	6	16
	% of Total	10.3%	.0%	5.1%	10.3%	15.4%	41.0%
Total	Count	17	2	7	6	7	39
	% of Total	43.6%	5.1%	17.9%	15.4%	17.9%	100%

Note. NI is not important, SI is somewhat important, I is important, VI is very important, and EI is extremely important, NP is no participation, SP is some participation, P is participated, PO is participate often, and CP is complete participation.

Statement four, “have frequent contact with child’s teacher,” was the second of three statements that indicated perceived importance but failed to indicate participation with an average mean rating of 3.45. The cross-tabulation results for question 4 can be seen in Table 11. The data show that 18% of ninth-grader parent respondents indicated perceived importance with very important or extremely important for having frequent contact with child’s teacher; they indicated none or only some participation.

Table 11

Cross-Tabulation of Importance and Participation for Have Frequent Contact with Child's Teacher

N= 39		Have frequent contact with child's teacher					
		NP	SP	P	PO	CP	Total
NI	Count	2	0	0	0	0	2
	% of Total	5.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	5.1%
SI	Count	1	0	0	0	0	1
	% of Total	2.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.6%
I	Count	0	0	1	1	0	2
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	2.6%	2.6%	.0%	5.1%
VI	Count	2	2	1	4	0	9
	% of Total	5.1%	5.1%	2.6%	10.3%	.0%	23.1%
EI	Count	2	1	5	6	11	25
	% of Total	5.1%	2.6%	12.8%	15.4%	28.2%	64.1%
Total	Count	7	3	7	11	11	39
	% of Total	17.9%	7.7%	17.9%	28.2%	28.2%	100%

Note. NI is not important, SI is somewhat important, I is important, VI is very important, and EI is extremely important, NP is no participation, SP is some participation, P is participated, PO is participate often, and CP is complete participation.

Statement 11, “Make contact with all of your child’s teachers prior to the end of the first 3 weeks of school,” was the third of three statements that failed to indicate ninth-grader parent participation with an average mean rating of 2.83. The data from parents concerning this statement indicated that only 82% perceived this to be of importance and only 56.4% indicated more than a little participation. The full cross-tabulation for statement 11 is provided in Table 12.

Table 12

Cross-Tabulation of Importance and Participation for Make Contact with All of Your Child's Teachers Prior to the End of the First 3 Weeks of School

N=39		Make contact with all of your child's teachers prior to the end of the first 3 weeks of school					
		NP	SP	P	PO	CP	Total
NI	Count	2	0	0	0	0	2
	% of Total	5.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	5.1%
SI	Count	4	1	0	0	0	5
	% of Total	10.3%	2.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%	12.8%
I	Count	2	1	4	0	0	7
	% of Total	5.1%	2.6%	10.3%	.0%	.0%	17.9%
VI	Count	0	2	3	3	0	8
	% of Total	.0%	5.1%	7.7%	7.7%	.0%	20.5%
EI	Count	4	1	1	5	6	17
	% of Total	10.3%	2.6%	2.6%	12.8%	15.4%	43.6%
Total	Count	12	5	8	8	6	39
	% of Total	30.8%	12.8%	20.5%	20.5%	15.4%	100%

Note. NI is not important, SI is somewhat important, I is important, VI is very important, and EI is extremely important, NP is no participation, SP is some participation, P is participated, PO is participate often, and CP is complete participation.

Although meeting the standard set by the researcher of having an average mean rating of 3.5 or greater to indicate participation, both statement six, "Read, sign and discuss each class syllabus," and statement 19, "Familiar with your child's principal and guidance counselor," had participation percentages below 85% for combined responses of participated, participate often, and complete participation. Statement six scored 84.2% while statement 19 scored only 79.5%; both statements however scored above 94% for perceived importance when combining results from the responses marked important, very

important, and extremely important. The complete cross-tabulation for statement six is detailed in Table 13.

Table 13

Cross-Tabulation of Importance and Participation for Read, Sign, and Discuss Each Class Syllabus

N= 38		Read, Sign, and Discuss Each Class Syllabus					
		NP	SP	P	PO	CP	Total
NI	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
SI	Count	2	0	0	0	0	2
	% of Total	5.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	5.3%
I	Count	0	1	6	0	0	7
	% of Total	.0%	2.6%	15.8%	.0%	.0%	18.4%
VI	Count	0	0	0	3	0	3
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	.0%	7.9%	.0%	7.9%
EI	Count	2	1	1	5	17	26
	% of Total	5.3%	2.6%	2.6%	13.2%	44.7%	68.4%
Total	Count	4	2	7	8	17	38
	% of Total	10.5%	5.3%	18.4%	21.1%	44.7%	100%

Note. NI is not important, SI is somewhat important, I is important, VI is very important, and EI is extremely important, NP is no participation, SP is some participation, P is participated, PO is participate often, and CP is complete participation.

Table 14 details the complete cross-tabulation for statement 19. The descriptive data show that the 79.5% for statement 19 was the lowest percentage of participation for combined responses to statements marked participated, participate often, and complete participation for those statements that indicated participation. Statement 19 also had the lowest average mean rating of the 23 statements that indicated ninth-grader parent participation with an average mean rating of 3.65.

Table 14

Cross-Tabulation of Importance and Participation for Familiar with Your Child's Principal and Guidance Counselor

N= 39		Familiar with Your Child's Principal and Guidance Counselor					
		NP	SP	P	PO	CP	Total
NI	Count	1	0	0	0	0	1
	% of Total	2.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.6%
SI	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	% of Total	.0%	2.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.6%
I	Count	1	1	2	0	0	4
	% of Total	2.6%	2.6%	5.1%	.0%	.0%	10.3%
VI	Count	0	1	2	5	2	10
	% of Total	.0%	2.6%	5.1%	12.8%	5.1%	25.6%
EI	Count	2	1	5	3	12	23
	% of Total	5.1%	2.6%	12.8%	7.7%	30.8%	59.0%
Total	Count	4	4	9	8	14	39
	% of Total	10.3%	10.3%	23.1%	20.5%	35.9%	100%

Note. NI is not important, SI is somewhat important, I is important, VI is very important, and EI is extremely important, NP is no participation, SP is some participation, P is participated, PO is participate often, and CP is complete participation.

The survey instrument Parent Perception Survey allowed space for respondents to list additional comments that they felt were important to the successful completion of the ninth-grade year. Of the 40 surveys returned, only nine contained additional comments. Four responses dealt with the need to improve or strengthen teacher and parent communication, while two responses dealt with home and school partnerships and the need for more parent involvement. Other comments included the need for guidance to be familiar with the students and help them set realistic future goals, the need to prepare students better for the transition from middle school to high school, and the need to

address issues through mediation prior to them becoming discipline problems.

The researcher further tried to answer research questions 1, 2, and 3 by surveying a second population sample of 5% of the remaining student population in Grades 10 through 12, as well as 5% of the parents or guardians of these students, and 100% of those teachers who taught a minimum of three tenth-grade classes each day. This set of data was collected with the use of the instruments labeled Appendices E, F, and G. Appendix E, Students in Grades 10-12 Survey, consisted of fifteen 5-point Likert scale questions collecting two sets of data; one measuring perceived importance and the other measuring the respondents perceived existence or perceived reception of the actions described in the questions. The survey instrument also contained five open-ended questions.

Appendix F, 10th-Grade Teacher Survey, consisted of fifteen 5-point Likert Scale questions collecting two sets of data; one measuring perceived importance and the other measuring the respondents witnessing of the actions described in the questions. The survey instrument also contained five open-ended questions. Appendix G, Parent of Students in Grades 10-12 Survey, consisted of fifteen 5-point Likert scale questions collecting two sets of data; one measuring perceived importance and the other measuring the respondents witnessing of the actions described in the questions. The survey instrument also contained five open-ended questions. For each of the three survey instruments used during this part of the study, the 15 Likert scale questions were phrased identically, while the open-ended responses differed based on the group identity.

The researcher used an average mean rating of 3.5 or higher for each of the 15 scaled statements as an indication of its importance and an indication of actions witnessed or provided. The data received from these survey instruments were analyzed

and reported using descriptive statistics. The researcher further subjected the data received to a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) for all three groups to determine if any of the statements yielded a significant difference between groups. Those statements that indicated differences when subjected to ANOVA were subjected to the Tukey HSD multiple comparison tests in order to determine the nature of differences. All open-ended response questions were analyzed for common threads and themes and were reported in narrative form.

The researcher received a total of 229 surveys from the student population in Grades 10 through 12. Out of 23 teachers that met the requirements of teaching a minimum of three 10th-grade classes, the researcher received nine completed surveys. Of the parents of students in Grades 10 through 12 that were invited to participate in the study, the researcher received 34 valid responses. The researcher looked at the descriptive statistics for each of the 15 statements and used an average mean rating of 3.5 or greater as an indicator of importance. Descriptives for Measure of Perceived Importance for Upperclassmen Students, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents found in Appendix O, shows that each of the 15 statements were perceived as important by all three groups with an average mean rating of 3.5 or higher. This data established that the concepts expressed in each of the 15 statements were felt to be important to students having a successful ninth-grade year by the students, teachers, and parents.

The highest average mean rating for a single statement regarding perceived importance as recorded by students was for the statement “Students are provided with extracurricular activities (i.e., after-school programs, school clubs, athletics),” with an average mean rating of 4.54. Tenth-grade teachers had two statements tied for the

highest average mean rating for perceived importance: “Students are provided with extracurricular activities (i.e., after-school programs, school clubs, athletics),” and “Teachers provide students opportunities to succeed,” both with an average mean rating of 4.89. Parents indicated their highest average mean rating for perceived importance for the statement “Teachers believe all students can learn,” with an average mean rating of 4.91. Both upperclassmen students and 10th-grade teachers indicated their lowest average mean rating for perceived importance for the same statement: “Teachers regularly contact parents regarding student progress (minimum of three times a quarter).” This statement had an average mean rating of 3.57 for students and 3.78 for teachers. Parents scored their lowest average mean rating for perceived importance for the statement “Students with like abilities are grouped together,” with an average mean rating of 4.18.

The data indicated that for the 15 statements regarding the witnessing or being provided with the actions described in those statements, six of the 15 statements failed to indicate either witnessed or provided by scoring an average mean rating below 3.5 by all three groups. Only four of the 15 statements indicated that the activities associated with the question was either witnessed or provided with an average mean rating of 3.5 or greater by all three groups. Three statements were indicated as witnessed only by teachers, one statement was indicated to only be witnessed by parents, and one statement was indicated to be witnessed or provided by both teachers and students. Table 15 shows the data for the six statements that had average mean ratings below 3.5.

Table 15

Descriptives for Statements Failing to Indicate Witnessed or Provided by Upperclassmen Students, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teachers are excited to work with ninth-grade students	Student	225	3.04	1.113	.074	2.90	3.19
	Teacher	9	3.33	.707	.236	2.79	3.88
	Parent	30	3.23	1.104	.202	2.82	3.65
	Total	264	3.08	1.100	.068	2.94	3.21
Teachers and students meet regularly to discuss progress (minimum of twice a month)	Student	226	2.43	1.239	.082	2.27	2.59
	Teacher	7	2.86	1.069	.404	1.87	3.85
	Parent	27	2.22	1.188	.229	1.75	2.69
	Total	260	2.42	1.229	.076	2.27	2.57
Teachers accommodate all students' individual learning styles by varying methods of instruction	Student	224	3.00	1.224	.082	2.84	3.16
	Teacher	9	3.44	1.014	.338	2.67	4.22
	Parent	31	2.97	1.169	.210	2.54	3.40
	Total	264	3.01	1.210	.074	2.86	3.16
Students receive individual guidance on a regular basis (minimum of once a quarter)	Student	223	2.68	1.302	.087	2.51	2.85
	Teacher	7	2.29	.756	.286	1.59	2.98
	Parent	31	2.52	1.235	.222	2.06	2.97
	Total	261	2.65	1.282	.079	2.50	2.81
Students' academic and social needs are provided for	Student	227	3.20	1.146	.076	3.05	3.35
	Teacher	9	3.44	.882	.294	2.77	4.12
	Parent	31	3.13	1.432	.257	2.60	3.65
	Total	267	3.20	1.172	.072	3.06	3.34
Students with like ability are grouped together	Student	223	3.21	1.317	.088	3.04	3.38
	Teacher	9	2.89	.601	.200	2.43	3.35
	Parent	30	3.43	1.194	.218	2.99	3.88
	Total	262	3.23	1.286	.079	3.07	3.38

Note. A mean rating of 3.5 or greater was used to indicate perceived witnessed or provided.

Table 16 details the descriptive data for the four statements that were indicated by all three groups as being witnessed or provided with an average mean rating of 3.5 or greater. The 10th-grade teachers had an average mean rating of 4.0 for three of these four statements, whereas parents only indicated two of the four statements with an average mean rating greater than 4.0. Upperclassmen students only rated one of the four statements with an average mean rating higher than a 4.0.

Table 16

Descriptives for Measure of Witnessed or Provided by Upperclassmen Students, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Students are aware of or informed as to which behaviors and actions are appropriate and expected within the secondary school setting	Student	226	3.89	1.075	.072	3.75	4.03
	Teacher	9	4.11	1.167	.389	3.21	5.01
	Parent	31	3.94	1.263	.227	3.47	4.40
	Total	266	3.90	1.098	.067	3.77	4.03
Teachers believe all students can learn	Student	224	3.56	1.290	.086	3.39	3.73
	Teacher	9	3.89	.601	.200	3.43	4.35
	Parent	32	4.00	1.016	.180	3.63	4.37
	Total	265	3.63	1.249	.077	3.48	3.78
Students are provided with extracurricular activities (i.e., afterschool programs, school clubs, athletics)	Student	225	4.20	1.179	.079	4.04	4.35
	Teacher	9	4.89	.333	.111	4.63	5.15
	Parent	30	4.33	.994	.182	3.96	4.70
	Total	264	4.23	1.146	.071	4.10	4.37
Teachers provide students with opportunities to succeed	Student	226	3.73	1.113	.074	3.58	3.88
	Teacher	9	4.33	.866	.289	3.67	5.00
	Parent	30	3.83	1.085	.198	3.43	4.24
	Total	265	3.76	1.104	.068	3.63	3.90

Note. A mean rating of 3.5 or greater was used to indicate perceived witnessed or provided.

Those statements only indicated as witnessed or provided by teachers were “Trust and respect are demonstrated between teachers and students,” with an average mean rating of 3.78; “Teachers regularly contact parents regarding student progress (minimum of three times a quarter),” with an average mean rating of 3.88; and lastly, “Students are made to feel valued and a part of the school family,” with an average mean rating of 3.75. The statement “Regular student attendance is important (minimum of 90% attendance rate)” was only indicated as witnessed by upperclassmen students and 10th-grade teachers with an average mean rating of 3.74 for students and 4.13 for teachers. Parents were the only ones that indicated witnessed or provided for the statement “the core

curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society,” with an average mean rating of 3.67.

To further analyze the data received from the survey instruments, Students in Grades 10-12 Survey, 10th-Grade Teacher Survey, and Parent of Students in Grades 10-12 Survey, the researcher further subjected the data received for both data sets of importance and witnessed or provided, to a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) for all three groups to determine if any of the statements yielded a significant difference between groups. Of the 15 statements that indicated importance by all three groups, 11 statements indicated a significant difference among the groups. ANOVA Results Upperclassmen Students, 10th-Grade Teachers and Upperclassmen Parents for Importance, found in Appendix P, details the data for the 11 statements that indicated a significant difference between groups.

The data collected for the 15 statements in the data set witnessed or provided, once subjected to ANOVA, only indicated one statement that showed a significant difference between groups. The ANOVA results for the statement “Teachers regularly contact parents regarding student progress (minimum of three times a quarter)” can be seen in Table 17. The results for the remaining 14 statements that failed to indicate a significant difference between groups once subjected to ANOVA can be viewed in Appendix Q, in ANOVA Results Upperclassmen, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents for Witnessed or Provided Failing to Indicate Significant Difference.

Table 17

ANOVA Results Upperclassmen, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents for Witnessed or Provided

Statement	Respondents	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers regularly contact parents regarding student progress (minimum of three times a quarter)	Between Groups	13.923	2	6.961	4.236	.015
	Within Groups	430.583	262	1.643		
	Total	444.506	264			

Note. Significance shown at the 0.05 level.

Each statement that showed a degree of significant difference from the ANOVA test for either perception of importance or perception of witnessed or provided was subjected to the Tukey HSD multiple comparison test in order to determine the nature of difference. All 11 statements that indicated a significant difference when subjected to ANOVA also indicated significant differences when subjected to the Tukey HSD test. The significant differences for all 11 statements were found to exist between students and parents. Tukey HSD for Perception of Importance Upperclassmen, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents, found in Appendix R, shows the results of the multiple comparison tests. The lone statement that indicated a significant difference for perception of witnessed or provided also showed a significant difference when subjected to the Tukey HSD test. The significant difference for this statement was found to be between groups students and teachers, as well as, teachers and parents. Table 18 shows the results from the multiple comparison tests.

Table 18

Tukey HSD for Perception of Witnessed or Provided Upperclassmen, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents

Dependent Variable	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference (I – J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teachers regularly contact parents regarding student progress (minimum of three times a quarter)	Student	Teacher	-1.273*	.461	.017	-2.36	-.19
		Parent	.182	.246	.738	-.40	.76
	Teacher	Student	1.273*	.461	.017	.19	2.36
		Parent	1.456*	.508	.013	.26	2.65

Note. * indicates the mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Each survey used to measure upperclassmen students, 10th-Grade teachers, and upperclassmen parents contained five open-ended questions. These questions were designed for the group being studied and were all that differed across instruments, Students in Grades 10-12 Survey, 10th-Grade Teacher Survey, and Parent of Students in Grades 10-12 Survey, found in Appendices E, F, and G. The open-ended questions for each of the survey instruments will be referred to from this point forward as SQ1 through SQ5 for upperclassmen students, TQ1 through TQ5 for 10th-grade teachers, and PQ1 through PQ5 for upperclassmen parents.

The researcher attempted to survey 5% of the total of the upperclassmen population in Grades 10 through 12. The number of respondents that returned valid surveys from this group was as follows: 73 completed surveys from 10th-grade students, 49 completed surveys from 11th-grade students, and 104 completed surveys from 12th-grade students, for a total of 226 upperclassmen respondents. An equal number of surveys for each grade level were distributed through grade level social studies classes. Students were given these surveys and asked to return them to their corresponding

teacher; teachers then returned the completed surveys to the researcher to be analyzed.

The researcher analyzed the results from the open-ended questions from survey instrument Students in Grades 10-12 Survey, and divided responses into common themes and threads given by each grade level. SQ1, “what was the biggest challenge academically that you faced as a ninth grader,” yielded common themes in the areas of academic courses, workload/study habits/exam preparation, teacher quality/teacher’s willingness to help, homework, peer interaction including upperclassmen, and making the transition from middle school to high school. The theme with the largest percentage of responses across all three grade levels in response to SQ1 concerned academic courses; a total of 43% of the upperclassmen students identified specific academic classes as problem areas during their ninth-grade year. Total percentages for identified problem courses across the three grade levels yielded the following results for upperclassmen respondents: math 23%, English/literature 9%, science 3%, social studies 5%, and foreign language 3%.

When broken down according to each grade level response to SQ1, 44% of 10th-grade students, 51% of 11th-grade students, and 39% of 12th-grade students indicated academic courses as problems during their ninth-grade year. Results for 10th-grade student respondents broke down into the following distributions: math 26%, English/literature 10%, science 4%, social studies 3%, and foreign language 1%. Eleventh-grade respondents’ distributions were as follows: math 23%, English/literature 4%, science 2%, social studies 18%, and foreign language 4%. For 12th-grade respondents the distribution for problem academic courses was as follows: math 20%, English/literature 12%, science 3%, social studies 1%, foreign language 3%, and other

1%. The distribution of percentages for the remaining themes identified from the upperclassmen open-ended responses for SQ1 are reported in Table 19.

Table 19

Percentages for Common Themes Identified from Upperclassmen Open-Ended Responses to SQ1

Theme	Group	% of Total
Workload/study habits/exam preparation	Total from Grades 10-12	21%
	10th grade	16%
	11th grade	12%
	12th grade	29%
Teacher quality/teacher's willingness to help	Total from Grades 10-12	11%
	10th grade	18%
	11th grade	8%
	12th grade	8%
Homework	Total from Grades 10-12	5%
	10th grade	4%
	11th grade	4%
	12th grade	7%
Peer interaction including with upperclassmen	Total from Grades 10-12	8%
	10th grade	4%
	11th grade	8%
	12th grade	6%
Making the transition from middle school to high school	Total from Grades 10-12	6%
	10th grade	1%
	11th grade	6%
	12th grade	10%

Open-ended responses for SQ2, “how familiar were you with the school’s procedures, vision, and expectations of ninth-grade students at the start of your freshman year and explain the reason for your answer,” yielded common responses of very familiar, familiar, somewhat familiar, and not familiar. Additionally reasons given for familiarity had common themes associated with areas of informed prior to start of year/freshmen orientation, informed from older siblings or friends who attended the school of study, information found in handbook, and teachers or administrators stressed from beginning. Twenty percent of all upperclassmen respondents indicated that they

were very familiar with the procedures, visions, and expectations of ninth-grade students at the start of their freshman year in response to SQ2. The distribution across grade levels for very familiar were as follows: 10th grade 21%, 11th grade 16%, and 12th grade 21%.

Approximately 30% of all upperclassmen respondents indicated that they were familiar with the procedures, visions, and expectations of ninth-grade students at the start of their freshman year in response to SQ2. Twelfth-grade respondents had the highest percentage for familiar with 35%, while 30% of 10th-grade respondents indicated familiarity, and only 18% of 11th-grade respondents indicated familiarity in response to SQ2. Those upperclassmen that responded to SQ2 as somewhat familiar with the procedures, visions, and expectations of ninth-grade students at the start of their freshman year totaled only 15% across all three grade levels. The individual grade level distributions for somewhat familiar were as follows: 15% for 10th grade, 10% for 11th grade, and 16% for 12th grade.

Seventeen percent of upperclassmen respondents indicated that they were not familiar with the procedures, visions, and expectations of ninth-grade students at the start of their freshman year in response to SQ2, with individual grade distributions as follows: 21% for 10th grade, 22% for 11th grade, and 23% of 12th grade. These figures are a possible indication that the school of study is not offering appropriate ninth-grade orientation programs prior to the beginning of the school year. Such programs help inform students, parents, and the community about the school and its expectations of students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Mizelle, 2005; Monahan, 1992). Approximately 15% of all upperclassmen respondents did not attempt to answer SQ2. Grade level distribution of percentages for common themes in the areas of informed prior to start of

year/freshmen orientation, informed from older siblings or friends who attended the school of study, information found in handbook, and teachers or administrators stressed from beginning are found in Table 20.

Table 20

Common Themes Identified from Upperclassmen Open-Ended Responses to SQ2

Theme	Group	% of Total
Informed prior to start of year/freshmen orientation	Total from Grades 10-12	10%
	10th grade	12%
	11th grade	8%
	12th grade	10%
Informed from older siblings or friends who attended the school of study	Total from Grades 10-12	10%
	10th grade	11%
	11th grade	6%
	12th grade	12%
Information found in handbook	Total from Grades 10-12	10%
	10th grade	3%
	11th grade	8%
	12th grade	15%
Teachers or administrators stressed from beginning	Total from Grades 10-12	9%
	10th grade	12%
	11th grade	4%
	12th grade	10%

In response to SQ3, “looking back on your ninth-grade experience, what do you think the school did best to help students succeed,” the researcher identified common themes or threads in the areas of separation of ninth-grade students/academy setting, availability of a redo policy/extra help or extra credit, quality teachers/quality instructional methods, and availability of guidance and administrative support. At least 10% of upperclassmen respondents from all three grade levels indicated that they felt the school did not provide them with help to succeed in their ninth-grade year. Distribution of responses in percentages for each theme is listed in Table 21.

Table 21

Common Themes Identified from Upperclassmen Open-Ended Responses to SQ3

Theme	Group	% of Total
Separation of ninth-grade students/academy setting	Total from Grades 10-12	6%
	10th grade	18%
	11th grade	0%
	12th grade	0%
Availability of a redo policy/extra help/or extra credit	Total from Grades 10-12	23%
	10th grade	1%
	11th grade	31%
	12th grade	29%
Quality teachers/quality instructional methods	Total from Grades 10-12	28%
	10th grade	17%
	11th grade	43%
	12th grade	28%
Availability of guidance and administrative support	Total from Grades 10-12	12%
	10th grade	1%
	11th grade	4%
	12th grade	12%
Nothing/did not offer help at success	Total from Grades 10-12	17%
	10th grade	22%
	11th grade	10%
	12th grade	16%

Note. 10th-grade respondents were the first class place in the 9th-grade academy setting.

SQ4, “looking back on your ninth-grade experience, where do you think the school lacked the most in helping students succeed,” yielded common themes regarding, teacher quality/teacher’s willingness to help, overall curriculum, procedures and discipline, and lack of guidance or administrative support. Interestingly, 8% of 10th-grade respondents felt that the freshman academy was a mistake and should be abandoned and only 2% of 11th-grade and 1% of 12th-grade respondents felt that the freshman academy concept would have been beneficial to them during their ninth-grade year. Additionally, only 6% of total upperclassmen respondents indicated they felt most everything or overall support failed to offer an opportunity for ninth-grade success.

Table 22 provides the distribution of responses in percentages for each theme identified in SQ4.

Table 22

Common Themes Identified from Upperclassmen Open-Ended Responses to SQ4

Theme	Group	% of Total
Teacher quality/teacher's willingness to help	Total from Grades 10-12	34%
	10th grade	36%
	11th grade	39%
	12th grade	32%
Overall curriculum	Total from Grades 10-12	7%
	10th grade	6%
	11th grade	10%
	12th grade	6%
Procedures and discipline	Total from Grades 10-12	15%
	10th grade	14%
	11th grade	8%
	12th grade	19%
Lack of guidance or administrative support	Total from Grades 10-12	6%
	10th grade	4%
	11th grade	0%
	12th grade	11%
Most everything	Total from Grades 10-12	6%
	10th grade	6%
	11th grade	4%
	12th grade	7%

The last open-ended response question referred to in this section as SQ5 included in survey instrument Students Grade 10-12 Survey was stated as “what suggestions do you have for this school to make the ninth-grade experience more successful or more beneficial to first time ninth-grade students.” Common themes or threads identified in SQ5 by the researcher were, better teacher quality/student teacher relations needed, more attempts at interaction with upperclassmen/made to feel more a part of school, do away with certain discipline/procedural policies, and abandon or discontinue academy concept.

The distribution of percentages for each stated theme in SQ5 can be viewed in Table 23.

Table 23

Common Themes Identified from Upperclassmen Open-Ended Responses to SQ5

Theme	Group	% of Total
Better teacher quality/student teacher relations needed	Total from Grades 10-12	40%
	10th grade	34%
	11th grade	37%
	12th grade	45%
More attempts at interaction with upperclassmen/made to feel more a part of school	Total from Grades 10-12	6%
	10th grade	8%
	11th grade	2%
	12th grade	7%
Do away with certain discipline/procedural policies	Total from Grades 10-12	8%
	10th grade	18%
	11th grade	6%
	12th grade	4%
Abandon or discontinue academy concept	Total from Grades 10-12	3%
	10th grade	6%
	11th grade	6%
	12th grade	0%

Note. 10th-grade respondents were the first class placed in the 9th-grade academy setting.

Additionally, approximately 3% of all upperclassmen respondents indicated a need for better or strengthened discipline, while only 2% indicated a need to continue the academy setting.

Due to lack of responses from 10th-grade teachers who were invited to participate in this study, it was not possible for the researcher to identify clear themes or common threads among completed surveys returned. However, all nine of the fully completed 10th-grade teacher surveys returned responded to most all open-ended questions. Responses for TQ1, “how well are students academically prepared for the tenth grade once completing the ninth grade at your school,” indicated that five of the nine teacher respondents felt that students lacked proper preparedness to be successful in higher

grades. Two felt that it varied greatly from student to student, and only two 10th-grade teachers felt students were prepared to enter the 10th grade once completing the ninth grade at this school.

According to responses for TQ2, “which areas in general are most tenth-grade students lacking in at the start of their sophomore year after completing the ninth grade at your school,” the teacher respondents felt there were three main areas of concern. The areas of English (including writing, vocabulary, and grammar skills), study and organizational skills, and maturity and self-discipline were named by at least three respondents each. When asked to respond to TQ3, “what are the general strengths you can see from students who have completed the ninth grade at your school,” responses were more diverse. Only seven of the nine teacher respondents answered this question. The responses were as follows: students usually have a willingness to relearn, most students eventually make a good transition to upper grades, most students desire to perform well academically, behavior seems to have improved by the time students enter 10th grade, individuality of students, most students seem to have a decent base of educational skills, and although minimal, most have some curricular base knowledge.

Interestingly, most responses concerning TQ4, “looking at the ninth-grade program/curriculum, where do you think the school lacked the most in helping students succeed,” most of the respondents indicated a need for some type of character education, which helped instill self-pride, self-discipline, and a sense of personal responsibility for both their academic and personal affairs. Only two of the eight responses dealt with academic curriculum in suggesting a needed improvement in either technology skills or proper grammar skills. Lastly, the responses received for TQ5, “what suggestions do you have for this school to make the ninth-grade experience more successful or more

beneficial to first time ninth graders in preparing them for success at higher grades,” were similar to the needs listed in response to TQ4. Six of the nine teacher respondents again suggested some kind of character education class, while two of the nine argued that students should be truly informed of the increasing difficulty of higher grades, and that students should not be passed on if unprepared. Two also felt it was important that ninth graders be challenged and held to high expectations for achievement and success.

The researcher devised a series of open-ended questions to be answered by upperclassmen parents to determine if there were any major areas they felt the school excelled at helping their child succeed in the ninth grade or if there were any considerable deficiencies that they felt needed to be addressed further than what the survey allowed. In answering PQ1, “how well was your student academically prepared for the tenth grade once completing the ninth grade at his or her school,” the researcher found that 69% of upperclassmen parent respondents felt that their child had been well prepared by the school for the difficulties 10th grade held the following year. Only about 11% of upperclassmen parent respondents felt that their child was somewhat prepared or as good as expected for the 10th grade, while 14% felt that the school had failed to offer critical guidance or preparation in some core academic subjects during their child’s ninth-grade year, most notably in the subject areas of math and English.

In relation to PQ2, “what concerned you most about your child’s educational experience during their ninth-grade year,” approximately 26% of upperclassmen parent respondents indicated that failing grades, the difficulty of the courses and workload, and their child being engaged enough by the school long enough to reach graduation were their biggest concerns. Additionally, 23% also were hesitant as to the social interactions their students would be confronted with in a larger school than they were used to,

including teacher/student interactions, upperclassmen encounters, and general classroom settings. Another major concern listed by approximately 17% of the upperclassmen parent respondents was their child getting the attention or individualized help needed from their teachers.

When confronted in PQ3, “what were the general strengths you saw from your child once they had completed the ninth grade at his or her school,” 43% felt that their child had developed strengths in social skills, confidence, self-motivation, independence, and overall organization. The readiness and ability to be successful at higher academic levels were the second most noted strengths at 26%. Only about 19% of upperclassmen parent respondents felt that their child’s strengths fell into academic areas or within specific subject disciplines.

Over 51% of upperclassmen parent respondents chose not to answer PQ4, “looking at the ninth-grade program/curriculum, where do you think the school lacked the most in helping students succeed during your child’s ninth grade year.” Of those that did answer, 17% indicated that the lack of individualized or content specific help was a major issue during their child’s ninth-grade year. Second largest percentage of responses dealt with school-to-home communication, with 11% of respondents feeling that communication levels were insufficient. Those that felt academics were sacrificed to better athletics and that discipline was too rigid both tied, coming in at 6% each.

Lastly, when upperclassmen parents were asked in PQ5 to list suggestions they had for this school to make the ninth-grade experience more successful or more beneficial to first time ninth graders in preparing them for success in higher grades, 14% indicated a need to keep students engaged by relating subjects to their lives, individualizing learning to their needs and interests in order to keep them motivated in

academic progress. Similarly, 14% of upperclassmen parent respondents also felt the school needed to make sure students were offered an environment where they could truly be successful, i.e., after school events dealing with academics as well as athletics, small productive class sizes, and students being grouped with truly similar academically leveled students, not just in name only. Both themes of better home/school relations, and better guidance services offered to students had a response of approximately 9%.

In answering research questions 1, 2, and 3, the researcher attempted to answer what components were perceived to be important to exist for first time ninth graders to be successful in their ninth-grade year according to students, faculty, and parents and which of these components actually were perceived to exist within the school used in this case study. In further extending this study, the researcher also wanted to determine to what extent student self-efficacy affected first time ninth graders' abilities to successfully transition from middle school to high school. To answer this question the researcher attempted to answer research question 4, "When considering student transition from middle school to high school, to what extent does perceived student self-efficacy determine successful transition in regards to core academic performance, behavior, and attendance?"

Research question 4 was answered using the Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES) found in Appendix H. The MJSES was designed to gain information regarding student efficacy beliefs and how they might relate to school success. This instrument consisted of 34 statements; 30 of the statements were rated on a 4-point Likert scale with values as follows: 1 being *really agree*, 2 *kind of agree*, 3 *kind of disagree*, and 4 *really disagree*. Four statements were rated using choices representing letter grades A, B, C, D, or F in relation to academic grades in the four core areas. Thirty of the 34 statements fit

into one of three subscales of either talent items, context items, or effort items; the remaining four statements had to do with grades received in each of the four academic core areas of English, math, social studies, and science.

This instrument was given to all registered first time ninth graders in their social studies class; a random sample was then taken from these respondents. Approximately 397 MJSES surveys were returned to the researcher from first time ninth graders; a random sample of approximately 25% of these students was taken to analyze. Out of the 100 surveys chosen in the random sample, 94 students gave valid identification numbers that could be matched to the academic, behavior, and attendance records provided by guidance. Students chosen for this data collection were identified by student identification numbers only, which were assigned by the ninth-grade guidance counselor prior to the distribution of surveys. The purpose of students being identified by number only was so the researcher could correlate student instrument responses with academic, behavior, and attendance data for each participating student, while protecting the student's full identity from the researcher and all other nonprivileged parties.

The data collected for the first 30 statements were analyzed and reported using descriptive statistics. The researcher further attempted to analyze the collected data by developing a scale based on the numeric responses given on the 4-point Likert scale for each of the statements written for the three subscale areas addressed in the MJSES. The researcher used this scale to analyze the responses for each individual survey respondent to determine whether they had a high student self-efficacy versus a low student self-efficacy; these results were then compared to actual academic, behavior, and attendance records of the respondent obtained by matching student identification numbers given by student respondents to identification numbers provided by the school's ninth-grade

guidance department. The scale developed and used by the researcher can be viewed with explanations in Appendix S.

Of the 30 statements addressing the subscales of talent, context, and effort, 22 of them were written in a positive manner; for example, “I work hard in school.” Fifteen of the 22 positive toned statements had an average mean score of 2.0 or less; the other seven had a range from 2.04-2.92 for an average mean. Nine of the 30 statements were written within a negative tone; for example, “I would get better grades if my teacher liked me better.” Based on the Likert scale with 1 being *really agree* and 4 being *really disagree*, the lower the average mean score the more agreement the student had with the statement.

The researcher divided the statements in the MJSES into the separate subscales and analyzed the data using descriptive statistics including frequency distributions for each statement within those subscales. The subscale, Talent Items, consisted of 13 statements each scored on a 4-point Likert Scale. The scoring for each response was as follows: 1 = *really agree*, 2 = *kind of agree*, 3 = *kind of disagree*, and 4 = *really disagree*. Of the 13 talent items only one statement scored above a 2.5 average mean; the statement “my classmates usually get better grades than I do,” scored a 2.67 average mean. The statement “I could get the best grades in the class if I tried enough” had the lowest average mean with a 1.43. Table 24 shows the descriptive data for the 13 statements in the talent subscale.

Table 24

Descriptives for Talent Items from the MJSES

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Error	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance
I could get the best grades in class if I tried	94	1.43	.068	1.00	1	.664	.441
I am good science student	93	2.18	.092	2.00	2	.884	.781
Sometimes I think an assignment is easy when others think its hard	94	1.84	.078	2.00	2	.752	.566
I am a good social studies student	94	2.12	.093	2.00	2	.902	.814
I am one of the best students in my class	93	2.11	.090	2.00	2	.866	.749
My teacher thinks I am smart	93	1.78	.082	2.00	2	.792	.627
I am a good math student	94	2.04	.087	2.00	2	.841	.708
My classmates usually get better grades than I do	92	2.67	.088	3.00	3	.840	.706
I usually understand my homework assignments	93	1.91	.077	2.00	2	.747	.558
I am a good English Student	93	1.75	.086	1.00	1	.830	.688
It is not hard for me to get good grades in school	93	1.90	.097	2.00	2	.933	.871
I am smart	93	1.55	.079	1.00	1	.759	.576
When the teacher ask a question, I usually know the answer even if others don't	93	2.28	.086	2.00	2	.826	.682

Note. Likert scale: 1 really agree, 2 kind of agree, 3 kind of disagree, and 4 really disagree.

To determine the distribution of answers for each of the talent item statements, the researcher also ran frequency tables for each of the 13 statements included in the talent subscale. The results for the frequency analysis are reported in Table 25.

Table 25

Frequencies for Talent Items within the MJSES

Statement	Statistics	Really Agree	Kind Of Agree	Kind Of Disagree	Really Disagree
I could get the best grades in class if I tried	Frequency Percentage	61 64.9%	28 29.8%	3 3.2%	2 2.1%
I am good science student	Frequency Percentage	22 23.4%	39 41.5%	25 26.6%	7 7.4%
Sometimes I think an assignment is easy when others think its hard	Frequency Percentage	34 36.2%	42 44.7%	17 18.1%	1 1.1%
I am a good social studies student	Frequency Percentage	24 25.5%	44 46.8%	17 18.1%	9 9.6%
I am one of the best students in my class	Frequency Percentage	24 25.5%	41 43.6%	22 23.4%	6 6.4%
My teacher thinks I am smart	Frequency Percentage	38 40.4%	40 42.6%	12 12.8%	3 3.2%
I am a good math student	Frequency Percentage	26 27.7%	43 45.7%	20 21.3%	5 5.3%
My classmates usually get better grades than I do	Frequency Percentage	8 8.5%	28 29.5%	42 44.7%	14 14.9%
I usually understand my homework assignments	Frequency Percentage	28 29.8%	47 50%	16 17%	2 2.1%
I am a good English student	Frequency Percentage	42 44.7%	36 38.3%	11 11.7%	4 4.3%
It is not hard for me to get good grades in school	Frequency Percentage	38 40.4%	33 35.1%	15 16.0%	7 7.4%
I am smart	Frequency Percentage	54 57.4%	30 31.9%	6 6.4%	3 3.2%
When the teacher ask a question, I usually know the answer even if others don't	Frequency Percentage	16 17.0%	41 43.6%	30 31.9%	6 6.4%

The highest rate of agreement was indicated for the statement “I could get the best

grades in class if I tried,” with a total agreement percentage of 94.7%. The statement with the highest disagreement in the talent subscale was “my classmates usually get better grades than I do,” with a total disagreement response of 59.6%. Looking at both the descriptive and frequency data for the 13 talent subscale, it can be determined that the majority of students who participated in this part of the study have a high self-efficacy in relation to talent items.

The context subscale also had 13 statements included in the MJSES, of these 13 statements, seven of them were written in a positive tone, while six were phrased or dealt with more negative aspects. The same 4-point Likert scale was used within the context subscale, meaning the lower the average mean the more in agreement with the statement the students were. Of the 13 context items, five statements had an average mean score of less than 2.0, while seven statements had an average mean rating of 2.9 or higher. “I will graduate from high school” had the highest indication of agreement from students with an average mean score of 1.09. In contrast, “I will quit school as soon as I can” had the lowest indication of agreement with an average mean score of 3.78. Still, it is disturbing to realize that 17% of the sample population of first time ninth graders indicated that they would possibly quit school prior to graduation. Table 26 lists the descriptive data for each of the 13 statements found in the context subscale.

Table 26

Descriptives for Context Items within the MJSES

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Error	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance
Most of my classmates like to do math because it's easy	93	2.92	.083	3.00	3	.797	.636
I would get better grades if my teacher liked me better	93	2.91	.111	3.00	3	1.070	1.145
I will graduate from high school	93	1.09	.042	1.00	1	.408	.166
I go to a good school	93	1.56	.077	1.00	1	.744	.554
Adults who have good jobs were good students when they were kids	94	1.86	.093	2.00	2	.899	.809
When I am old enough I will go to college	93	1.24	.064	1.00	1	.615	.378
No one cares if I do well in school	93	3.67	.072	4.00	4	.697	.486
It is important to go to high school	94	1.24	.056	1.00	1	.543	.294
What I learn in school is not important	94	3.48	.080	4.00	4	.772	.596
It does not matter if I do well in school	92	3.65	.078	4.00	4	.748	.559
Kids who get better grades than I do, get more help from the teacher	94	2.99	.094	3.00	3	.910	.828
I will quit school as soon as I can	92	3.78	.055	4.00	4	.531	.282
Teachers like kids even if they do not always make good grades	94	2.01	.089	2.00	2	.861	.742

Note. Likert scale: 1 = really agree, 2 = kind of agree, 3 = kind of disagree, and 4 = really disagree.

Frequency tables were also done for each of the 13 context items in this subscale of the MJSES. The statements “I will graduate from high school,” “I go to a good

school,” “when I am old enough I will go to college,” and “it is important to go to high school” all had a total agreement percentage of 90% or higher. Both statements “no one cares if I do well in school” and “I will quit school as soon as I can” had a total disagreement percentage rate of 90% or higher. Frequency results for all 13 context subscale items can be viewed in Table 27.

Table 27

Frequencies for Context Items within the MJSES

Statement	Statistics	Really Agree	Kind Of Agree	Kind of Disagree	Really Disagree
Most of my classmates like to do math because it's easy	Frequency Percentage	5 5.3%	18 19.1%	49 52.1%	21 22.3%
I would get better grades if my teacher liked me better	Frequency Percentage	14 14.9%	15 16.0%	29 30.9%	35 37.2%
I will graduate from high school	Frequency Percentage	88 93.6%	3 3.2%	1 1.1%	1 1.1%
I go to a good school	Frequency Percentage	52 55.3%	33 35.1%	5 5.3%	3 3.2%
Adults who have good jobs were good students when they were kids	Frequency Percentage	40 42.6%	32 34.0%	17 18.1%	5 5.3%
When I am old enough I will go to college	Frequency Percentage	78 83%	10 10.6%	3 3.2%	2 2.1%
No one cares if I do well in school	Frequency Percentage	2 2.1%	6 6.4%	13 13.8%	72 76.6%
It is important to go to high school	Frequency Percentage	75 79.8%	16 17.0%	2 1.0%	1 1.1%
What I learn in school is not important	Frequency Percentage	2 2.1%	10 10.6%	23 24.5%	59 62.8%
It does not matter if I do well in school	Frequency Percentage	4 4.3%	3 3.2%	14 14.9%	71 75.5%
Kids who get better grades than I do, get more help from the teacher	Frequency Percentage	7 7.4%	18 19.1%	38 40.4%	31 33.0%
I will quit school as soon as I can	Frequency Percentage	1 1.1%	2 2.1%	13 13.8%	76 80.9%
Teachers like kids even if they do not always make good grades	Frequency Percentage	29 30.9%	40 42.6%	20 21.3%	5 5.3%

The descriptive and frequency data for the context items in the MJSES both indicated that the sample of students for this part of the study also had a high self-efficacy in relation to

the context items measured by the MJSES. Evidence of this can be seen in that a majority of the students responded positively in relation to how they felt about their school and college futures, as well as their disagreement with statements that indicated a lack of caring or lack of importance of education.

The third and final subscale within the MJSES consisted of only four items measuring effort. These four statements were split evenly with two being positively associated and two negatively associated with academic efforts. Both the positively stated effort items had an average mean score of less than 2.0, while both the negatively associated effort items had an average mean score of 2.80 or greater. The descriptives and frequency data for these four statements can be viewed in Table 28 and Table 29.

Table 28

Descriptives for Effort Items within the MJSES

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Error	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance
I work hard in school	94	1.64	.066	2.00	2	.637	.405
Most of my classmates work harder on their homework than I do	94	2.88	.093	3.00	3	.902	.814
I always get good grades when I try hard	93	1.49	.076	1.00	1	.732	.535
I usually do not get good grades in math because it's too hard	94	2.93	.102	3.00	3	.986	.973

Note. Likert scale: 1 really agree, 2 kind of agree, 3 kind of disagree, and 4 really disagree.

Table 29

Frequencies for Effort Items within the MJSES

Statement	Statistics	Really Agree	Kind Of Agree	Kind Of Disagree	Really Disagree
I work hard in school	Frequency Percentage	41 43.6%	47 50.0%	5 5.3%	1 1.1%
Most of my classmates work harder on their homework than I do	Frequency Percentage	4 4.3%	32 34%	29 30.9%	29 30.9%
I always get good grades when I try hard	Frequency Percentage	58 61.7%	26 27.7%	7 7.45%	2 2.1%
I usually do not get good grades in math because it's too hard	Frequency Percentage	11 11.7%	16 17.0%	36 38.3%	31 33.0%

The descriptive and frequency data for the four effort items addressed in the MJSES indicated that the sample population of students participating in this part of the study had a high self-efficacy in relation to the effort items scored. Noting that all three subscales of talent, context, and effort items found in the MJSES indicated high student self-efficacy existed for a majority of first time ninth graders within the school of study, the researcher sought to determine if the student responses on the MJSES matched the true academic performance of the sample population that participated in the study.

To determine if student reported self-efficacy in response to the statements in the MJSES correlated to actual student performance, the researcher used the scale found in Appendix S. This scale was based on the numeric responses given on the 4-point Likert scale for each of the statements written for the three subscale areas addressed in the MJSES. Both the context and effort subscale statements were divided into positively or negatively stated statements. The researcher used this scale to determine whether each first time ninth grader respondent indicated high or low self-efficacy and if this indication of self-efficacy correlated to their actual academic, attendance, and behavior traits. This

was done by matching the identification numbers given by students on their surveys to academic, attendance, and discipline records for the corresponding identification numbers on the printout obtained from the ninth-grade guidance counselor.

The researcher found that after applying the developed scale to each individual returned MJSES for the sample population of first time ninth graders, that 68% of the students self-reported levels of student self-efficacy as indicated by responses to the MJSES did correlate with actual academic, attendance, and discipline records for those students. Thirty-one percent of the students self-reported levels of self-efficacy as indicated by their responses to the MJSES either did not correlate or had a weak correlation when compared to their actual academic, attendance, and discipline records. Out of the sample population of 94 valid surveys, only 5% of students indicated a low overall student self-efficacy in response to the MJSES.

Of the 29 returned MJSES survey instruments that either did not correlate or had a weak correlation to actual academic, attendance, and discipline records, 41% failed to correlate to actual student records when identification numbers from the instruments were matched to those provided with records from guidance. Of the ones where results did not correlate, 24% had indicated high student self-efficacy in their responses but were indeed failing at least two of their core academic classes. Seventeen percent were failing at least two of their core academic classes and had a high number of absences and discipline referrals even though their responses had indicated high student self-efficacy. Similarly, approximately 21% had indicated high student self-efficacy in their responses on the MJSES but had double-digit numbers in both absences and discipline referrals.

One student who indicated high student self-efficacy in both context and effort items on the MJSES and low/high in talent items, but when compared to actual records

was failing one core academic class, had a grade of a D in another, had a combined total of over 100 days marked absent in the core academic classes, and had 16 discipline referrals. Another student who identified him/herself as having an overall high student self-efficacy according to his/her responses on the MJSES had over 129 combined days absent in four core academic classes, was failing one core academic class, and had a low D in two other core academic classes. Approximately 14% of the student respondents whose responses to the MJSES did not correlate to their actual student records failed only one course and 50% of those students only had moderate discipline referrals and absences. More than half of those who only failed one class had what could be considered a high rate of absences with more than 10 absences in at least one or more core academic classes and a minimum of 10 discipline referrals.

The researcher found that after comparing student responses on the MJSES for each student to the records matched by identification numbers from guidance, 52% of the students showed only a mild or weak correlation between response and actual records. Of those that showed a mild or weak correlation, 73% of the students had indicated a low/high student self-efficacy but had a failing grade in one of their core academic classes. Fifty-three percent of these student respondents were failing one core academic class and had a D in one or more of their other core academic classes. Of the students who were failing one class and had a D in one or more class, 50% had double-digit absences in one or more core academic classes and 25% had double-digit discipline referrals. The researcher also found that 10% of the students who had a mild or weak correlation once responses were applied to the developed scale and compared to actual records had indicated high student self-efficacy but had a letter grade of D in at least one core academic class. The researcher also found that of these students, one had double-

digit absences in three core academic classes and two had five or more discipline referrals.

Summary

The data collected and analyzed in Chapter 4, was done so to determine what measure perceptions and expectations held by students, faculty, and parents dealing with transition from middle school to high school had on the ability of students to successfully make this transition. In addition, the researcher also sought to determine the extent student self-efficacy had on individual students successfully making the transition from middle school to high school in regards to core academic performance, behaviors, and attendance. This study's mixed-method design allowed the researcher to look at both quantitative and qualitative data from a population sample of students, faculty, and parents from a rural ninth through twelfth grade high school in northern South Carolina. Results concerning data obtained in answering research questions 1 and 2 were comparable with other studies measuring student, teacher, and administrator perceptions of importance and existence of key program components. Chapter 5 will be used to provide an overall summary of this research study including drawing conclusions, supporting the researcher's findings with existing literature, listing possible applications, and offering recommendations for future studies concerning ninth-grade transition and student self-efficacy.

Chapter 5: Study Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will integrate the components of this study together with a brief overview, imply conclusions that can be made based on data received and analyzed, imply applications for this study, as well as recommend improvements and topics for future studies as a result of this work. The need for clearer answers to why ninth graders fail in such high numbers across the United States, and growing disparity between the number of students that enter high school and finish 4 years later with their diploma is what inspired this research. Although this study was conducted as a case study of a particular school in northern South Carolina, the increasing numbers of high school dropouts across America each year lend credibility to a rising and unanswered need.

Problem

A rural ninth through twelfth grade high school in northern South Carolina has taken steps to increase the successful transition of first time ninth graders entering into their school. Inconsistent graduation rates, retention rates, dropout rates, as well as failure to consistently achieve Adequate Yearly Progress as set forth by the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation have prompted such actions by this school. According to data retrieved from this school's 2002-2009 yearly state report cards, this school has failed to meet adequate yearly progress 4 of the 6 years that these measures were formally applied.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine what measure perceptions and expectations held by students, faculty, and parents dealing with transition from middle

school to high school had on the abilities of students to successfully make this transition. The researcher considered the perceptions and expectations of these stakeholders in regards to behaviors, skills, current programs, and supports to determine what was interfering with students' abilities to successfully transition from middle school to high school within this district. In looking at the transition from middle school to high school, the researcher felt it was important to include perceived student self-efficacy in determining individual student success in transitioning from middle school to high school by first time ninth graders.

Research Questions

This research study was designed to answer the following questions in regards to students making a successful transition from middle school to high school:

1. As perceived by first time ninth-grade students, which discrepancies exist between desired and actual characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school?
2. As perceived by ninth-grade faculty, which discrepancies exist between desired and actual characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school?
3. As perceived by first time ninth-grade student parents, which discrepancies exist between desired characteristics of successful transition programs for students moving from middle school to high school and their actual participation in these areas?
4. When considering student transition from middle school to high school, to what extent does perceived student self-efficacy determine successful transition in regards to core academic performance, behavior, and attendance?

Overview of Study

The literature review for this study focused primarily on five themes the researcher identified as key elements in identifying the problem of ninth graders failing to successfully transition from middle grades to high school. Those areas of focus were problems associated with change, relationships, at-risk factors, student perceived self-efficacy, and successful components. Across the scope of literature evidence exists that during this transitional period from middle school to high school, most children are at an age where they are not only being forced to contend with a change in school environment, but also in physical, emotional, and psychological changes (Hughes et al., 2005).

In addition to these changes, students who barely understand themselves are now being asked to build new relationships with teachers and peers. Gillock and Reyes (1996) showed that a student's perception of his or her teacher greatly affected his or her self-perceptions and their academic performance. Other researchers stated that the social support of peers plays a major role in influencing day-to-day behaviors and feelings of adolescents toward the value of school and how well they may perform or transition overall (Adeyemo & Troubeli, 2008; Hughes et al., 2005; Mizelle, 2005).

Literature also points out that many students fall behind academically during the ninth-grade transition; unfortunately some do not bounce back as quickly as others. According to Roderick (1993), course failures immediately following the transition period from middle school to high school were not limited to students that showed prior low academic achievement but were an issue for all ninth graders. However, a student being retained only once during K-12 grades are 60% more likely not to graduate (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999). According to Jinks and Morgan (1999), it would seem that

students with high self-efficacy would try different strategies and would persevere in the classroom while students with low self-efficacy would shy away from difficult situations and would give up on learning.

There was no shortage of literature that offered suggestions as to what ninth graders need in order to successfully transition from middle school to high school. Much of the literature stresses the importance of strategic transitional programs that provide extensive interactions across the school building and create a sense of community to ease the academic and social transition (Durant, 2009; Neild et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2008). Also considered important is making the curriculum count, allowing students to take responsibility, and overall quality of ninth-grade programs (Durant, 2009; Zsiray et al., 1996). The researcher used the literature reviewed in this study to help formulate and construct the desired target populations that would be best suited to answer the four research questions.

The target population for this study included first time ninth-grade students entering a rural ninth through twelfth grade high school in northern South Carolina, the faculty and staff that directly worked with and oversaw these students on a day-to-day basis, and the parents and/or guardians of these students. Also included in this study was a second target population of randomly selected students in the remaining tenth- through twelfth-grade classes, the parents or guardians of these students, and teachers who taught a minimum of three tenth-grade level classes. The data collection methods, instrumentation, and procedures used for analyses of data for this study were detailed by the researcher in Chapter 4.

Summary of Results

After quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data collected, the research

questions were answered as follows:

1. In response to research questions 1 and 2, all groups within the studied population indicated each of the statements measuring perceived importance for specific behaviors, skills, programs, and supports as being important to having a successful ninth-grade year.

2. In response to research questions 1 and 2 on the issues of perceived existence or witnessed, student participants were least likely to indicate existence for most behaviors, skills, programs, and supports key to having a successful ninth-grade year being present in the school; while teachers and administrators were more likely to indicate a greater existence for most behaviors, skills, programs, and supports key to having a successful ninth-grade year being present within the school.

3. In response to research question 3, parents indicated all statements measuring perceived importance for specific behaviors, skills, programs, and supports as being important to having a successful ninth-grade year.

4. In response to research question 3, parents of first time ninth-grade students indicated that they participated in 88% of the activities associated in the statements measuring parent participation, while upperclassmen parents indicated the existence of only five behaviors, skills, programs, and supports key to having a successful ninth-grade year as indicated by the statements measuring perceived existence of such criteria within the school.

5. In response to research question 4, first time ninth graders within this school generally indicated a high level of student self-efficacy across the three subscales of talent, context, and effort measured within the MJSES. When self-reported responses were checked against actual academic, attendance, and behavior records, a majority of

student responses correlated to their actual records.

The findings of this study indicate that there are some significant differences in what the stakeholders perceive to be important in providing first time ninth graders with a chance for successful transition from middle school to high school, and the perception of which of those components actually exist within the school of study. The discrepancy between what should be and what is by all stakeholders, but especially students, is troubling considering that literature clearly stresses the importance of having key components and supports in place for transitioning students (Durant, 2009; Herlihy, 2007).

The National Association of Secondary Principals' 2004 report *Breaking Ranks II* indicated seven key components for all high schools to ensure successful transitions for students moving from middle school to high school; two of these key components were *support* and *buy in*. If first time ninth graders are only perceiving seven of 34 of the areas that they rated important for successful transitioning actually existing in the school, it is logical to assume they feel a lack of support which could, as data show, keep them from buying into what the school is offering in terms of transition programs and supports. This can be supported by looking at just a few statements that students failed to indicate perceived existence within the school of study, such as "teachers and students have mutual respect for one another," "the curriculum is individualized for each student," "students speak highly of this school," and "teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs." Many of the areas which failed to be perceived as existing within the school by students indicate that this school may indeed be failing at making purposeful and meaningful connections as suggested by Hertzog and Morgan (1998).

Additionally the fact that only seven out of 34 statements from survey instrument

Perceptions of the Ninth Grade indicated a perceived existence within the school by first time ninth graders, teachers, and administrators. Also, the fact that only four of 15 statements from instruments Students in Grades 10-12 Survey, 10th-Grade Teacher Survey, and Parent of Students in Grades 10-12 Survey indicate perceived existence within the school, clearly shows that all stakeholders are not in agreement as to which key elements exist in the school to help students successfully transition from middle school to high school. The dangers associated with such discrepancies across stakeholders can be related back to research conducted by McLellan (2004) which indicated that those schools within her study that indicated higher perceived rate of existence across all stakeholders had lower dropout rates, implying these schools were also experiencing higher academic success. Adversely, those schools within McLellan's (2004) study which indicated low perception of key components of alternative schools across all stakeholders continued to struggle with high dropout rates and underperforming academics.

When allowed to elaborate through open-ended questions concerning areas felt to be important in making the transition from middle school to high school, the responses varied across stakeholders. Common themes across students were the importance of completing work, regular attendance, following discipline code, and a welcoming environment for ninth graders. The themes listed by students correlate to findings indicated throughout the literature review which stipulated that welcoming environments, relevant and rigorous curriculum, and discipline and attendance as indicators of possible success or failure were all important considerations in developing successful transition programs (Clark, 2007; Durant, 2009; Herlihy, 2007; NASSP, 2004; Smith, 2007). Teachers and administrators agreed that outside distractions needed to be considered

when engaging students, as well as students and parents being made aware of needed requirements for graduation.

Similarly, when allowed to elaborate on areas of strengths and weaknesses for the school at hand in helping ninth graders be successful during their freshman year, the stakeholders had different ideas on where the strengths and weaknesses fell. Students indicated strengths in areas of ninth-grade academy, quality teachers, availability of redo policies, and available guidance and administrative support. However, students also listed lack of quality teachers, teachers' willingness to help, and the overall curriculum as major weaknesses during the ninth grade. Teachers predominantly listed student characteristics in listing strengths and listed the lack of character education in the ninth grade as a major weakness in the school's help for a successful transition from middle school to high school.

When asked for areas of suggested improvements, most groups listed suggestions to correct those areas they felt the school was weakest in ensuring a smooth and successful transition from middle school to high school. Students and parents both indicated a need for better teacher quality and better student/teacher relationships. Parents also listed a need for better guidance services, and greater home/school partnerships. Teachers again reiterated the need for character education and informing students and parents better as to the requirements for graduation. The themes associated with suggestions for improvement also correlated to key issues discussed throughout the literature concerning transition and transition programs. Since teachers often become the students' primary contact with the school, studies show that it is important that quality, willing teachers are assigned to work with ninth-grade students (Fraser & Wahlberg, 1991; Neild & Farley, 2005; Owens & Konkol, 2005). As mentioned earlier, Crosnoe

(2009) stipulated that students, schools, and parents all benefited when schools and parents had open and regular communication.

Although the study conducted by McLellan (2004) was centered on alternative high school programs in Mississippi, her conclusions can logically be applied to perceptions of importance and existence of program components across a variety of different program structures. Her conclusions in that study were that mere high expectations or standards are not enough; successful programs must have many, if not all, key program components (McLellan, 2004). Assuming these findings can then be applied to the school within this study, it would be safe to conclude that the discrepancies of what students, teachers, parents, and administrators believe should exist within successful transition programs and what actually exist within this school may be what continues to interfere with students successfully making the transition from middle school to high school as indicated by ninth-grade retention rates, inconsistent on time graduation rates, and dropout rates. Evidence of students continuing to struggle can be seen in Table 30. According to Table 30, even after the implementation of a ninth-grade academy transition program, approximately 60 to 100 students continued to be retained for failure to successfully complete the ninth grade each year. Even more disturbing are the percentages for students who were retained in the ninth grade multiple times.

Table 30

Percentages of Ninth-Grade Retentions Before and After the Implementation of a Ninth-Grade Academy

Academic School Year		No. of 9 th Grade Students	% Retained	% Retained more than once
2006-2007	Start of Year	782	12%	23%
	End of Year	620	12%	14%
2007-2008	Start of Year	769	9%	19%
	End of Year	607	9%	11%
2008-2009*	Start of Year	811	12%	26%
	End of Year	634	11%	17%
2009-2010*	Start of Year	745	10%	27%
	End of Year	621	13%	18%

Note. * indicates ninth grade academy concept in use.

Much of the literature dealing with transition discusses how stressful the transition from middle school to high school can be on all students, not just those who are considered at-risk; even high performing students tend to drop off at the start of their ninth-grade year (Hertzog & Morgan, 1997; Kagan & Segal, 1991; Kerr, 2002; Roderick, 1993). Considering the numerous literature examples stressing student feelings of belonging, feelings regarding relationships with peers, parents, and teachers, and overall comfort within schools in regards to successful transitioning from middle school to high school, the researcher felt it was imperative to include research question 4 dealing with student self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), who can be considered the creator of the concept of self-efficacy, self-efficacious students are more willing to participate in academic settings, take more academic risk with fewer long-term negative effects from temporary setbacks than less self-efficacious students.

The theoretical structure offered from literature concerning student self-efficacy is

that self-efficacious students are more likely to cope better with stressful and rigorous situations, and that student self-efficacy can be directly related to higher academic achievement (Bandura, 1993, 1997; Bong, 2004; Schunk, 1984; Zimmerman, 2000; Zimmerman et al., 1992). In response to such literature, it can then be assumed that students with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to successfully transition from middle school to high school, continue to show academic success, and progress through high school to graduate on time.

According to the data collected while trying to answer research question 4, when considering student transition from middle school to high school, to what extent does perceived student self-efficacy determine successful transition in regards to core academic performance, behavior and attendance, a majority of the first time ninth-grade students when surveyed indicated high student self-efficacy. Therefore as supported by literature and other research including studies from Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) and Adeyemo and Troubeli (2008), which concluded self-efficacy correlated directly to student achievement, it is safe to assume that those students whose self-reported high self-efficacy which matched academic, discipline, and attendance records obtained from the school guidance department should continue to achieve academically and graduate from high school on time. Similarly, it can be determined that those students who indicated low self-efficacy or whose self-reported high self-efficacy results did not correlate to actual academic, behavior, and attendance records may have trouble progressing through high school to graduate on time and are at greater risk to drop out prior to completion of high school.

Conclusions

From the data it can be concluded that stakeholder perceptions of importance for

particular behaviors, skills, programs, and supports that are needed for students to have a successful transition from middle school to high school are in agreement amongst all stakeholders. However, there is a significant difference in stakeholder perception of existence as to which behaviors, skills, programs, and supports are available within the school of study that would allow students to have a successful transition from middle school to high school. These discrepancies could indicate the reasons students have failed to successfully make the transition from middle school to high school in the past and continue to struggle in making this transition within this school and district.

When comparing the literature concerning student self-efficacy and the data collected in answering research question 4, a majority of first time ninth graders within this school should be able to successfully transition from middle school to high school. The fact that students have continued to struggle to do so may indicate again that the discrepancies in what should be included in a successful transition program and what is perceived to actually exist in this school's transition program could be part of the problem. Because the data collected is supported by the literature, the researcher is fairly confident in concluding that student self-efficacy may play a role in an individual student's ability to successfully transition from middle school to high school. The researcher makes this conclusion based on evidence that 68% of first time ninth graders accurately described their student self-efficacy by their self-reported results from the MJSES which the researcher was able to successfully correlate to actual individual records in academic performance, attendance, and discipline. However, the actual amount student self-efficacy determines the successful transition from middle school to high school is still undetermined since the data collected in this study indicates multiple factors may exist as to why students in this school and district continue to struggle in making the transition

from middle school to high school.

Limitations

This research and its findings were limited by several factors. The researcher limited the study to one specific school in a rural district in northern South Carolina. Participants were limited to specific groups of students attending this school, parents of students that attend this school, and only faculty that worked at this school. Another limitation of this study was the low number of ninth-grade teacher responses, tenth-grade teacher responses, and parent responses. These factors could skew the findings while limiting its external scope. Lastly, this study was limited to only 1 year worth of ninth grade.

Recommendations for Improvement

The data revealed that all stakeholders agreed that there were key behaviors, skills, programs, and supports that were important in making sure students successfully transition from middle school to high school. However, it also revealed that perceptions of which of these important behaviors, skills, programs, and supports actually existed within the school of study varied widely across the different stakeholders. It was also concluded that student self-efficacy may indeed play a role in a student's ability to successfully transition from middle school to high school, but to what extent could not be specifically determined by the results of this study. It is for these reasons that the researcher makes the following recommendations for improvement:

1. It is recommended that the school within the study review the data collected from all stakeholders for both importance and existence and determine which of the items that are felt to be important exist in the school. Secondly, it is recommended that they look at those areas that most stakeholders felt existence within the school lacked and look

for ways to improve, implement, or develop these areas for the benefit of its ninth-grade students.

2. It is recommended that the school district from which the school of study resides review the data collected from all stakeholders for both importance and existence and develop a district-wide plan to help schools strengthen or develop supports and programs to help students successfully transition from middle school to high school.

3. It is recommended that the administration, guidance, and teachers review the data and develop a plan of action to improve school and home communications in order to alleviate most of the parents' anxieties concerning their students' ninth-grade year.

4. It is recommended that the administration and teachers who are directly responsible for ninth-grade students work with the administration and teachers of eighth-grade students from all feeder schools to develop strategies for introducing students to the expectations, challenges, and rigor of study at the ninth-grade level prior to them leaving the eighth grade.

5. It is recommended that the administration and teachers from both ninth-grade buildings within the district work together to ensure both locations are offering equitable programs and supports for students entering the ninth grade at both schools; also so they can ensure that student expectations and rigor of curriculum are consistent throughout both schools.

6. It is recommended that the administration and teachers of ninth-grade students work with tenth-grade teachers to develop and plan ways to instill the skills and attributes needed in higher grades within the ninth-grade curriculum.

7. It is recommended that ninth-grade teachers and guidance counselors work to develop a plan to test all incoming ninth-grade students for a level of student self-efficacy

and use the data collected to identify students who may be more at-risk. Secondly, teachers and counselors should continue to monitor these students, offering supports, advice, and remediation to ensure these students have a greater chance at successfully making the transition from middle school to high school.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Based on the results of this study concerning perceived importance and perceived existence of behaviors, skills, programs, and supports needed for students to make a successful transition from middle school to high school, as well as the effect student self-efficacy has on this transition, the recommendations for future studies are as follows:

1. Multi-school study performed throughout two or more districts concerning perceived importance and perceived existence of behaviors, skills, programs, and supports needed to successfully transition from middle school to high school. This would allow the researcher to expand the scope of stakeholders across multiple geographic and socioeconomic areas and identify specific correlations and differences in perceptions across these groups.
2. A pre and posttest research study of student self-efficacy to determine to what extent implemented supports and programs within the school in regards to helping students transition from middle school to high school have an impact on student self-efficacy.
3. Multi-year study of ninth-grade supports and programs that were implemented to help students transition from middle school to high school, to determine the effectiveness of these supports on students' abilities to transition successfully through higher grades and increase graduation rates.

Summary

Any type of transition or change is often met with anxiety or reluctance. The transition from middle school to high school is no different, except that this transition usually takes place when adolescents are changing physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. That is a lot of change to ask a person to make and to do all of them well. The growing problem of increasing ninth-grade numbers and decreasing graduation rates across the United States is alarming to say the least. School districts, schools, and educators have to find ways to make the transition from middle school to high school accessible for all students.

The days of assuming that students who enter high school will graduate 4 years later are over. Statistics and data show that we are losing more and more disengaged and disenfranchised students every year in America. The ninth-grade year may be the pivotal year for many students; making sure students experience success during this academic year may determine whether or not they graduate and receive a high school diploma.

The researcher worked to identify those behaviors, skills, programs, and supports that students, teachers, administrators, and parents all felt were important in helping students make a successful transition from middle school to high school. The researcher also worked to determine how a student's self-efficacy affected this transition process. Districts, schools, and educators not only need to continue with the supports and programs that are strong, but they need to identify what may be lacking in order to develop better and more productive programs and supports that can reach all students.

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Appendix A

Perceptions of the Ninth Grade

Perceptions of Ninth grade

By
 _____Administration _____Teachers _____Students

Based on your perceptions, please rate the following items according to their importance in relation to a successful ninth-grade year (5 being extremely important, and 1 being not important). Also rate each item to what extent they exist in your school (5 being consistently exist and 1 being does not exist). Please circle your choices.

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Existence in your school</u>
1. Teachers are excited to work with ninth grades.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Teachers believe students can achieve.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Regular student attendance is important for academic success.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. There is trust between students and teachers.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. Teachers and students speak freely with one another.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Administrators and teachers share common school goals and visions.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Teachers have the freedom to make personal instructional decisions.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. The administration believes in the abilities of the staff.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. The curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. Peer group counseling sessions happen regularly.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. Teachers provide positive feedback and reinforcement to students.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

14. Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
15. Individual counseling is available as needed.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
16. Teachers regularly monitor and share student progress to students.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
17. Teachers and students have mutual respect for one another.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
18. Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
19. Faculty work in teams to plan student instruction.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
20. The ninth-grade program was organized based on faculty and staff input.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
21. Teachers are provided with the materials needed in order to teach effectively.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
22. The curriculum is individualized for each student.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
23. Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
24. Students are provided extracurricular activities.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
25. Students speak positively about this school.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
26. Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
27. There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the ninth-grade program.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
28. The administration sets a climate that supports teaching and learning.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
29. Teachers provide opportunities for students to succeed.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
30. There is communication between teachers and the administration regarding student progress.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
31. Teachers regularly monitor and report student progress to parents.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

Permission Letter to Use Survey Instrument by Dr. Kay McLellan Alford

July 1, 2009
[REDACTED] Fox Run Drive
Olive Branch, MS [REDACTED]

Frank E. Wilson, Jr.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] SC [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Wilson:

This letter will grant you permission to use my survey instrument, as is or adapted, from my dissertation. This will be used in your dissertation entitled "The Role Stakeholder Perceptions and Student Self-Efficacy Plays in Transitioning from Middle School to High School".

I may be reached at [Kaymalford@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:Kaymalford@[REDACTED]) or at 901-[REDACTED] if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Kay Alford
Kay McLellan Alford

Appendix C
Parent Perception Survey

Parent Perceptions Survey

Based on your perceptions, please rate the following items according to their importance in relation to a successful ninth-grade year (5 being extremely important, and 1 being not important). Also rate each item to what extent that you participate (5 being full participation and 1 being did/do not participate). Please circle your choices.

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Participation</u>
1. Taking an active role in helping choose your child's ninth grade classes.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Participation in Parent Teacher Association.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Being familiar with school policies and discipline code.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Have frequent contact with child's teachers.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. Encouraging child to become involved in extracurricular activities.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. Read, sign and discuss each class syllabus.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Attend Freshmen orientation.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Attend Open House and parent conferences.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. Active roll in knowing your child's friends.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. Review child's homework and study material daily.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Make contact with all of your child's teachers prior to the end of the first three weeks of school.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. Requesting or receiving regular student progress reports.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. Support your child's efforts to become more independent.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14. Maintain open communication between yourself and your child about academic and social concerns.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
15. Familiarized with the requirements for graduation.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

16. Aware of child's discipline record.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
17. Aware of attendance requirements and child's attendance record.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
18. Attending child's extracurricular activities.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
19. Familiar with your child's principal and guidance counselor.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
20. Encourage your child to be successful.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
21. Discuss the importance of school with your child on a regular basis.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
22. Discuss long range academic goals with your child.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
23. Listen to and address your child's concerns about school, classes, or teachers.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
24. Respond to teacher request or contacts in a timely manner.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
25. Familiarized with help services that could benefit your child's academic progress.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Please list any other components you feel are essential relative to a successful ninth-grade year.

Appendix D

Email Communication with Dr. Cynthia Copeland

Re: Seeking Permission to use Instrumentation from your dissertation study

Sunday, July 12, 2009 1:30 PM

From:

"Dr. Cynthia Copeland" <ccopeland@scsd2.k12.sc.us>

[Add sender to Contacts](#)

To:

wilsonf1@yahoo.com

Mr. Wilson:

In developing my interview questions, it was a very simple process. I would think that you would want to do the same. While, I'm sure our studies are similar your questions should be slightly different from mine. You have my permission to use my instruments in part only. Please know that you must modify your instruments to fit your study. I wish you God's blessings as you complete this process of your study.

Dr. Cynthia Copeland
Guidance Counselor
Mayewood Middle School
4300 E. Brewington Rd.
Sumter, SC 29150
803-495-8014
Ext. 305
Fax: 803-495-8048

Frank Wilson <wilsonf1@yahoo.com> 07/11/09 2:25 PM >>>

Dear Ms. Copeland

My name is Frank E. Wilson Jr. I am a doctoral candidate at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs NC. I am currently working on a dissertation proposal as part of the requirements of my degree program. I am currently employed with [REDACTED] in the Upstate. I came across your study "The Perceptions of Middle and High School Transitions as Viewed by Students, Parents, Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators in Sumter School District Two" while conducting research for my own topic. The working title of my own study is "The Role Stakeholder Perceptions and Student Self-efficacy Plays in Transitioning from Middle School to High School." After looking at your study I feel that the instruments that you use to question students, teachers, and parents to be very insightful. I believe these instruments could be very helpful in conducting my own research concerning this topic.

I am seeking your permission to use in whole or in part the instruments titled Appendix D Student Questionnaire, Appendix E Parent Questionnaire, Appendix G Teacher Questionnaire-High School, and Appendix H Interview High School Counselor.

I look forward to hearing from you concerning this matter and I thank you in advance for the time and effort you have already given to this matter.

Sincerely

Frank E. Wilson Jr.
Doctoral Candidate
Gardner-Webb University

If you would like to mail a letter of permission you can send it to:

Frank E. Wilson Jr
[5916 Cannons Campground Rd](#)
[Cowpens SC 29330](#)

Appendix E
Students in Grades 10-12 Survey

Students Grade 10 – 12 Survey

Based on your perceptions please rate the following items according to how important you feel they are in relation to having a successful ninth-grade experience (5 being extremely important, and 1 being not important). Also please rate from your experience to what extent you witnessed or were provided the actions for each item during your ninth-grade year (5 being consistently and 1 being did not exist).

Check the correct response:

_____ I attended the ninth grade at the school I am currently enrolled in.

_____ I did not attend the ninth grade at the school I am currently enrolled in.

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Witnessed or provided</u>
1. Teachers are excited to work with ninth-grade students.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers and students meet regularly to discuss progress. (minimum of twice a month)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Regular student attendance is important. (minimum of 90% attendance rate)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Trust and respect are demonstrated between teachers and students.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. The core curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. Teachers accommodate all students' individual learning styles by varying methods of instruction.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Students are aware of or informed as to which behaviors and actions are appropriate and expected within the secondary school setting.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Teachers believe all students can learn.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. Students receive individual guidance on a regular basis. (minimum of once a quarter)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. Students' academic and social needs are provided for.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Students with like ability are grouped together.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. Students are provided with extracurricular activities. (i.e. after-school programs, school clubs, athletics)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. Teachers provide students with opportunities to	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix F
10th-Grade Teacher Survey

10th-Grade Teacher Survey

Based on your perceptions please rate the following items according to how important you feel they are in relation to having a successful ninth-grade experience (5 being extremely important, and 1 being not important). Also please rate from your experience to what extent you witnessed each item being offered during the ninth-grade year (5 being consistently and 1 being did not exist).

Please Respond:

I have taught at my current school for _____ years.

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Witnessed</u>
1. Teachers are excited to work with ninth-grade students.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers and students meet regularly to discuss progress. (minimum of twice a month)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Regular student attendance is important. (minimum of 90% attendance rate)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Trust and respect are demonstrated between teachers and students.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. The core curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. Teachers accommodate all students' individual learning styles by varying methods of instruction.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Students are aware of or informed as to which behaviors and actions are appropriate and expected within the secondary school setting.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Teachers believe all students can learn.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. Students receive individual guidance on a regular basis. (minimum of once a quarter)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. Students' academic and social needs are provided for.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Students with like ability are grouped together.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. Students are provided with extracurricular activities. (i.e. after-school programs, school clubs, athletics)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. Teachers provide students with opportunities to succeed.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix G

Parent of Students in Grades 10-12 Survey

Upper Classman Parent Survey

Based on your perceptions please rate the following items according to how important you feel they are in relation to having a successful ninth-grade experience (5 being extremely important, and 1 being not important). Also please rate from your experience to what extent you witnessed each item being offered during your child's ninth-grade year (5 being consistently and 1 being did not exist).

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Witnessed</u>
1. Teachers are excited to work with ninth-grade students.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers and students meet regularly to discuss progress. (minimum of twice a month)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Regular student attendance is important. (minimum of 90% attendance rate)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Trust and respect are demonstrated between teachers and students.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. The core curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. Teachers accommodate all students' individual learning styles by varying methods of instruction.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Students are aware of or informed as to which behaviors and actions are appropriate and expected within the secondary school setting.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Teachers believe all students can learn.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. Students receive individual guidance on a regular basis. (minimum of once a quarter)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. Students' academic and social needs are provided for.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Students with like ability are grouped together.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. Students are provided with extracurricular activities. (i.e. after-school programs, school clubs, athletics)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. Teachers provide students with opportunities to succeed.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14. Teachers regularly contact parents regarding student progress. (minimum of three times a quarter)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

- | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| 15. Students are made to feel valued and a part of the school family. | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
|---|-----------|-----------|

Please answer the following questions as openly and honestly as possible in regards to your child's ninth-grade experience.

1. How well was your student academically prepared for the tenth grade once completing the ninth grade at his or her school?

2. What concerned you most about your child's educational experience during their ninth-grade year?

3. What were the general strengths you saw from your child once they had completed the ninth grade at his or her school?

4. Looking at the ninth-grade program/curriculum, where do you think the school lacked the most in helping students succeed during your child's ninth-grade year?

5. What suggestions do you have for this school to make the ninth-grade experience more successful or more beneficial to first time ninth graders in preparing them for success in higher grades?

Appendix H

Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale

Student ID # _____

Morgan-Jinks Efficacy Scale (MJSES)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please rate the following statements honestly as to how close they reflect your own beliefs. Circle the answer that best reflects your opinion of the statement, 1 being really agree, 2 kind of agree, 3 kind of disagree, 4 really disagree. For the last four questions circle the correct letter grade you received on your last report card in each of the classes listed.

Statement	Really Agree	Kind of Agree	Kind of Disagree	Really Disagree
1. I work hard in school.	1	2	3	4
2. I could get the best grades in class if I tried enough.	1	2	3	4
3. Most of my classmates like to do math because it is easy.	1	2	3	4
4. I would get better grades if my teacher liked me better.	1	2	3	4
5. Most of my classmates work harder on their homework than I do.	1	2	3	4
6. I am a good science student.	1	2	3	4
7. I will graduate from high school.	1	2	3	4
8. I go to a good school.	1	2	3	4
9. I always get good grades when I try hard.	1	2	3	4
10. Sometimes I think an assignment is easy when other kids think it is hard.	1	2	3	4
11. I am a good social studies student.	1	2	3	4
12. Adults who have good jobs probably were good students when they were kids.	1	2	3	4
13. When I am old enough, I will go to college.	1	2	3	4
14. I am one of the best students in my class.	1	2	3	4
15. No one cares if I do well in school.	1	2	3	4
16. My teacher thinks I am smart.	1	2	3	4

17. It is important to go to high school.	1	2	3	4	
18. I am a good math student.	1	2	3	4	
19. My classmates usually get better grades than I do.	1	2	3	4	
20. What I learn in school is not important.	1	2	3	4	
21. I usually understand my homework assignments.	1	2	3	4	
22. I usually do not get good grades in math because it is too hard.	1	2	3	4	
23. It does not matter if I do well in school.	1	2	3	4	
24. Kids who get better grades than I do get more help from the teacher than I do.	1	2	3	4	
25. I am a good English student.	1	2	3	4	
26. It is not hard for me to get good grades in school.	1	2	3	4	
27. I am smart.	1	2	3	4	
28. I will quit school as soon as I can.	1	2	3	4	
29. Teachers like kids even if they do not always make good grades.	1	2	3	4	
30. When the teacher asks a question I usually know the answer even if the other kids don't.	1	2	3	4	
31. What grade in math did you get on your last report card?	A	B	C	D	F
32. What grade in social studies did you get on your last report card?	A	B	C	D	F
33. What grade in science did you get on your last report card?	A	B	C	D	F
34. What grade in English did you get on your last report card?	A	B	C	D	F

Appendix I

Email Communication with Dr. Vicky Morgan Regarding the MJSES

RE: Seeking Permission to use Student Self-Efficacy Scale Instrument

Wednesday, July 1, 2009 10:05 PM

From:

"Morgan, Vicky" <vlmorgan@ilstu.edu>

[View contact details](#)

To:

"Frank Wilson" <wilsonf1@yahoo.com>

Hi Frank,

Yes, you have our permission to use the scale. The best of luck in your research!

Vicky Morgan, Ph.D.
Professor, Curriculum and Instruction
223 DeGarmo Hall
Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61790-5330

From: Frank Wilson [mailto:wilsonf1@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tue 6/30/2009 1:27 PM

To: jljinks@ilstu.edu; Morgan, Vicky

Subject: Seeking Permission to use Student Self-Efficacy Scale Instrument

Hello,

I am contacting you seeking permission to use your Student Self-Efficacy Scale instrument in whole or part during my research work. I am currently working on a dissertation proposal as a part of my degree program through Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs NC. My work is looking at the role stakeholder perceptions and student self-efficacy plays in the transitioning from middle school to high school. I believe your instrument design can be a valuable tool for this study. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Frank E. Wilson Jr.
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix J

Descriptives for Measure of Perceived Importance for Students, Teachers, and
Administrators

Descriptives for Measure of Perceived Importance for Students, Teachers, and Administrators

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teachers excited to work with ninth graders	Student	105	3.97	1.197	.117	3.74	4.20
	Teacher	9	4.33	1.118	.373	3.47	5.19
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	119	4.03	1.175	1.175	3.81	4.24
Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support	Student	102	4.17	1.118	.111	3.95	4.39
	Teacher	9	4.78	.441	.147	4.44	5.12
	Administrator	5	4.80	.447	.200	4.24	5.36
	Total	116	4.24	1.076	.100	4.04	4.44
Teachers believe students can achieve	Student	104	4.43	1.012	.099	4.24	4.63
	Teacher	9	4.78	.441	.147	4.44	5.12
	Administrator	5	5.00	.000	.000	5.00	5.00
	Total	118	4.48	.967	.089	4.32	4.66
Regular student attendance is important for academic success	Student	104	4.29	1.121	.110	4.07	4.51
	Teacher	9	5.00	.000	.000	5.00	5.00
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	118	4.36	1.074	.099	4.16	4.55
There is trust between students and teachers	Student	105	4.02	1.232	.120	3.78	4.26
	Teacher	9	4.44	.882	.294	3.77	5.12
	Administrator	5	5.00	.000	.000	5.00	5.00
	Total	119	4.09	1.200	.110	3.87	4.31
Teachers and students speak freely with one another	Student	103	3.93	1.207	.119	3.70	4.17
	Teacher	9	4.33	.886	.289	3.67	5.00
	Administrator	5	4.20	.837	.374	3.16	5.24
	Total	117	3.97	1.170	.108	3.76	4.19
Administrators and teachers share common school goals and visions	Student	105	3.97	1.122	.109	3.75	4.19
	Teacher	9	4.78	.441	.147	4.44	5.12
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	119	4.06	1.092	1.00	3.86	4.26
Teachers have the freedom to make personal instructional decisions.	Student	104	3.79	1.212	.119	3.55	4.02
	Teacher	9	4.78	.441	.147	4.44	5.12
	Administrator	5	4.20	.447	.200	3.64	4.76
	Total	118	3.88	1.178	.108	3.67	4.10
The administration believes in the abilities of the staff	Student	105	4.27	.923	.090	4.09	4.45
	Teacher	9	4.78	.667	.222	4.27	5.29
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	119	4.32	.901	.083	4.16	4.48

(Continued)

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society	Student	105	4.24	1.033	.101	4.04	4.44
	Teacher	9	4.67	.707	.236	4.12	5.21
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	119	4.29	1.001	.092	4.10	4.47
Teachers accommodate students individual learning styles	Student	104	4.21	1.138	.112	3.99	4.43
	Teacher	9	4.78	.441	.147	4.44	5.12
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	118	4.27	1.091	.100	4.07	4.47
Peer group counseling sessions happen regularly	Student	105	3.61	1.221	.119	3.37	3.85
	Teacher	8	3.88	.991	.350	3.05	4.70
	Administrator	5	3.60	.894	.400	2.49	4.71
	Total	118	3.63	1.190	.110	3.41	3.84
Teachers provide positive feedback and reinforcement to students	Student	104	4.19	1.025	.100	3.99	4.39
	Teacher	5	4.89	.333	.111	4.63	5.15
	Administrator	9	4.80	.447	.200	4.24	5.36
	Total	118	4.27	.993	.091	4.09	4.45
Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis	Student	103	3.93	1.087	.107	3.72	4.14
	Teacher	9	4.56	.726	.242	4.00	5.11
	Administrator	5	4.20	.837	.374	3.16	5.24
	Total	117	3.99	1.063	.098	3.80	4.19
Individual counseling is available as needed	Student	103	4.38	.971	.096	4.19	4.57
	Teacher	9	4.89	.333	.111	4.63	5.15
	Administrator	5	4.80	.447	.200	4.24	5.36
	Total	117	4.44	.932	.086	4.27	4.61
Teachers regularly monitor and share student progress to students	Student	101	3.98	1.157	.115	3.75	4.21
	Teacher	9	4.78	.441	.147	4.44	5.12
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	115	4.07	1.122	.105	3.86	4.28
Teachers and students have mutual respect for one another	Student	103	4.14	1.172	.115	3.91	4.36
	Teacher	9	4.78	.667	.222	4.27	5.29
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	117	4.21	1.134	.105	4.00	4.41
Teachers are responsive to students' academic and social needs	Student	103	4.15	1.070	.105	3.94	4.35
	Teacher	8	4.75	.463	.164	4.36	5.14
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	116	4.21	1.034	.096	4.02	4.40

(Continued)

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Faculty work in teams to plan student instruction	Student	102	3.93	1.110	.110	3.71	4.15
	Teacher	10	4.10	1.101	.348	3.31	4.89
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	117	3.97	1.094	.101	3.77	4.17
The ninth-grade program was organized based on faculty and staff input	Student	104	3.84	1.208	.118	3.60	4.07
	Teacher	9	4.33	1.323	.441	3.32	5.35
	Administrator	4	4.50	.577	.289	3.58	5.42
	Total	117	3.90	1.206	.112	3.68	4.12
Teachers are provided with the materials needed in order to teach effectively	Student	104	4.19	1.089	.107	3.98	4.40
	Teacher	9	4.44	1.333	.444	3.42	5.47
	Administrator	5	4.80	.447	.200	4.24	5.36
	Total	118	4.24	1.091	.100	4.04	4.44
The curriculum is individualized for each student	Student	103	3.76	1.216	.120	3.52	4.0
	Teacher	9	3.78	1.394	.465	2.71	4.85
	Administrator	5	4.00	.707	.316	3.12	4.88
	Total	117	3.77	1.206	.112	3.55	3.99
Students with like ability are grouped together for instruction	Student	103	3.94	1.145	.113	3.72	4.17
	Teacher	9	4.22	.667	.222	3.71	4.73
	Administrator	5	4.00	1.732	.775	1.85	6.15
	Total	117	3.97	1.137	.105	3.76	4.17
Students are provided extracurricular activities	Student	104	4.34	1.020	.100	4.14	4.53
	Teacher	9	4.78	.667	.222	4.27	5.29
	Administrator	5	4.80	.447	.200	4.24	5.36
	Total	118	4.39	.987	.091	4.21	4.57
Students speak positively about this school	Student	101	3.85	1.345	.134	3.59	4.12
	Teacher	9	4.44	.882	.294	3.77	5.12
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	115	3.93	1.303	.121	3.69	4.17
Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff	Student	103	3.78	1.212	.119	3.54	4.01
	Teacher	9	4.56	.882	.294	3.88	5.23
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	117	3.87	1.193	.110	3.74	4.09
There was a school-wide effort to develop curriculum for the ninth-grade program	Student	103	3.85	1.150	.113	3.63	4.08
	Teacher	10	4.60	.843	.267	4.00	5.20
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	118	3.95	1.131	.104	3.74	4.16
The administration sets a climate that supports teaching and learning	Student	103	3.93	1.140	.112	3.71	4.15
	Teacher	9	4.67	.707	.236	4.12	5.21
	Administrator	5	4.80	.548	.200	4.24	5.36
	Total	115	4.03	1.090	.103	3.82	4.23

(Continued)

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teachers provide opportunities for students to succeed	Student	101	4.16	1.129	.112	3.94	4.38
	Teacher	9	4.67	.707	.236	4.12	5.21
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	115	4.22	1.090	.102	4.02	4.42
There is communication between teachers and the administration regarding student progress	Student	102	4.06	.983	.097	3.87	4.25
	Teacher	9	4.56	.882	.294	3.88	5.23
	Administrator	5	4.80	.447	.200	4.24	5.36
	Total	116	4.13	.974	.090	3.95	4.31
Teachers regularly monitor and report student progress to parents	Student	102	3.83	1.379	.137	3.56	4.10
	Teacher	9	4.67	.707	.236	4.12	5.21
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	116	3.93	1.337	.124	3.69	4.18
Faculty share ideas, resources, and strategies with one another	Student	101	3.85	1.195	.119	3.62	4.09
	Teacher	9	4.78	.441	.147	4.44	5.12
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	115	3.96	1.165	.109	3.74	4.17
Students are diversely grouped for instructional activities	Student	102	3.74	1.210	.120	3.50	3.97
	Teacher	9	4.56	1.014	.338	3.78	5.33
	Administrator	5	4.60	.548	.245	3.92	5.28
	Total	116	3.84	1.201	.112	3.62	4.06
Students and faculty feel safe within the school environment	Student	101	4.18	1.144	.114	3.95	4.40
	Teacher	9	4.67	.707	.236	4.12	5.21
	Administrator	5	4.80	.447	.200	4.24	5.36
	Total	115	4.24	1.105	.103	4.04	4.45

Note. A mean rating of 3.5 or higher was used to determine importance.

Appendix K

Tukey HSD Perception of Existence for Students, Teachers, and Administrators

Tukey HSD Perception of Existence for Students, Teachers, and Administrators

Dependent Variable	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teachers meet regularly with students to provide academic help and support	Student	Teacher	-1.186*	.415	.014	-2.17	-.20
		Administration	-.486	.574	.675	-1.85	.88
	Teacher	Student	1.186*	.415	.014	.20	2.17
		Administration	.700	.687	.566	-.93	2.33
Teachers accommodate students' individual learning styles	Student	Teacher	-1.167*	.420	.017	-2.16	-.17
		Administration	-.267	.581	.890	-1.64	1.11
	Teacher	Student	1.167*	.420	.017	.17	2.16
		Administration	.900	.695	.401	-.75	2.55
Teachers provide positive feedback and reinforcement to students	Student	Teacher	-.990*	.377	.026	-1.89	-.09
		Administration	-.190	.522	.929	-1.43	1.05
	Teacher	Student	.990*	.377	.026	.09	1.89
		Administration	.800	.625	.409	-.68	2.28
Students receive individualized guidance on a regular basis	Student	Teacher	-1.019*	.411	.038	-1.99	1.43
		Administration	-.019	.568	.999	-1.37	.68
	Teacher	Student	1.019*	.411	.038	.04	-.04
		Administration	1.000	.680	.309	-.61	1.33
Teachers regularly monitor and share student progress with students	Student	Teacher	-1.224*	.448	.020	-2.29	-.16
		Administration	-.524	.620	.676	-2.00	.95
	Teacher	Student	1.224*	.448	.020	.16	2.29
		Administration	.700	.742	.614	-1.06	2.46
Students willingly share their ideas with faculty and staff	Student	Teacher	-1.319*	.449	.011	-2.38	-.25
		Administration	-.619	.621	.580	-2.09	.85
	Teacher	Student	1.319*	.449	.011	.25	2.38
		Administration	.700	.743	.615	-1.06	2.46
Teachers provide opportunities for students to succeed	Student	Teacher	-1.086*	.454	.048	-2.16	-.01
		Administration	-.886	.627	.338	-2.38	.60
	Teacher	Student	1.086*	.454	.048	.01	2.16
		Administration	.200	.751	.962	-1.58	1.98

(Continued)

Dependent Variable	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Students and faculty feel safe within the school environment	Student	Teacher	-1.167*	.495	.052	-2.34	.01
		Administration	-1.267	.684	.158	-2.89	.36
	Teacher	Student	1.167*	.495	.052	-.01	2.34
		Administration	-.100	.819	.992	-2.04	1.84

Note. * indicates the mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix L

Descriptives for First Time Ninth-Grader Parents Perception of Importance

Descriptives for First Time Ninth-Grader Parents Perception of Importance

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Taking an active role in helping choose your child's ninth grade classes	39	1	5	4.54	.137	.854
Participation in Parent Teacher Association	39	1	5	3.85	.193	1.204
Being familiar with school policies and discipline code	39	1	5	4.69	.128	.800
Have frequent contact with child's teachers	39	1	5	4.38	.171	1.067
Encouraging child to become involved in extracurricular activities	38	1	5	4.13	.207	1.277
Read, sign and discuss each class syllabus	38	2	5	4.39	.158	.974
Attend Freshmen orientation	39	3	5	4.77	.086	.536
Attend Open House and parent conferences	39	3	5	4.74	.095	.595
Active roll in knowing your child's friends	39	1	5	4.77	.119	.742
Review child's homework and study material daily	38	2	5	4.50	.124	.762
Make contact with all of your child's teachers prior to the end of the first three weeks of school	39	1	5	3.85	.203	1.268
Requesting or receiving regular student progress reports	39	1	5	4.82	.109	.683
Support your child's efforts to become more independent	39	1	5	4.72	.116	.724
Maintain open communication between yourself and your child about academic and social concerns	39	1	5	4.87	.105	.656
Familiarized with the requirements for graduation	39	1	5	4.74	.131	.818
Aware of child's discipline record	39	1	5	4.85	.113	.709

(Continued)

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Aware of attendance requirements and child's attendance record	39	1	5	4.90	.103	.641
Attending child's extracurricular activities	39	1	5	4.49	.172	1.073
Familiar with your child's principal and guidance counselor	39	1	5	4.36	.154	.959
Encourage your child to be successful	39	1	5	4.90	.103	.641
Discuss the importance of school with your child on a regular basis	39	1	5	4.79	.117	.732
Discuss long range academic goals with your child	39	1	5	4.82	.109	.683
Listen to and address your child's concerns about school, classes, or teachers	39	1	5	4.85	.107	.670
Respond to teacher request or contacts in a timely manner	39	2	5	4.85	.086	.540
Familiarized with help services that could benefit your child's academic progress	39	1	5	4.74	.120	.751

Note. Importance shown with average mean rating of 3.5 or greater.

Appendix M

Descriptives for Ninth-Grader Parent Participation

Descriptives for Ninth-Grader Parent Participation

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Taking an active role in helping choose your child's ninth grade classes	39	1	5	4.23	.189	1.180
Being familiar with school policies and discipline code	40	2	5	4.50	.124	.784
Encouraging child to become involved in extracurricular activities	39	1	5	3.77	.216	1.347
Read, sign and discuss each class syllabus	39	1	5	3.87	.215	1.341
Attend Freshmen orientation	40	1	5	4.58	.156	.984
Attend Open House and parent conferences	40	1	5	4.22	.181	1.143
Active roll in knowing your child's friends	40	1	5	4.50	.164	1.038
Review child's homework and study material daily	39	1	5	3.72	.183	1.146
Requesting or receiving regular student progress reports	40	1	5	4.33	.184	1.163
Support your child's efforts to become more independent	40	1	5	4.47	.156	.987
Maintain open communication between yourself and your child about academic and social concerns	40	1	5	4.58	.151	.958
Familiarized with the requirements for graduation	40	1	5	4.40	.182	1.150
Aware of child's discipline record	40	1	5	4.65	.146	.921
Aware of attendance requirements and child's attendance record	40	1	5	4.72	.134	.847
Attending child's extracurricular activities	40	1	5	4.13	.206	1.305
Familiar with your child's principal and guidance counselor	40	1	5	3.65	.213	1.350

(Continued)

Statement	N	Minimum		Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Encourage your child to be successful	40	1	5	4.80	.109	.687
Discuss the importance of school with your child on a regular basis	40	1	5	4.50	.183	1.155
Discuss long range academic goals with your child	40	1	5	4.60	.138	.871
Listen to and address your child's concerns about school, classes, or teachers	40	1	5	4.58	.147	.931
Respond to teacher request or contacts in a timely manner	40	1	5	4.55	.152	.959
Familiarized with help services that could benefit your child's academic progress	40	1	5	4.12	.169	1.067

Note. Participation shown with average mean rating of 3.5 or greater.

Appendix N

Percentages for Ninth-Grader Parent Perceived Importance and Participation

Percentages for Ninth-Grader Parent Perceived Importance and Participation

Quest No.	Statement	Perceived Importance	Indicated Participation
1	Taking an active role in helping choose your child's ninth grade classes	97.4%	86.9%
3	Being familiar with school policies and discipline code	97.5%	97.5%
5	Encouraging child to become involved in extracurricular activities	89.4%	86.9%
7	Attend freshmen orientation	100%	94.8%
8	Attend open house and parent conferences	100%	89.8%
9	Active roll in knowing your child's friends	97.5%	92.3%
10	Review child's homework and study material daily	97.4%	86.7%
12	Requesting or receiving regular student progress reports	97.4%	87.2%
13	Support your child's efforts to become more independent	97.4%	94.9%
14	Maintain open communication between yourself and your child about academic and social concerns	97.5%	94.9%
15	Familiarized with the requirements for graduation	97.5%	92.3%
16	Aware of child's discipline record	97.5%	94.9%
17	Aware of attendance requirements and child's attendance record	97.4%	94.9%
18	Attending child's extracurricular activities	92.3%	89.7%
20	Encourage your child to be successful	97.4%	97.5%
21	Discuss the importance of school with your child on a regular basis	97.4%	89.7%
22	Discuss long range academic goals with your child	97.4%	94.9%
23	Listen to and address your child's concerns about school, classes, or teachers	97.4%	94.9%
24	Respond to teacher request or contacts in a timely manner	97.4%	94.9%

(Continued)

Quest No.	Statement	Perceived Importance	Indicated Participation
25	Familiarized with help services that could benefit your child's academic progress	97.5%	94.9%

Note. Percentages are total percentage from important, very important, extremely important for importance, and participated, participate often, and complete participation for participation.

Appendix O

Descriptives for Measure of Importance for Upperclassmen Students, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents

Descriptives for Measure of Importance for Upperclassmen Students, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teachers excited to work with ninth graders	Student	229	4.18	1.034	.068	4.04	4.31
	Teacher	8	4.50	.535	.189	4.05	4.95
	Parent	34	4.71	.579	.099	4.50	4.91
	Total	271	4.25	.992	.060	4.14	4.37
Teachers and students meet regularly to discuss progress (minimum of twice a month)	Student	225	3.62	1.208	.081	3.46	3.78
	Teacher	7	4.43	.787	.297	3.70	5.16
	Parent	33	4.45	.971	.169	4.11	4.80
	Total	265	3.75	1.206	.074	3.60	3.89
Regular student attendance is important (minimum of 90% attendance rate)	Student	228	4.32	1.041	.069	4.19	4.46
	Teacher	9	4.78	.441	.147	4.44	5.12
	Parent	34	4.88	.327	.056	4.77	5.00
	Total	271	4.41	.984	.060	4.29	4.53
Trust and respect are demonstrated between teachers and students	Student	228	4.32	1.056	.070	4.18	4.45
	Teacher	9	4.56	.527	.176	4.15	4.96
	Parent	34	4.76	.496	.085	4.59	4.94
	Total	271	4.38	1.000	.061	4.26	4.50
The core curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society	Student	227	4.19	1.078	.072	4.05	4.33
	Teacher	9	4.44	.726	.242	3.89	5.00
	Parent	34	4.82	.459	.079	4.66	4.98
	Total	270	4.28	1.031	.063	4.15	4.40
Teachers accommodate all students' individual learning styles by varying methods of instruction	Student	226	4.25	1.037	.069	4.11	4.38
	Teacher	9	4.22	.838	.278	3.58	4.86
	Parent	33	4.64	.742	.129	4.37	4.90
	Total	268	4.29	1.005	.061	4.17	4.42
Students are aware of or informed as to which behaviors and actions are appropriate and expected within the secondary school setting	Student	226	4.43	.873	.058	4.32	4.55
	Teacher	9	4.78	.441	.147	4.44	5.12
	Parent	33	4.85	.364	.063	4.72	4.98
	Total	268	4.50	.828	.051	4.40	4.60
Teachers believe all students can learn	Student	228	4.53	.907	.060	4.41	4.64
	Teacher	9	4.67	.500	.167	4.28	5.05
	Parent	33	4.91	.292	.051	4.81	5.01
	Total	268	4.58	.853	.052	4.48	4.68

(Continued)

Statement	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Students receive individual guidance on a regular basis (minimum of once a quarter)	Student	228	3.79	1.238	.082	3.63	3.95
	Teacher	7	3.86	.900	.340	3.03	4.69
	Parent	34	4.53	.788	.135	4.25	4.80
	Total	269	3.88	1.205	.073	3.74	4.03
Students' academic and social needs are provided for	Student	227	4.28	.999	.066	4.15	4.41
	Teacher	9	4.33	.707	.236	3.79	4.88
	Parent	34	4.76	.496	.085	4.59	4.94
	Total	270	4.34	.954	.058	4.23	4.46
Students with like ability are grouped together	Student	226	3.97	1.218	.081	3.81	4.13
	Teacher	9	4.33	.866	.289	3.67	5.00
	Parent	34	4.18	1.058	.181	3.81	4.55
	Total	269	4.01	1.189	.073	3.87	4.15
Students are provided with extracurricular activities (i.e., after-school programs, school clubs, athletics)	Student	225	4.54	.813	.054	4.43	4.64
	Teacher	9	4.89	.333	.111	4.63	5.15
	Parent	34	4.44	.824	.141	4.15	4.73
	Total	268	4.54	.804	.049	4.44	4.63
Teachers provide students with opportunities to succeed	Student	228	4.48	.902	.060	4.36	4.60
	Teacher	9	4.89	.333	.111	4.63	5.15
	Parent	33	4.76	.561	.098	4.56	4.96
	Total	270	4.53	.861	.052	4.42	4.63
Teachers regularly contact parents regarding student progress (minimum of three times a quarter)	Student	228	3.57	1.311	.087	3.40	3.74
	Teacher	9	3.78	.833	.278	3.14	4.42
	Parent	33	4.36	.962	.168	4.02	4.70
	Total	270	3.67	1.284	.078	3.52	3.83
Students are made to feel valued and a part of the school family	Student	227	4.15	1.154	.077	4.00	4.30
	Teacher	8	4.88	.354	.125	4.58	5.17
	Parent	32	4.69	.859	.152	4.38	5.00
	Total	267	4.24	1.124	.069	4.10	4.37

Note. Importance shown with average mean rating of 3.5 or greater.

Appendix P

ANOVA results Upperclassmen Students, 10th-Grade Teachers and Upperclassmen
Parents for Importance

ANOVA results Upperclassmen Students, 10th-Grade Teachers and Upperclassmen Parents for Importance

Statement	Respondents	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers are excited to work with ninth-grade students	Between groups	8.714	2	4.357	4.548	.011
	Within groups	256.718	268	.958		
	Total	265.432	270			
Teachers and students meet regularly to discuss progress (minimum of twice a month)	Between groups	23.275	2	11.638	8.451	.000
	Within groups	360.785	262	1.377		
	Total	384.060	264			
Regular student attendance is important (minimum of 90% attendance rate)	Between groups	10.468	2	5.234	5.587	.004
	Within groups	251.067	268	.937		
	Total	261.535	270			
Trust and respect are demonstrated between teachers and students	Between groups	6.249	2	3.125	3.177	.043
	Within groups	263.603	268	.984		
	Total	269.852	270			
The core curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society	Between groups	12.149	2	6.074	5.919	.003
	Within groups	274.018	267	1.026		
	Total	286.167	269			
Students are aware of or informed as to which behaviors and actions are appropriate and expected within the secondary school setting	Between groups	5.694	2	2.847	4.255	.015
	Within groups	177.302	265	.669		
	Total	182.996	267			
Teachers believe all students can learn	Between groups	4.297	2	2.149	2.995	.052
	Within groups	191.569	267	.717		
	Total	195.867	269			
Students receive individual guidance on a regular basis (minimum of once a quarter)	Between groups	16.205	2	8.103	5.775	.004
	Within groups	373.222	266	1.403		
	Total	389.428	268			

(Continued)

Statement	Respondents	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Students' academic and social needs are provided for	Between groups	7.019	2	3.509	3.943	.021
	Within groups	237.633	267	.890		
	Total	244.652	269			
Teachers regularly contact parents regarding student progress (minimum of three times a quarter)	Between groups	18.249	2	9.125	5.732	.004
	Within groups	425.069	267	1.592		
	Total	443.319	269			
Students are made to feel valued and a part of the school family	Between groups	11.477	2	5.739	4.666	.010
	Within groups	324.657	264	1.230		
	Total	336.135	266			

Note. Significance shown at the 0.05 level.

Appendix Q

ANOVA Results Upperclassmen Students, 10th-Grade Teachers and Upperclassmen
Parents for Witnessed or Provided, Failing to Indicate Significant Differences

ANOVA Results Upperclassmen Students, 10th-grade Teachers and Upperclassmen Parents for Witnessed or Provided, Failing to Indicate Significant Differences

Statement	Respondents	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers are excited to work with ninth-grade students	Between groups	1.563	2	.781	.643	.526
	Within groups	316.922	261	1.214		
	Total	318.485	263			
Teachers and students meet regularly to discuss progress (minimum of twice a month)	Between groups	2.413	2	1.206	.797	.452
	Within groups	388.891	257	1.513		
	Total	391.304	259			
Regular student attendance is important (minimum of 90% attendance rate)	Between groups	6.219	2	3.110	2.571	.078
	Within groups	312.064	258	1.210		
	Total	318.284	260			
Trust and respect are demonstrated between teachers and students	Between groups	4.243	2	2.122	1.532	.218
	Within groups	361.571	261	1.385		
	Total	365.814	263			
The core curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society	Between groups	4.281	2	2.141	1.830	.162
	Within groups	305.351	261	1.170		
	Total	309.633	263			
Teachers accommodate all students' individual learning styles by varying methods of instruction	Between groups	1.776	2	.888	.605	.547
	Within groups	383.190	261	1.468		
	Total	384.966	263			
Students are aware of or informed as to which behaviors and actions are appropriate and expected within the secondary school setting	Between groups	.464	2	.232	.191	.826
	Within groups	318.994	263	1.213		
	Total	319.459	265			

(Continued)

Statement	Respondents	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers believe all students can learn	Between groups	6.001	2	3.001	1.936	.146
	Within groups	406.014	262	1.550		
	Total		264			
Students receive individual guidance on a regular basis (minimum of once a quarter)	Between groups	1.707	2	.853	.517	.597
	Within groups	425.565	258	1.649		
	Total	427.272	260			
Students' academic and social needs are provided for	Between groups	.694	2	.347	.251	.778
	Within groups	364.385	264	1.380		
	Total	365.079	266			
Students with like ability are grouped together	Between groups	2.364	2	1.182	.713	.491
	Within groups	429.350	259	1.658		
	Total	431.714	261			
Students are provided with extracurricular activities (i.e., after-school programs, school clubs, athletics)	Between groups	4.488	2	2.244	1.718	.181
	Within groups	340.951	261	1.306		
	Total	345.439	263			
Teachers provide students with opportunities to succeed	Between groups	3.321	2	1.660	1.365	.257
	Within groups	318.702	262	1.216		
	Total	322.023	264			
Students are made to feel valued and a part of the school family	Between groups	7.184	2	3.592	2.091	.126
	Within groups	446.717	260	1.718		
	Total	453.901	262			

Note. Significance shown at the 0.05 level.

Appendix R

Tukey HSD for Perception of Importance Upperclassmen, 10th-Grade Teachers, and
Upperclassmen Parents

Tukey HSD for Perception of Importance Upperclassmen, 10th-Grade Teachers, and Upperclassmen Parents

Dependent Variable	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference (I – J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teachers are excited to work with ninth-grade students	Student	Teacher	-.321	.352	.633	-1.15	.51
		Parent	-.527*	.180	.010	-.95	-.10
	Teacher	Student	.321	.352	.633	-.51	1.15
		Parent	-.206	.385	.854	-1.11	.70
Teachers and students meet regularly to discuss progress (minimum of twice a month)	Student	Teacher	-.806	.450	.175	-1.87	.26
		Parent	-.832*	.219	.001	-1.35	-.32
	Teacher	Student	.806	.450	.175	-.26	1.87
		Parent	-.026	.488	.998	-1.18	1.13
Regular student attendance is important (minimum of 90% attendance rate)	Student	Teacher	-.453	.329	.354	-1.23	.32
		Parent	-.558*	.178	.005	-.98	-.14
	Teacher	Student	.453	.329	.354	-.32	1.23
		Parent	-.105	.363	.955	-.96	.75
Trust and respect are demonstrated between teachers and students	Student	Teacher	-.240	.337	.757	-1.03	.55
		Parent	-.449*	.182	.038	-.88	-.02
	Teacher	Student	.240	.337	.757	-.55	1.03
		Parent	-.209	.372	.840	-1.09	.67
The core curriculum provides the skills necessary for students to become productive members of society	Student	Teacher	-.255	.344	.740	-1.07	.56
		Parent	-.634*	.186	.002	-1.07	-.20
	Teacher	Student	.255	.344	.740	-.56	1.07
		Parent	-.379	.380	.579	-1.27	.52
Students are aware of or informed as to which behaviors and actions are appropriate and expected within the secondary school setting	Student	Teacher	-.344	.278	.432	-1.00	.31
		Parent	-.415*	.152	.019	-.77	-.06
	Teacher	Student	.344	.278	.432	-.31	1.00
		Parent	-.071	.308	.971	-.80	.65

Appendix S

Scale for Correlation of MJSES to Actual Student Data

Scale for Correlation of MJSES to Actual Student Data:

3 Number

<u>Talent items</u>	
2	1
6	2
10	3
11	1
14	1
16	2
18	2
19	2
21	1
25	3
26	1
27	1
30	2
Total	22

13-26 High
33-50 Low

Talent items were listed by question number, the sum of items responses were then gathered to determine a whole number. A scale was then developed based on sum of responses in relation to sum of possible high efficacy responses. Those whole numbers falling between the two scales were marked low/high or mid

Context items were divided into positive and negative worded questions and a sum for each set of responses a whole number. Again a scale was then developed based on sum of responses in relation to sum of possible high efficacy responses. Again whole numbers falling between the scales were marked low/high or mid

<u>Context items</u>	
3	3
7	1
8	1
12	3
13	1
17	1
29	1
Total	11

7-14 High SE
21-28 Low SE

<u>Context items</u>	
4	2
15	4
20	4
23	4
24	4
28	0
Total	18

18-24 High SE
6-12 LowSE

<u>Effort items</u>	
1	2
9	1
Total	3

2-4 High SE >4=Low

<u>Effort items</u>	
5	4
22	3
Total	7

6-8 High SE
<6=Low

Effort items were also divided into positive and negative worded questions and a sum for each set of responses a whole number. Again a scale was then developed based on sum of responses in relation to sum of possible high efficacy responses

	GRADE	ABSENCES	DISCIPLINE
English	66	15	17
Math	67	20	
Science	71	18	
SS	71	11	