2015

A Case Study of the Effectiveness of a Summer Transition Program for First-Time Ninth Grade Students

Jonathan Wickert
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Jonathan Wickert

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Tammye Turpin, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Michael Jazzar, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Beth Robelia, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2014

Abstract

A Case Study of the Effectiveness of a Summer Transition Program for First-Time Ninth Grade Students

by

Jonathan Scott Wickert

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

January 2015

Abstract

High schools have undertaken numerous approaches to reduce the number of first-time 9th grade students who do not move to 10th grade with their cohort. The purpose of this study was to determine if a summer program successfully transitioned 9th grade students from middle school to high school environments. Guided by the stage-environment fit conceptual framework, this study explored the effectiveness of a summer transition program at acclimating first time 9th grade students to physical, social, and academic environments. A mixed-method design was used in the study. A *t* test was used with a sample of approximately 400 archival 9th grader student responses to the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student. Statistical differences in familiarity with physical environments and perceptions of school climate were found between attendees and nonattendees, with attendees reporting better acclimation. A chi-square revealed greater course success for first-time 9th graders in the first marking period and lower 9th grader retention rate for attendees. Acclimation of 9th grade students as perceived by a sample of 10 teachers was explored through individual interviews and analyzed using the constant comparative method. Narratives from teacher interviews suggested acclimation to physical and social environments was greater for attendees. Study results led to development of a 1-day transition program aimed at utilizing effective transition program strategies with the entire upcoming 9th grade cohort. Long-term data collection and disaggregation is recommended to determine lasting effects of the program. Effective 9th grade transition programs may result in social change through increased promotion rates and higher graduation rates.

A Case Study of the Effectiveness of a Summer Transition Program for First-Time Ninth Grade Students

by

Jonathan Scott Wickert

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

January 2015

Dedication

I dedicate this study first and foremost to my parents. I can never thank them enough for pushing me to achieve my potential, to never back down from a challenge, and to persevere in the face of continued adversity. I take comfort in the fact they look down upon me with pride at what I have accomplished, knowing that none of it would have been possible without their love and sacrifice.

I also dedicate this study to my wife and son as a reminder of the sacrifices you both made. I wish I could give you back the time and financial resources consumed while I pursued this dream and promise to spend the rest of my life spending every moment I can with each of you.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Turpin, Dr. Jazzar, Dr. Robelia, and Sunny with Methodology Support at Walden University for pushing me to complete a rigorous study with value to the local community. Your support and commitment to my doctoral journey were invaluable. Thank you also to Administrative staff and interview participants within the school district where this study took place for supporting my personal and professional growth by making data and time available for the completion of this study.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

High schools have undertaken numerous approaches to reduce the retention rate of ninth grade students. A student is classified as retained when not promoted forward to the next grade with the rest of the grade level cohort. The transition experience from eighth to ninth grade has been identified as an area of impact on student achievement (Akos & Galassi, 2004b). Some transition programs occur during the summer before the ninth grade year (Ilic, 2011) and can focus on helping students acclimate to the new environments that they will encounter during the transition to ninth grade. Students retained in ninth grade may have experienced difficulty with the transition to ninth grade; retention in ninth grade often results in dropping out of high school (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010).

The practice of retention is contentious. McCoy and Reynolds (1998) found the practice of retention could lead to short-term improvement in standardized test scores when compared to same-grade groups; however, the authors also concluded that these gains did not persist into later grades and were associated with lower reading and math achievement in those grades. A limitation of their study was that it sampled only low-income, mostly minority students from Chicago. Jimerson (2001) conducted a meta-analysis and concluded there was a lack of sound empirical studies to support the practice of grade retention, as retention may increase the risk of poor academic outcomes. A later meta-analysis indicated that retained students were more likely to drop out and have lower levels of academic and social adjustment (Jimerson et al., 2006). Drawing in part

from the studies of McCoy and Reynolds (1998) as well as from Jimerson (2001), the National Association of School Psychologists (National Association of School Psychologists 2013) took the position that progress monitoring, universal screening, and early intervention are more appropriate actions to address student difficulties. The National Association of School Psychologists (2013) specifically mentioned summer programs as a method to support at-risk students and reduce the likelihood of retention.

Definition of the Problem

Taking steps to address the issues underlying student retention and threats to graduation is especially important given the social implications associated with noncompletion. The large numbers of students who do not graduate from high school can expect to experience long-term social and economic consequences. Students who do not complete high school can expect to experience more unemployment, a higher likelihood of incarceration, and lower lifetime earnings (Bornsheuer, Polonyi, Andrews, Fore, & Onwuegbuzie, 2011; Fields, 2008; Heath, 2011; Levin, 2009). The social and economic implications associated with noncompleters highlight the importance of early intervention programs developed to affect dropout rates (Jimerson et al., 2006).

Rationale

Better insight into the effect of transition programs on ninth grade retention rates could lead to reducing the negative social consequences associated with students who do not complete high school. McCombs et al. (2011) sought to determine the characteristics of effective transition programs as well as the barriers and facilitating factors to providing these programs. The authors found program structures and visions were too varied to

draw generalizable conclusions. The program variation conclusion supported the need for further exploration of the effectiveness of transition programs.

The Success Academy in the district under study is a free, 8-day summer program designed to assist first-time ninth grade students with the transition to their new educational environment, including the Freshman Academy. Students may attend as many or as few days of the Success Academy as they would like. Appendix B contains a schematic detailing the connections between the environments. The Success Academy typically takes place during the last week of July and first two weeks of August. Participation in the program is voluntary and open to all students promoted to ninth grade from within the district as well as to students coming from out of district. Students from the district's three middle schools who must integrate into the larger school environment attend the Success Academy.

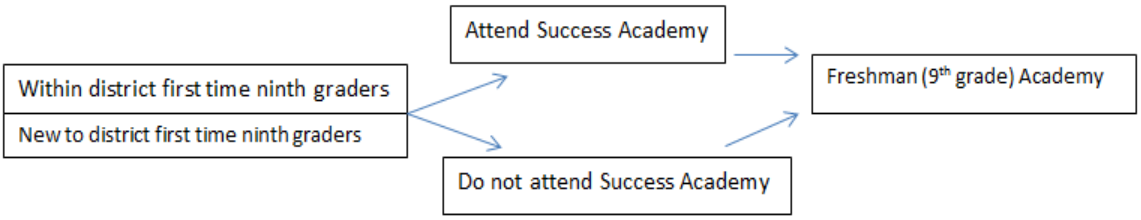


Figure 1. First-time ninth grade student entry into school of study.

During the Success Academy, educators screen students for reading difficulties and students participate in teambuilding activities. Attendees also engage in content area activities with classroom teachers they may have during the school year and follow their school-year schedule. Additionally, all students receive free lunch using the school year procedures, receive access to their lockers, and participate in a campus scavenger hunt.

Transportation is provided and all activities are centered on a theme that changes each year. During the Success Academy, students experience multiple exposures to the physical, social, and academic environments of the high school they will attend.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Data from the school of study indicated a downward trend in both math and reading proficiency across ninth grade disaggregate groups for the 2005-2010 school years (personal communication, 2011). The school's 4-year graduation rate was below that established under No Child Left Behind (personal communication, 2011). Prior to the 2011-2012 school year, approximately 120 to 130 freshmen out of a class of 550 to 600 were retained each school year (personal communication, 2011). In 2009, 20.4% of first-time ninth grade students were retained; in 2008, 19.8% were retained, and in 2007, 20.2% were retained (personal communication, 2011). Prior to, and including, the 2011-2012 school year, students at the school of study needed to earn six credits while passing both English and math in order to move on to 10th grade. During the 2012-2013 school year, first-time ninth grade students needed to earn five credits while passing both English and math in order to move on to 10th grade. A change to the building schedule led to the adjustment in the number of credits needed to move from ninth to 10th grade. The graduation rate at the school of study at the time of this research was approximately 84%, with a ninth grade promotion rate to 10th grade of approximately 82% (personal communication, 2013).

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Weiss and Bearman (2007) confirmed ninth grade as a predictor for future high school academic success. In the review of literature, the authors noted that previous research indicated in excess of 40% of ninth grade students failed one or more major subjects in the first semester of high school (Weiss & Bearman, 2007). Poor performance during the freshman year can lead to a higher risk of dropping out (Weiss & Bearman, 2007). Weiss and Bearman drew from a sample of 14,787 respondents from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. All respondents participated in the first wave of collection during their eighth grade year and in the second wave during their ninth grade year. The authors concluded that the physical transition itself may be of less consequence than other factors and such as academic and social history.

Neild, Stoner-Eby, and Furstenberg (2008) studied the relationship between ninth grade distress and the likelihood of completing high school in the Philadelphia public school system. The researchers used data from the Philadelphia Education Longitudinal Study. The original sample was comprised of 2,933 students, with 1,470 being contacted and interviewed, along with parents. The surveys were administered during the summer after eighth grade and later combined with student grades and other data maintained by the School District of Philadelphia. Following eighth grade, only 46% of the students sampled who were not retained had graduated from a school in the Philadelphia public school system. Within 4 years, just 53% of students still in the Philadelphia school system had graduated and 25% had formally dropped out. While another 17% maintained enrollment at the end of 4 years, nearly 25% of these were still in ninth or 10th grade.

Nearly two thirds of students who dropped out had not been promoted at the end of ninth grade (Neild et al., 2008). The authors of the study identified ninth grade failure as a primary predictor of dropping out, with high statistical significance existing for the percent of ninth grade courses failed ($r = .0045$, $p < .001$). Despite other factors, the ninth grade experience significantly contributes to a students' probability of completing high school.

Numerous studies exploring the difficulty of the transition from eighth to ninth grade have been conducted. Researchers have examined the perceptions of students, parents, and teachers, and educators have constructed a myriad of programs to address the concerns of all three groups. Hauser, Choate, and Thomas (2009) conducted a survey of all three stakeholder groups, finding that there were both positive and negative aspects of the transition. Students were excited about making new friends, participating in sports, and having more freedom. All groups noted increased concerns involving academic rigor, expectations, pressure, and preparedness. Students were mostly concerned with the difficulty of coursework and teacher friendliness, while teachers focused on social concerns and the students' ability to do homework as the most challenging aspects of the transition (Hauser et al., 2009).

In an exploration of the transition experience of students in Australia, Pereira and Pooley (2007) found that student concerns regarding student-student and student-teacher relationships persisted through Grade 12 regardless of the initial transition experience. Pooley's (2007) findings reinforced the results of a study conducted by Akos and Galassi (2004b) and Smith, Akos, Lim, and Wiley (2008) and may help explain the importance of

ninth grade on graduation rates. Akos and Galassi (2004b) administered surveys to 320 ninth grade students, 61 parents, and 17 teachers from a single high school. A checklist format was used to elicit responses from students as well as a Likert scale survey to rate the difficulty of the transition to high school. Interestingly, teachers perceived the transition as much more difficult than students did (Akos & Galassi, 2004b). Despite the insight gained into perceptions of the transition, some methodological issues existed with the study. The high school had previously implemented programming to facilitate the transition, possibly influencing the survey results. The small sample and fact the study was confined to just one high school fed by a single middle school, both from a high performing district, were limitations of this study (Akos & Galassi, 2004b).

Cushman (2006) interviewed 16 students from Indianapolis, Indiana and found that students were concerned about the physical size of high schools, academic expectations, how older students would treat them, their relationships with teachers, and the future impact of high school on the future. Cushman also noted that students desired bridge programs during the summer after eighth grade in order to familiarize themselves with campus, forge relationships, and make academic inroads. Ganeson and Ehrich (2009), similarly to previous researchers, concluded that the developmental changes adolescents experienced were categorized as physical, cognitive, emotional, and psychological, with a fear of becoming lost in new physical environments as well. Butts and Cruzeiro (2005), in a study of 495 first-time ninth grade students, with limited generalizability, found that these students wished they had known more about finding

their way around the building, locating classes, and how to identify requirements for graduation.

Langenkamp (2010) concluded that positive social relationships from middle school could act as a predictor of academic success in ninth grade, protecting against course failure and having implications for how schools address school transitions. Akos and Galassi (2004a) had previously noted small differences in the transition based upon race and gender, identifying that for female students, school connectedness was an important component of an effective transition, perhaps due to unique social needs of adolescents. Benner and Graham (2009) found that girls seemed to have more difficulty with the transition than boys did. The researchers determined African American students had greater levels of difficulty with the transition, even if their pretransition academic experience was positive.

Problem Statement

In a society focused on college and career readiness, students who do not complete high school face with significant challenges. High schools have taken different approaches to reduce the rate of ninth grade retention with the goal of increasing the graduation rate. With McCombs et al. (2011) noting great variation in the structures and success rates of summer acclimation programs, the purpose of this mixed methods intrinsic case study was to explore how effectively the Success Academy acclimated first-time ninth grade students to the physical, social, and academic environments at the school of study. Program effectiveness was determined by the subsequent impact on the school's 20% ninth grade retention rate. Acclimation, within the context of the school of study,

refers to exposing students to specific environments and helping students feel comfortable with the procedures, atmosphere, and expectations associated with those environments. The findings from this study may also help other high schools develop and explore the effectiveness of their own transition programs.

Definitions

The following terms and their definitions are helpful in understanding the information presented in this study:

Academic transition: Movement from one place to another. In this study, movement from eighth to ninth grade or from middle school to high school.

Acclimate: To adjust to a new environment through preexposure activities.

Attendee: A first-time ninth grade student who attended the Success Academy for at least one day and presumed to have participated in program activities.

First-time ninth grade student: Student who is enrolled in the ninth grade for the first time.

Freshman academy: A within-school structure designed to help first-time ninth grade students adjust to high school. Students are typically placed on teams and receive additional support structures (Kmiec, 2007).

Noncompleter: A student who does not complete high school.

Retained ninth grade student: A student who has attempted and failed to complete the ninth grade in a previous year. At the site of study, school years 2011-2012 and earlier required earning six credits and passing both English and math. During the 2012-

2013 school year, students needed to earn five credits and pass both English and math (personal communication, February 20, 2012).

School climate: The beliefs and expectations held by students about their learning environments and relationships with both teachers and other students (Chen & Weikart, 2008; Sherblom et al., 2006).

Success Academy: A summer transition program focused on acclimating first-time ninth grade students to the physical, social, and academic environments at the school of study.

Transition program: A systematic program to help students move between grades and/or physical settings with the intention of making the adjustment as smooth as possible.

Significance

The Success Academy was created to address the ninth grade retention rate. Approximately 20% of first-time ninth graders were retained for at least one year at the school of study (personal communication, 2011). In each of the first three years of the Success Academy, conducted during the first 2 weeks in August, approximately 55% to 60% of each incoming freshman class attended at least one day of the voluntary program. Program attendees were a cross section of the incoming class. Schools considering their own approach to addressing issues with the ninth grade transition may look to this study to inform their decision making process.

Research Questions

The following central research questions guided this study:

RQ 1: Does the Success Academy acclimate first-time ninth grade students to the physical environments within the school of study?

RQ 2: Does the Success Academy acclimate first-time ninth grade students to the social environments within the school of study?

RQ 3: Does the Success Academy acclimate first-time ninth grade students to the academic environments within the school of study?

Examination of acclimation to social and physical environments was aided through the examination of archival quantitative data gathered using the results of a school climate survey as well as qualitative data collected through teacher interviews.

Exploration of Research Questions 1 and 2 occurred using the results of an archival school climate survey.

RQ 1: Does the Success Academy acclimate first time ninth grade students to the physical environments within the school of study?

$H_0$1: The findings from this study will show no significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and students' perception of comfort level with elements of the physical school environment.

H_a1: The findings from this study will show a positive significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and students' perceptions of comfort level with elements of the physical school environment.

RQ 2: Does the Success Academy acclimate first time ninth grade students to the social environments within the school of study?

$H_0$2: The findings from this study will show no significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and students' perceptions of social relationships within the school environment.

H_a2: The findings from this study will show a positive significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and students' perceptions of social relationships within the school environment. In order to further explore the central research questions, it was necessary to address the quantitative subquestions:

SubRQ 1: Does participation in the Success Academy have an impact on first marking period course grades for first-time ninth grade students?

H_0s1: The findings from this study will show no significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and first marking period course grades.

H_as1: The findings from this study will show a significant positive relationship between participation in the Success Academy and first marking period course grades.

SubRQ 2: Does the Success Academy have an impact on the retention rate of ninth grade students?

H_0s2: The findings from this study will show no significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and the ninth grade retention rate.

H_as2: The findings from this study will show a significant positive relationship between participation in the Success Academy and the ninth grade retention rate.

In order to explore the central research questions, it was also necessary to address the qualitative subquestions:

SubRQ 3: What observable student behaviors allow teachers to differentiate between students who participated in the Success Academy and those who did not?

SubRQ 4: What impact does the Success Academy have on students' ability to be prepared for classroom routines, procedures, and relationships?

Review of the Literature

Student retention and graduation is a concern at all high schools. Factors influencing retention and graduation are complex, involving a mixture of both psychological needs and institutional structures. In the review of literature, I began with establishment of the conceptual framework, move into an examination of approaches school officials have taken to ease the transition for ninth grade students, and then compare similar studies, their methods, and designs to this study. The review of literature concludes with an examination of studies for methodology to provide support for the selected methodology used in this study.

The search began by reviewing professional publications addressing the concerns students have had about transitioning to high school, the effect of the transition on student retention, and the likelihood of graduating. Reference pages provided a starting point for identifying appropriate scholarly, peer-reviewed studies that would inform further inquiry. Saturation was reached on the topic of the transition experience and the search moved into the psychological and developmental needs of adolescents, establishing the basis for the conceptual framework of this study, and framing the search for the different approaches schools have taken to address the transition to high school before it occurs. Additional studies were also identified using the reference list in peer-

reviewed journal articles. The most common search words and phrases included *transition, bridge program, ninth grade retention, adolescent development,* and *summer*.

Conceptual Framework

Eccles et al. (1993) described the stage-environment fit framework of developmentally appropriate environments for adolescents within which this study was grounded. According to this framework, educational environments should challenge students while providing the structure necessary for the developmental needs of these students based upon their level of maturity (Eccles et al., 1993). In other words, the fit between educational environment and adolescent needs is a critical factor in determining students' academic and social success (Eccles et al., 1993). Stage-environment fit has implications for how students are treated by their teachers, the formation of peer groups, and the level of challenge present in classroom environments (Eccles et al., 1993). Proper transition of adolescents across environments should have a positive impact on their perception of those environments and themselves, while misaligned environments may result in the educational declines associated with educational transitions (Eccles et al., 1993). The appropriateness of fit may be linked to student motivational consequences both academically and behaviorally (Eccles et al., 1993; Gutman & Eccles, 2007). An examination of the needs of adolescents and changes experienced by them during transitions can inform the creation of transition programs that may lead to positive student outcomes.

Hagenauer and Hascher (2010) found that learning is connected to emotion. The authors showed that emotions such as connectedness, anger, safety, frustration, and

happiness have an impact on student learning. Students' needs for relevance and relatedness within their greater school community can have an impact on their academic success (Hagenauer & Hascher, 2010). Motivational factors that influence student learning have been linked to students' emotional experiences, learning, and behavior (Hagenauer & Hascher, 2010; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002a). Educational environments that do not meet the affective needs of students may lead to negative social and academic outcomes for students; influencing their self-concept regardless of their level of investment in school (Hagenauer & Hascher, 2010). Feelings of positive emotions lead to higher levels of achievement (Pekrun et al., 2002a), enjoyment of learning, and hope (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002b). The research conducted by Pekrun et al. (2002b) implied that feedback loops exist between students' emotions and academic achievement. These findings supported the importance of life-stage appropriate programs that support the development of positive emotions within school environments.

Blythe, Simmons, and Bush (1978) found that adolescents look to other students who have already made successful transitions as role models. High school students have indicated that their peer group is more influential than family or school (Cooper & Markoe-Hayes, 2005). As students mature, schools must provide developmentally appropriate environments to motivate students (Eccles & Roeser, 2009). Successful programs produce gains in students' academic achievement and relationships even among low ability and high-risk students (Eccles & Roeser, 2009). How students construct and perceive their environments are critical indicators of their success (Eccles & Roeser, 2009) so early introduction and acclimation to the environment, leading to feelings of

comfort and support, meeting the needs of developing adolescents, should lead to positive student outcomes. The Success Academy was designed to address the transition to the new physical, social, and academic environments, all noted domains within the literature to be critical for a successful transition to high school for adolescent learners.

Stage-environment fit theory has been used to evaluate the use of freshman academies (Kmiec, 2007) and ninth grade environments (Ellerbrock, 2012; Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2010). Freshman academies are built upon the premise that transitioning first-time ninth graders have unique needs that are best met using appropriate environments that foster feelings of safety, security, community, and interpersonal networks with both peers and teachers (Kmiec, 2007). Freshman academies attempt to address the fears and vulnerabilities of these transitioning students throughout the duration of their first year of high school, in a new environment with an unfamiliar physical plant layout, new peers, and different academic expectations (Kmiec, 2007). Similarly, the Success Academy aims to support this transition by providing cognitive and emotional support appropriate to the needs of transitioning adolescents. The difference is that the Success Academy attempts to support this transition prior to its occurrence, shortening the transition period through a program developed to specifically address concerns focused around new physical, social, and academic environments.

The stage-environment fit framework was used to inform this study and help determine if the program has fulfilled its original intent of supporting students with their transition to ninth grade. The Success Academy was designed to emulate the environments students are transitioning into and provide advanced exposure and

acclimation time to their new educational environments. Blythe et al. (1978) noted the importance of the peer and peer-teacher relationship in student transitions, a factor addressed by the Success Academy in its attempts to expose students to both groups prior to the formal transition to high school. If the program was stage appropriate, it should have facilitated successful transitions to the physical, social, and academic environments of the high school, influenced student motivation, and led to increased educational outcomes (Eccles et al., 1993) for Success Academy attendees. Success Academy students, due to the success of the program, may serve as role models for nonattendees, thus having an impact on their educational outcomes because of participant preacclimation.

Substantiation of Conceptual Framework

In a study exploring the relationship between school climate, student well-being, and academic success, Riina-Ruus et al. (2007) found that students' perception of teachers' attitudes toward them influenced academic success. Previously, Roeser, Midgley, and Urdan (1996) had established a direct relationship between school culture and students' sense of belonging and academic performance. The authors indicated that feeling emotionally supported and connected to the school were important motivating factors in the academic realm (Roeser et al., 1996). Perceived student-teacher relationships had a direct positive effect on school affect ($\beta = .23$, $p \leq .01$).

Similarly, the quality of teacher-student relationships was a strong indicator of feelings of school belonging ($\beta = .17$, $p \leq .05$). Roeser et al. (1996) concluded that student perception of a school's emphasis on effort and understanding was related to

students' perceptions of whether teachers cared, trusted, and respected students. The results of these studies indicated a relationship between student perceptions of school climate, the transition experience, and academic outcomes. A positive school climate leads to more focused academic environments and increased student achievement (Fenzel & O'Brennan, 2007). Langenkamp's (2010) study has implications for this discussion because the author challenged previous research by arguing that whether or not a student changes schools when moving from eighth to ninth grade, outcomes can be predicted to be the same. The lack of emphasis placed on the transition between physical environments noted in Langenkamp's (2010) study supported the notion of changing relationships and expectation for both students and teachers being primary factors influencing the success of the transition.

Battin-Pearson et al. (2000) attempted to test theories that predict factors for use in identifying students with a greater propensity to drop out. The authors of this study looked at data associated with 10th grade students who dropped out of high school and concluded that poor academic achievement was a direct predictor of the likelihood of dropping out. Achievement was reflected by the total score on the California Achievement Test, grade point average as reported by the school, and grades at age 14 as self-reported by students. Battin-Person et al. (2000) concluded that low school bonding was correlated (standardized path coefficient of .18, $p < .001$) to poor academic achievement and poor academic achievement was correlated as a direct indicator of dropping out before the end of 10th grade (standardized path coefficient of .57, $p < .001$). Poor academic achievement is the strongest predictor of dropping out and prevention

efforts should focus on increasing the academic success of students (Battin-Person et al., 2000).

A relatively common practice is to give students access to the high school prior to the arrival of other students (Andrews & Bishop, 2012) in order to provide time to acclimate to the new environment. Summer programs may last for varying periods of time and be targeted at various demographic groups within the transitioning cohort or seek to address specific areas of need for transitioning student in general (Gleason et al., 2010; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Lawrence, McNeal, & Yildiz, 2009). Program specialization may be related to the findings by Chin and Phillips (2004), who stated that the success of summer program experiences was largely determined by the values of the students being served. This presents challenges for program designers attempting to attract large numbers of students with various backgrounds and needs (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006). Regardless of program focus, the largest gains have been found with middle income students. Low income student attendance lags behind that of other demographic groups, despite the desire of parents of low income students to provide learning opportunities outside of the school year (David, 2010; Terzian, Moore, & Hamilton, 2009). There have been few documented studies addressing the effectiveness of summer transition programs that aim to attract students from multiple backgrounds into a holistic acclimation program. If the Success Academy addresses the stage-environment needs of attendees, in agreeance with stage-environment fit theory, participating students from all backgrounds should be comfortable with their new

physical, social, and academic environments, resulting in a positive perception of those elements of the school climate and greater academic achievement later in high school.

Transition Programs

Schools across the United States have taken many different approaches to addressing the issue of the ninth grade transition (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Thorne, 2001). In a review of literature surrounding summer bridge programs, Garcia & Paz (2009) concluded that although these programs have existed at the university level since the 1960s, studies reporting their outcomes on university students are lacking. When attempting to determine if summer programs were effective in improving student achievement, a meta-analysis by McCombs et al. (2011) reinforced this finding but at the K-12 level. The authors also sought to determine the characteristics of effective programs as well as the barriers and facilitating factors to providing these programs however, McCombs et al. found that program structures and visions were too varied to draw generalizable conclusions.

Relationship to Previous Research

Considering the differing perceptions of teachers and students regarding the transition to ninth grade (Akos & Galassi, 2004b; Straksis, 2010), it was necessary for this study to collect the perceptions of both students and teachers, and compare this data to achievement data, in order to determine how effective the Success Academy is at acclimating students to the physical, social, and academic environments. Students who struggle to identify with social networks, and other elements of the school environment related to school climate, often have academic difficulties as well (Fenzel & O'Brennan,

2007). Terzian et al. (2009) concluded at the K-12 level there is, "a lack of experimental research to measure the impacts of summer learning programs on children and youth." As a result, there are not many models available from which to design this study, making it necessary to draw upon topically isolated yet methodologically related studies that will help answer the research questions.

Related Methodology

Researchers have used both quantitative and qualitative data to examine the academic achievement of ninth grade students, school climate, and perceptions relating to the transition to ninth grade. A mixed methods approach was used in my study. Smith (1997) conducted the most relevant mixed method research measuring the effects of eighth grade transition programs. Smith (1997) sought to explore whether or not eighth grade transition programs facilitated student performance in high school and affected the propensity of students to drop out of high school. Comparing data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey to the results of a student survey developed by the Educational Testing Service provided data to examine. The authors used logistic regression was used within an analysis of covariance structure. The independent variable was participation in a transition program and the dependent variables dropout status and GPA. Covariates included student demographics, student behavior and academic history, and middle school characteristics. Smith (1997) concluded that transition programs designed to aid in the transition to high school were effective, with full transition programs reducing the propensity of participants to not complete high school by twenty percent. These students also performed better academically in high school, using student

grades as a measure, than students who participated in either a partial transition program or no program. After taking other factors such as demographics and middle school characteristics into account, this conclusion was drawn. Smith (1997) also reported that students who participated in full programs reported relationships with their teachers that are more positive and had higher grade point averages.

Archival student achievement data has been used in many studies to measure the impact of the transition to ninth grade on academic achievement. Achievement data are frequently paired with either student school climate survey data or teacher interview data. Smith, Akos, Lim, and Wiley (2008) compared the perceptions of students and stakeholders with regard to the transition to high school. A four point Likert style student survey and teacher interviews were used. While attempting to compare perceptions of school climate between the United States and China, Yang, Bear, Blank, Zhang, and Huant (2013) used a four point Likert style student survey; the Delaware School Climate Survey. Fenzel and O'Brennan (2007) verified the positive relationship between school climate and academic achievement through use of a four point Likert style student survey to measure school climate and correlated the results to student report card grades. A sample of 282 African American students from seven parochial schools across the east coast was used. The researchers administered a student survey and correlated the results to standardized test scores. The authors concluded that students respond to climates they perceive as fair, supportive, and caring. The small sample size of this study, and demographic specificity, limits its generalizability, however. Sherblom et al. (2006) took a similar approach when examining the relationship between school climate and student

achievement in math and reading. The researchers administered surveys by mail to a random sample of 5,750 students and teachers from 40 schools. The result of this study was that for 44 of 54 indices of school climate, there was a significant correlation ($p < .05$) to achievement scores. Student perceptions of well-being at school were correlated with math achievement (.56) and reading achievement (.70) with $p < .01$.

Jordan (2001) drew from a sample of 20 public high schools following the Talent Development Model across 12 districts. The author administered a student survey of 147 items to measure, among other elements, students' perception of school climate, school safety, and teacher-student relationships. The questions are similar to those used in the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student. Jordan's (2001) survey was completed by 13,616 students and attempted to measure three dependent variables: course failures, GPA, and educational aspirations. Regression analysis was used. Course failure had an inverse relationship with teacher support, school safety, and adjustment to high school constructs even though none reached the level of statistical significance (Jordan, 2001).

Nelson and DeBacker (2008), in a survey of 235 middle and high school students, noted that perceived peer relationships are related academic achievement motivation. Perception of peer relationships was noted to be related to student persistence, effort, and achievement (Nelson & DeBacker, 2008). Belongingness was found to have an impact on motivation to learn while higher self-efficacy was reported by students who believed they were valued and respected. The academic values of friends had an influence on one's own academic motivation. Unfortunately, a decrease in motivation and more negative perceptions of peer relationships were found across the transition from middle to high

school (Nelson & DeBacker, 2008). Generalizability of this study was limited due to being confined to science classrooms and only included one middle and one high school in the sample.

Buhrman (2010) explored the impact of a transition program for ninth grade students on GPA, credits, dropout rates, and student satisfaction. While this was a quasiexperimental study, the site under study had both a summer transition program as well as a freshman academy. The transition academy explored in my study is also paired with a freshman academy. Buhrman's (2010) used a target sample of 555 ninth grade students. Interestingly, the survey was not administered to the control and experimental groups at the same time. There was also no attempt in the study to separate the effect of the summer program from that of the Freshman Academy. Ilic (2011) later used a mixed methods design to determine the effects of a summer bridge program on the academic performance of ninth graders. The program lasted four weeks, with students attending the program for four hours over 19 days. The outcomes of participants to nonparticipants were compared but included the grades of only 25 students and interviews with three students. Given the discrepancy between student and teacher perceptions of the student transition, it is concerning that only the student perspective was included in this study. No statistical effect was found between program participation and end of ninth grade GPA. The three students interviewed indicated they desired improved academic performance the following year. Other factors, such as student mobility and participation in additional intervention programs, were not controlled for in the study were believed to have affected the results (Ilic, 2011).

Finally, Langenkamp (2009) expanded the literature on the transition to high school when the author examined the relationship between student perceptions of school climate and student grade point average, correlated to different possible pathways to high school, using a sample in excess of 2,679 students. Langenkamp (2009) compared student grade point averages at the end of ninth grade year and correlated them to the results of the Adolescent Health and Academic Achievement study. Studies conducted prior to Langenkamp's (2009), when attempting to evaluate the transition to ninth grade, have collected student achievement data, school climate data, and/or conducted teacher interviews. I collected archival quantitative data in the form of ninth grader first marking period course grades from 2007-2013, ninth grader retention rates from 2007-2013, and the qualitative archival results of a modified Delaware School Climate Survey-Student.

My mixed methods study combined data approaches used in previous studies to measure the relationship between school climate and student achievement. Data collection consisted of archival ninth grader student perceptions of school climate as measured by the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student in order to determine if there was a difference in perception of school climate between students who did and did not attend the Success Academy. Only archival responses to the Student portion were used in this study. The school of study previously used the DSCS-S to measure school climate perceptions of ninth grade students. Interviews of ninth grade teachers and support staff were conducted to compare the transition experience of attendees versus nonattendees with regard to comfort with routines, procedures, and relationships. Yang et al. (2013) used the Delaware survey, designed to assist schools in evaluating programs, in a similar

fashion by administering both the teacher and student components. Smith et al. (2008) combined survey responses and teacher interviews in a study exploring the nature of the high school transition. Combining perception survey responses with interviews is similar to the mixed methods approach of comparing student perception survey responses to academic achievement variables used by Langenkamp (2009), Fenzel and O'Brien (2007), and Sherblom et al. (2006), An accurate measurement of the Success Academy's effectiveness at assisting students in their transition to ninth grade was made as a result of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data.

Implications

Considering the societal and economic costs of not completing high school, addressing the retention and graduation rate issues at the school of study has implications at the local, state, and national level. Resource expenditure on an effective program may be cost effective given the short and long term societal and economic costs associated with students who do not complete high school. In 2009, dropouts were considered 63 times more likely to be incarcerated than students who graduate college (Heath, 2011). It is estimated that dropouts comprise 37% of federal prison inmates, 54% of state prison inmates, and 33% of probationers (Levin, 2009). These inmates cost approximately $2,500 per month for incarceration and $155 per month for those on parole (Levin, 2009), equating to an average lifetime cost of $26,600 per high school dropout that conflicts with the law (Levin, 2009). Beyond the impact on the criminal justice system, dropouts adversely affect the economic health of the country. It is estimated that high school dropouts earn $300,000 less over their lifetime than a high school graduate

(Fields, 2008) does. High school graduates enroll in Medicaid at a rate half that of dropouts, with 64% of dropouts using food stamps at least once during adulthood (Levin, 2009). Each high school graduate is estimated to generate benefits of nearly $210,000 to the public sector in tax revenues, savings from better health, and funds not required for incarceration or welfare (Levin, 2009).

Significance exists at both the local and national level. Numerous human and capital resources dedicated to program implementation could be applied to other areas of need if it is determined that the Success Academy is not assisting students with the transition to ninth grade. The results of this study will help determine whether the Success Academy is having an impact on the student transition and provide the school of study with the necessary information to determine if the program has been effective. The findings may also be used assist other schools in the creation of their own programs to address their freshman transition experience. As the success rates of ninth grade students increases, in turn increasing graduation rates, the positive benefits to both individuals and society are potentially significant. Implementation of successful transition programs leading to lower retention rates and higher graduation rates will have wide ranging impacts on the criminal justice system, individual earning power, and local, state, and national tax revenues.

The findings of this study were used to inform decision making for a project to address elements of the Success Academy indicating a lack of effectiveness at acclimation. The project could have consisted of the creation of a professional development workshop on supporting the transition needs of students. Programmatic

recommendations to increase student participation was another possible project topic. A third possible project was a plan to support the school with investigating causes for student nonattendance in order to increase enrollment in the program should the findings from this study indicate the program is effective.

Summary

The effectiveness of the Success Academy at helping first-time ninth grade students acclimate to the physical, social, and academic environments at the school of study was explored in this study. Section 2 of this study consists of a literature-based discussion of the research design, quantitative and qualitative research questions, the data sources that will be utilized in this study, an overview of how data analysis and validation will be conducted, and steps to ensure participants will be protected. Section two concludes with the findings of the study. Section three contains a project designed to further address the problem of the ninth grade transition based upon the findings from the study and section four is a reflection of the study, the project, and what I learned during this experience.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The intention of this study was to determine, through the examination of quantitative and qualitative data sources and answering of the associated research questions, whether the Success Academy acclimated students to the physical, social, and academic environments within the school of study. A mixed-method intrinsic case study design was most appropriate given the areas within the educational context of the three transitional domains (physical, social, and academic).

The central research questions for this study were as follows:

RQ 1: Does the Success Academy acclimate first time ninth grade students to the physical environments within the school of study?

RQ 2: Does the Success Academy acclimate first time ninth grade students to the social environments within the school of study?

RQ 3: Does the Success Academy acclimate first time ninth grade students to the academic environments within the school of study?

Archival student school climate survey results were used to explore Research Questions 1 and 2.Archival first-time ninth grader first marking period grades and archival first-time ninth grader retention rates from the years 2007-2013 were used to explore Research Question 3. Interviews with 10 teachers and support staff of ninth grade students shed light on teacher perceptions of the student transition to all three environments and supported triangulation of all other data collections.

Research Design and Approach

Data collection occurred sequentially at the school of study immediately following approval from the IRB at Walden University. The collection of archival ninth grader first marking period grades and first-time ninth grader retention rates, both from 2007-2013, occurred at the school of study as well as the collection of archival school climate survey data. Teacher interviews also took place at the school of study outside of normal school hours. Data analysis, integration, and interpretation of all data sources occurred in my home, typically after 5:30pm on weekdays or between the hours of 9am and 9pm on weekend days in order to ensure the security of the data. All data were stored in a locked safe, on a password protected flash drive, and on a password protected desktop computer.

Quantitative data consisted of archival first marking course grades of ninth grade students from 2007-2013 and archival ninth grader retention rates from 2007-2013. The quantitative research questions were examined based upon their relationship to each other. Research Subquestions 1 and 2 were associated with Research Question 3. The quantitative collection was designed to address the research subquestions:

SubRQ 1: Does the Success Academy have an impact on first marking period course grade of first-time ninth grade students?

SubRQ 2: Does the Success Academy have an impact on the retention rate of first-time ninth grade students?

Quantitative data also included archival school climate survey data from the modified Delaware School Climate Survey-Student. The selection of this source was necessary to explore Research Questions 1 and 2.

RQ 1: Does the Success Academy acclimate first time ninth grade students to the physical environments within the school of study?

RQ 2: Does the Success Academy acclimate first time ninth grade students to the social environments within the school of study?

Survey results were compared to interview responses to help determine the impact the Success Academy had on students' abilities to be prepared for classroom routines, procedures, and relationships.

Qualitative data consisted of one-to-one interviews with teachers and support staff who had participated in every year of the Success Academy and currently instructed first-time ninth grade students. The interviews were designed to address the third and fourth research subquestions:

SubRQ 3: What observable behaviors allow teachers to differentiate between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees in their classroom?

SubRQ 4: What impact did the Success Academy have on students' ability to be prepared for classroom routines, procedures, and relationships?

The Success Academy is a time and feature bound closed system, of which an in-depth understanding of its impact was desired (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). While the case itself was of interest, so was the larger issue of having a positive impact on the student transition to ninth grade in order to increase student achievement for the

long term betterment of society (Creswell, 2012). Despite large social implications, I did not intend the study itself to be generalizable, but rather to inform the decision making process of other high schools considering the implementation or refinement of their own transition programs (Merriam, 2009). An intrinsic case study design was selected because it involved the use of multiple data sources and multiple methods, lending strength to the findings of the study (Merriam, 2009).

The mixed methods design used in this study facilitated data triangulation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2012). Simply collecting student and teacher perspectives would not ensure reliability of the data (Creswell, 2012). A quantitative collection allowed interview data to be triangulated, lending credibility to the study. Archival quantitative data provided by the school principal were reviewed in order to determine the effect of the Success Academy on first marking period course grades and ninth grader student retention rates from 2007-2013. The examination of longitudinal ninth grader first marking period grades and ninth grader student retention rates using a chi-square assisted in determining if the program helped students transition successfully to new academic environments within the school of study. The effect of the Success Academy on student perception of physical and social environments at the school of study was measured using the results of the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student. A one-tailed *t* test ($p \leq .001$) was conducted to determine if any difference in perception between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees was statistically significant. The review and analysis of each data source aided in the process of answering the central research questions of whether or not the Success Academy helped students transition to

the physical, social, and academic environments within the school of study by drawing upon multiple perspectives.

Data collection occurred sequentially. The first data collected was archival student achievement data. The first marking course grades of ninth grade students from 2007-2013 were reviewed. Data were requested in electronic format from the building principal, who removed any identifiers from the data. The data set included 3 years of Success Academy influenced data and 4 years of preprogram data. It was possible to identify Success Academy attendees versus nonattendees in the data because student names were already coded in a separate, preexisting spreadsheet that was merged by the building principal. Statistical significance of the relationship between attendance at the Success Academy and first marking period academic achievement was determined using a chi-square. With first marking period grades being a lead indicator of long term student success (Bornsheuer et al., 2001), examining this data after the end of the first marking period likely provided better insight into the initial transition experience.

Archival ninth grader retention rates from 2007-2013 were reviewed next. Retention rates were reported yearly to Freshman Academy staff. The provided data included 2 years of Success Academy influenced data because retention data for Success Academy attendees during the 2013-2014 school year were not yet available. The school administration currently disaggregated this data by first-time ninth graders versus repeat ninth graders but had not always done so in the past. It was possible to identify Success Academy attendees versus nonattendees in the data because student names were already coded in a separate, preexisting spreadsheet that was merged by the building principal.

The statistical significance of the relationship between participation in the Success Academy and the ninth grader retention rates was explored using a chi-square. The analysis of first marking period course grades and retention rate data was later compared to teacher interview responses.

Next, the quantitative archival school climate survey results from the 2013-2014 school year were reviewed for trends in student responses and response rates that indicated areas of either extremely positive or negative transition experiences. A one-tailed *t* test was conducted to see if there was a statistical significance between the responses to each question for attendees of the Success Academy compared to students who did not attend. The information gleaned from the review of the archival results of the modified Delaware School Climate Survey-Student was compared to teacher interview responses. Success Academy attendee experiences and perceptions, and the program's impact on the transition, were essential for answering the study's research questions.

Perceptions of the physical and social aspects of the school climate measured at the beginning of the school year yielded insights into whether or not students felt comfortable in these new social networks and with the physical layout of the building. The Delaware School Climate Survey-Student, developed by the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project, was used by the school of study to collect this data. The school of study collaborated with the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project to modify the DSCS-S. The school of study desired more information regarding perceptions of ninth grade students who did and did not attend the Success Academy. The DSCS-S was selected by the school, in part, because of preestablished reliability and validity.

Questions from subscales not relating to the Success Academy were removed, the survey administered, and raw data were reported to the school of study. The sections removed from the survey were Respect for Diversity, Student Engagement School-Wide, Use of SEL Techniques, Cognitive and Behavioral Engagement, and Fairness of Rules. One of the items on the survey asks students whether they attended the Success Academy. Student responses to the participation question allowed for comparison of attendee and nonattendee perceptions of school climate at the beginning of the school year. I compared the perceptions of attendees and nonattendees to infer the impact of the Success Academy on students' perceptions of the new environments.

The final stage of data collection involved ten teachers and support staff informants taking part in an individual, one to one, semi-structured interview with the researcher. The interviewer attempted to elicit teachers' perceptions of how the Success Academy helped students transition to high school. Teacher informants provided evidence regarding the impact of the Success Academy on the student transition. Teachers observe behaviors such as punctuality, academic preparedness, and other factors relating to the transition that students may not prioritize. Each interview lasted approximately thirty to forty minutes. Interviews took place at the school of study outside of normal school hours. I conducted and recorded all interviews using a digital recorder. An interview guide contained open-ended questions and helped me explore teacher insights into the student transition to the physical, social, and academic environments of Success Academy attendees.

Interviews began with an interventionist and one teacher member from the English, Math, Social Studies, and Science content areas. Interviews were transcribed and reviewed for themes, then underwent member checking (Merriam, 2009). The remaining interviews were then conducted, underwent member checking, and were compared to available archival data (Merriam, 2009). Interview questions included the following:

1. In your classroom, what differences do you notice between students who attended the Success Academy and those who did not?
2. What impact did the Success Academy have on your relationship with your students?
3. What impact has the Success Academy had on the academic success of students who participated as compared to students who did not participate in the Success Academy?
4. How do Success Academy participants differ from nonparticipants in terms of familiarity of classroom routines during the school year (on time to class, rules, location of materials, etc.)?
5. Do Success Academy participants appear to feel more or less confident with the school transition once the school year begins? How do you know?

During the interviews, the researcher used an interview guide consisting of the above questions and asked both probing and clarifying questions in an attempt to attain greater accuracy in inferences drawn during analyzing transcripts.

Interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method, with some slight modification. Glasser and Strauss (1967) recommended collection and analysis

occur simultaneously, a practice not followed within this study. Numerous studies have used the constant comparative method outside of grounded theory (Boeije, 2002, Fram, 2013, Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, & Rennie, 2006). Constant comparative analysis was designed for theory generation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All data is systematically compared to all other data during the process of coding (Fram, 2013). Practically, comparing every piece of data may not be efficient as the most relevant parts of the interview are those that address the research questions (Boeije, 2002).

Analysis closely followed the constant comparative method with little variation. Each interview was first generally read. Once all interviews were reviewed, each question was individually re-read and coded. For example, responses to the first question underwent analysis for each interview before responses to the second question were analyzed. The text was broken into passages and the main point summarized in the margin (Rennie, 2006). Codes were identified by looking for recurring words or ideas within the responses to the interview questions. The codes were descriptive and as literal as possible (Rennie, 2006). Once coding was complete, a memo was written describing the rationale behind the codes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). Coding was then revisited in order to compare coded sections and support the development of consistent categories (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). Codes were placed into the developed categories that were more abstract (Rennie, 2006). My goal was to formulate categories and codes that could be used to determine the core message of the interview participant (Boeije, 2002) within the context of the interview question.

Setting and Sample

Data, with the exception of interviews, collected in this study were archival in nature and did not involve the use of student participants. Detailed discussion of the characteristics of the archival data takes place in the Context section. The data used in this study was not publically available data and needed to be obtained from the school of study. Prior to data collection, a letter of cooperation was obtained from the district Superintendent. A data use agreement was obtained from the building Principal.

Teachers of first-time ninth grade students and academic interventionists were purposefully sampled informants in this study. A sample of between eight and 10 teacher informants out of approximately twenty eligible potential informants was sought. There is a relationship between the physical, social, and academic environments within the site that necessitate the use of specific people with relevant information (Patton, 1990). Relevant interview informants who are able to provide rich information about the case were selected using intensity sampling (Patton, 1990). With the exception of the support staff, only teachers of exclusively ninth grade students were represented in the sample. By mixing the sample based upon content area and student demographic groups served by the program, multiple perspectives were able to be included in the sample without introducing irrelevant experiences (Patton, 1990). Gaining insights into the transition experience from as many environments as possible was needed to determine the level of effectiveness of the program at acclimating students to these environments.

Interviewees completed a consent form and had informed consent procedures outlined prior to the interview. Two ninth grade teachers from each of the core content

areas: English, math, social studies, and science were represented in the sample. All teachers participated in every administration of the Success Academy. As a result of variations in program format and structure over time, answering the research questions requires using informants who have participated in these changes. The teachers all are members of the Freshman Academy during the school year and instruct the students who attended the Success Academy. Interviewing adults who engage in daily interaction with the student program attendees was essential for gaining insight into the effectiveness of the program. The teacher informants were able to provide detailed accounts of student behavior related to acclimation to physical, social, and academic environments. Two support staff informants were the Freshman Academy Interventionist for academically and behaviorally at-risk students in the ninth grade and the Reading Specialist. Both participated in all prior years of the Success Academy and were able to discuss the impact of the program on specific demographic groups noted in the literature to have increased difficulty with the transition to ninth grade (Akos & Galassi, 2004a).

Instrumentation and Materials

Once permission to conduct the study was granted, potential teacher interviewees were selected, confidentially approached, and had informed consent procedures outlined. Obtaining consent, the interview, member checking, and any necessary follow-up was anticipated to require a total time commitment of no more than three hours from each interview participant. A sample of 10 teacher and support staff informants was sought to participate in one to one interviews lasting up to one hour each. Interviews took place in the interviewee's classroom or office.

The results of analysis of archival first marking period course grades, archival retention rate data, and archival school climate survey results was used to help inform any necessary modification or expansion of teacher interview questions. Following member checking, all interview transcripts were continuously reviewed and compared to not only each other but also the ninth grader first marking period course grades from 2007-2013, ninth grader retention rates from 2007-2013, and school climate survey data. The triangulation of data sources occurred during collection and analysis. Trends in the three archival data sources were compared to each other and then compared to the responses of interviewed informants. The use of both qualitative and quantitative data lends validity to the study as well (Lodico et al., 2010). Each set of data is related and able to test the assumptions of the other.

A mixed-method intrinsic case study design was most appropriate for this study considering the context of the three transitional domains (physical, social, and academic). The case itself has more variables than data points through which to directly measure effectiveness (Merriam, 2009). Many factors influence the student transition experience, however. Effectiveness within three domains was measured in this study. Collecting just student or just teacher perspectives does not ensure reliability or validity of the data. Triangulation involves using multiple data points to assist in pinpointing reality (Merriam, 2009). Comparison occurred using data sources that represent multiple perspectives. Student achievement was measured through archival ninth grader first marking period course grades and archival ninth grader retention rates and represents an institutional perspective. The archival DSCS-S results present a student perspective that

was compared to student achievement data as well as the teacher interview responses that present a third perspective. The congruence of all three perspectives and the four data sources were evaluated using constant comparative analysis. Data were compared, grouped by dimension, and given a name that eventually became a category used to help identify patterns within the data (Merriam, 2009). A case study design also provided for the use of multiple data sources, collected using multiple methods, lending strength to the findings (Merriam, 2009).

The role of the researcher was limited in scope, despite the number of data sources to be collected. During the first three and a half years of my career, I was a Social Studies teacher at the school of study and formed collegial relationships with many of the informants in this this study. Currently employed at the school of study as the Instructional Advisor, I had a preestablished, and much closer, relationship with both the building principal and potential informants. These existing relationships may have aided in securing informants as well as honest responses to interview questions and in gaining access to archival data in a timely manner. I was also responsible for administration of the Success Academy for the first three years of the program and worked directly with all potential informants in this nonsupervisory capacity. As a member of the school's instructional team, data from the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student was already descriptively discussed with me as part of my professional responsibilities. I held a bias that the Success Academy helps attendees acclimate to the environments within the school of study but was undecided regarding the positive extent and long term impact of program participation.

The first data review was the archival quantitative student achievement data. Sample sizes in excess of five hundred students for each year of archival data helped establish validity. First marking period course grades for first-time ninth grade students encompassing the years 2007-2013 was collected and reviewed. This data was requested in an electronic format, stripped of identifiers, from the building principal. The principal retrieved archival student achievement data from the Delaware Department of Education database. The data previously met the reporting requirements set forth by the Delaware Department of Education. Course grade data yielded insight into the initial academic transition experienced by both attendees and nonattendees. It included three years of Success Academy influenced data and four years of pre-program data. Course grades were reported as a numeric average as well as a letter grade. Issues surrounding validity and reliability were mitigated by the archival nature of the data and lack of need to directly interact with student participants (Merriam, 2009). Success Academy attendees were already coded in a preexisting spreadsheet that was merged by the building principal. The researcher, using Microsoft Excel, coded failed courses (grade of 69% or below) "0" and successfully completed courses "1". This was added to the spreadsheet provided by the Principal. The collection of archival student data was used to measure the effect on the dependent variable, first marking period course grades, influenced by the independent variable of participation in the Success Academy. The effect was measured by the number of courses failed by first-time ninth grade students during the years encompassed by the data collection. Raw course grade data, including my additions, are available from the researcher by request.

Archival ninth grade retention data from 2007-2013 was reviewed next. Sample sizes in excess of five hundred students for each year of archival data help establish validity. The assistant principal who supervises the Freshman Academy reports retention data yearly to Freshman Academy staff. Following IRB approval, the rates of retention of first-time ninth grade students were requested from the building principal but reviewed after the first marking period course grades were collected. The principal retrieved archival student achievement data from the Delaware Department of Education database. This data previously met the reporting requirements set forth by the Delaware Department of Education. Success Academy attendees were already coded in a preexisting spreadsheet that was merged by the building principal. The retention data was requested to be in electronic format, stripped of identifiers. The data only included two years of Success Academy attendees because retention data for Success Academy attendees during the 2013-2014 school year was not yet available. The retention rates helped determine how Success Academy attendees transitioned to academic environments at the school of study. Data were reported as raw numbers and disaggregated by year as well as by first-time ninth graders versus repeat ninth graders by the school administration. The number of retained students who also attended the Success Academy was reported as well. Fields reported were "Total Number of Ninth Graders Retained", "Number of True Freshmen Retained", "Number of Success Academy Attendees Retained", "Number of Success Academy Attendees", "Number of Repeating Ninth Graders Retained", "True Ninth Grade Class Size", and "Total Ninth Grade Class Size". Data was placed into a 2 x 2 table for each year of Success Academy data for

conducting a chi-square. In instances when it was not possible for the Principal to separate repeat and first-time ninth grade retained students, the aggregate number of retained students was reported. Issues surrounding validity and reliability were mitigated by the archival nature of the data and lack of need to directly interact with participants (Creswell, 2012). Retention rate data was used to measure the effect on the dependent variable, first-time ninth grader retention rate, influenced by the independent variable of attendance at the Success Academy. The number of first-time ninth grade students retained during the years encompassed by the data collection was measured. Raw retention data are available from the researcher upon request.

The final phase of quantitative data collection is archival school climate survey data from the 2013-2014 school year. This was archival data collected by the school of study in September, 2013, using the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student. The survey was developed by the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project (DPBSP). The survey has established reliability and validity (Bear, Gaskins, Blank, & Chen, 2011) and reports data by subscales "grounded in research and theory as to its importance in academic achievement and social and emotional development" (University of Delaware, 2013). These subscales are teacher–student relations (α=.88), student–student relations (α=.81), fairness of rules (α=.70), liking of school (α=.83), and school safety (α=.83) (Bear et al., 2011). The original sample consisted of students in 85 schools and encompassed grades 3-12. All schools voluntarily participated in field testing a total of 12, 262 students in the sample and demographics similar to the general student population in Delaware (Bear et al., 2011). The survey has concurrent validity, with

scales moderately correlated across groups and at the school level, with academic achievement and suspensions and expulsions (Bear et al., 2011). High reliability exists across grade-level groups, gender, race, and ethnic lines with an aggregate alpha of .94 (Bear et al., 2011). This was confirmed using confirmatory factor analyses after randomly dividing the sample into two subsamples (Bear et al., 2011).

The school of study collaborated with the DPBSP to modify the survey to fit the school's needs while still maintaining the integrity of the survey as an empirical instrument. An adequate sample was ensured by collecting responses from approximately 430 of 520 first-time ninth grade students (Triola, 2013). The survey questions, electronically administered by the school of study, and associated subscales, are available in Appendix D. The DPBSP reported raw result to the school of study electronically in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. A four point Likert design was used for the response selections for each question, with response choices of *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. One of the items on the survey asks whether the student attended the Success Academy. The response to this question allowed for comparison of attendee and nonattendee perceptions of school climate at the beginning of the school year.

Data Collection and Analysis

The mixed-methods study employed constant comparative data analysis (Creswell, 2012). Both quantitative and qualitative data were considered to be of equal priority in this study, despite the order of collection (Creswell, 2012). Constant comparative analysis allows the researcher to interpret whether or not the results of each collection support or contradict each other, lending validity to the findings (Creswell,

2012). Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately, using different methods, and the results of the analyses compared. Research questions, data sources, and statistics performed are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Research Methodology

Research Question	Data Source	Data Type	Analysis
Does the Success Academy acclimate first-time ninth grade students to the physical environments in the school of study? (RQ1)	Archival 2013-2014 DSCS-S results	Quantitative	One tailed *t* test
	Teacher Interviews	Qualitative	Constant Comparative
Does the Success Academy acclimate first-time ninth grade students to the social environments in the school of study? (RQ2)	Archival 2013-2014 DSCS-S results	Quantitative	One tailed *t* test
	Teacher Interviews	Qualitative	Constant Comparative
Does the Success Academy acclimate first-time ninth grade students to the academic environments in the school of study? (RQ3)	Archival 2007-2014 first marking period course grades	Quantitative	Chi-Square
	Archival 2007-2013 ninth grade retention rate	Quantitative	Chi-Square
	Teacher Interviews	Qualitative	Constant Comparative
Does participation in the Success Academy have an impact on first marking period course grades for first-time ninth grade students? (SubRQ1)	Archival 2007-2013 first marking period course grades	Quantitative	Chi-Square
Does the Success Academy have an impact on the retention rate of ninth grade students? (SubRQ2)	Archival 2007-2013 ninth grade retention rate	Quantitative	Chi-Square

(table continues)

Research Question	Data Source	Data Type	Analysis
What observable student behaviors allow teachers to differentiate between students who participated in the Success Academy and those who did not? (SubRQ3)	Teacher Interviews	Qualitative	Constant Comparative
What impact does the Success Academy have on students' ability to be prepared for classroom routines, procedures, and relationships? (SubRQ4)	Teacher Interviews	Qualitative	Constant Comparative

Quantitative analysis of student achievement data took place first by being entered into Microsoft Excel. A chi-square was conducted on retention data using Microsoft Excel. First marking period course grade data was received and recoded in Microsoft Excel and then entered into SPSS Version 20.0 (International Business Machines, 2011). Both quantitative sources were evaluated using a chi-square with participation in the Success Academy being the independent variable and ninth grader first marking period course grades and ninth grader retention data being separate dependent variables. The results of the analysis helped determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between the two variables (Triola, 2012). Results are displayed in tables and discussed appropriately for an educational audience. These quantitative data addressed the first and second research subquestions:

Statistical significance of any change in ninth grade first marking period course grades and the ninth grade student retention rate due to participation in the Success Academy was determined using SPSS. Course grade and retention data were both

analyzed using a chi-square to determine and express the relationship between the two variables (Triola, 2012) and identify any cause-effect relationship, yet it could not be the sole basis for this claim (Montgomery & Peck, 1992). To establish causation, it would be necessary to prove that no other factor could cause the results (Freund & Wilson, 1998); a claim that cannot be made by this study given the number of variables that could affect student success in ninth grade.

When testing whether or not the perceived relationship is statistically significant, it is necessary to test the null hypothesis. For this study, H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$. The level of probability, *p*, was set at $p \leq .001$. A probability level of $p \leq .001$ is common for studies in the field of education (Creswell, 2012). Gaspard, Burnett, and Gaspard (2011) used a similar approach. The researchers used student questionnaires and a correlational exploratory methodology when looking at how the independent variables self-esteem, race, gender, living accommodations, and participation in school organizations affects the dependent variable first semester grades of college freshmen at Louisiana State University.

The organization that created the school climate survey, the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project, provided the raw survey response data to the school in September, 2013. Review of the data from this survey was used to address the first and second central research questions. The school of study shared the archival raw data with the researcher. Survey results are disclosed in this study by the researcher using descriptive statistics. The preestablished reliability and validity of the DSCS-S has been previously discussed in the Context section. A one-tailed test of significance (Creswell,

2012) was performed by the researcher on each survey question to determine if a statistically significant difference exists in responses between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees, shedding light on any possible impact of program on affective variables, such as the establishment of interpersonal relationships. The Student *t* test was tested against the hypothesis H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$. The level of probability, *p*, was set at $p \leq .001$ as with the analysis of all archival quantitative data in this study.

Ninth grade teacher interviews were digitally voice recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The purpose of teacher interviews was to address the qualitative research subquestions (SubRQ 3 and SubRQ 4).

Transcripts were subject to member checking to evaluate for accuracy in transcription and researcher inference, and to inquire whether there was any information informants wished to add to their responses. Following verification, the transcripts were reviewed using constant comparative analysis. The transcripts were read generally and then re-read with notes being recorded in the margins of the transcript (Merriam, 2009). Microsoft Excel 2013 was used to keep track of themes and their location within specific transcripts. Themes were coded based upon the environment being referenced as well as the type of relationship being addressed. Further analysis of the transcripts continued to identify themes within responses, including school climate factors influencing student-student and student-teacher relationships.

Three mechanisms were used to validate the quantitative data. First, quantitative data was archival, reducing current threats to both internal and external validity because student participants were not be interacted with directly (Lodico et al., 2010). Sample

sizes in excess of five hundred students for each year of archival student achievement data help establish validity. Student achievement data for all ninth grade students were reviewed, establishing the sample as the actual population for the archival data and reducing the potential effects of an inadequate sample (Creswell, 2012). The final step to ensure validity was the use of statistical analysis with the level of probability set at $p \leq .001$. A low probability level reduced the likelihood that any results are due to chance (Triola, 2013).

The archival survey data collected by the school already had empirically established reliability and validity (Bear et al., 2011). The school of study administered the survey electronically under conditions set forth by the creators of the instrument. An adequate sample was ensured by collecting responses from approximately 430 of 520 first-time ninth grade students (Triola, 2013). Analysis of the DSCS-S using a *t* test with a level of probability of $p \leq .001$ reduced the odds of results being obtained largely due to chance.

Interviews conducted with teachers underwent member checking of transcripts to ensure validity (Lodico, 2012). Interview data was constantly compared to the archival data collections to help ensure the validity of the information provided by interview informants (Merriam, 2009). The use of multiple data sources aided in lending validity to this study (Lodico, 2012) as well as gave voice to both students and teachers (Merriam, 2009) who were affected by the program of study.

Protection of Participants

Participant protection was heavily considered during all steps of data collection, review, and reporting. The researcher obtained a letter of cooperation from the Superintendent in the district of the school of study. A data use agreement between the researcher and building principal was also completed. All teacher informants had informed consent procedures and protections outlined and completed a consent form. Teacher participant names are not included in the study but were coded to assist in data tracking. Teachers who agreed to participate were assigned a letter representing the content area taught and a participant number based upon the order of consent. The designation was used to identify the participant throughout the rest of the study. All correspondence between interviewees and me was conducted in person. In the event documents were passed between us, such as for the member checking, sealed envelopes were utilized. No personally identifiable information was collected and variables are reported in aggregate form only. A paper document recording the names of interview informants and the corresponding codes was stored in my safe until member checking concluded. The document was then destroyed. Copies of both electronic recordings and paper transcripts of interviews were stored in a locked safe in the researcher's home on a password protected USB drive that also contains all other study related data. A copy of all electronic files were stored in a password protected folder on the researcher's desktop computer. Additionally, the researcher's desktop computer is password protected to help ensure the security of electronic data.

Following permission from the Walden University IRB (02-28-14-0276850) yet prior to conducting the study, permission was sought from the building principal to conduct the study, with all data collection, analysis, and reporting procedures being reviewed. When accessing archival data, information that could be used to identify a student, such as a student name or identification number, was deleted from the spreadsheet by the building principal and replaced with a number indicating the location within the spreadsheet rows. No information that could be used to identify a student was accessible to, or was stored by, the researcher. The archival school climate survey data completed by students and used to triangulate teacher interview data was completed anonymously. There was no way for student identifiable information to enter the final study. All electronic data was stored on the researcher's password protected desktop computer at his home and an electronic backup copy was stored on a password protected USB drive and stored in a locked safe in the researcher's home when not in use. The USB drive was not removed from the researcher's home except when data was placed on it by the building Principal.

Findings

Results of data analysis are presented based on the order of the central research questions. The results of Research Subquestions 1 and 2, since they relate specifically to Research Question 3, are presented in this section. Discussion of Research Subquestions 3 and 4 occurs after that of all central research questions. Presentation of the data in this format helps provide the context necessary for exploring the central research questions and assists in the triangulation process.

Research Questions and Data Sources

Central research questions guiding this study address the physical, social, and academic transitionary environments independently but do so using elements of multiple data sources. Associated research subquestions may utilize specific data sources in order to directly address the essence of the question itself. Each central research question, and associated research subquestions and hypotheses, was first reviewed independently of the others and then combined to determine if the effect of the program had overall results.

Interview Questions 3, 4, and 5 overlap transition environments but may hold indirect significance to academic environments and are therefore used for multiple research questions within the study. The integration of Research Subquestions 3 and 4, along with the overlapping of responses to Interview Questions 3, 4, and 5 across environments occur in the Conclusion section of this study. Triangulation of data sources in this way was intended to lend greater validity to conclusions drawn from data sources.

Central Research Question 1 Results

The first central research question (RQ 1) explored whether the Success Academy acclimated attendees to physical environments present at the school of study. Data sources included the quantitative archival results of the modified Delaware School Climate Survey-Student (DSCS-S) and teacher interviews.

RQ 1: Does the Success Academy acclimate first-time ninth grade students to the physical environments within the school of study?

$H_0$1: The findings from this study will show no significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and students' perception of comfort level with elements of the physical school environment.

H_a1: The findings from this study will show a positive significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and students' perceptions of comfort level with elements of the physical school environment.

Physical environments were considered to include feelings of safety within those environments and clarity of expectations within physical school settings as well. Student perception of physical environments within the school of study was previously collected using a modified version of the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student. An independent samples *t* test ($p \leq .001$, CI = 0.99) was conducted on the responses to each survey question. A summary of student responses to all DSCS-S questions can be found in Appendix F. A summary of means and standard deviations for all DSCS-S questions is located in Appendix G. A summary of the responses to questions pertaining to physical environments is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Results of DSCS-S Responses Related to Physical Acclimation

Question	Sig. (1-tailed)	*t* value
Students feel safe in this school.	0.662	1.074
Students are safe in the hallways.	0.300	0.510
Rules in this school are made clear to students.	0.003	2.269*
Students know how they are expected to act.	0.038	1.404
Students know what the rules are.	0.021	1.884*
This school makes it clear how students are expected to act.	0.017	1.463
I am able to get to class without getting lost.	0.000	3.293***
I am comfortable with following lunchtime procedures.	0.024	1.082
I can find and open my locker on my own.	0.068	4.787***
I can get to class on time.	0.906	1.104

Note. *$p \leq .05$, ***$p \leq .001$

Quantitative results. A statistically significant difference ($p \leq .001$) in perceptions was identified between students who attended the Success Academy and those who did not on two questions. An equal variances *t*-test revealed a statistically reliable difference between the mean number of Success Academy attendees who felt they could get to class without getting lost (M = 3.05, s = 0.645) and students who did not attend the Success Academy and felt they could get to class without getting lost (M = 2.81, s = 0.816), t (420) = 3.293, p = .000, $\alpha = .001$. An equal variances *t*-test revealed a statistically reliable difference between the mean number of Success Academy attendees who felt they could find and open their locker (M = 3.19, s = 0.684) and students who did not attend the Success Academy and felt they could find and open their locker (M = 2.84, s = 0.824), t (420) = 4.787, p = .068, $\alpha = .001$. The null hypothesis (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$) is rejected only for these survey questions.

An equal variances *t*-test revealed a statistically reliable difference between the mean number of Success Academy attendees who felt school rules were clear (M = 3.16, s = 0.665) and students who did not attend the Success Academy and felt school rules were clear (M = 3.02, s = 0.647), t (430) = 2.269, p = .003, α = .05. The null hypothesis (H_0: ρ = 0 and H_a: ρ ≠ 0) is rejected only at the level $p \leq 0.05$ for this survey question.

An equal variances *t*-test revealed a statistically reliable difference between the mean number of Success Academy attendees who felt students know what the school rules are (M = 3.17, s = 0.532) and students who did not attend the Success Academy and felt students knew what school rules are (M = 3.07, s = 0.514), t (430) = 1.184, p = .003, α = .05. The null hypothesis (H_0: ρ = 0 and H_a: ρ ≠ 0) is rejected only at $p \leq 0.05$ for this survey question. It is important to note that Added Questions 6, 7, 8 and 9 were not part of the original DSCS-S survey and lack the empirical reliability and validity of the other survey questions.

Qualitative results. Although teacher responses to other interview questions may have related to this central research question, the specific teacher interview questions asked to address this research question were:

4. How do Success Academy participants differ from nonparticipants in terms of familiarity of classroom routines during the school year (on time to class, rules, location of materials, etc.)?

5. Do Success Academy participants appear to feel more or less confident with the school transition once the school year begins? How do you know?

Interview Question 4 provided insight into the student classroom experience. A summary of categories and codes identified through analysis of responses to Interview Question 4 are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Categories and Codes for Interview Question 4

Timeliness	Rules	Expectations
Hallway Navigation	Dress Code	Classroom Routines
Read Schedule	Initial Referrals	Teacher Expectations
Not Late	Classroom Behavior	Classroom Management
Physical Locations		Environmental Appropriateness

Informants noted differences in classroom acclimation between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees in three key areas: timeliness, rules, and expectations. Differences between rules and expectations focus around behaviors that would result in a disciplinary referral. Rules are infractions that would result in a referral while expectations tend to focus more on interpersonal interactions and teacher beliefs regarding how the classroom environment should operate and develop during the first few weeks of school (Charles, 2002). General consistency in responses existed across participants for all three categories with one notable exception. Some teacher participants indicated that program structures and individual teacher decisions during the program led to differences in their interactions with students that later led to variations and inconsistencies in student acclimation across environments.

Theme: Timeliness. Informants agreed that Success Academy attendees were generally more adept at reading student schedules, navigating the physical building in order to arrive at class on time, entering class on time, and able to leave the classroom

and arrive at specific destinations without assistance when called out of class for administrative and other matters. As the school year progresses, the difference between attendees and nonattendees extinguishes but a stark contrast exists for the first few weeks of the school year. Students who attended the Success Academy were familiar with the physical layout of the building, able to adjust routes between locations, and served in the role of assisting peers with navigational issues.

Students who attended the Success Academy were, in the opinion of teachers, familiar with the physical layout of the school and able to get to class on time:

> If they were late, it was because they were hanging out with their friend at their locker or that kind of situation. It's not because they didn't know where they were going because I think the Academy helped with that. I think everybody who attended the Academy had a good foundation of how this building was laid out and where they needed to go and that's noticeable on the first couple of days of school…But I didn't have, with my ninth graders, actually with my 9th, 10th, or 11th graders because they were all Academy kids, I didn't have hardly any kids late.

A second teacher explains:

> So, it's I'm not late to class because I already know that I have to take this path to get from you know math or English or whatever it is so they do have an advantage there that oh man, gym, that's all the way on the other side of the building and I learned that in Success Academy so I already know that if I have to go from science to gym, I don't have time to stop at my locker and so they can build their

> routine, their class change routine faster cause they have already walked through their schedule and they can figure out the best paths and then once everyone else is in they figure out the path of least resistance…they've walked through their schedule, they've found their locker already, they've figured out to get from point A to point B and they've figured out three different ways to get from point A to point B in case, you know, A and B options don't work out I've got to go this way then so they definitely get to-they have the advantage when it comes to that, to the mental preparation of I've got to get somewhere in five minutes, how do I do that?

The confidence with navigation extends to the ability to leave the classroom and to locate offices and other resources, "They know how to get places. If they get called down to the office or managing their way back from lunch or so, they're more confident in where they're going." A social studies teacher echoed this sentiment:

> [Success Academy attendees]…they're able to just kind of breeze through their schedule. They're showing them the ropes. So the students who are a little bit lost, I typically tell them, or ask them rather, "did you have a friend that attended the Success Academy?" If they said yes, I said then find that friend and let them be your guide because I want you to figure it out on your own with some assistance of course from your peer rather than me trying to tell it.

The difference between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees can also be explained by what nonattendees appear not to know at the start of the year:

> … [nonattendees] don't know their way around the building. They don't know us, they don't know me, they don't…it's the cafeteria, the parking lot, it's where are the bathrooms, where are the water fountains, where's the cold water fountain, you know, where's the library, things like that…So you kind of see, especially on the first and second day of school, they got the lost in the sauce look…

Theme: Familiarity with rules. The second category to emerge from responses to Interview Question 4 was familiarity with, and likelihood to follow, classroom rules. Success Academy attendees were believed to less frequently commit behavioral infractions, more appropriately follow the dress code, and to have generally better classroom behavior at the start of the school year. The combination of these acclimation based behaviors was noted by teachers to result in a more manageable and on-task classroom environment as a result of nonattendees following the example and recommendations of their participant peers. Teachers noted that Success Academy attendees are "more aware of the rules because of things like dress code and cell phones during the Success Academy." This may be because, as an interventionist noted, "…folks have expectations so when a teacher puts forth expectations initially and students know where the bright line is and where not to cross it-it makes a difference…and results in less referrals for behavior issues."

School level supports during the school year, paired with Success Academy attendance have an impact as well:

> I noticed this year, the kids that attended the Success Academy kind of understood a little more about dress code, they were a little more timely, they, I think they

> were much more aware of what the expectations were…I think that for this year, it really took much longer for the kids that didn't attend the Success Academy, especially when it came to dress code in terms of time periods, the A/B schedule, and some of the things that we try to model during the Success Academy, it really threw them for a loop.

Theme: Classroom expectation. Expectations for behavior in the classroom environment was another area in which informants emphasized an impact of the Success Academy on the acclimation of attendees. This area was also the one in which program and teacher variations were noted to result in differences in the level and nature of acclimation across classrooms. Some informants noted that they combined classrooms or did not spend time introducing students to classroom routines or school year expectations either because they did not desire to or because they were not instructing students they anticipated having in class during the academic year. Teachers who did spend time on the elements of classroom routines and expectations found that Success Academy attendees responded affirmatively and supported teachers in acclimating program nonattendees once the formal school year began.

Interview Question 5 provided further insight into acclimation to the physical environments students encounter. Results of interview transcript analysis are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Categories and Codes for Interview Question 5

Routines	Navigation	Classroom	Interpersonal Relations
Find Classroom	On-time	Group work	Ask questions
Use Locker	Directions	Participation	Tone of Voice
	Physical Locations	Leadership	Inside jokes
	Pace	Outgoing	Greeting
	Body Language	Eagerness	Inner Circle
			Established Friendships
			Rapport with Teacher

The categories of routines (nonclassroom), navigation, classroom environment, and interpersonal relations emerged as areas in which Success Academy attendees appeared better acclimated and more confident that their nonparticipant peers. Codes for these emergent categories are centered on student behaviors within these environments that allowed teachers to determine whether student program attendees were likely more confident in those transition environments than nonattendees.

Theme: Nonclassroom routines and navigation. Students who did not attend the Success Academy exhibited behaviors that allowed teachers to know that confidence with certain school routines was lacking. In the hallway, nonattendees tend to be:

> …just looking around a lot. They're just kind of looking with this uncertain look on their face, they're kind of emotionless in the sense they're not kind of smiling like the other ones but not distraught or crying or that nature but they just have this blank stare and they're just looking around as if they're almost in an area where you turn off the lights and its completely dark and you tell them "find the exit" and they can't. A little bit more, their posture is kind of different. A little bit

> slouched so to speak and kind of more constricted a little bit hunched over, kind of looking down at the ground as well just because they're not confident in this environment of having 2000 plus students. That's the major difference and they're at their locker and their at their locker and their fidgeting around with it and they keep spinning it and they're trying and trying and trying-that's obviously a cue that the kid really needs help.

Teachers explained that it was easy on the first few days of school to know who needed help and who did not and, consequently as a result of having established relationships with students during the Success Academy, to know which students attended and which did not. Teachers found themselves, and attendees, providing assistance between classes to students who did not attend the Success Academy.

> There's definitely a lot of students coming here the first day like a deer in the headlights and I don't see that with our Success Academy students. I see them moving through with confidence, I see them going from class to class without incident and problems so its –I also see the students going to Guidance when they need to so if they have scheduling problems, they are already familiar with who takes care of that so some other folks in the building they get to meet our assistant principal and if they have some issues they know who to go to. All these things help a student when they first come to high school.

This outward appearance of confidence is present in the classroom at the start of the year as well:

> …body language. When they [Success Academy attendees] come in, they're not kind of looking around like they don't know where they're going. They would probably be the kids that just come in, sit down, be ready to start. Where someone who wasn't here may not be sure where to sit. Well maybe that does go along with the classroom routines then. Because they come in, they know-I don't know-I think they just have more a sense of sureness about them.

Theme: Classroom behaviors. Success Academy attendees were also noted by teachers to be more participatory in class activities, to assist other students in need, and to more readily engage in group work. These classroom based actions are predicated upon feelings of safety, comfort, and a shared experience between Success Academy teachers and students. Outward indications of feelings of comfort and security were easily identified by teachers:

> I think every kid who came to the Success Academy those first two years felt like, and still feels like the people in this building are here to help me.

Teacher-student relationships established during the Success Academy even alter the normal first day of school processes:

> [Attendees] come in having spent a week with you two weeks ago. There's inside jokes from Success Academy that ease on the tension and allows you to actually get to instruction more quickly, more group projects more quickly because they don't spend the first week sitting in silence afraid to raise their hand.
>
> …The students who don't attend, they're more quiet, more reserved, less likely to raise their hand and participate…I've had kids who if you talk to them today

> would think they've been friends for years but they just went to the Success Academy together and that's where they started to talk and where they established their friendship. Definitely from a group work standpoint, it's very helpful.

A difference exists between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees in terms of student perception of the school and its teachers at the beginning of the year:

> In the beginning it's really positive. I hear a lot of positive things. I can't ever recall hearing a negative comment about a teacher from someone that was here in the Academy at the beginning of the year. I think the team builders are cool, the teachers and students interact with each other and get to see a different side of them and I think that helps the student see they're more people just like us.

Theme: Interpersonal relations. Elements of the personal relationships converge with attendees' overall experiences during the Success Academy to create an environment students feel comfortable in and the transition results is less stress for these students:

> I would definitely say they are much more confident coming in…They're like already high fiving everyone and saying hello and acting like they own the place and you gotta kind of knock them down a peg…I think they seem to transition easier-the transition seems to be easier for them because they've already got this inner circle that is the Freshman Academy and the Success Academy kind of establishes that for them so they seem to already be slightly more at ease than somebody that wouldn't have come here already and figured out where everything is and figured out where their classes are, and what its all going to be

about. So like, yeah, they appear calmer and more confident and they are I think. You know, it's easier, less stress for them.

You spend those first few days getting to know each other, getting to know the classroom environment, the routine, the teachers, things like that so those kids-Success Academy kids-they've kind of already got under the belt, they've figured all that out os they are not dealing with that and they can then move on to dealing with, you know, the actual academic side of it or they can just relax for a week and be like, hey, I've got this. High school isn't going to be as bad as I thought whereas those kids who are just coming in on day one that have never been here before, they spend the first two weeks stressed that they're going to be sent to the pool on the third floor so you know they deal with a different kind of stress factor, those kids who don't come to the Success Academy. They've got more of the mundane unimportant yet important things to worry about so.

Research Question 1 conclusions. Comparison of quantitative and qualitative data sources revealed a congruence between student and teacher perceptions of acclimation to physical environments within the school of study. Statistical significance in the difference between responses ($p \leq .05$) was revealed when comparing clarity of rules between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees. Teacher informants reinforced this fact when indicating that Success Academy attendees appeared comfortable with, and aware of, rules both within classroom and the school in general. Teachers indicated that students who attended the Success Academy began the year with fewer behavior referrals than their counterparts did.

Statistical significance in the difference between responses ($p \leq .001$) was revealed when comparing the ability to get to class without becoming lost and the ability to find and open one's locker between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees. It is important to note that these two survey questions were not part of the original DSCS-S survey and lack the empirical reliability and validity of the other survey questions. Teachers echoed this level of acclimation, indicating that students who attended were easily able to get to class on time, were familiar with the layout of the building, and knew how to use their locker. Students who attended the Success Academy as well as those who did not felt they were able to get to class on time. This may have been the result of the DSCS-S being administered to students one full week into the school year rather than on the first or second day of school.

Teachers indicated that Success Academy attendees felt safe in the school and appeared to enjoy being there at the beginning of the school year. While these feelings are likely impacted by student comfort with the physical layout of the building, relationships formed during the Success Academy likely affected these emotional connections as well. Statistical analysis of these two elements of the transition experience is discussed with data collected for Research Question 2.

Central Research Question 2 Results

The second central research question (RQ 2) explored whether the Success Academy acclimated attendees to social environments present at the school of study. Data sources included the quantitative archival results of the modified Delaware School Climate Survey-Student (DSCS-S) and qualitative teacher interviews.

RQ 2: Does the Success Academy acclimate first-time ninth grade students to the social environments within the school of study?

$H_0$2: The findings from this study will show no significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and students' perceptions of social relationships within the school environment.

H_a2: The findings from this study will show a positive significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and students' perceptions of social relationships within the school environment.

The Student *t* test was tested against the hypothesis H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$. The level of probability, *p*, was set at $p \leq .001$ as with the analysis of all archival quantitative data in this study.

Student perception of social environments within the school of study was previously collected using a modified version of the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student. An independent samples *t* test ($p \leq .001$, CI = 0.99) was conducted on the responses to each survey question. A summary of student responses to all DSCS-S questions can be found in Appendix F. A summary of means and standard deviations for all DSCS-S questions is located in Appendix G. A summary of the responses to questions pertaining to social environments is displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Summary of Results of DSCS-S Responses Related to Social Acclimation

Question	Sig. (1-tailed)	*t* value
Teachers care about their students.	0.332	0.656
Teachers listen to students when they have problems.	0.436	1.462
Adults who work in this school care about the students.	0.404	1.187
Students like their teachers.	0.110	1.219
Teachers like their students.	0.107	0.736
Students are friendly with each other.	0.539	-0.136
Students care about each other.	0.266	0.495
Students treat each other with respect.	0.408	-0.180
Students get along with each other.	0.912	0.028
Students threaten and bully others in this school.	0.417	0.071
Students worry about others bullying them in this school.	0.870	1.225
In this school, bullying is a problem.	0.021	-0.907
Students bully one another in this school.	0.030	-0.806
I feel happy in school.	0.431	1.325
My school is a fun place to be.	0.596	1.159
I like this school.	0.094	2.499**
I like most of my teachers.	0.252	1.389
I like students who go to this school.	0.138	-0.141
This school is safe.	0.020	1.874*
Students know they are safe in this school.	0.995	0.219

Note. *p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01

Quantitative results. There was not a significant difference in the mean responses of attendees compared to nonattendees at the level of $p \leq .001$. A *t* test did however reveal a statistically significant difference in perceptions between students who attended the Success Academy and those who did not on two questions. An equal variances *t*-test revealed a statistically reliable difference between the mean number of Success Academy attendees who felt the school of study was safe (M = 3.14, s = 0.555) and students who did not attend the Success Academy and felt the school of study was

safe (M = 3.04, s = 0.529), t (430) = 1.874, p = .020, α = .05. The null hypothesis (H_0: ρ = 0 and H_a: ρ ≠ 0) is rejected only for these survey questions but not at the $p \leq .001$ level.

An equal variances *t*-test revealed a statistically reliable difference between the mean number of Success Academy attendees who liked the school of study (M = 3.02, s = 0.659) and students who did not attend the Success Academy and liked the school of study (M = 2.85, s = 0.694), t (420) = 2.499, p = .094, α = .01. The null hypothesis (H_0: ρ = 0 and H_a: ρ ≠ 0) is rejected for this survey question.

Qualitative results. Research Question 2 was further examined through teacher interviews. Results of interview transcript analysis are displayed in Table 6. Although teacher responses to other interview questions may have related to this central research question, the specific teacher interview question asked to address this research question was:

2. What impact did the Success Academy have on your relationship with your students?

Table 6

Categories and Codes for Interview Question 2

Instructional	Time bound	Interactions
Academic needs	Long term	Less intimidated
Social needs	Early development	Dialogue
Support		Positive
Home relationships		Inside Jokes
Personalities		Human beings
Preplanning		Trust
Team Support		Bond
Classroom management		Greetings

Informants unanimously indicated the Success Academy had a positive impact on their relationship with not only their students but with first-time ninth grade students in general. The impact of these relationships was most notable in three ways. First, teachers felt better prepared and able to meet the instructional needs of incoming students because of the relationships formed with students prior to the start of the school year. Second, teachers noted that their relationship development and sustainment had an associated time component that differed from relationships developed with program nonattendees. Third, teachers indicated specific interactions they had with Success Academy attendees that were distinctly different in nature and frequency from the relationships formed with nonattendees.

Theme: Instructional benefits. Relationship building helped teachers learn more about the instructional needs of individual students as well as entire classrooms of students before the year officially started:

> …you can already stylistically see what are their strengths, what are their weaknesses with not only structure and grammatical and all of that, but also the process they are going to take.

A second teacher expands by noting:

> I guess I would just say students who came to Success Academy, I'm already more familiar with them. It's in a sense probably easier for me to instruct them because I know kind of what their personalities are so I can play into that and I feel more comfortable coming over right from the start helping them with things because I don't have to feel them out and you know some kids don't like to ask

> questions. So then, you know you have to go over to them or, you know, some kids are really loud so you have to work with them differently.

The ability to observe students, take notes, and begin preparing for the first day of school is helpful:

> …while we're in the classroom, I use my teacher side of my mind to watch how they respond, watch how they work, little things like if they have pencil and paper and if they're prepared and how prepared they are and I kind of start taking notes. Ok, on the first day of school should I do this or should I do that because I'm looking at them in their desks and some kids you know, you get them to let their guard down and then you observe them and how they work in the classroom and you can have a much better idea for where to go on day one if you know what to expect from them.

Classroom preparation for Success Academy attendees is common across all content areas and ability levels:

> You make notes of kids that you think you may have to make accommodations for or in different aspects you may have a group that –you know with every lesson you kind of tweak it through the years-and this group may do well with a different twist on a lesson or they might not do well with it. Some groups do really well with seat work, some don't. You can kind of find that out pretty early. So it definitely gives you a leg up when you plan.

Benefits were seen by interventionists as well:

> That gave me the opportunity to say here are some things you can try so that won't happen. I was able to pull out my different color visor papers that some kids do better- the white causes problems sometimes, so a green or a blue sometimes, and it was like, "oh, wow, this helps." Or, "I get lost when I'm reading." Okay, let's get a ruler out and let's do line by line. I was able to provide strategies for them…

Theme: Teacher-student relationships. Teacher informants felt as if they developed relationships more quickly with Success Academy attendees and that these relationships persisted over time. Relationships varied from simply being familiar with a student's name and face to a more personal connection. Often, these relationships were with students not in the teacher's classroom during the school year. Teachers stressed that they noticed a difference between themselves and Success Academy attendees and relationships between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees:

> You already know their name, you are more comfortable with them so you build a relationship faster with those kids than the ones who are coming in fresh on day one, most definitely. You know you feel a little bad, like I know I felt a little guilty because you do know those kids so you do sort of joke with them, and flock to them so but ultimately that same relationship is built with everyone in the room it just happens faster with the Success Academy kids because they have a head start, they already know you, everybody else has to catch up.
>
> …It's different getting to know a kid as a student in a classroom than it is getting to a kid by doing like the teambuilding activities and things like that…you get to

> build a more personal relationship with them before you establish "ok now this is how my classroom is going to work for real."

A former Success Academy attendee expressed to his teacher that a Success Academy prior to entry to 10th grade would have been beneficial for relationship development. Students who attended found obvious benefits with regard to forming and maintaining relationships with teachers and seek that connection in later years as well.

> They come back and say I wish we had one for sophomore year because they really could have used that to get to know my teachers then too. So I think for them to say that, that's important because they know that they felt more comfortable with their teachers as a freshman coming in whereas in their sophomore year that was something they missed.

Teachers look forward to the Success Academy's relationship building opportunities as well:

> I think it had a very positive impact on my relationship with the students. it's going to be weird coming in now at the beginning of the school year not knowing any of the kids or not having any kind of connection with them. And even though it's kind of brief during the summer, and its gotten more brief each year, it's, I think that's very valuable. I think there's a level of fear that's broken down for them and for me.

Teachers recognize they are bonding with students over nontraditional activities that have a long term impact on both teacher and student:

> That first year was something none of us had ever been through-students or teachers. I'll never forget it but those students in that first year, we-they still come down and see us-me. We've still-we remember Success Academy you know. You go out there and you run around the tennis courts with blindfolds on looking for tennis balls and by the end of the day everyone's sweating out there and it's hot but they're having fun and laughing. By the end of the day, they remember that stuff. Those kids, I'm definitely going to go to their graduation because we know each other after all two, three, years-however many it's been. It's definitely kept alive. And I won't use any names but a lot of those students come back and see us. A lot.

Other teachers attribute the nature and longevity of their relationships with students to the Success Academy as well:

> I was reflecting back to the students that I've had in the past who attended the Success Academy and a lot of the students who are on the list of students, I still see on a regular basis even though they're in 11th grade or 10th grade, they will typically come back and see me and I think it has a lot to do with the Success Academy. It just makes a huge difference when the students are comfortable in the setting.

Relationship persistence and depth is present for some teachers:

> I mean, I know when I see the juniors in the cafeteria at lunch, the boys are a whole foot taller, but when you ask them, "How are you doing?" or whatever, you know them. I mean it seemed like in years past I would see students but I would kind of have to second guess, like, ok, I think I had this person in class a couple

> years ago but what's their name again? Whereas because that bond is so strong, I think like I said, even the kids that are juniors now, and the sophomores obviously from just last year, I think there definitely is a stronger relationship that definitely is able to be built.

One of the interventionists supported the difference in relationships with students and how that has affected relationship development and his classroom success:

> My relationship with the kids for the first two years, I still have a lot of them and very strong relationship with all of them. I have kids now, that even have gotten out of Tier 2, moved back to Tier 1, will still come down and say, "hey, I've got this really hard project I'm working on can you help me with it?" Where I have, one of the kids we worked very closely with, he actually came to me today and said, "Can I have you two periods next year? Because I know I need to do this, and I know I need to do this and I think it's going to help me to have you staying on me. I need that organization, I need that…"

Theme: Student-student relationships. Teacher informants noticed differences in their interactions with Success Academy attendees as well as differences in student-student interactions between Success Academy attendees. The resulting relationships persisted through the school year and became indistinguishable from more mature relationships students had with peers. Teachers appear to enjoy witnessing the development of student-student relationships:

> I had two girls last year and it really was not until literally April or May, and I had them in class together, and I just assumed they were long lost friends from

> Kindergarten. I mean, they, you know, always were walking down the hall together, they would call each other on the phone, help each other with homework- I mean they just seemed like long lost buddies. Then, finally in April or May, I was like, "oh, how long have you guys known each other? You're such good friends." And they were like, "oh, we met during the Success Academy." …and they're friends now and they hang out together, they meet up together in the morning. That would have never necessarily happened if; I think the Success Academy kind of pulls down those barriers.

Theme: School-home relationships. The relationship building crossed school boundaries and into the homes of students. The formation and maintenance of the relationships across stakeholders are viewed as what made the program worthwhile:

> …and I think the relationships with the parents were, at least on my end, I can't speak for anyone else but I know from the first year I have parents still emailing me – kids who are gone, kids who are not in my program anymore, "Hey, I just saw my kid's report card and they got this and I know they can do better but what can they do?" Well, if a parent is feeling comfortable enough to contact me and I don't even have their kid anymore, to get advice, somebody did something right along the way. Somebody built a relationship, and I don't think it was me, personally, by myself. I think WE built those relationships. WE gave parents the belief and we were true on it that we were going to be there for their kids through it all, no matter what. That their kids were our number one priority. And I think that the kids found that out, the parents found that out, and I just think it's a better

situation all the way around. But I think that was the key to the Success Academy. That was the key.

Research Question 2 conclusions. Comparison of quantitative and qualitative data revealed some apparent inconsistencies with regard to social acclimation between students and teachers. Statistical significance was present in differing opinions of liking school ($p \leq .01$) and feeling safe in the school ($p \leq .05$) between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees. Significance at $p \leq .001$ did not exist for any question. Teacher informants stressed the benefit of relationship building on the transition experience and expressed the belief that the development of positive relationships with attendees likely lead to student academic success. Teachers appeared upbeat about the formation of these relationships, their long-term existence, and impact on the learning environment and school climate. Analysis of DSCS-S data did not appear to support these perceptions with the degree of magnitude expressed by teachers. Success Academy attendees tended to have a more positive perception of the school's social environments but not on a level carrying definitive statistical significance.

Central Research Question 3 Results

The third central research question (RQ 3) explored whether the Success Academy acclimated attendees to academic environments present at the school of study. Data sources included archival student achievement data from 2007 to 2013. Research Question 3 was first explored through Research Subquestion 1 (SubRQ 1) by examining whether attendance at the Success Academy had an impact on first marking period course grades for first-time ninth grade students.

H_0s1: The findings from this study will show no significant relationship between participation in the Success Academy and first marking period course grades.

H_as1: The findings from this study will show a significant positive relationship between participation in the Success Academy and first marking period course grades.

Research Subquestion 1 results. Research Subquestion 1 was used to explore whether or not attendance at the Success Academy has an impact on first marking period course grades for first-time ninth grade students. Course success data are displayed in Table 7. Course grades of 70% or greater, as well as a grade of "P" were coded as having been successfully completed. A final marking period grade of 69% or below, or a grade of "F", were coded as having not been successfully completed. Courses for which there was no grade or the grade was coded "W" were removed from the data set. Ninth grade students were not identified by the school of study as being first-time ninth graders or repeat ninth graders until the 2011-2012 school year.

Table 7

Ninth Grader First Marking Period Course Grades

Year	Courses Attempted	Successful Courses	Not Successful Courses
2007-2008*	4178	3338	840
2008-2009*	4201	3284	917
2009-2010*	4196	3401	795
2010-2011*	4395	3492	903
2011-2012**	4894	3957	937
2012-2013**	4046	3533	513
2013-2014**	3915	3555	360

* First-time and repeat ninth grade students combined.

** Only first-time ninth grade students counted.

Changes in the building schedule and number of courses ninth grade students could take in a given school year affected the data. Grade level cohorts consist of unique students, rendering cross-year statistical analysis invalid. Statistical analysis performed in this study focused on determining whether or not Success Academy attendees, within their given grade level cohort, performed with greater success than their peers.

First marking period course grades for the 2011-2012 school year were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then SPSS. Cross tabulation of these results are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

2011-2012 Course Success – Success Academy Attendance Cross tabulation

			SAAttendance		Total
			Did Not Attend	Attended	
CourseSuccess	Not Successful	Count	488	449	937
		Expected Count	508.5	428.5	937.0
		% within CourseSuccess	52.1%	47.9%	100.0%
		% within SAAttendance	18.4%	20.1%	19.1%
		% of Total	10.0%	9.2%	19.1%
	Successful	Count	2168	1789	3957
		Expected Count	2147.5	1809.5	3957.0
		% within CourseSuccess	54.8%	45.2%	100.0%
		% within SAAttendance	81.6%	79.9%	80.9%
		% of Total	44.3%	36.6%	80.9%
Total		Count	2656	2238	4894
		Expected Count	2656.0	2238.0	4894.0
		% within CourseSuccess	54.3%	45.7%	100.0%
		% within SAAttendance	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	54.3%	45.7%	100.0%

Review of the crosstabulation did not indicate a likelihood that there is a significant difference in the level of course success between students who attended and those who did not. A chi-square was performed in order to determine if any difference in the amount of success experienced was statistically significant. The result of this analysis is displayed in Table 9.

Table 9

2011-2012 First-Time Ninth Grader Course Success Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.238[a]	1	.135
N of Valid Cases	4894		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 428.49.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

A chi-square was performed and no significant relationship was found between participation in the Success Academy during the 2011-2012 school year and first marking period course grades, X^2 (1, N = 4894) =2.238, $p \leq .001$. Students who did not attend the Success Academy experienced slightly more first marking course success but the amount of success was not statistically significant. The null hypothesis of no significant difference in achievement between Success Academy attendees compared to nonattendees (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$) fails to be rejected for the 2011-2012 school year.

First marking period course grades for the 2012-2013 school year were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then SPSS. Cross tabulation of these results are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

2012-2013 Course Success – Success Academy Attendance Cross tabulation

			SAAttendance		Total
			Did Not Attend	Attended	
CourseSuccess	Not Successful	Count	380	133	513
		Expected Count	247.8	265.2	513.0
		% within CourseSuccess	74.1%	25.9%	100.0%
		% within SAAttendance	19.4%	6.4%	12.7%
		% of Total	9.4%	3.3%	12.7%
	Successful	Count	1574	1959	3533
		Expected Count	1706.2	1826.8	3533.0
		% within CourseSuccess	44.6%	55.4%	100.0%
		% within SAAttendance	80.6%	93.6%	87.3%
		% of Total	38.9%	48.4%	87.3%
Total		Count	1954	2092	4046
		Expected Count	1954.0	2092.0	4046.0
		% within CourseSuccess	48.3%	51.7%	100.0%
		% within SAAttendance	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	48.3%	51.7%	100.0%

Review of the cross tabulation indicated a likelihood exists that there is a significant difference in the level of course success between students who attended and those who did not. A chi-square was performed on the course success data in order to determine if any difference in the amount of success experienced was statistically significant. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 11.

Table 11

2012-2013 First-Time Ninth Grader Course Success Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	156.355[a]	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	4046		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 247.75.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

A chi-square was conducted and a significant relationship was found between participation in the Success Academy during the 2012-2013 school year and first marking period course grades, X^2 (1, N = 4046) = 156.355, $p \leq .001$. Students who attended the Success Academy experienced a statistically significant greater degree of success in their first marking period courses. The null hypothesis of no significant difference in achievement between Success Academy attendees compared to nonattendees is rejected for the 2012-2013 school year (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$).

First marking period course grades for the 2013-2014 school year were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then SPSS. Cross tabulation of these results are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

2013-2014 Course Success – Success Academy Participation Cross tabulation

			SAAttendance		Total
			Did Not Attend	Attended	
CourseSuccess	Not Successful	Count	261	99	360
		Expected Count	169.0	191.0	360.0
		% within CourseSuccess	72.5%	27.5%	100.0%
		% within SAAttendance	14.2%	4.8%	9.2%
		% of Total	6.7%	2.5%	9.2%
	Successful	Count	1577	1978	3555
		Expected Count	1669.0	1886.0	3555.0
		% within CourseSuccess	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
		% within SAAttendance	85.8%	95.2%	90.8%
		% of Total	40.3%	50.5%	90.8%
Total		Count	1838	2077	3915
		Expected Count	1838.0	2077.0	3915.0
		% within CourseSuccess	46.9%	53.1%	100.0%
		% within SAAttendance	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	46.9%	53.1%	100.0%

Review of the cross tabulation indicated a likelihood exists that there is a significant difference in the level of course success between students who attended and those who did not. A chi-square was performed on the course success data in order to determine if any difference in the amount of success experienced was statistically significant. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

2013-2014 First-Time Ninth Grader Course Success Chi Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	103.929[a]	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	3915		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 169.01.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

A chi-square was performed and a significant relationship was found between participation in the Success Academy during the 2013-2014 school year and first marking period course grades, X^2 (1, N = 3915) = 103.929, $p \leq .001$. Students who attended the Success Academy experienced a statistically significant greater degree of success in their first marking period courses. The null hypothesis of no significant difference in achievement between Success Academy attendees compared to nonaattendees (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$) fails to be rejected for the 2013-2014 school year.

A chi-square ($p \leq .001$) was conducted in order to determine the level of first marking period course success experienced by students who attended the Success Academy compared to those who did not. Students who attended the first year (2011-2012) of the Success Academy did not experience a significantly different level of

success in the first marking period, as measured by the number of courses passed, than their peers who did not attend the Success Academy. The null hypothesis (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$) fails to be rejected. Students who attended the second and third years of the Success Academy (2012-2013 and 2013-2014) did, however, experience a statistically significant level ($p \leq 0.05$) of greater success than their counterparts who did not attend the program.

Research Subquestion 2 results. Research Subquestion 2 also explored the transition to academic environments. Research Subquestion 2 explored whether or not participation in the Success Academy had an impact on the retention rate of ninth grade students. Data collected is displayed in Table 14. This data was quantitatively analyzed using a chi-square.

Table 14

Ninth Grader Retention 2007-2013

School Year	Total Ninth Graders Retained	First-Time Ninth Graders Retained	Repeat Ninth Graders Retained	Success Academy Attendees Retained	Success Academy Attendance	First-Time Ninth Grader Class Size	Total Ninth Grader Class Size
2007-2008	132	-----	-----	-----	-----	530	662
2008-2009	128	-----	-----	-----	-----	544	672
2009-2010	134	-----	-----	-----	-----	532	666
2010-2011	144	-----	-----	-----	-----	573	710
2011-2012	125	71	71	24	358	550	621
2012-2013	61	38	65	11	287	542	607

Archival retention data for first-time ninth graders following the 2011-2012 school year is displayed in Table 15. The number of students who partipated in the

Success Academy and those who did not are categorized based upon whether or not they were promoted to 10th grade with the rest of their grade level cohort. The derived expected values used to conduct the chi-square are displayed in Table 16.

Table 15

2011-2012 First-Time Ninth Grader Retention

	Retained	Not Retained	Totals
Attended	24	334	358
Not-attended	47	145	192
Totals	71	479	550

Table 16

2011-2012 First-Time Ninth Grader Retention Expected Values

	Retained	Not Retained	Retained Expected	Not Retained Expected
Attended	24	334	46.21	311.79
Not-attended	47	145	24.79	167.21

Note. df=1, $p \leq .001$.

A chi-square test was performed and a significant relationship was found between participation in the Success Academy and the likelihood of being retained in ninth grade, X^2 (1, N = 550) = .000000031, $p \leq .001$. Students who attended the Success Academy during the 2011-2012 school year were more likely to progress to 10th grade with the rest of their grade level cohort. The null hypothesis of no significant difference in retention likelihood between Success Academy attendees compared to non-attendees (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$) is rejected for the 2011-2012 school year.

Archival retention data for first-time ninth graders during the 2012-2013 school year is displayed in Table 17. The number of students who attended the Success Academy and those who did not are categorized based upon whether or not they were promoted to 10th grade with the rest of their grade level cohort. The derived expected values used to conduct the chi-square are displayed in Table 18.

Table 17

2012-2013 First-Time Ninth Grader Retention

	Retained	Not Retained	Totals
Attended	11	276	287
Not-attended	27	255	282
Totals	38	531	569

Table 18

2012-2013 First-Time Ninth Grader Retention Expected Values

	Retained	Not Retained	Retained Expected Value	Not Retained Expected Value
Attended	11	276	19.17	267.83
Not-attended	27	255	18.83	263.17

Note: df=1, $p \leq .001$.

A chi-square test was conducted and no significant relationship was found between attendance at the Success Academy and the likelihood of being retained in ninth grade, X^2 (1, N = 569) = 0.006, $p \leq .001$. The result of the analysis was not significant at $p \leq .001$, but is significant at $p \leq .05$. Students who attended the Success Academy during the 2012-2013 school year were more likely to progress to 10th grade with the rest of their grade level cohort. The null hypothesis of no significant difference ($p \leq .001$) in

retention likelihood between Success Academy attendees compared to nonattendees (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$) is not rejected for the 2012-2013 school year. Given a probability level of $p \leq .05$, the null hypothesis would be rejected, however.

A chi-square ($p \leq .001$) was conducted in order to determine if any difference in the likelihood of being retained at the conclusion of the ninth grade year exists between who attended the Success Academy compared to those who did not. Students who attended the first year (2011-2012) of the Success Academy did experience a significantly lower level of likelihood than their peers who did not attend the Success Academy. The null hypothesis (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$) fails to be rejected, however. Students who participated in the second year of the Success Academy (2012-2013) did not experience a statistically significant level of greater success at $p \leq .001$, but did at a level of $p \leq .05$, compared to their counterparts who did not attend the program. The null hypothesis is not rejected for the 2012-2013 school year at the level $p \leq .001$. Data for the 2013-2014 school year was not available at the time of writing.

Qualitative results. The final data review for RQ 3 was qualitative and consisted of teacher interviews. Teacher responses to Interview Questions 3, 4, and 5 were solicited, reviewed, and then compared to each other before being compared to the quantitative collection associated with this research question. The relevant teacher interview questions were as follows:

3. What impact has the Success Academy had on the academic success of students who participated as compared to students who did not attend the Success Academy?

4. How do Success Academy participants differ from nonparticipants in terms of familiarity of classroom routines during the school year (on time to class, rules, location of materials, etc.)?

5. Do Success Academy participants appear to feel more or less confident with the school transition once the school year begins? How do you know?

Teacher interviews supported the exploration of acclimation of students to academic environments. Interview Question 3 provided the teacher perspective of this transition. Results of interview transcript analysis are displayed in Table 19.

Table 19

Categories and Codes for Interview Question 3

More Successful	Not Sure	No Impact
Small Gains	Lack of Data	Had Social Success
Strong Relationships	Strong Relationship	
More Effort	Home Environment	
Indirect		
Expectations		
Knowledge of Student		
First Marking Period		
Short Term		

Theme: Uncertainty. Teacher informants were divided regarding the effectiveness of the Success Academy at acclimating attendees to academic environments within the school under study. Informants clearly indicated that they were generally not sure whether any academic success experienced by Success Academy attendees was a direct result of program attendance or if was a result of outside factors. The majority of informants stated they did not feel able to accurately answer the questions without greater data to support their inclinations. Informants were divided into three categories: attendees

were likely more successful, the informant was unsure, or the program did not have an impact on academic success but did have an impact on the social acclimation of students.

Participant beliefs regarding their responses to the impact on academic acclimation appeared ambivalent due to lack of available data on student achievement. One stated, "I don't necessarily know that it has [an impact]…But I don't have the data to be able to really figure out without a shadow of a doubt." A second noted that, "I don't really have an answer to this one because I don't have too much of the data that drives it…I don't know if academically it gives them an advantage." A third participant went so far as to say, "That's one area that can't be gauged because the data before and after was not available. I know…it's had an impact on relationships, knowing the school, familiarity on what a teacher wants, but as far as academics, I don't have any data to support that." Perhaps the best summary of informant perception regarding the impact on acclimation to academic environments was:

> Well, I don't have the data to back this up by any meaningful information but I would say for similar reasons to [question] number one, that they're more successful, the kids that are popping out in my mind, than those that don't [participate]. I just think for the same reasons, whether it's part of their academic background or their parents' support level, and whether their attendance was a direct reflection of what they find important and prioritize but they definitely seem to be more academically successful than those that don't [participate]. Even if that means-I don't have the data from a retention standpoint or anything like that but my overall impression is that they are more successful. It's difficult to

answer that without any meaningful data.

Theme: Indirect effects. Even when teachers felt the program may have had a meaningful impact on academic success, there was a lingering doubt about what the data indicated and whether any academic gains were more a result of programmatic impact on other areas of the transition. One teacher participant stated, "I don't think we do enough academically to be able to necessarily determine that."

A teacher with a large number of students who attended the Success Academy each year provided greater insight into any impact she perceived:

> …I do feel that just in the sense of getting themselves set up and getting them rolling, having the Academy helped us in getting them rolling sooner. We got started and we didn't have to waste the getting to know you time and the-we still had that but it wasn't the full block…by building the relationship for example I think that it made them feel more comfortable that when they're having difficult time or when they needed extra help that they would come in in the morning and use that time that I was offering to get the help or to go over something or they come back and say I really don't understand this or they feel comfortable enough to say I'm stuck on this; help.

A social studies teacher's impressions of the program extended upon the belief that academic gains were likely a more indirect result of other factors, despite having gathered his own data to compare to his perception. He specifically notes student participant success in both the short and the long term but maintains internal questions regarding the underlying factors for student success:

So, I think with developing that rapport with the student beforehand, those are the students who will put forth a little bit more effort, a little bit more compliable to my requests-if I say, hey, you're missing an assignment I need you to do this, you need to stay after school, they're like, okay, that's fine. Whereas the other ones, they still may do it but it's not as fluid, it's not as easy to get them to do that. But overall, like I said, it's been really great and I was really surprised when going through the numbers of how many students are still on target to pass and when looking back at the grades how they stayed the same or actually increased by a point or up to ten….They may not particularly like the subject matter of which they're learning about but their just willing to dedicate themselves more in comparison to other students.

… It gives me particular background knowledge on that student so that I would be able to support them more throughout the school year because I know some of their strengths and I know some of their weaknesses. And by them going forth and taking some of the SRI testing to track their Lexiles and me having the data to show and look at their DCAS scores in the past that can allow me to adjust my instruction as their teacher to suit their needs a little bit more in comparison to the past where they were just coming in on that first day and I had no data, I had no knowledge of who these students were, so it just makes it a lot easier.

… I would say that overall the first marking period grades of those that attended the Success Academy were more successful. Looking at the list of students, there are around two to four of them throughout the last three years

> whose grades actually decreased-and of course there could be many factors that are involved in that-that actually fell below passing. And these students when looking back to their eighth grade year, they were the marginal students. The students that just barely got through. So that first year in high school, especially that first marking period, I pretty much expect it to be difficult for them because it is a different environment, different curriculum, different standards and it may just not so much mesh well with them for that first marking period. So that first marking period grades, I think the proof is in the pudding on that one.

The plausible connection, as perceived by teachers, between relationship building with students and student achievement, was noted by a teacher in the biology content area as well. The participant initially believed that there was no impact on academic success as a result of program participation but the participant's beliefs evolved during the interview:

> I definitely-that is where I would see the connection. You know, um, a lot of kids, they will pass every class except one and when you ask them why, they are failing that one class it's not that they don't understand, it's that I don't like the teacher. How many kids-I hear that all the time. Why are you failing Spanish? I don't like the teacher. It's not I don't understand it. It's not I can't learn. It's I don't like them therefore I won't do their work, I won't try in their class. So, you know they get to figure out pretty early on if they like us in Success Academy and that helps. As a student, if I liked my teacher, I wanted to do well to make them happy. I think these kids are the same way. They get to like the individuals that

they're meeting and they don't want to disappoint them. So that helps lead to academic success. I can definitely, I can see that correlation. I would make that. I would say that helps them be successful because they don't want to disappoint the people they made these connections with.

Research Question 3 conclusions. Comparison of the quantitative and qualitative data sources for Research Question 3 yielded insight into the impact of the Success Academy on acclimation to the academic environments in both the short and long term. A chi-square ($p \leq .001$) was conducted in order to determine the level of first marking period course success experienced by students who participated in the Success Academy compared to those who did not. Students who participated in the first year (2011-2012) of the Success Academy did experience a significantly different level of success in the first marking period, as measured by the number of courses passed, than their peers who did not attend the Success Academy. The null hypothesis (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$) is rejected. Students who participated in the second and third years of the Success Academy (2012-2013 and 2013-2014) did, however, experience a statistically significant level of greater success than their counterparts who did not attend the program. The finding of a significant impact on first marking period course grades was supported within the responses provided by teacher informants.

A chi-square ($p \leq .001$) was conducted in order to determine if any difference in the likelihood of being retained at the conclusion of the ninth grade year exists between students who participated in the Success Academy compared to those who did not. Students who participated in the first year (2011-2012) of the Success Academy did

experience a significantly lower level of retention likelihood than their peers who did not attend the Success Academy. The null hypothesis (H_0: $\rho = 0$ and H_a: $\rho \neq 0$) is rejected. Students who participated in the second year of the Success Academy (2012-2013) did not experience a statistically significant level of greater success at $p \leq .001$, but did at a level of $p \leq .05$, compared to their counterparts who did not attend the program. The null hypothesis is not rejected for the 2012-2013 at the level $p \leq .001$.

Students who participated in the Success Academy appear to have experienced a greater level of success in the first marking period of ninth grade than students who did not participate. The program's impact on ninth grade retention of attendees does not hold consistent statistical significance at the level set in this study ($p \leq .001$) but did at $p \leq .05$. Teacher informants reported mixed perceptions regarding the impact of the Success Academy on student academic achievement as well. Among informants who felt there may be an impact on student academic success because of acclimation to academic environments, most attributed any gains to the impact of the Success Academy on other factors that impact student achievement, such as student-teacher relationships and knowledge of students' backgrounds and educational needs. Any direct impact of the Success Academy on student achievement and acclimation to academic environments appears to be mixed and the result of indirect association at best.

Research Subquestion 3 Results

Research Subquestion 3 (SubRQ 3) provided the researcher and reader with a contextual perspective on any differences that may exist between students who attended the Success Academy and those who did not. SubRQ 3 supported exploration of

observable student behaviors that allow teachers to differentiate between students who attended the Success Academy and those who did not.

Conceptualization of the behaviors of these students as observed by their teachers provides additional perspective when comparing the results of all data sources to each other. This question was qualitatively explored using teacher interviews and was addressed in some form by each interview question. Analysis was completed by constantly comparing the responses of the interview informants to one another.

While all interview questions were related to this research question, responses to the most strongly associated interview question was the following:

1. In your classroom, what differences do you notice between students who attended the Success Academy and those who did not?

The emergent category for this interview question was Leadership. Students who participated in the Success Academy were noted by informants to exhibit greater leadership across multiple environments than students who did not participant. Subcategories indicate those environments and codes reflect the behaviors exhibited by students who participated in the Success Academy. The result of this analysis, categories, subcategories, codes, and associated research subquestion for Interview Question 1 are displayed in Table 20.

Table 20

Results of Analysis for Interview Question 1

Category, Code, Subcodes	Associated Research Question
Leadership	
Classroom Climate	
Support teachers	SubRQ4
Acclimate nonattendees	SubRQ4
Participate in class	SubRQ3
Classroom behaviors	
On-time	SubRQ3
Prepared with materials and to learn	SubRQ3
Focused	SubRQ3
Organized	SubRQ3
Peer Support	
Read and follow schedule	SubRQ3
Class routines	SubRQ4
Navigate building	SubRQ3
Positive Attitude	
Reflect on Success Academy experience	SubRQ3
Share experiences with both attendees and nonattendees	SubRQ3

Theme: Observable student differences. Overlapping responses were consistent across interview questions, participants, and shed light onto the differing behaviors noticeable between attendees and nonattendees. Most notably, Success Academy attendees were viewed by teachers as being leaders in establishing a participatory classroom climate, exhibiting what teachers considered to be positive classroom behaviors, supporting peers with their schedules and building navigation, and exhibiting a positive attitude about the Success Academy that translated to the broader Freshman Academy.

Success Academy attendees appeared to have an easier transition to the school year, especially with regard to physical and social structures:

> I notice that those students that attended the academy seemed to have an easier transition. They appeared to be less stressed. They were more organized, for the most part, and seemed to know where they were going and where they were coming from and even in that sense of getting themselves together they weren't waiting until the third week of school to get themselves together. They were coming in that first week and they were together with what they needed and they were more comfortable. They were more comfortable in the classroom with their classmates, with their teachers, and the other teachers in that wing as well.

The level of comfort of Success Academy attendees was noticeable as well:

> From the get go, like day one of official school, the ones who attended the Success Academy, they seemed to be more comfortable coming into the room, they know the teachers, they know a lot of the kids that they are coming into so that's definitely very noticeable in terms of overall demeanor of the kids. They already kind of already felt more comfortable with high school.

This readiness to begin the school year was referenced by one of the school's interventionists as well. The informant stated, "The major difference is students who attend the Success Academy seem to be more focused and able to get the initial concepts in the first six or seven weeks of class. They are also more familiar with the building…my teaching style, and my expectations." This sentiment was echoed by classroom teachers:

> In the classroom, it is very obvious at the beginning of the year who attended and who did not outside of normal things in regard to getting to know different parts

> of the building, getting to know the teachers' names, just for them coming in prepared at the beginning of the year. Kind of them understanding the rules of the class, how class is conducted, it's a big difference. Those who did not go to the Success Academy are a little bit frazzled on that first day and they are typically kind of hesitant when it comes to participating on the first day. First day of school they [Success Academy attendees] already know, hey, I should sit up front while everyone else is in the back. So, it's just very simple things like that can make a big difference.
>
> …It is smooth in regard to the kids are at the class on time. They know where to go, what to expect next so they have very few questions on the schedule aspect of it all. They understand the block deal and alternating days; this is the classroom I should go to on Mondays versus Tuesdays. So, Success Academy just covers all those bases for the first day.

An English teacher likened participation in the Success Academy to students investing in their future experience:

> …but the kids-think of it like a bank analogy. Those kids that came to the Academy kind of are investing a little bit into savings and all that is there when they come in on day one. I mean, prepared is the cliché but it's more than prepared. Some of them aren't even prepared but they have a sense of the school, a sense of who we are.

The same teacher summarized the broad exposure to students and the greater school environment students are exposed to and the impact it has on both students and teachers,

allowing for differentiation between attendees and nonattendees once the school year begins and later into their academic careers:

> I feel like there are kids who were just at the Academy who-they sort of have a better attitude because the preview of the school, preview of the teachers, and things like that, getting to know each other, it made connections that after day one of the actual school year were able to be made again. I guess in the long run, the kids that came first, they did make certain connections with us, with the building, with other students-maybe if there are Honor Society volunteers that are here or whatever, they get to experience just a little differently-so you kind of have a different approach to the school year. It makes it a little stronger...but it all adds up and there's just something about being in the halls and I see kids that are not mine-students that are not mine but I know their names and I've been able to talk to them all year long- and they kind of have that relationships with all of us through the building and it's just sort of an element of something there.

Theme: No difference. Three informants expressed that they did not notice a difference between attendees and nonattendees in the Success Academy. One participant interpreted the question to relate to demographic characteristics such as socioeconomic status and other demographic characteristics but noted that she recognized students from having participated. A second informant stressed that his role within the program changed dramatically after the first year and he had no basis upon which to answer the question as he had little to no direct interaction with students during the Success Academy and is not located in an area of the building that permits him to view out of

class behaviors. A third informant acknowledged that he conducted classroom activities during the Success Academy in such a manner to prohibit noticing such differences:

> …as far as…I can remember some faces, but I can't particularly tell who was in the Academy and who wasn't and I try to not to teach that way either…if someone is not here to get a procedure down, I'm going to have to reteach it when school begins anyway. So, I kind of treat everyone as a clean slate when they come in and, not that, "oh, they were in the summer, they should know better." So I treat everyone as the same entity…because I don't want any kid to feel left out because they weren't able to attend the summer.

Theme: Student leadership. Review of interview transcripts revealed that Success Academy attendees tend, in the eyes of teachers, to exhibit behaviors of student leaders. These students are on time to class, prepared, and productively participate. They are able to read and follow their schedule and support peers who did not attend the Success Academy with navigation of the building as well. Success Academy attendees were also noted to express positive perspectives of school experiences and communicated these experiences to their peers.

Research Subquestion 4 Results

Research Subquestion 4 (SubRQ 4) provided a holistic perspective on the transition experience for students who participated in the Success Academy. Gaining initial insight into the teacher perspective of this element of the experience assists in contextualizing the results of data from archival sources.

SubRQ 4: What impact does the Success Academy have on students' ability to be prepared for classroom routines, procedures, and relationships?

Classroom routines, procedures, and relationships have an impact on physical, social, and academic environments; encompassing all three transitionary domains explored by this study. SubRQ 4 was explored using teacher interviews and was addressed in some form by each interview question. Analysis was completed by constantly comparing the responses of the interview informants to one another.

Students who attended the Success Academy were noted to exhibit leadership behaviors that affected the classroom climate by supporting teachers and program nonattendees with acclimation to the general classroom and associated classroom routines.

Theme: Attendees positively affect environments. Informants stressed that once the year began, it was noticeable which students attended the Success Academy due to their role, overt or not, in supporting the classroom climate. While the effect may wear off as the year progresses, the effect of a classroom with Success Academy attendees is beneficial to both the teacher and students who did not attend the program. Nonattendees are acclimated through the prior experiences and peer support of students who participated in the Success Academy:

> From a classroom management standpoint, it's much easier in the beginning of the year with the students who have attended the Success Academy. And, kids tend to learn from their peers what's acceptable and what's not so it definitely helps establish classroom procedures because once you have them established,

> they pretty much run themselves as long as you reinforce them through the year. So the fact that the majority of the class, or a lot of kids will come in knowing what the expectations are – the other kids kind of sit back and watch so it definitely makes things easier. Some of the basic classroom management, what's acceptable and what's not, I do introduce the classroom rules and expectations and I do it again for all the students but when you have a bulk of them that already know it, it really sets the tone for the rest of the class.

A second teacher provided clarity to how this peer accountability looked in the classroom environment:

> …some of our basic rules, like the stupid ones like you can't shoot paper into the trashcan because it's not a basketball hoop, that one, that has to be covered in Success Academy, though like a kid who didn't come to the Success Academy on day one tried to shoot something into the trash can, a kid who did come would be like, that's twenty push-ups buddy let's go. You know, so they can already kind of self-correct the other kids in the classroom because they already do kind of have a feel for what our expectations are or they already know that when you come in you need to sit down, you need to get out your warm-up notebook, because we did kind of go through that at Success Academy last year-this is how our classroom is going to be run so this is how we expect you to behave in the summer before school starts so we got them into that routine before it all started.

One of the interventionists described the impact the Success Academy had on the first few weeks of school when he was heavily engaged with students during the program in its first two years as compared with his diminished role in the program:

> I felt like my classroom rules were followed better, the procedures of my classroom were followed better the first two years of Academy kids because, again, I already had that with them. I'd built that, I'd already explained that to them. We'd already started the process of working on their reading program so they already knew on this day I do this for so many minutes. I was able to sit down with them and say here is your folder, this is how each day is laid out, this is what things you have to do.

Another informant noted:

> …they get a feel for their classroom routine quicker. They're the leaders when it comes to being the ones who get in the classroom and follow the routine. Like they are the ones who sort of lead the charge on that because they did, they got that advantage of getting to meet us earlier and getting to know our rules and getting to know that routine so whereas it might take a month to get a non Academy kid onto the get in here, sit down, take out your notebook, do the warm-up, maybe it only takes another week or two to get the Success Academy kids on that track because it's something that we had practiced with them already so they knew when they walked in on day one well this is what we're going to have to do to get into that routine.

The leadership exhibited by these students extended into the hallways as well:

> I think that the kids that went to the Academy, and even the kids that came for a day or two days or they went so that they could get their schedule because they were getting schedules on that day, that little bit was enough that they had a comfort level coming in and that they felt comfortable enough to answer questions for someone else or they knew someone else they saw at the Academy, "hey I don't know that, but I know that they do." And then, "hey come with me, I'll take you to this teacher I know that she knows or that he knows" so I saw a lot of that too. And it's helpful to the other teachers because teachers who are not in the Academy and they're going, "oh my God, I don't know how to read this schedule and they have first period classes and they've made the comment that so and so helped me, they were at the Academy-you told them at the Academy how to do it and they understand or they remember that another teacher told them this" so I think that helps them too because our schedule is kind of crazy. I think it kind of made it easier, calmer, a little bit. It wasn't as rushed or panic-stricken when you see the kid that kind of has the eyeballs that are out, you know, the deer in the headlights look and we saw a lot less of that. The kids that had that "oh I don't know where to go and I'm panicking look" were the kids that weren't at the Academy.

Success Academy attendees appear to be more familiar with, and supportive of, teachers and the associated classroom routines. Teachers felt as if the year gets off to a much smoother start when a large number of Success Academy attendees are in their classrooms and that student attendees are familiar with the teacher's personality,

expectations, and routines are a cause of this expediency. In terms of environmental familiarity, students who attended the Success Academy begin the academic year in a more advanced and comfortable position than students who did not attend.

Overall Conclusions

Research Question 1 explored the effectiveness of the Success Academy at acclimating students to physical environments within the school of study.

Acclimation to physical environments as a result of participation in the Success Academy appears to be effective with regard to the ability to navigate the physical building, get to class on time, and find and open their locker ($p \leq .001$). Teacher informants supported this finding noting the difference in ability between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees. Student familiarity with rules was not found to be significant at the level set by this study but was at $p \leq .05$. Teacher informants supported this finding by indicating students who attended the Success Academy appear more aware of, and likely to follow, school rules, resulting in fewer discipline referrals for these students.

Research Question 2 explored the effectiveness of the Success Academy at acclimating students to social environments within the school of study.

Acclimation to social environments as a result of attending the Success Academy is not definitively effective. No questions on the DSCS-S revealed a statistically significant difference ($p \leq .001$) in perception between attendees and nonattendees. Statistical significance at $p \leq .05$ existed with attendees indicating students feel safe in the school. Students who attended the Success Academy indicated they like the school

under study with a significance of $p \leq .01$. Teacher informants indicated that the Success Academy supported the development of both student-teacher and student-student relationships. Relationships formed during the Success Academy existed and persisted in both the short and long term for students and teachers alike. Teachers felt more aware of the instructional and social-emotional needs of students. The class dynamic was established and familiar earlier for both teachers and students and teachers felt they knew the names of more students than in pre-Academy years. Teachers indicated they felt as if they had a shared experience with students that helped them bond, establish rapport and trust, and carry that relationship into the start of the school year with positive results. Student-student relationships were also noted to have been formed during the Success Academy. Students who attended were more likely to help other students in need, regardless of whether they knew them. Success Academy attendees from different middle schools often formed friendships that teachers believed had existed before the Success Academy.

Research Question 3 explored the effectiveness of the Success Academy at acclimating students to academic environments within the school of study.

RQ 3: Does the Success Academy acclimate first time ninth grade students to the academic environments within the school of study?

Acclimation to academic environments as a result of participation in the Success Academy is not definitively effective. Statistically significant ($p \leq .001$) differences in the first marking period grades of Success Academy attendees compare to nonattendees did not exist for the 2011-2012 school year but did for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school

years. Success Academy attendees appear to experience greater academic success during the first marking period than students who did not participate. Statistically significant ($p \leq .001$) differences in the retention rate of first-time ninth grade students who participated in the Success Academy compared to those who did not are inconsistent as well. Statistical significance existed for the 2011-2012 school year. Statistical significance did not exist at the level prescribed by this study for the 2012-2013 school year but did exist at $p \leq .05$. Teacher informants, however, indicated that the Success Academy had little to no direct impact on student academic achievement. Academic gains, if present, were believed by teachers to be a result of improved relationships with students, teacher knowledge of incoming students, and data collected during the Success Academy. Academic gains were not perceived by teachers to be a result of academic activities conducted during the Success Academy.

Overall effectiveness of acclimation to transition environments is measured through changes in academic outcomes. Teacher informants indicated that program structures do not necessarily have an impact on academic achievement yet students who participate are clearly more familiar with the physical layout of the building and expectations. Students who attended the Success Academy also appear more confident and have relationships established with peers and teachers before the school year begins. Teachers are better able to plan instruction for these students and note a more positive classroom culture in classes with larger numbers of Success Academy attendees. Considering the administration of the archival DSCS-S occurred a week into the school year, Success Academy nonattendees may have been influenced by their peers who

attended the Success Academy (Blythe, Simmons, & Bush, 1978) and had enough time to acclimate to school environments which may have lessened differences in perceptions that may have been in place on the first day of school. This could account for the differences in perception reported between students and teachers. Additionally, if the Success Academy was effective at acclimating students to the physical and social transition environments, it is reasonable to conclude the impact would manifest itself in greater academic achievement (Eccles et al., 1993; Fenzel & O'Brennan, 2007; Nelson & DeBacker, 2008; Riina-Ruus et al., 2007; Roeser et al., 1996; Smith 1997), possibly through improved first marking period course grades and a decreased retention rate of first-time ninth grade students. Issues surrounding the reliability of DSCS-S data may be mitigated through the discernible improvement in student achievement for those students who attended the Success Academy.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The project for this study is an attempt to take the most successful elements of the Success Academy and to condense the program down to one day for all first-time incoming ninth grade students. First-time ninth grade students will engage in a variety of experiential activities designed to acclimate them to physical, social, and academic environments within the school of study. Participating students will receive and follow their school year schedule, meet each of their teachers, become familiar with the new physical layout and institutional changes, and engage in activities designed to promote teamwork and develop interpersonal skills. The primary goal of this project is to provide the school of study an alternative to the current program in the event of future funding restraints. A secondary goal is to provide a framework for other schools looking to develop their own transition programs for first-time ninth grade students.

Weiss and Bearman (2007) reviewed literature surrounding the transition to ninth grade and confirmed ninth grade as a predictor for future high school academic success. The literature also indicated poor performance during freshman year could lead to a higher risk of dropping out (Weiss & Bearman, 2007). Neild et al. (2008) found, despite other factors, the ninth grade experience significantly contributes to a students' probability of completing high school. A central area of concern was the transition to ninth grade. Cushman (2006) noted that students desired bridge programs during the summer after eighth grade in order to familiarize themselves with the campus, forge relationships, and make academic inroads. Findings from my study indicated that the

Success Academy was generally effective at acclimating students to all three environments, yet 40% of the incoming class at the research site receives no structured acclimation to new environments.

The school of study currently offers a voluntary 8-day summer transition program to all incoming first-time ninth grade students. This program is known as the Success Academy and typically draws attendance from 60% of the incoming freshman class. Reaching the remaining 40% with a program that addresses the concerns of transitioning first-time ninth grade students is the primary goal of this project.

Description and Goals

The goal of this project is to create a 1-day transition program for first-time ninth grade students that successfully acclimates them to the physical, social, and academic environments within the school of study. The new transition program draws from effective components of the current program, as indicated by this study. The secondary goal of this project is develop the framework of an effective 1-day transition program that can be utilized by other schools seeking to develop or refine their own transition program. The schedule of activities for this transition program can be found in Appendix A.

First-time ninth grade students will arrive at the school at 8am and find a table with the first letter of their last name. They will sign in with student volunteers and collect their school year schedule, locker information, lunch number, a T-shirt, as well as the schedule for the day. Once receiving these materials, each students will proceed to his or her locker to locate and open it and then to the auditorium. Students will then

participate in an assembly for approximately 45 minutes. The assembly will consist of a welcome message from their new principal, and overview of the school's priorities and available extracurricular activities, dress code, school rules, and other elements of the transition to high school deemed relevant to the transition. The assembly will conclude with an overview of the day's activities as well as instructions to students for how read their school year schedule. Students will be dismissed from the auditorium to begin their rotation sessions that will last until lunch. Student volunteers will lead groups of students to their designated area and assist them with the transition between activities.

Acclimation to physical, social, and academic environments begins with the three rotations. Physical acclimation is centered around the scavenger hunt activity. Students will follow the sequence of locations for this activity as indicated in Appendix A. Participation in the scavenger hunt should support students in developing their mental map of the school (Hannes et al., 2012). Moore, Kerr, and Hadgraft (2011) and Segrist and Nordstrom (2007) previously indicated that scavenger hunts help students become more familiar with physical locations and resources. Martinez, Williams, Metoyer, Morris, and Berhane (2009) found that students engaging in scavenger hunts generally exhibit engagement and motivation to complete the associated tasks.

Acclimation to social environments occurs through participation in team building activities commonly used at challenge courses (Gillis & Speelman, 2008). These activities support students in developing trust (Farini, 2012), relationships (Glass & Benshoff, 2002), and social skills (Dyson & Plunkett, 2012), which can lead to increased feelings of leadership, hope, and efficacy (Odello, Hill, & Gomez 2008). Challenge

activities will be positioned at key locations of interest, not conflicting with scavenger hunt locations, around the building. Most activities will last approximately 15 to 20 minutes, and students will rotate through these activities. Activities will be facilitated by teachers of nonninth grade students. Student leaders and other teachers in the building, including ninth grade teachers, will act as participants in the activities to serve as positive role models for the ninth grade students (Roybal, Thornton, & Usinger, 2014). A list of team building activities is included in Appendix A.

Acclimation to academic environments takes part in two stages. The first stage occurs before lunch during the My Plan session. A guidance counselor will lead the session and introduce students to how grades are calculated and the effect of a zero on a student's final grade. Students will also learn about athletic eligibility, promotion and graduation requirements, and complete the Letter to Myself activity found in Appendix A. Students will place the letter in a signed envelope and return it to the guidance counselor. The letter will be opened during the student's spring scheduling conference (Education Partnerships, Inc., 2014).

Following the conclusion of the morning session, students will all report to the cafeteria for lunch. Students will be introduced to cafeteria rules and procedures and obtain lunch using their lunch number. Lunch will conclude at 1:05pm. The second stage of academic environment acclimation occurs after lunch when students follow an abbreviated version of their first marking period schedule. Students will meet each of their teachers, receive their syllabus, and partake in other activities as deemed appropriate by the individual teacher. Each session will last approximately 10 minutes. Student

volunteers will be positioned throughout the building to assist students with finding their way between classes.

The transition program concludes with students returning to the auditorium. Students will be presented with a giant diploma to sign as part of their individual commitment to graduate from high school. The group will then take a class picture in front of the diploma. The photograph will be placed in the yearbook as well as hung next to the diploma in the cafeteria. The diploma will be hung in the cafeteria for the duration of the school year. The day will end with closing remarks from the students' principal and a brief recap of what students can expect on the next day of school when all students are present. Students will be dismissed and exit the building by passing between two lines of teachers and student volunteers who will be applauding and expressing their desire to see them tomorrow.

Review of the Literature

Students transitioning to high school have indicated numerous fears about the transition. There is fear about catching the wrong bus, being late to class, getting lost, and being unable to open their lockers (Andrews & Bishop, 2012; Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006). The addition of new teachers, the possible amount of homework, and older students in the school also cause anxiety (Uvaas & McKevitt, 2013). The transition is especially problematic for students considered "at risk" (Tilleczek, 2007). When transitioning, students need to acclimate to new policies, building layouts, and teacher practices (Andrews & Bishop, 2012). Schools providing supports for transitioning students were found by MacIver and Epstein (1991) to report lower dropout rates than

schools that provided minimal transitional supports. Students may derive their sense of belonging from school climate and social relationships with both students and teachers (Roybal et al., 2014).

Elements of Effective Transition Programs

Studies by Kennelly and Monrad (2007) and Thorne (2001) indicated that schools across the United States have taken many different approaches to addressing the issue of the ninth grade transition. Smith (1997) concluded that transition programs were effective and may reduce the propensity of participants to not complete high school by up to twenty percent. Andrews and Bishop (2012) concluded that a relatively common practice is to give students access to the high school prior to the arrival of other students in order to provide time to acclimate to the new environment. Summer programs may last for varying periods of time and be targeted at various demographic groups within the transitioning cohort or seek to address specific areas of need for transitioning student in general (Gleason, Boykin, Johnson, Bowen, Whitaker, Micu, Raju, & Slappey, 2010; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Lawrence, McNeal, & Yildiz, 2009). The developmental changes being experienced by adolescents were categorized at this time as being physical, cognitive, emotional, and psychological with a fear of becoming lost in new physical environments as well (Ganeson & Ehrich, 2009). Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) found that transitioning students wished they had known more about finding their way around the building, locating classes, and how to identify requirements for graduation.

Shanahan (2000) argued that human development is essentially a series of interactions between a human and their environment. Life transitions do not need to be

stressful despite the disruption to social pathways and other structures that can result in stress (Benner, 2011). Creation of a support structure to guide students through these transitionary periods may result in a reduction in transition associated stress. Identification of program elements that will be most effective with adolescents and the transition to ninth grade are essential in supporting this transition. The Center for Supportive Schools (2014) recommended using juniors and seniors to serve as peer leaders and positive role models for incoming ninth grade students. Education Partnerships, Inc. (2014), in their research brief, states that effective high school transition programs provide high school tours, time with the high school counselors, problem solving and decision making practice, and opportunities for peer interaction and social support. Uvass and McKevitt (2013) found that transitioning students found self-guided tours of the school and meeting classmates and students as the most supportive supports for adjusting. Students need opportunities to build connections with their peers through fun and engaging activities small group activities (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006) that provide opportunities for individual attention (David, 2010). The use of experiential educational activities in an environment similar to summer camp (McCombs et al., 2011), using hands-on activities, combined with an element of physical activity and nonacademic activities was recommended by Terzian, Moore, and Hamilton (2009).

Adventure Education

The structure of this 1-day transition program draws heavily from that of adventure education programs. While adventure education programs tend to draw from

the natural environment, their key focus is on the development of cooperation, planning, persistence, and adaptability (Rhoades, 1972). Kurt Hahn (1957) devised the first Outward Bound program from which most adventure programs are derived, stressing character, challenge, and physical endeavor. Common features of these programs are small groups, mentally or physically challenging activities, interactions that involve group problem solving and decision-making, and a trained leader (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997). These programs are believed to lead to the development of self-control, self-esteem, positive self-concept, and other desirable attributes that are retained over time (Hattie et al., 1997). In their meta-analysis of adventure programs focus on diverse potential outcomes, Hattie et al. (1997) based 1,728 effect sizes from 151 samples in 96 studies. The authors found effect sizes maintained over time for confidence (.33), self-efficacy (.31), internal locus of control (.30), and decision-making (.47).

Social Emotional Learning

High school transition programs have the opportunity to guide students through opportunities for social-emotional learning with the aim of developing positive relationships (Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2013). One way to develop these skills is by using peer leaders conducting sessions and facilitating activities with ninth grade students (Johnson et al., 2013). The findings of Malecki and Elliott (2002) that a link exists between problem behaviors and future academic performance serves to underscore the importance of social-emotional learning for adolescents. Bandura (1997) suggested that students learn these skills partly through imitating those around them and by listening to others. The skills necessary for establishment of positive social relationships, such as

empathy, can be developed through character education programs that encompass teamwork and problem solving activities (Allen, Akinyanju, Milliken, Lorek, & Walker, 2011). Social-emotional programs are also believed to increase self-awareness and self-management skills such as setting goals and practicing both personal and interpersonal skills (Beland, 2007). Participation in social-emotional activities require students have the opportunity to feel supported in expressing their views, involved in decision-making processes, and to share power and responsibility in decision-making, all elements of cooperative and challenge activities that can be used for social-emotional development (Shier, 2001).

Social-emotional learning is a process by which children achieve life tasks through the integration of thinking, feeling, and behaving (Zins, Bloodsworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). Students become self-aware and responsible in relationship decision making to foster academic success. Schools are social places, necessitating support for students in developing and maintain relationships. Efforts to increase social-emotional competency can lead to reductions in bullying, improvements in school climate, student behavior, and academic outcomes (Bridgland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013).

Key social-emotional competencies include awareness of feelings, management of feelings, personal responsibilities, respect for others, problem identification, problem solving, active listening, expressive communication, cooperative negotiation, and help seeking (Payton et al., 2000). Awareness of feelings includes the ability to be aware of one's own feeling as well as those of others and to understand contradictory feelings occur together at times. This ability to take perspective, avoid stereotypes, and respect

others is critical. They are the skills that allow students to identify a problem, set goals, develop solutions, and put the solution in place (Payton et al., 2000). Verbal and nonverbal means of communication are required for each of these steps as well as for the initial establishment, and maintenance of, productive interpersonal relationships. Engaging students in tasks that simulate this process is one way to provide the opportunity for practice of these skills.

Challenge Activities

Challenge activities are often used in adventure education. Low challenge course activities are commonly identified as activities that require spotters and focus on group problem solving and team building. They may, however, include group initiatives and trust activities (Gillis & Speelman, 2008). Challenge courses are often used today in camp, educational, and recreational settings (Gillis & Speelman, 2008). The authors conducted a meta-analysis of 44 controlled studies to determine if challenge courses are an effective tool and under what conditions. While definitions of challenge course activities, facilitator competence, and goals are varied, it was determined through effect sizes that programs with a developmental purpose produced medium effect sizes (d = .47). Developmental programs had an effect size of d = 1.33 in middle schools and d = .41 in high schools. Challenge activities may work well with students who do not respond well to traditional approaches and can be integrated when full-scale programming cannot be implemented (Moote & Wodarski, 1997).

Odello, Hill, and Gomez (2008) conducted a pre-posttest study using a t test to determine if participation in a challenge course has a positive effect on one's leadership

and work efficacy. Surveys were collected from 43 participants, using convenience sampling, who participated in challenge courses of different durations. Analysis was conducted at $p < .05$ using a two-tailed *t* test. The study lacked a comparison group but found that participation in the four-hour course significantly increased participants' levels of leadership and work efficacy. The effect remained over a six-week period. One of the activities that took place in the course was the Spider Web, which was used in this project.

Dyson and Plunkett (2012) noted that this type of cooperative learning activity helps build self-worth and supports social skill development. This learning is promoted through social contexts and is aligned with Kolb's (1984) definition of experiential learning that requires an element of critical reflection on the activity. Dewey (1938) argued that cooperative activities were not enough and that the activity must be oriented toward student interests and needs as well as be active and contain an element for reflection. The study by Dyson and Plunkett (2012) used focus groups and surveys and found that the use of cooperative activities can lead to the development of positive attitudes toward learning and engagement.

Challenge activities have been shown to have a positive effect on attributes associated with student achievement. Robitschek (1996) found, using the Hope Scale, that significant increases $p < .001$ in Agency and Pathways exists among students who participate in challenge courses. Participants felt more confident about being able to achieve their goals and to generate paths for doing so. Garst, Schneider, and Baker (2001) concluded in their mixed methods study that social acceptance and behavioral conduct

impacts were significant and remained for up to four months. Self-perception was also positively impacted. The authors believed this was partially due to the physical, mental, and emotional challenge associated with the experiential activities.

Challenge activities facilitate group cohesion by requiring members to work together to accomplish predetermined tasks (Glass & Benshoff, 2002). Teamwork and communication skills are required to be utilized and success is dependent upon the extent to which members cooperate. In their study of 167 adolescents using pre-post tests and stepwise linear regression, Glass and Benshoff (2002) found that participants perceived increased group cohesion as a result of participation in a challenge course program, indicating this type of course can support development of group cohesion among adolescents. The majority of participants were 12 years old and from one geographic region, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Rothwell, Siharath, Badger, Negley, and Piatt (2008) examined the verbal exchanges among participants participating in challenge activities and found 69.5% to be task related and purposeful with no associated, recognizable emotions. Students, once engaged in the activity, tend to remain verbally focused on task completion.

Trust is a risk adolescents take in action with adults. The establishment of trust between students and educators may be further complicated by the view that educators should be trusted simply because of their perceived expertise. Distrust in interactions with adults can exacerbate marginalization or self-marginalization (Farini, 2012). Trust may be built between these groups through interactive problem-solving activities, as communication is the key component of these interactions. Farini (2012) analyzed

videotapes of interactions between adolescents in peace education activities and examined the design of turns produced in the interactions between participants. Avoidance and the associated consequences may be attributable to a lack of trust. Priest (1998), in a study of 75 employees at a computer company, found that groups increased their overall trustworthiness ratings following program participation, as measured using a two factor ANCOVA and a control group. The program was also found to improve participants' levels of acceptance. Challenge activities may support the development of trust between teachers and students participating in this 1-day transition program.

Spatial Awareness

The term "mental map" is used in the field of Geography to describe one's knowledge base of location specific information (Hannes et al., 2012). This knowledge may include the ability to describe a route or estimate the distance between two points. Mental maps may contain routes, landmarks, or identifying features of areas that can be used for navigation purposes. These serve as anchor points for individuals that allow for the acquisition of further knowledge of a spatial environment. When faced with a decision problem, one's mental map may be used to determine alternate courses of action (Hannes et al., 2012).

Creation of geo-spatial activities for students is recommended to follow guidelines in order to facilitate the acquisition of spatial knowledge for decision-making purposes. Research by Moore et al. (2011) resulted in a framework for the creation of self-guided field trips for students. The researchers developed a self-guided field trip designed to direct 24 postgraduate engineering students to a set of water management

resources. This pilot let to a full-scale trial for 260 students, facilitated through an electronic learning management system. Subsequent trials involved 550 students over two semesters. Students overwhelmingly indicated favorably regarding the structure and benefit of the experience. Moore et al. (2011) recommend choosing appropriate locations for visits, providing guidance materials, and the development of projects that students can feel connected to accompanied by significant questions that can be investigated.

Martinez et al. (2009) indicated that the ability to mentally rotate objects, images, or the self is included in spatial thinking. In sharing a geospatial scavenger hunt they used with K-12 students, the authors noted students exhibited a high degree of engagement and motivation and became more capable of describing their location in relation to other objects. Segrist and Nordstrom (2007) conducted a scavenger hunt of psychology department resources with 144 undergraduate college students to determine if this format increased students' awareness, and potential use, of these resources. A pre-posttest design was used in conjunction with a paired samples *t* test. Participants responded to a 5-point Likert style survey after completing the activity. Students reported greater familiarity with the available resources as well a belief indicating the activity was effective and enjoyable. Students also worked collaboratively and developed team skills. Increased familiarity with all scavenger hunt elements was significant at $p < .001$.

The findings from my study indicated that students who participated in the Success Academy were more comfortable navigating the building than their peers who did not participate. Participants seemed to have a more familiar relationship with their teachers by the first day of school due to early and close interaction that took place during

the Success Academy. Students attending the Success Academy also indicated a more positive perception of the safety of the school environment and clarity of rules and procedures than those who did not participate. Participants were also significantly less likely to be retained in ninth grade, which may have been a result of familiarity with classroom academic expectations and requirements for promotion and graduation. Insider program knowledge on the part of the researcher has allowed me to select the Success Academy program components that were specifically related to these attributes of acclimation in order to condense the program to one day. This inside information also facilitated development of the time schedule for these activities, as I am familiar with the amount of time necessary for meaningful completion. All activities displayed in this project are directly linked to program outcomes from the current version of the Success Academy.

The literature review initially began with an exploration of the elements necessary for a successful ninth grade transition program. Research for the literature review then focused on the actual activities that would be used in the project as well as transitional concerns of students moving from eighth to ninth grade. The activities are primarily experiential in nature and already conducted during the current version of the Success Academy. Research consisted of searches for the effectiveness adventure courses and challenge activities first. Expansion into how students learn spatial awareness and the effectiveness of scavenger hunts came next. Social emotional learning was also explored as many of the challenge activities develop these skills. All research was conducted using the Walden University databases

Discussion of Project

Existing Supports and Potential Barriers

Support for the current 8-day version of the Success Academy currently exists, as implied by the attendance rate and continued implementation by the district of study. An extension of the Success Academy was recently approved, and funding allocated, by the school board. It is likely that support would also exist for a scaled down program that may address the same transitional concerns as the full version of the program at a substantially reduced cost. Resources for many of the challenge activities are already purchased for standard district maintenance and instructional needs and may still exist from prior implementations of the Success Academy. The school of study has a positive rapport with many local businesses that may support funding or fundraising should the need arise. Training manuals from the current version of the program already exist and would need only modification for the new structure to remain relevant.

Three main barriers to implementation exist. The first barrier is the possible need to adjust the school calendar so that the first day of the academic year is for first-time ninth grade students to be the only students in the building. Adjustments to the school calendar can be problematic due to contractual and union agreements. Implementation of this project relies on the first student day being exclusively for first-time ninth grade students and that the entire building staff is expected to report. Working closely with any existing teacher unions and the school board will be essential for surmounting this obstacle in the event it exists.

The second barrier to implementation is generating support from teachers who do not teach ninth grade students or do not feel the program is necessary or worthwhile. Teachers who participate in implementation but fail to do so with fidelity will send the wrong message to students and can undermine the feeling of a supportive and caring school environment. All teachers should be made aware of the likely societal repercussions associated with students who do not complete ninth grade as well as the literature on school transitions. Additionally, staff should be made aware of student retention rates, and summer school rates, within the school and/or district. This may support staff in finding the relevance of the transition program and importance of their committed participation in the initiative.

The final major barrier to implementation is funding. The National Civic League (2012) found that a "high quality" program could range in cost from $1,109 to $2,801 per student. Funding staff is largely taken care of by utilizing a student day but there is still the cost of materials and promotional items. Many materials can be used for multiple years before replacement is necessary. First year costs for team building materials is approximately $1,000 and T-shirts, magnets, and other promotional materials will cost approximately $4,000. Transportation and lunch costs will vary dramatically by location. I recommend reaching out to local businesses and searching for grant opportunities to support funding of promotional items. The school Principal may also consider using building budget funds if available to support funding of promotional materials and giveaways for students and shirts for staff.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Project implementation will be a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, data collection, reflection, and refinement. Implementation will be managed by a team of teachers and support staff within the building, representing primarily teachers of ninth grade students but also teachers from elective and intervention courses. Members of the school's leadership team should be part of the process as well. A timeline of activities is outlined in Table 21.

Table 21

Timeline for Project Implementation

Month	Key Stakeholders	Tasks
September	Planning Team, Student Volunteers	Implement program, clean up and inventory materials, collect data
October	Planning Team	Reform planning team, schedule team meetings, analyze data, reflect and begin planning process
November	Planning Team	Form planning team committees, set committee deadlines
December	Planning Team	Schedule presenters
January	Planning Team	Finalize challenge activities
February	Planning Team	Verify materials inventory, generate initial purchasing list
March	Planning Team	Begin identifying student volunteers
April	Planning Team	Purchase materials (challenge activities, giveaways, incentives, etc.)
May	Planning Team	Complete presentations and scavenger hunt content and materials
June	Planning Team, Student Volunteers	Assign summer responsibilities
July	Planning Team, Student Volunteers	Confirm student schedules, organize purchased materials, complete training packets
August	Planning Team, Student Volunteers	Print student schedules, set up challenge activities, make and hang signs, confirm staff responsibilities, train student volunteers and staff, schedule publicity

Program implementation will require the support of building and district level administrative staff so the planning team should take great care to keep these stakeholders informed during the planning process. In addition, whenever possible, purchasing decisions should be finalized as early as possible and ordered with enough lead time to ensure the planning team can adjust for any delivery delays and spread spending across multiple fiscal years if necessary. Planning and implementation is a process that will require additional time during the school year so it is important to ensure that leaders are identified, deadlines established, and regular progress meetings take place to avoid last minute scrambling at the end of the school year.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others

Student volunteers will be needed to assist with program preparation and implementation. These volunteers should be positive role models for incoming freshmen and represent areas of the greater school community that can support transitioning students with integration into extracurricular environments. Duties of these volunteers may include making signs, organizing paperwork, helping new students find their way around the school, facilitating challenge activities, and other tasks as needed. The use of student volunteers may help transitioning students establish relationships with upperclassmen and alleviate feelings of anxiety associated with the transition to new social environments (Blythe, Simmons, & Bush, 1978).

Teachers and other building staff will serve in defined roles during the transition day. Teachers will be expected to be in their classrooms during class period times if they teach first-time ninth grade students. Teachers who do not teach these students will be

expected to participate during program activities. Duties may include participating in challenge activities, supporting the scavenger hunt, collecting and organizing materials and student volunteers, and helping answer student questions and assisting with student navigation and miscellaneous concerns. Support staff will prioritize positive interactions with transitioning students to help form student-teacher relationships that can support the transition experience (Roeser et al., 1996).

Project Evaluation

Type of Evaluation

Outcome based formative evaluation will be used for evaluating the effectiveness of the project. The project will be evaluated using two data sources: the results of yearly administration of the DSCS-S to all first-time ninth grade students and longitudinal analysis of the first marking period grades of first-time ninth grade students and the retention rate of first-time ninth grade students.

Justification of Evaluation Type

On the day immediately following the 1-day transition program, all first-time ninth grade students will be administered the same version of the DSCS-S as is currently administered at the school of study. Use of the DSCS-S will provide insight into acclimation to physical and social environments and the results of the study can be reported to the school of study by the Delaware Positive Behavior Support group as is currently done. The results are typically reported using descriptive statistics but this could be easily manipulated for statistical analysis by the school of study. The survey will be readministered at the conclusion of the school year in order to determine if any change in

acclimation to environments or perception of the environments exists. This will help determine if student perception changes during the course of the year because of school structures.

Outcomes

Student achievement data comprises the second data source. First marking period course grades and the retention rate of first-time ninth grade students will be collected each year. Data are readily available and the same sources were used by this research study. First marking period course success will serve as a leading indicator of the transition to academic environments. The retention rate will allow the school of study to determine if course success, or a lack thereof, is maintained or changed through the year and whether this is attributable to the transition program or other school structures. These data sources will provide insight into the effectiveness of specific program elements on the transition to the physical, social, and academic environments. The school should use the transition program planning team to set thresholds for success to be evidenced within the data to determine the level of program success.

Project Implications

Implications for Social Change

The aim of this 1-day transition program is to provide a cost-effective alternative to the current Success Academy model that can also be used by other schools in the development of their own transition programs. Successfully acclimating transitioning students to physical, social, and academic environments should lead to a decrease in the ninth grade retention rate and an increase in the graduation rate. The project provides

activities supported by this research study to be effective at acclimating students to these environments as well as supported by literature to affect student skill acquisition and promote social and emotional development.

The project promotes positive social change by reducing student fears surrounding the transition to ninth grade. Students may become more likely to feel connected to the school, more familiar with its physical layout and processes, and to experience academic achievement (Roeser et al., 2006). First-time ninth grade students who attend a successful transition program may be more likely to move to 10th grade with their cohort and to graduate from high school.

Project Importance

The project is important to the local community because it helps the school of study identify areas of strength and weakness of the Success Academy for program planning purposes. The project also provides a mechanism for the school of study to look at adjusting the program based upon revenue projections and staff availability. The Success Academy appears to be popular within the community based upon the approximate attendance rate of 60% for the voluntary program. Revenue constraints could threaten program extinction but this project provides an alternative that is flexible, engaging, and easily evaluated. The project could support the school of study in reducing the retention rate of first-time ninth grade students and reducing the corresponding dropout rate.

The 1-day transition program can benefit schools across the country by providing a framework for the development of their own transition programs. The study upon which

the project was developed did not seek to be generalizable but the findings from the study shed light onto specific types of activities that teachers and students felt supported the transition to physical, social, and academic environments. The identified activities were then examined and combined into a schedule that allowed the experiences of highest value to be compressed from an eight day to a 1-day program. This framework can be used by other schools to identify locally relevant activities to be used in their own transition programs as well as providing suggestions for how to evaluate a program of this nature for effectiveness. Ultimately, effective programs may lead to greater academic success in ninth grade, translating to higher graduation rates and benefits on the local, state, and national level.

Conclusion

Students transitioning to ninth grade tend to be concerned with elements of the transition to physical, social, and academic environments. The 1-day acclimation program is a set of structured activities designed to impactfully expose students to these environments in a way that, sustainable, effective, and easily replicated.

Section 3 of the project study was based upon the findings of the study's data analysis. This section outlines the goals of the study, reviews literature associated with the selected acclimation program activities, and lays out a timeline for implementation. Project evaluation and implications for social change are discussed as well as implications.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This section begins with an assessment of the project's strengths and moves into ways the research study informing the project can be improved and its limitations remediated. Later topics in Section 4 consist of reflections on the doctoral process and my development as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. Discussion of the project's potential for social change occurs as well. Section 4 concludes with the implications of the research, applications, and recommendations for future research.

Project Strengths

The primary strength of the project is sustainability. It will be easy to add, remove, and substitute program components at little financial cost. Student activities are easily located, materials sourced, and constructed. Materials can often be reused simply by reprinting, and presentations can be updated as promotion and graduation requirements change. Transportation and staff costs are already present as the proposed program takes place on the first student day when buses would already be running and staff reporting to work. The largest extraneous cost is providing lunch to students free of charge. This is mitigated by students who would already receive free or reduced lunch subsidized by the federal government. The largest costs are the ones most easily removed if funding constraints increase. This includes the cost of promotional materials and incentives such as shirts, magnets, and other items.

Secondary project strengths include activities that are experiential and age appropriate. The activities build upon life requisite skills such as navigation, cooperative

learning, problem solving, and long and short range planning and goal setting. Students develop skills that will pay dividends in ninth grade onward.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

The most notable limitations of this study surround the research method itself. A case study was used to explore acclimation to the physical, social, and academic environments, but limitations in the data sources themselves hampered the reliability of the data and, in turn, the generalizability of the study. Demographic data of Success Academy attendees was not collected. Knowing if the program was more or less effective with specific demographic groups and students with specific academic, social, and economic histories would have shed greater light on the general effectiveness of the program and allowed for more comprehensive quantitative analysis. The data would also have enabled the school of study to later predict the likelihood of success for program attendees and develop other interventions for students meeting specific profiles.

Students who attended the Success Academy should also be followed further into their academic careers. A longitudinal approach would allow the school of study to determine if the effect of the program diminishes or persists into later grades. Student academic and social trajectories could be followed and predicted in order to gain greater insight into the impact of the program on graduation rates. A longitudinal approach should also be followed with the DSCS-S. The survey should be administered on the first or second day of school in order to get a more accurate measure of differences in perception of these environments between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees. The survey should then be readministered later in the school year in order to determine if

all students acclimate and share similar perceptions of school environments. Student surveys or focus groups should also be used to get student feedback on the program for planning purposes in order to keep the program relevant and engaging. Combining survey responses to student names, demographic data, and longitudinal achievement would provide a better picture of any possible predictive or long-term impact of the Success Academy and allow the school of study to develop more targeted follow-up interventions for students not positively impacted by attending the Success Academy.

Scholarship

I learned a great deal about scholarship through the research process. I learned the importance of sourcing from a wide variety of sources and how to evaluate sources for accuracy, validity, and bias. This same critical lens must be used on my own research and thought processes. The process also emphasized for me the importance of the planning process and seeking input from others, even if their ideas are not the same as mine. Nobody is perfect and every project benefits, as does every stakeholder on the project, from the insights and experiences of others. These feedback loops are essential for well-developed research, projects, and practices. Scholarship is not just about gathering information, learning, and retaining. It is also about listening and collaboration.

Project Development and Evaluation

The project study developed from my professional involvement with the Success Academy at the school of study. I recognized a need to determine if the program was having a positive impact on students. This would be necessary in helping the district determine whether to continue funding the program or how to make changes that would

allow the program to continue and be successful. The results of my research surprised me because I did not anticipate that the social element of the program would be so connected to academic success in the eyes of teachers. Seeing the impact of the program also made me consider the cost and that it is likely not affordable to many schools and districts. I sought to consider the elements of the program likely to have had the greatest impact as indicated by the data and create a cost-effective, sustainable, 1-day acclimation program consisting of the greatest value activities.

Evaluation of any program is essential. It is my recommendation that the one day program detailed in this project be evaluated through the administration of the DSCS-S and continued examination of academic achievement data. These data sources are readily available and easily collected and analyzed. They are also able to help protect against researcher bias and to protect participants' identities, important elements of research I learned about along this journey.

Leadership and Change

The doctoral journey has had a noticeable impact on my perceptions of both leadership and change. Leaders are not necessarily identifiers or solvers of problems; they are the ones that help guide organizations toward realizations and solutions in meaningful, effective ways. This process should build capacity from within by incorporating and valuing multiple stakeholders in all parts of the process while moving toward the accomplishment of a shared mission using a shared set of values. When leaders leave, their departure should not be felt. The organization should be in a position

of positive movement, possess a collaborative atmosphere, and be able to develop independently of the leader who guided the process.

Change is necessary and inevitable. I believe the change itself is not something to fear or embrace, it is just part of an ongoing cycle that forces reflection and innovation. The development of this project, and the entire doctoral journey, drove this realization home for me when I sat down to look at how I have changed over time and now possess a skill set and attributes to support my personal development as well as the development of the people and organizations with whom I work. Our perception of change and the change process is what defines the change. The world certainly is not static, nor should we be.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

The doctoral journey has provided many opportunities to reflect upon my skills and shortcomings as a scholar. Learning new things and exploring new topics has always been a passion of mine, more so than the research itself. The doctoral journey has taught me to look beyond the obvious connections between topics and methods and to question in a more practical way how these elements of the world around us can be linked and mutually beneficial as opposed to viewing content as compartmentalized and exclusive to particular disciplines.

As a scholar, I also learned to appreciate more greatly the need to be organized, methodical, and to incorporate the feedback and ideas of others into both my research and writing. It is easy to want to rush forward toward task completion in order to feel accomplished, but the quality of the product and its accuracy and usefulness must take

priority over timelines and recognition. The perspectives of others are critical to the development of socially impactful research for both the short and long term. Scholarship is not a solitary process but one that requires collaboration, cooperation, and an ability to appreciate the value in the contribution of others.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

The doctoral journey has greatly influenced me as a practitioner in ways I did not anticipate. The doctoral process made me a more critical thinking and questioner. The surface layer of both problems and solutions, while most apparent, are also the most superficial and, when relied upon, crumble upon the weight of the needs of professionals and those we serve. I have gained an appreciation for a well-constructed planning process, the importance of needs-assessments and explorations into root causes, and implementation and evaluation timelines driven by practicality rather than when quick data is simply desired. Professional practice is a process in which people, processes, programs, thoughts, and actions evolve and work together over time. The doctoral journey has made me a more thoughtful, inclusive, and reflective practitioner.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

Development of this project was a process with which I was already familiar from my personal professional experience. Developing the project based upon the results of my own research was not, however. I tremendously enjoyed having insight into the development and conduction of a research study of practical value on a local and somewhat personal level where I could not only see the impact of the existing program

that was explored but also recommend how to modify it based upon readily accessible data from a variety of sources driven relevance and value by rather than accountability.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

A one day acclimation program developed using research into successful transition programs as well as the transitional concerns of students, teachers, and parents may be useful in addressing student difficulty with the transition to ninth grade. The completed project describes a sustainable program with activities believed by both students and teachers to have successfully supported students with this transition to new physical, social, and academic environments. Creation of a smoother transition to ninth grade may lead to more students successfully progressing to 10th grade with the rest of their cohort and feeling more positively connected to the greater school community. Feelings of academic and social success may thus support students through the later grades and increase the likelihood of these students graduating from high school whereas in the past, they may have potentially become high school dropouts.

Research supports the negative consequences of failing to complete high school and the connection to ninth grade (Jimerson et al., 2006; Neild et al., 2008; Weiss & Bearman, 2007). Increasing graduation rates through greater success in ninth grade can lead to lower crime rates, lower unemployment, a more skilled workforce, less dependence on social support systems, and greater economic revenue (Bornsheuer et al, 2011; Fields, 2008; Heath, 2011; Levin, 2009). The impact of improved trajectories and outcomes may be felt at local, state, and national levels and benefit all levels of society.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Increasing graduation rates through improved success in ninth grade has potentially significant benefits for society. Development and implementation of successful transition programs may lead to lower retention rates, higher graduation rates, and wide-ranging impacts on the criminal justice system, earning power, and local, state, and national tax revenues. The National Association of School Psychologists (2013) took the position that progress monitoring, universal screening, early intervention, and summer programs are more appropriate than retention. The findings from this study suggest that summer programs can be an effective way of addressing retention rates in ninth grade by supporting the transition to new physical, social, and academic environments prior to the start of the school year.

The findings from this study may assist other schools in the creation of their own programs to address their freshman transition experience. Application of this study should focus on supporting the decision making process of high schools attempting to address their ninth grade retention rate. Summer transition programs may be an effective way to acclimate students to new ninth grade environments. The attendance rate of the Success Academy is approximately 60% of the incoming cohort. The program can be inferred to be popular within the community yet may not be reaching some students who would benefit from the program the most. Simply modeling a program after the Success Academy does not guarantee attendance from underserved populations, nor does it mean the program will serve the unique needs of any specific local community. Schools seeking to apply the findings from this study should be careful not to over generalize and

should be wary of the impact of the concurrently implemented Freshman Academy on the academic outcomes of students.

Several key limitations exist within this study that can guide future research. The demographic characteristics of students who both participated in and did not attend the Success Academy were not collected or considered within this study. The demographic composition of Success Academy attendees as well as their academic histories would be useful in shedding light upon the composition of students of the Success Academy and the likelihood of attendees experiencing success or failure in ninth grade regardless of participation. Longitudinal performance of Success Academy attendees was not considered either. Teacher perception was mixed regarding the long-term impact of the program on academic success.

Future research following attendees through their high school careers is advisable. When considering longitudinal academic achievement of ninth grade students at the school of study, it is important to note that a Freshman Academy was instituted at the same time as the Success Academy. The impact of the Freshman Academy structures may have had an impact on student achievement and perception not accounted for in this study.

Finally, the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student was administered approximately one week after the school year began. This delay in administration may have given nonattendees time to gain familiarity with the building, form relationships, and generally acclimate to the school environments. The survey should be administered on the first or second day of school in order to get a more accurate measure of differences

in perception of these environments between Success Academy attendees and nonattendees. The survey should then be readministered later in the school year in order to determine if all students acclimate and share similar perceptions of school environments. Combining survey responses to student names, demographic data, and longitudinal achievement would provide a better picture of any possible predictive or long-term impact of the Success Academy.

Conclusion

The project study is a one day acclimation program for students transitioning to ninth grade for the first time. The one day program is based upon the findings of a case study exploring the effectiveness of the eight day Success Academy at acclimating these students to physical, social, and academic environments within the school of study. The Success Academy is effective to this end and elements of the Success Academy most directly linked to positive results in the data were used in the creation of the one day program. The project was designed to provide a framework for a cost-effective one day transition program that will help students transition to ninth grade in hopes of progressing to 10th grade with the rest of their grade level cohort and eventually graduating from high school.

References

Akos, P., & Galassi, J. (2004a). Gender and race as variables in psychosocial adjustment to middle and high school. *Journal of Educational Research*, *98*(2), 102-108. doi:10.3200/JOER.98.2

Akos, P., & Galassi, J. (2004b). Middle and high school transitions as viewed by students, parents, and teachers. *Professional School Counseling*. *7*(4), 212-221. Retrieved from ERIC.

Allen, K., Akinyanju, K., Milliken, T., Lorek, E., & Walker, T. (2011). Improving the pro-social skills of transitioning urban youth: A summer camp approach. *Middle School Journal*, 14-22. Retrieved from ERIC.

Andrews, C., & Bishop, P. (2012). Middle grades transition programs around the globe. *Middle School Journal*, *44*(1), 1-18. Retrieved from JSTOR Journals.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of self control*. New York, NY: Freeman.

Battin-Pearson, S., Newcomb, M. D., Abbott, R. D., Hill, K. G., Catalano, R. F., & Hawkins, J. (2000). Predictors of early high school dropout: A test of five theories. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *92*(3), 568-582. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.92.3.568

Bear, G., Gaskins, C., Blank, J., & Chen, F. F. (2011). Delaware school climate survey-student: Its factor structure, concurrent validity, and reliability. *Journal of School Psychology*, *49*, 157-174. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2011.01.001

Beland, K. (2007). Social and emotional learning hikes interest and resiliency. *Principal Leadership*, *7*, 16-21.

Benner, A., & Graham, S. (2009). The transition to high school as a developmental process among multiethnic urban youth. *Child Development*, *80*(2) 356-376. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01265.x

Blyth, D., Simmons, R., & Bush, D. (1978). The transition into early adolescence: A longitudinal comparison of youth in two educational contexts. *Sociology of Education*, *51*, 149-162. Retrieved from JSTOR Journals..

Boeije, H. (2002). A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method in the analysis of qualitative interviews. *Quality & Quantity*, *36*, 391-409. Retrieved from SocINDEX.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bornsheuer, J., Polonyi, M., Andrews, M., Fore, B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. (2011). The relationship between ninth-grade retention and on-time graduation in a southeast Texas high school. *Journal of At-Risk Issues*, *16*(2), 9-16. Retrieved from ERIC.

Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Hariharan, A. (2013). The missing piece: A national teacher survey on how social and emotional learning can empower children and transform schools. Retrieved from: http://static.squarespace.com/static/513f79f9e4b05ce7b70e9673/t/526a2589e4b01768fee91a6a/1382688137983/the-missing-piece.pdf

Buhrman, B. R. (2010). *Impact of a ninth-grade transition program on cumulative GPAs and credits, ninth-grade dropout rates, and student satisfaction* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order

No. 3396308)

Butts, M. J., & Cruzeiro, P. A. (2005). Student perceptions of factors leading to an effective transition from eighth to ninth grade. *American Secondary Education, 34*(1), 70-82. Retrieved from ERIC.

Cauley, K., & Jovanocich, D. (2006). Developing an effective transition program for students entering middle school or high school. *Clearing House, 80*(1), 15-25. doi:10.3200/TCHS.80.1.15-25

Center for Supportive Schools. (2014). *Peer group connection: Ensuring that all 9th graders make a successful transition to high school*. Retrieved from: http://supportiveschools.org/solutions/peer-group-connection/

Charles, C.M. (2002). *Building classroom discipline*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Chen, G., & Weikart, L. (2008). Student background, school climate, school disorder, and student achievement: An empirical study of New York City's middle schools. *Journal of School Violence, 7*(4). doi:10.1080/15388220801973813

Chin, T., & Phillips, M. (2004) Social reproduction and child-rearing practices: Social class, children's agency, and the summer activity gap. *Sociology of Education, 77*, 185-210. doi:10.1177/003804070407700301

Cooper, R., & Markoe-Hayes, S. (2005) Improving the educational possibilities of urban High school students as they transition from 8th to 9th grade. UC/ACCORD. Retrieved from:http://ucaccord.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/improving-the-educational-possibilities

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating*

quantitative and qualitative research (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Cushman, K. (2006). Help us make the 9th grade transition. *Educational Leadership*, *63*(7), 47-52.

David, J. (2010) Some summer programs narrow learning gaps. *Educational Leadership*, 78-80.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience in nature*. New York, NY: Dover Publications, INC.

Dyson, M., & Plunkett, M. (2012). Making a difference by embracing cooperative learning practices in an alternative setting: An exciting combination to incite the educational imagination. *Journal of Classroom Interaction, 47*(2), 13-24. Retrieved from ERIC.

Eccles, J., & Roeser, R. (2009). Schools, academic motivation, and Stage-Environment Fit. *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*. 404-434. doi:10.1002/9780470479193.adlpsy001013

Eccles, J., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C., Reuman, D., Flanagan, C., & Mac Iver, D. (1993). Development during adolescence: The impact of Stage-Environment Fit on young adolescents' Experiences in schools and in families. *American Psychologist*. 48(2), 90-101. Retrieved from PsycArticles.

Education Partnerships Inc. (2014). Research brief: Successful transition to high school. Retrieved from: http://educationpartnerships.org

Ellerbrock, C. R., & Kiefer, S. M. (2010). Creating a ninth-grade community of care. *The Journal of Educational Research, 103*(6), 393-406. doi:

10.1080/00220670903383085

Ellerbrock, C.R. (2012). Creating a family-like ninth grade environment through interdisciplinary teaming. *Urban Education*, 47:32. doi:10.1177/0042085911427736

Farini, F. (2012). Analysing trust building in educational activities. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 53, 240-250. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2012.03.013

Fenzel, L., & O'Brennan, L. (2007, April). *Educating at-risk urban African American children: The effects of school climate on motivation and academic achievement.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Fields, G. (2008, October 21). The high school dropout's economic ripple effect. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122455013168452477.html

Fram, S. (2013). The constant comparative analysis method outside of grounded theory. *Qualitative Report*, *18*(1), 1-25.

Freund, R., & Wilson, W. (1998). *Regression analysis: Statistical modeling of a response variable*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Ganeson, K., & Ehrich, L. (2009). Transition into high school: A phenomenological study. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *1*(41) 60-78. doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2008.00476.x

Garcia, L., & Paz, C. (2009). Evaluation of summer bridge programs: Former students

take stock. *About Campus*. doi:10.1002/abc.299

Garst, B., Scheider, I., & Baker, D. (2001). Outdoor adventure program participation impacts on adolescent self-perception. *Journal of Experiential Education, 24*(1), 41-49. doi:10.1177/105382590102400109

Gaspard, M., Burnett, M., & Gaspard, C. (2011). The influence of self-esteem and selected demographic characteristics on first semester academic achievement of students enrolled in a college of agriculture. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 52*(4), 76-86. doi:10.5032/jae.2011.04076

Gillis, H., & Speelman, E. (2008). Are challenge (ropes) courses an effective tool? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Experiential Education, 31*(2), 111-135. doi:10.5193/jee.31.2.111

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Pub. Co.

Glass, J., & Benshoff, J. (2002). Facilitating group cohesion among adolescents through challenge course experiences. *Journal of Experiential Education, 25*(2), 268-277. doi:10.1177/105382590202500204

Gleason, J., Boykin, K., Johnson, P., Bowen, L., Whitaker, K., Micu, C., Raju, D., & Slappey, C. (2010). Integrated engineering math-based summer bridge programs for student retention. *Advances in Engineering Education*, 1-17. Retrieved from EBSCO*host*.

Gutman, L., & Eccles, J. (2007). Stage-Environment Fit during adolescence: Trajectories of family relations and adolescent outcomes. *Developmental Psychology, 43*(*2*),

522-537. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.43.2.522

Hagenauer, G., & Hascher, T. (2010). Learning enjoyment in early adolescence. *Educational Research and Evaluation*. *16*(6), 495-516. doi:10.1080/13803611.2010.550499

Hahn, K. (1957). *Outward Bound*. New York, NY: World Books.

Hannes, E., Kusumastuti, D., Espinosa, M., Janssens, D., Vanhoof, K., & Wets, G. (2012). Mental maps and travel behaviour: Meanings and models. *Journal of Geogrphic Systems*, 14: 143-165. doi:10.1007/s10109-010-0144-2

Harvard Family Research Project. (2006). Summer success: Challenges and strategies in creating quality academically focused summer programs. *Harvard Graduate School of Education*, 9: 1-14. Retrieved from: http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/publications-resources/summer-success-challenges-and-strategies-in-creating-quality-academically-focused-summer-programs.

Hattie, J., Marsh, H., Neill, J., & Richards, G. (1997). Adventure education and Outward Bound: Out-of-class experiences that make a lasting difference. *Review of Educational Research*, *67*(1), 43-87. doi:10.3102/00346543067001043

Hauser, G., Choate, K., & Thomas, T. (2009). A two-year study of stakeholder perceptions associated with the transition from 8th grade to high school. *International Journal of Learning*, *16*(3), 315-326. Retrieved from EBSCO*host*.

Heath, D. (2011). Economic effects of dropping out of high school or college. *Social Science Medley*. Retrieved from: http://www.socialsciencemedley.com/2011/04/effects-of-dropping-out-of-

school.htm

Heck, T. (2009). Spider's Web. Retrieved from: http://www.duct_tape_teambuilding_games_sample_game_2.pdf

Hewitt-Taylor, J. (2001). Use of constant comparative analysis in qualitative research. *Nursing Standard*. *15*(42), 39-42. doi:10.7748/ns2001.07.15.42.39.c3052

Ilic, M. (2011). *Effects of a summer bridge intervention program on 9th grade academic performance.* (Doctoral Dissertation). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 183. Retrieved from ProQuest. (881645768)

International Business Machines (2011). IBM SPSS [computer software]. New York, NY: IBM.

Jimerson, S. (2001). Meta-analysis of grade retention research: Implications for practice in the 21st century. *School Psychology Review, 30*(3), 420-437. Retrieved from EBSCO*host*.

Jimerson, S. R., Pletcher, S. W., Graydon, K., Schnurr, B. L., Nickerson, A. B., & Kundert, D. K. (2006). Beyond grade retention and social promotion: Promoting the social and academic competence of students. *Psychology In The Schools, 43*(1), 85-97. doi:10.1002/pits.20132

Johnson, V., Simon, P., & Mun, E. (2013). A peer-led high school transition program increases graduation rates among Latino males. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 107:3, 186-196. doi:10.1080/0022067.2013.788991

Jordan, W. (2001). *At-risk students during the first year of high school: Navigating treacherous waters*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Paper

presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Association, Seattle, WA.

Kennelly, L., & Monrad, M. (2007). Easing the transition to high school: Research and best practices designed to support high school learning. *The National High School Center*. Retrieved from: http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_TransitionsReport.pdf

Kmiec, C. (2007). *Freshman academies and the transition to high school: An investigation of stage-environment fit theory*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Florida, FL.

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Langenkamp, A. (2009). Following different pathways: Social integration, achievement, and the transition to high school. *American Journal of Education*. doi:0195-6744/2009/11601-0003

Langenkamp, A. (2010). Academic vulnerability and resilience during the transition to high school: The role of social relationships and district context. *Sociology of Education*, *83*(1), 1-19. doi:10.1177/0038040709356563.

Lawrence, S., McNeal, K., & Yildiz, M. (2009). Summer program helps adolescents merge technology, popular culture, reading, and writing for academic purposes. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 52*(6). doi:10.1598/JAAL.52.6.3

Levin, H. (2009). The economic payoff to investing in educational justice. *Educational Researcher*, *38*(1), 5-20. doi:10.3102/0013189X08331192

Lodico, M., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtle, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice* (Laureate Education, Inc., custom ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

MacGregor, M. (2008). *Teambuilding with teens: Activities for leadership, decision making, and group success*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

MacIver D. & Epstein, J. (1991). Responsive practices in the middle grades: Teacher teams, advisory groups, remedial instruction, and school transition programs. *American Journal of Education, 99*, 587-622. doi:10.1086/443999

Malecki, C., & Elliott, S. (2002). Children's social behaviors as predictors of academic achievement: A longitudinal analysis. *School Psychology Quarterly, 147*(1), 1-23. doi: 10.1521/scpq.17.1.1.19902

Martinez, A., Williams, N., Metoyer, S., Morris, J., & Berhane, S. (2009). A geospatial scavenger hunt. *Science Scope*, 18-23. Retrieved from EBSCO*host*.

McCallumore, K., & Sparapani, E. (2010). The importance of the ninth grade on high school graduation rates and student success in school. *Education 130*(3). 447-456. Retrieved from ERIC.

McCombs, J., Augustine, C., Schwartz, H., Bodilly, S., McInnis, B., Lichter, D., & Cross, A. (2011). Making summer count: How summer programs can boost children's learning. RAND Education. doi:10.1037/e525802012-001

McCoy, A. R., & Reynolds, A. J. (1999). Grade retention and school performance: An extended investigation. *Journal of School Psychology, 37*(3), 273-298. doi:10.1016/s0022-4405(99)00012-6

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Montgomery, D., & Peck, E. (1992). *Introduction to linear regression analysis* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Moore, G., Kerr, R., & Hadgraft, R. (2011). Self-guided field trips for students of environments. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, *36*(2), 107-118. doi:10.1080/03043797.2010.546832

Moote, G., & Wodarski, J. (1997). The acquisition of life skills through adventure-based activities and programs: A review of the literature. *Adolescence, 32*(125). Retrieved from the Academic OneFile.

National Association of School Pyschologists. (2013). Grade retention and social promotion. Retrieved from: http://www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/positionpapers/WhitePaper_GradeRetentionandSocialPromotion.pdf

National Civic League. (2011). Summer counts: Making summer programs part of the learning equation. Wiley Periodicals. doi:10.1002/ncr.20081

Neild, R., Stoner-Eby, S., & Furstenberg, F. (2008). Connecting entrance and departure: The transition to ninth grade and high school dropout. *Education and Urban Society*, *40*: 543-569. doi:10.1177/0013124508316438

Nelson, R., & DeBacker, T. K. (2008). Achievement motivation in adolescents: The role of peer climate and best friends. *Journal Of Experimental Education*, *76*(2), 170-189. doi:10.3200/JEXE.76.2.170-190

Odello, T., Hill, E., & Gomez, E. (2008). Challenge course effectiveness: The impact on leadership efficacy and work efficacy among college students. *Journal of Unconventional Parks, Tourism, and Recreation Research, 1*(1), 18-22.

Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Payton, J., Wardlaw, D., Graczyk, P., Bloodworth, M., Tompsett, C., & Weissberg, P. (2000). Social and emotional learning: A framework for promoting mental health and reducing risk behavior in children and youth. *Journal of School Health, 70*(5), 179-185. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2000.tb06468.x

Pekrun, R., Goetz, T., Titz, W., & Perry, R. (2002a). Academic emotions in students' self-regulated learning and achievement: A program of qualitative and quantitative research. *Educational Psychologist, 37*(2), 91-105. doi:10.1207/s15326985ep3702_4

Pekrun, R., Goetz, T., Titz, W., & Perry, R. (2002b). Positive emotions in education. In Beyond coping: Meeting goals, visions, and challenges. E. Frydenberg (Ed.), *Beyond coping: Meeting goals, visions, and challenges* (149-173). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Pereira, A., & Pooley, J. (2007). A qualitative exploration of the transition experience of students from a high school to a senior high school in rural Western Australia. *Australian Journal of Education, 51*(2), 162-177. doi:10.1177/000494410705100205

Priest, S. (1998). Physical challenge and the development of trust through corporate

adventure training. *The Journal of Experiential Education*, 21:1, 31-34. doi: 10.1177/105382599802100107

Rennie, D. L. (2006). The grounded theory method: Application of a variant of its procedure of constant comparative analysis to psychotherapy research. In C. Fischer (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods for psychologists: Introduction through empirical studies* (pp. 59-78). Burlington, MA: Academic Press

Residence Life. (2014). Archie Bunker's Neighborhood. Retrieved from: http://www.life.arizona.edu/docs/default-source/social-justice/archiebunkersneighborhood.pdf?sfvrsn=2

Rhoades, J. (1972). *The problem of individual change in Outward Bound: An application of change and transfer theory* (Doctoral dissertation), Dissertation Abstracts International. (4922A)

Rinna-Ruus, V., Veisson, M., Leino, M., Ots, L., Pallas, L., Silvia-Sarv, E., & Veisson, A. (2007). Students' well-being, coping, academic success, and school climate. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *35*(7), 919-936. doi:10.2224/sbp.2007.35.7.919

Robitschek, C. (1996). At-risk youth and hope: Incorporating a ropes course into a summer program. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 45: 163-169. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.1996.tb00266.x

Roeser, R., Midgley, C., & Urdan, T. (1996). Perceptions of the school psychological environment and early adolescents' psychological and behavioral functioning in school: The mediating role of goals and belonging. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *88*(3), 408-422. doi: 10.1037//0022-0663.88.3.408

Rothwell, E., Siharath, K., Badger, H., Negley, S., & Piatt, J. (2008). The emotional dynamics of a group during a challenge course experience. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, 8:2, 113-131. doi:10.1080/14729670802539453

Roybal, V., Thornton, B., & Usinger, J. (2014). Effective ninth-grade transition programs can promote student success. *Education*, *134*(4), 475-487. Retrieved from Opposing Viewpoints in Context.

Shanahan, M. (2000). Pathways to adulthood in changing societies: Variability and mechanisms in life course perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 667-692. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.667

Sherblom, S., Marshall, J., & Sherblom, J. (2006). The relationship between school climate and math and reading achievement. *Journal of Research in Character Education*, *4*(1 & 2), 19-31. Retrieved from the Walden University database.

Shier, H. (2001). Pathways to participation: Openings, opportunities, and obligations, *Children & Society*, 15, 107-117. doi:10.1002/CHL.617

Skills Converged. (2014). *Toxic Waste*. Retrieved from: http://www.skillsconverged.com/FreeTrainingMaterials/tabid/258/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1010/Teambuilding-Exercise-Handle-Toxic-Waste.aspx

Smith, J. (1997). Effects of eighth-grade transition programs on high school retention and experiences. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *90*(3), 144-152. doi:10.1080/00220671.1997.10543770

Smith, J., Akos, P., Lim, S., & Wiley, S. (2008). Student and stakeholder perceptions of the transition to high school. *The University of North Carolina Press*.

Straksis, M. (2010). *Impact of a highly structured transition program on 9th grade achievement.* Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (763612904).

Terzian, M., Moore, K., & Hamilton, K. (2009). Effective and promising summer learning programs and approaches for economically-disadvantaged children and youth. *Child Trends*, 1-42. doi:10.1037/e616472009-001

Thorne, N. J. (2001). *Perceptions of academically at-risk students of an ease-of-transition program from eighth to ninth grade.* Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (252151741)

Tilleczek, K. (2007). *Fresh starts/false starts: A review of literature on the transition from elementary to secondary school*. Paper presented at the Ontario Education Research Symposium, Toronto, Ontario.

Triola, M. F. (2012). *Elementary statistics: Technology update*. (11th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

University of Delaware. (2013). Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project. Retrieved from: http://wordpress.oet.udel.edu/pbs/school-climate/de-school-climate-survey/

Uvaas, T., & McKevitt, B. (2013). Improving transitions to high dchool: A review of current research and practice. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 57:2, doi:10.1080/1045988X.2012.664580

Washington State University. (2014). *Acid River*. Retrieved from: http://dsa.csupomona.edu/osl/studentmanual/files/Acid_River_1.pdf

Weiss, C., & Bearman, P. (2007). Fresh starts: Reinvestigating the effects of the transition to high school on student outcomes. *American Journal of Education.*

395-421. doi:10.1086/512738

Yang, C., Bear, G., Blank, J., Zhang, W., & Huant, X. (2013). Students' perceptions of school climate in the U.S. and China. *American Psychological Association*, *28*(1), 7-24. doi:10.1037/spq0000002

Zin, J., Bloodworth, M., Weissberg, R., & Walberg, H. (2004). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say? *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, *17(*2-3), 191–210. doi:10.1080/10474410701413145

Appendix A: The Project

Transition Program Schedule

Time	Duration	Activity	Location (s)	Notes
8am-8:45am	45 minutes	Check in	Main Lobby to Auditorium	Students receive schedule, lunch number, promotional materials
8:45am-9:30am	45 minutes	Welcome Assembly	Auditorium	How to read schedule, expectations, rules, dress code, sports, etc.
9:35am-Noon		Rotations		
	1 hour	My Plan	Auditorium	Students receive information about credits, promotion, graduation, grade calculation, etc. from Guidance Counselor
	45 minutes	Scavenger Hunt	Inside building	Three rotations within this with staggered start times
	45 minutes	Team builders	Gym, athletic fields, appropriate locations	Locations must be published and provided to students with signs directing. Rotate on 20 minute interval
12:35pm-1:05pm	30 minutes	Lunch	Cafeteria	Explain procedures, eat lunch
1:15pm-2:25pm	1 hour 15 minutes	Meet teachers	Follow 7 period schedule for first marking period	
1:08pm-1:18pm	10 minutes	Period 1	Classroom	Hand out syllabus, introduce self, preview of course/style
1:21-1:31pm	10 minutes	Period 2	Classroom	Hand out syllabus, introduce self, preview of course/style
1:34pm-1:44pm	10 minutes	Period 3	Classroom	Hand out syllabus, introduce self, preview of course/style
1:47pm-1:57pm	10 minutes	Period 4	Classroom	Hand out syllabus, introduce self, preview of course/style
2pm-2:10pm	10 minutes	Period 5	Classroom	Hand out syllabus, introduce self, preview of course/style
2:13pm-2:23pm	10 minutes	Period 6	Classroom	Hand out syllabus, introduce self, preview of course/style
2:26pm-2:36pm	10 minutes	Period 7	Classroom	Hand out syllabus, introduce self, preview of course/style
2:40pm-3:05pm	25 minutes	Send off	Auditorium	Students sign giant diploma, class photo, preview of tomorrow
3:05pm		Dismissal		

Scavenger Hunt

9th grade:

- Guidance Office

  -What are some of the resources available to students in guidance? Who is the students' Guidance Counselor freshman year?
  Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
  Who is your guidance counselor?

- In-school suspension room

  - Summarize rules of In School Suspension

  - Decision making that can lead you to ISS – outlining types of offences & levels of offences, including the Extended Day Program

  Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
  Name one violation that will result in ISS.

- Freshman assistant principal

  - Personal Decision Making

  - Why might you be sent to your Assistant Principal?

  Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
  In what wing is your Assistant Principal located?

10th grade:

- Large Group Instruction room

  Overview of AP-(Advanced Placement) What is it? What types of courses are available? What are some benefits of taking an AP class?
  Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
  How do you earn college credits in high school?

- MAIN OFFICE/LOBBY --Attendance Office (Late to Class)

Overview of the main office: Who is in there? What are some reasons a student might need to go there (sign in/out, visit their Principal post freshman year, Dean of Students, absent notes)
Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
If you arrive at school late, who needs to sign you in so that you are not recorded as unexcused tardy?

- Driver's Education (Cafeteria front)

  Who is eligible to take DE? Drivers Ed can be taken during the summer, etc.
  Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
  What class requires you to have 5 credits to take, two of which need to be English and math?

11th grade:

- Wellness Center hallway

  What is Wellness Center? What is the difference between Wellness and the Nurse?
  Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
  What must you have completed in order to visit the Wellness Center?

- Library

  Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
  How can the library help you to be academically successful?

- World Language classroom

  Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
  How many world language credits do you need to graduate?

12th grade:

- School Resource Officer's office

  What are some reasons that you might need to visit the SRO?
  Key question students need to answer before leaving this station:
  What is one offense that might cause you to have to visit the School Resource Officer?

- Cafeteria (rear). Students who successfully complete questions report here for a piece of cake.

Scavenger Hunt Questions

9th grade questions

1. Who is your guidance counselor?

2. Name one violation that can result in In School Suspension:

3. In what wing is your assistant principal located?

10th grade questions:

1. How do you earn college credits in high school?

2. If you arrive at school late, who needs to sign you in so that you are not recorded unexcused tardy?

3. What class requires you to have 5 credits to take, two of which need to be English and math?

11th grade:

1. What must you have completed in order to visit the Wellness Center?

2. How can the library help you to be academically successful?

3. How many world language credits do you need to graduate?

12th grade:

1. What is one offense that might cause you to have to visit the School Resource Officer?

2. How many credits do you need to graduate?

Archie Bunker's Neighborhood

Purpose of Activity: To get students to understand the effects that stereotypes and discrimination can have on various groups.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

By actively participating in this activity, participants will:

1. Experience the discrimination that some groups experience.
2. Recognize oppressive systems in government, housing, law enforcement and other institutions.

Timeline:

For the first 10 minutes: Let every group progress towards designing and constructing their section of the city. After 10-15 minutes: Start to treat the groups differently. Chamber members can start to distribute the snacks and invitations to join. Police can start patrolling the groups. The Storekeepers can have sales and clearances. Mayor can begin to gift buildings and items. Anytime after 30 minutes: Wrap up and have your groups present their communities.

Materials Needed:

Tables

4 pieces of butcher paper of varying sizes for the groups

Paper for constructing buildings

Blank paper for building permits

Nametags to distinguish the groups

Fake money (totaling about $2000)

Art supplies (glue, tape, markers, pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks)

5-6 non-participants to act in roles

Ground Rules:

Be fully present and participate at your own comfort level – challenge by choice.

Listen respectfully, and encourage others to participate.

Respect that everyone is at a different place with the things we discuss today.

Show respect for one another's beliefs, values, and experiences.

Respect and maintain privacy.

Set-Up:

You are the mayor of a town and have charged four groups with redesigning the city. The four groups are the Orange, Blue, Green and Purple. Students should be gathered into groups randomly but not before the 5-6 actors have been designated their roles. Each group will have a finite amount of time to design the city based on the length of the program. The city's design should be based on what the group needs in the city.
Each group will be given a piece of butcher paper and a section of the room to work in. They need to remember that any building needs to be approved by the Building Inspector and any materials need to be purchased from the Storekeeper.

Group Descriptions:

These descriptions give directions as to how the groups should be treated by the mayor and the rest of the townspeople. Be sure to let everyone acting read these descriptors but not the group members.

- The **Orange Group** is privileged in this activity. They will have every advantage possible. They will never be arrested by the police or even hassled. They will begin with the most amount of money: $500. This group gets the best snacks from the Chamber of Commerce and two will even become members. They never have to wait in line at places and always get their building permits approved no matter how they are filled out.
- The **Purple Group** has fewer opportunities than the Orange Group. Their permits usually have a few correctable mistakes and get approved. They get snacks from the Chamber and have one member selected from them. They begin with $460, less than the Orange Group. They typically get warnings from the police before being arrested or ticketed.
- The **Blue Group** has even fewer advantages than the Purple Group. They often get their paperwork wrong and are dismissed to go try it again. This group is ticketed or arrested more than the first two groups. They have the opportunity to have one of their group members interview to become part of the Chamber. They begin the activity with $420.
- The **Green Group** is arrested/ticketed more than any other group. Their building permits are often wrong and ripped up. They are assigned more fees than any other group. They begin with $400. The Chamber won't be bothered with this group because they aren't business owners and they never will be.

Townspeople:

There are several townspeople that are there to help the Mayor. These are people who are not playing the game but helping to facilitate the program. They should be designated in the beginning before groups are selected. This is how each person should act during the game. Do not break character. Characters include the Police Officer, Secretary, Building Inspector, Storekeeper and 1-2 Chamber of Commerce Members. Each has a different set of tasks to keep the activity moving forward.

As **Mayor**, you are the facilitator and are able to break character if need be. In the mayor role, you favor the Orange Group and will often gift them things to help their community. You don't go into the less privileged places due to "safety concerns."

The **Building Inspector** is a lot more accessible for the more privileged. You have to approve every building that can be built. These approvals cost anywhere from $20-$100 at the discretion of the inspector. Go around and inspect the different buildings being made. If they don't meet your standard, you can correct the group and/or fine them for their mistakes.

The **Secretary** is highly irritated with the amount of people who need to see the Mayor and Building Inspector. When the inspector is "unable" to see anyone, you look over the forms. You are kind to the privileged but are not against ripping up the forms of the Green Group for the slightest error.

The **Storekeeper** sells any materials necessary to complete the buildings. You determine how much to sell items for and when to have sales and clearances. Items should be sold in increments of $20. Some items can be available for rental.

The **Police Officer** is there to arrest and fine anyone who violates the "law." You can send people to jail for an allotted amount of time (3-5 minutes). You hang around the lower privilege areas more because they are "criminals." The Orange Group never does anything wrong, and the Purple group can be issued warnings.

The **Chamber of Commence** is a welcoming organization for those who are doing great things in the city. You take the time to stay within the privileged places and bring the privileged people snacks. You give the Orange Group an opportunity to have two groups members join and the Purple group gets one. The Blue group can have someone interview to join but they are rarely accepted. The Green group is ignored.

Discussion Questions:

What are your initial reactions to the activity?

What were some of the barriers to creating the community you wanted?

What were the other groups going through? Did you notice anything?

How can you relate this to real life?

If each group represented a social class, which one would you be in?

What does it feel like to be in the Green group in reality? Orange Group?

If this was race, who would be in the top group? Bottom? Middle? Why?

After doing this activity, how do you think it will affect your future experiences?

(Residence Life, 2014)

Spider's Web

Group Size: 8 – 16

Time: 20 – 30 minutes (without debrief)

Set Up Time: 15 minutes

Amount of Duct Tape Required: 40 - 50 feet

Game Objective

The entire group must travel through the duct tape spider's web.

Set Up / Preparation

Build a spider's web:

1. When building the spider's web, your number one concern is the safety of the participants.

2. The standard method for building a spider's web indoors is to stack chairs (that are designed to be stackable) to make two columns each measuring approximately five feet tall. If your stacked chairs are unstable don't do this activity.

3. The two columns of stacked chairs should be approximately eight feet apart.

4. Now it is time to create the actual "spider's web" by stringing the duct tape from one column of chairs to the other. The fastest and easiest stringing pattern is to create a grid , starting with the horizontal pieces of duct tape first and completing the grid by stringing the vertical pieces of duct tape last (refer to the photos). The holes should measure approximately 30 inches square. Smaller holes make the game harder. Consider creating your web with a combination of smaller and larger holes.

5. Safety note: It s imperative to lightly attach the duct tape to the two columns of chairs. This will help prevent the chairs from falling over (and on top of people) should someone push on the duct tape. If the duct tape is lightly attached to the chairs and the duct tape is pushed, the duct tape should easily come off the chairs.

6. If you do not want to use stacks of chairs, you can create the duct tape spider's web between other things such as wide doorways, trees, columns, etc.

Presenting the Challenge

1. Ask the team to stand on one side of the spider's web.

2. Presentation Script: "Your challenge is to travel from the side of the spider's web you're now on to the other side. You must follow and obey the following rules throughout the game." [read the rules below]

Rules

1. Team members must travel through the spider's web. You can't travel over, under or around it.

2. Participants may not alter the spider's web.

3. No member of the team may touch the spider's web (duct tape) at any time no matter what side of the spider's web they're on.

4. Should a touch occur, offer the group one or a combination of the following penalties:

• The person who touched must go back.

• The entire team starts over again.

Pass 2 people through that are connected together.

• Allow the group to decide on an appropriate penalty.

5. Once an individual successfully makes it through a hole, that hole is closed (see "Variations" below).

6. Participants may not jump or dive through web openings. Anyone traveling through the web must be spotted.

7. Only the supplied equipment may be used. Do not supply the group with any additional equipment. This rule will keep the group from using boards or other devices to help them travel through the web openings.

Safety Warning

1. Because lifting is involved, this is considered an advanced game. If you have anything less than advanced facilitation and leadership skills do not attempt this game.

2. If you (the facilitator) ever feel the group is operating in an unsafe manner you must immediately stop the game.

3. People with knee, shoulder or back injuries should not participate.

4. If possible, place a pad (gymnastics mat) on the ground underneath the spider's web. This will provide a cushion should someone fall to the ground during this game.

Story Line

"Your team is traveling through the Amazon jungle and the path you must take has a giant spider's web across it. There is no way around this so you must travel through the spider's web. Don't touch the spider's web or the giant spider will wake up and chase you!"

Facilitator Notes

1. Due to the fact that lifting and spotting is involved, I consider this an advanced

teambuilding game. Not all teams are ready for this activity.

2. During this game you (the facilitator) will be right in there with the group spotting them.

You need to encourage everyone else to be safe during the game as well.

3. Some groups may want to practice passing people through the web prior to actually starting. Allowing the group to practice on the web itself can take away some of the unknown aspects of the activity. If you do decide to let the group practice, consider setting some limitations on the practice (time, number of tries, etc.). Practice can always be held in another area with the group imagining the actual spider's web.

Debriefing Suggestions

Because this activity requires team members to help each other pass through openings, it lends itself to debriefing questions such as: a team right now that we aren't utilizing fully? What openings would we like to create?

• This game required a balance of planning and doing. What is true about how our team balanced these two during the game that is also true about how we balance the two in real life? Are there important lessons about the balance between planning and doing that we must understand to move forward as a team?

• When being passed through the web you were faced with trusting your teammates to take care of you. What noticeable and measurable changes would happen on our team if we trusted each other 10 times more? (Heck, 2009)

The Hillary Step

This activity replicates the experience of climbers as they approach the summit of Mt. Everest. There is only one rope for all climbers to clip onto as they move both up and down the mountain. Therefore, climbers must pass each other on this rope, with a sheer fall of thousands of feet on either side of them. In order to do this, climbers walk up to each other, one will unclip from the line and, while holding on to the other climber, walks around them and then re-clips on the other side.

There will be two athletic benches placed end to end on the ground and a rope suspended beside the benches. Wrestling mats will be on the ground around the benches. Students must move from one end of benches to the other (go up and down the mountain). Upon reaching the first end, they may rest for up to one minute before they need to move back down the mountain to where they started. The goal is for the entire group to complete the task without anyone falling off the benches to their death. Whenever someone falls, the entire group must start over from the beginning.

Magic Carpet

Students are split into groups of 8 to 12 people. The team is given a tarp or rug that is explained to be a magic carpet. All team members will stand on the carpet and are told:

> You are on a magic carpet, thousands of feet up in the sky. The directions for steering the carpet are on the bottom of the carpet. You are not going anywhere because your carpet is upside down. The object is to get the entire group to stand on the "bottom" of the carpet without anyone falling off.

Nail Balance

The objective of this game is to balance an even number of nails (6-8) on the head of a single nail that has been nailed into a board. This can be done either individually or in groups.

Path of Life

The objective of this game is to get the entire group to cross the path from one side of the room to the other. Lay laminated construction paper on the ground in a 7x7 grid. Show participants possible directions they can travel (left, right, diagonal, forward). No backwards movement or jumping. They must use the tiles to cross one person at a time. The facilitator secretly creates a path to cross in his/her mind. Participants line up and the first person steps on a pad. If the choice was correct, they may move again. If not, a horn or whistle is sounded and that person's turn is over and the next student starts at the beginning. The next person begins and tried to remember the correct choices made by the students in front of him/her. This continues until all members have made it across without anyone making a mistake. If someone makes a mistake, the entire group starts over.

Marble Roll

The objective of this game is to move a marble from one point to another by having it roll through a series of pieces of PVC pipe without stopping or falling out. Students are given pieces of pipe of various length but not enough pipe to span the entire distance. Each piece of pipe has a color on the end that indicates which end of the other pieces of pipe may be attached to it (red to red, green to green, blue to blue, etc.). Once the marble is placed in the pipe, it cannot be slowed or stopped by the participants and any pipe with the marble in it cannot be moved from its place.

Acid River

Objective:

1. To emphasize the responsibility in teamwork and the connections everyone plays in accomplishing the group's goals.
2. To allow for observation of team interaction while exploring problem solving, communication skills, cooperation, planning, roles and expectations.

Group Size:

Groups of 12-24

Materials:

Carpet Squares (1 tile for every 2 people)

4 lengths of rope

Instructions:

1. Make the river wide enough to be a challenge for the group to get from one side to the other (look at about 15 – 25 ft.) Mark the river with rope.

2. Distribute the carpet squares – 1 tile for every 2-4 people.

3. Explain to the group that the river is acid and will eat up everything that touches it, except for the magic tiles. However, the magic tiles must be touched at all times they are in the river**.** If the tile is not touched it is lost, swept away in the current.

4. Everyone must get over to the other side of the river. If any one touches the river, or falls (a foot half on the tile and touching river, hands in, whatever), everyone must go back and start again.

5. No scooting or sliding on the squares. This can be a safety issue and it emphasizes

individual work versus teamwork.

6. Once the group has started the process, your role is to take carpet squares that are "swept away by the current" and to watch for safety issues.

7. The facilitator can take away (or give) carpet squares arbitrarily.

Processing Questions: Instruct participants to speak from their own experience.

1. What happened during the process? What worked? What didn't or what hindered the process?

2. Was leadership demonstrated during the process? How so? What did you observe?

3. What were the individual roles people played? Were members comfortable with their roles?

4. Who knew what the process for crossing was? How did you communicate the plans to group members? (Washington State University, 2014).

Toxic Waste

Purpose

In this team building exercise, the group must work together to handle toxic waste symbolized by an object.

Objective

Transport toxic waste from one location to another.

Timing

Explaining the Exercise: 5 minutes

Activity: 10 min planning + 20 min activity = 30 minutes

Group Feedback: 10 minutes

What You Need

- Several golf balls. This represents the toxic waste.
- Ropes.
    - You need two 10m pieces of ropes for marking areas.
- Two cans. You can use empty cans of Pringles or those used to pack tennis balls.
- String. These can be used as supplies by the team.
- Scissors.
- Bicycle rubber tube.
- A fairly large area. You can also carry out this exercise outdoors.
- Blindfolds.

Setup

Mark two circles on the floor with two ropes. Make each circle about 3m in diameter and allow 4m distance between them.

- Place one empty can at the center of one circle. Place another can with several golf balls in it at the center of the other circle.
- Explain that the task is to move the container of toxic waste from one circle to the other while observing *safety regulations*. They must then place the contents of the can into the empty can to neutralize the toxic waste.
- The *safety regulations* are as follows:
    - All personnel must keep a safe distance of 1.5m from the toxic waste.
    - Anyone who breaches this safe distance will be radiated and his participation level will be affected. If part of a body breaches the area, it becomes dysfunctional.
- Provide the equipment to the team.
- Use the following guidelines while monitoring the team's activities:
    - Start with warnings about breaching the safe distance so delegates can have a chance to learn the game. If repeated, issue statements such as:
        - You cannot use your hands anymore.
        - You have radiated your legs and cannot use them anymore.
        - You have lost your eyesight (provide blindfolds that the person should wear for the rest of the game).
        - You have lost your voice and cannot talk to others.

- If the toxic waste is dropped, everyone dies. Reset the exercise and get them to start from the beginning.

- Allow 5 to 10 minutes for planning and preparation.
- Allow 20 minutes for them to carry out the task.
- Once completed, congratulate them and then follow with a discussion.

Discussion

Did you nominate a leader to coordinate your activities?

- Did you utilize every team member's specific skills and talent?
- Were you happy with the way the team completed the task?
- What areas of the exercise did you find most challenging and why?
- (Skills Converged, 2014).

Bank Robbery

LEARNING CONCEPTS

- Problem solving
- Teamwork and group dynamics
- Communication skills

(25–40 MINUTES)

This activity is a fun way for groups of all ages to work through a problem that relies on every member's input for the solution. Each participant is given an essential piece of information about a fictional bank robbery that has taken place, and group members must work together, using the clues to solve the crime. The activity illustrates the importance of organization in group problem solving and highlights ways the group can improve their teamwork to solve real problems they may encounter in the future. At the same time, it reinforces the fact that all team members have something valuable to contribute and that it is important to consider everyone's viewpoints, ideas, and information when problem solving.

GOALS

Participants will:

- learn to involve and rely on all members to accomplish a task
- strengthen communication and teamwork skills in a group setting
- clarify how to solve problems and achieve goals despite possible roadblocks

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Scissors
- Handouts: "Bank Robbery Clues" (pages 140–141) and "Bank Robbery Key" (page 142)

GETTING READY

Make two copies of the "Bank Robbery Clues." Keep one for your reference; cut the other into individual clues, one for each group member. Fold the clues in half to hide the information on each slip. Enough clues are included for a group of 28. If you have fewer members, double up some clues so that random members receive more than one clue. If you wish, you can remove the last four clues for a total of 24 clues. Although not essential, the last four serve to further complicate the picture as teens work to solve the mystery. If your group has more than 28 members, have one teen serve as a timekeeper and any others as observers.

If you wish, make a copy of the "Bank Robbery Key" for yourself.

Organize the chairs in a large circle so teens can see one another.

Activity

When teens arrive, ask them to sit on a chair in the circle. Do not ask the teams to designate a leader. Explain the activity like this:

> You have just learned that a neighborhood bank in New York City has been robbed of one million dollars. This group is the detective team that is investigating the robbery and attempting to identify the thief or thieves. Each of the slips of paper I'm holding contains a clue about what happened. If you put all the facts together, you'll solve the mystery.
>
> There are a few rules to follow so the investigation is not compromised. First, you can organize the chairs in any way you want, but you're to remain in your seats—you may not get up and walk around the group while you're working. Second, you need to share the information in your clue orally—by talking. No passing clues around or showing them to anyone else, and no writing them anywhere either! Remember, everyone's clue is important.
>
> In addition to learning who committed the robbery, you need to figure out the alibis of the other people being investigated—where they actually were at the time the bank was robbed. Anytime the entire group agrees that it has an answer, you can tell me. If you're right, I'll tell you. If not, I will only tell you *whether* your answers are incorrect—not *which* ones are wrong. You'll have 25 minutes to talk together and try to solve the crime.

Answer any questions and then pass out the clues, making sure that people don't show them to others in the group.

If your group has observers, allow them to make minor suggestions to the group about how they can work together more effectively, but remind them not to suggest ideas about the solution.

As facilitator, stand unobtrusively outside the group and indicate every 5 minutes of time that passes. You may want to jot notes about the group's organization, how it works together, stumbling blocks, communication styles, and so forth. Refer to these when the group discusses the experience during "Talk About It."

Regardless of whether the group solves the mystery, end the process after 25 minutes. Allow teens a few minutes to go around the circle and share their clues. If the group didn't solve the crime, share the actual solution before discussing what happened during the activity.

Talk About It

Take 10–15 minutes to talk about the activity. Consider these discussion questions related to the group's experience:

- How did your way of working together change as the activity went along? What would you do in real life if the same thing were happening in a group you're a member of?
- If you figured out the mystery, was it easy or hard to do so? How did your group come up with the answer? If the group didn't figure out the mystery, what needed to happen in order for you to do so?
- Was a leader needed to accomplish this goal? If yes, who emerged as a leader? (Talk about how this leader emerged.) If not, what does this tell you about how your group solves problems without a leader?
- How did it feel to *need* every single person to take part in solving the crime? Was anyone overlooked or did anyone dominate the process? How did this affect your group's success? What steps can be taken to make sure everyone on your team is included when working toward a certain goal?
- What happened when someone forgot a clue or made an incorrect connection between clues? How did your group communicate and react in this situation?
- Were there any moments when you wanted to cheat—for example, by passing around the clues, laying them out in order, or walking around to see other people's clues? Why did you or didn't you do this? How does this relate to real-life situations where you receive clear instructions on what is acceptable for accomplishing a goal?
- If this had been an important real-life situation, how well would the team have done? Explain.

Wrapping Up

Encourage teens to observe the ways they solve problems when participating as individual members of a group. Also ask them to notice how people are included or excluded when decisions are made. Remind them to keep in mind what they've learned about listening to and counting on all members of the group and to apply it the next time the team encounters a decision-making situation.

Bank Robbery Key

The Charitys worked together to rob the bank. **Margaret Charity** supplied the front-door key that she had borrowed from **Mr. Moneybags**. Her brother, **George Charity**, supplied the dynamite.

Mr. Moneybags had already left for Mexico when the robbery took place.

Peter Smith was already in Atlantic City on the night of the robbery. **The Charitys** were lying when they tried to frame him for the robbery.

John Rosales was at **Aimee Chang's** parents' house.

There was no evidence that **Mr. Moneybags's** brother **John Poorman** had anything to do with the robbery.

Bank Robbery Clues

The robbery was discovered at 8:00 a.m. on Friday. The bank had closed at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday evening.

Margaret Charity, a teller at the bank, discovered the robbery.

The vault of the bank had been blasted open by dynamite.

The president of the bank, Mr. Moneybags, left before the robbery was discovered. Authorities at the Mexico City airport arrested him at noon on Friday.

The president of the bank had been arguing with his wife about money. He had talked frequently about leaving her.

The front door of the bank had been opened with a key.

The janitor and the president of the bank possess the only keys to the bank.

Margaret Charity often borrowed the president's key to open the bank early when she had an extra amount of work to do.

A strange person had been hanging around the bank on Thursday, watching employees and customers.

A large amount of dynamite had been stolen from the Acme Construction Company on Wednesday.

An Acme Construction Company employee, George Charity, said that a strange person had been hanging around the construction company on Wednesday afternoon.

The strange person who had been hanging around the bank and the construction company is John Rosales. John Rosales had recently dropped out of New York University and was found by police in East Baystream, about 10 miles from New York City.

John Rosales was carrying $500 when police apprehended him. He had thrown something into the river as the police approached.

Aimee Chang of East Baystream told police that she had bought $500 worth of genuine antique glass beads from John Rosales, and that she planned to resell them in her boutique in downtown East Baystream.

Bank Robbery Clues (continued)

Aimee Chang said that John Rosales had spent Thursday night at her parents' home and left after a pleasant breakfast on Friday morning.

When police tried to locate the custodian of the bank, Peter Smith, he apparently had disappeared.

Margaret Charity stated that her brother, George, had seen Peter Smith running from the bank as George was strolling to the 24-Hour Diner for coffee around eleven o'clock Thursday night.

The FBI in Atlantic City, New Jersey, found Peter Smith on Friday. He had arrived there by train at five o'clock Thursday evening.

The train conductor confirmed the time of Peter Smith's arrival.

Mr. Moneybags is the only person who has a key to the vault.

There were no trains out of Atlantic City between 4:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday.

In addition to keeping payroll records, George Charity is in charge of the dynamite supplies of the Acme Construction Company.

Margaret Charity said that Peter Smith had often flirted with her.

Mr. Moneybags waited in the terminal at the Los Angeles airport for 16 hours because of engine trouble on the plane he was to take to Mexico City.

Mr. Moneybags's brother, John Poorman, had always been jealous of his brother.

John Poorman is known to always go to a movie on Friday nights.

John Poorman appeared in Los Angeles on Monday waving a lot of money.

John Poorman wanted to marry Peter Smith's sister.

The Mole

LEARNING CONCEPTS

- Teamwork and group dynamics
- Trust and distrust • Problem solving

(35–45 MINUTES)

This activity demonstrates how dynamics change when distrust arises in a group. The group attempts to solve a problem without the guidance of a leader. At the beginning of the process, suspicion is raised when you tell participants that there may be a "mole" in the group trying to prevent the team from succeeding. In actuality there is not a mole, but the dynamics of the group make everyone believe otherwise.

In a partitioned area of the room you will set up a three-dimensional structure made of playing cards. In another part of the room, teams of students work to build an exact replica of the model, relying on fellow group members to make sure they are building the structure correctly. As they work, they begin to suspect their own teammates of providing inaccurate clues for building it. Some groups might not finish the task because of suspicious attitudes, and some participants may find it difficult to confront others for seemingly not trying to help the team. Regardless of whether groups complete the task, the activity and discussion bring up issues of trust and group dynamics that apply beyond this group setting to everyday life.

You will need a room with a small partitioned area where the original design can be set up and obscured from view and additional space so groups of teens can move around freely. Each team needs a desk or table to work on.

GOALS

Participants will:

- learn to confront issues of distrust
- strengthen their understanding of how attitudes (positive and negative) affect group dynamics
- clarify how to solve problems and achieve goals despite possible roadblocks

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Decks of playing cards (one deck for every 6–8 participants plus one for the model structure)
- Standard-size (approximately 3½" x 6") envelopes (one for each participant)
- Pen
- Stapler

- Handouts: "Team Instructions for Building a Card Structure Replica" and "Special Mole Instructions" (page 55)

GETTING READY

Copy enough "Team Instructions for Building a Card Structure Replica" and "Special Mole Instructions" handouts for each participant. On each copy of the "Special Mole Instructions," mark *by hand* an X on the line next to "You ARE NOT the mole." It is important that you mark the same thing on every sheet, to establish that there isn't a mole in the group. Place each sheet in an envelope, seal all the envelopes, and staple one envelope behind each copy of the "Team Instructions for Building a Card Structure Replica."

Prior to conducting the activity, use one deck of cards to construct an original card structure in the partitioned area of the room. This will be the model for the replica structures the teams will build; make it three-dimensional and use as many cards as possible. Make sure the model is not visible to teens as they enter the room or as you explain the activity.

Determine how you will divide your larger group into smaller groups of six to eight members.

Setting the Stage

Most people don't join a group or team thinking that others in the group will have different goals than they do. Typically, people want to start off with a positive attitude and an assumption that everyone's agenda is the same, that all are dedicated to achieving the group's objectives.

Believing others have an underlying agenda or ulterior motive creates distrust and suspicion in groups that may otherwise be successful. Members begin to question others and challenge group decisions, often resulting in a general breakdown of how the group works together. In this activity, the effect may not be so dramatic. The atmosphere that arises, however, provides a starting point to openly discuss ways to establish group expectations, improve deteriorating team relationships, or confront existing dynamics where someone has or seems to have undermined the group's goals.

Groups of younger teens are likely to approach the activity with a more direct approach. They may more openly blame or accuse others, even jokingly, due to a tendency to speak the truth sooner. Older teens may try to figure out who is attempting to sabotage the group and may be more subtle, or even subversive, when trying to confront other members. If there is an existing outspoken member or someone who is often a scapegoat, group members may believe from the get-go that this person is to blame—a situation that provides an uncomfortable yet effective opportunity to challenge the group to change its existing interactions or judgments of each other.

In the unlikely event that teens become sarcastic or mean-spirited toward certain members, it may be necessary to step in and remind them to focus on the activity and not to bring up personal things from the past. If comments become deliberately cutting, or if you view ostracizing behavior that isn't related to the activity, take a minute or two to refocus the group on the real goal of the exercise. Openly point out the behavior that is occurring and challenge teens to participate purposefully in the activity. "Extending the Learning" at the end of this activity allows you to further explore ways to improve trust and constructively confront group members.

Activity

When teens arrive, divide them into smaller groups of six to eight people. Ask each team to select a desk or table. Place a deck of cards in the center of each group's work surface without designating a leader in any of the groups; do not ask the teams to choose a leader. Then say:

> **On your table is a deck of cards that your team will need to complete a task. I am passing out instruction sheets and secret envelopes to everyone in your group. You may read through the instruction sheet, but do *not* open the envelope attached to it until I tell you to.**

Pass out the instruction sheets with the envelope stapled to them and go over the "Team Instructions for Building a Card Structure Replica" together, letting teens know the location of the concealed area. Then continue:

When you open your envelope, you will find "Special Mole Instructions." Keep the information on these special instructions a secret until after your group has finished building the replica house of cards. Put the special instruction sheet back in the envelope or in your pocket—just make sure no one else sees what's in your envelope. This is not a competition among teams; you're to work as hard as you can within your individual team to accomplish the goal. Let me know when you want me to check out your project. I'll tell you if there are mistakes, but I won't say specifically what is wrong. You have 15 minutes to complete the task. Open your envelopes.

Once teens have opened their envelopes and the groups have begun working, walk around the room monitoring and observing what happens. If necessary, jot notes to keep track of things you want to bring up when the groups are done. As teams ask you to check out their structures, do so without drawing attention from the other groups. If there are mistakes, avoid being specific about what they are. Allow the group to keep working together in an attempt to fix their replica. Let groups know when 5 minutes remain. Regardless of whether the groups accurately complete the replicas, end the process when 15 minutes have elapsed. After calling time, remove the partition shielding the model. Give groups a few minutes to look at the model structure, compare it to theirs, and decompress a little in their small groups before bringing everyone together to talk about what happened.

Talk About It

Use about 15 minutes to talk about the activity. Begin by asking:

Who was the mole in each group?

When no one speaks up, allow participants to react. Then say:

No one? Then what happened in this activity?

Provide time for each group to explain their experiences and for you to offer any of your own observations that stood out. Allow flexibility for discussion time, as some touchy issues may come up during the process. Some teens might, for example, be upset about how people treated others in their group, about actions that could be perceived as cheating, or about comments referring to outside behaviors that were made in the context of the activity ("That's just like Joe. I could see him being the mole, he never supports our group's goals"). Openly point out the comments or flashpoints as you observe them, and allow the group to process them during this discussion time.

Also discuss some or all of the following questions related to your group's experience:

- **Maybe others in your group accused you of being the mole, or maybe you suspected someone of being the mole. If so, what went on in your mind? What behaviors made each of you suspicious that someone was a mole? Did you ever want to just come out and ask others if they were the mole? *Did* you ask? Why? What happened?**
- **How did the way your group worked together change as the activity went along? What would you do in a real-life group situation if you thought a team member was working against you or others in the group? If your group didn't complete the replica, what would need to have happened so you could have done so?**
- **Sometimes trust is broken in a group. This can happen whether it's a group of friends, your family, a sports team, a counseling group, or another one. When this happens, how can people reestablish trust?**
- **What steps can a group take to make sure everyone is working for the same goal? When people start going in different directions, what can you do to keep the group productive?**

Wrapping Up

Because this activity deals with trusting others, ask teens to spend some time over the next few days evaluating the role trust plays in their lives. Suggest they watch how they interact with friends and family members, what it takes for them to trust others, and how they can tell when someone is distrustful. You may also ask them to bring in newspaper or magazine clippings on how public figures gain and lose the trust of their supporters and critics. Encourage teens to write their observations and opinions about trust, distrust, confronting problems, and establishing or reestablishing a solid group connection in their notebooks or journals.

Extending the Learning

This activity has multiple levels of learning. In particular, you may want to focus the group on two different, yet related, topics: improving trust and identifying ways to confront others who may not be working toward mutual goals.

Participate in a ropes course. To address trust issues, consider having teens participate in low-elements activities at a ropes course if you have one in your area. These activities can be facilitated by the ropes course staff after you provide them with information about the issues you want the group to work through. To locate a ropes course facility near you, contact one of the following:

Association for Challenge Course Technology (www.acctinfo.org)

Professional Ropes Course Association (www.prcainfo.org)

Project Adventure (www.pa.org)

You can also look in the Yellow Pages in your area under "Ropes Courses," "Challenge Courses," or "Conference Centers."

Watch and discuss *The Abilene Paradox*. To further explore the issue of productively confronting others in a group, consider showing the video *The Abilene Paradox*, available at most libraries. You can also rent the video from ATS Media (www.atsmedia.com). The movie doesn't address having a mole in a group; rather, it explores how groups make decisions based on the belief that everyone shares the same opinion. It also highlights how problems in a group can escalate when people wait too long to voice their true opinions.

Team Instructions for Building a Card Structure Replica

In the area of the room that you can't see is a three-dimensional model made of playing cards. Your team's task is to construct a *replica*—a structure that is identical to the model—in the shortest amount of time. You have up to 15 minutes to complete the task. The replica must be correct. The shape must be the same as the model and all cards need to be in the correct position.

Any team member can go to view the original design. However, this must be done *one person at a time only*. That person may look at the original as long as she or he wishes. People may go back and look again as often as your group decides is necessary.

When you believe your replica is correct, notify me and I will check your structure. If it's incorrect, I'll tell you there is at least one mistake, although I won't tell you what or where it is. You'll continue working on the structure.

Special Mole Instructions (FOR YOUR EYES ONLY)

Perhaps you've heard of a "mole." In the world of espionage, a mole is a double agent, secretly working against a group he or she is part of. In real-life situations, all team members don't always work toward the same goals. Sometimes people do things to reach personal objectives rather than team goals. They may also work against team goals because of group tension, lack of trust, difficulty getting along with others, or other reasons.

There may be such a person in your group today. You can think of that person as "The Mole." It's also possible that there's more than one mole in the group.

If you are the mole, you're to do everything in your power to work against the efforts of your group, *without letting anyone know you're the mole.*

If a team member thinks another team member is the mole, he or she can accuse that person. The rest of the group will vote, and if there's unanimous agreement, the group can exclude the mole from any further planning or discussion with the group.

_____ You ARE the mole.

_____ You ARE NOT the mole.

Letter to Myself

LEARNING CONCEPTS

• Group closure or warm-up • Setting goals and creating vision

(20–25 MINUTES)

Less a group exercise than an opportunity for personal reflection, this activity can be used either at the closing group meeting to help teens focus on next steps or at an early meeting to encourage participants to set goals for personal growth within the group. Teens write letters to themselves, seal the letters in envelopes, and give them to you for safekeeping. At a later date, you will return the letters to teens by mail or in person. You will need enough space so all participants can reflect and write privately.

GOALS

Participants will:

- take time to reflect and document personal thoughts for future review
- set goals and vision
- experience meaningful group closure

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Writing paper (plain or fancy—a variety of types of paper can be nice for this activity)
- Pen or fine-point marker for each participant
- Business-size envelopes
- Large, sturdy rubber band
- Self-stick note
- First-class stamps (needed at a later date if you will be mailing the letters to teens)

GETTING READY

Determine when you will send the letters back to teens. If you're using the activity for closure, you may want to plan to have teens think of what they want to be doing one year from the day they write the letter. If you are using it as an opening activity, consider having them write letters they'll receive at the end of the group's time together (such as the close of the academic term, the end of camp, or the completion of weeks- or months-long service project).

If you will not be mailing the letters but plan to hand them out personally at a later meeting, determine when you'll do that based on the group's schedule. When that day arrives, you will want to set aside private time for teens to receive, read, and share thoughts about the letters as they relate to the group experience.

Setting the Stage

Since the content of the letters will be private, group discussion is not a necessary component of the activity. You may, however, want to build in some time for group sharing at the end of the meeting. The point of this discussion won't be to share details of the letters but rather to talk about general reflections on the group experience. For such discussion, plan a bit of time at the end of the meeting, but don't mention it as you set up the writing activity. This is to ensure that teens, who may be writing very private thoughts, will be able to fully focus on the personal writing task.

Activity

If using the activity for closure, begin by briefly summarizing your observations of teens' growth or development during their participation in the group. If using the activity as an opener, briefly describe what the group will be doing together and express your hope that the time will be a growing experience.

Then ask teens to select a piece of paper to use as stationery and to find a place in the room where they'll be comfortable writing privately. Pass out an envelope and pen or marker to each participant. Say:

> **Today you're going to write a letter to a very special person—you!**

Instruct teens to write their names and complete addresses with postal code (or just their names, if you will be returning the letters in person) on the envelope. Have them determine the best address for reaching them one year from today (or another time period you've established). Students who are moving or anticipate changing addresses can use another reliable address, such as a grandparent or friend. In this case, make sure they use their own name as recipient and address it in care of (c/o) the other person. Then explain the letter writing and time frame as appropriate:

> **In your letter to yourself, write about where you see yourself (one year from today). Put today's date at the top. Write whatever nickname or special name you use for yourself. As you write to yourself, think about reading the letter in the future. You may want to write about certain goals and expectations you have. Or if you're dealing with a difficult situation right now, maybe you'll want to describe what's happening so you can check in with yourself about it. Whatever you write about, don't just write "Hi, what's up?" These letters are private. I won't read them. In fact, once you've finished your letter, seal it in your envelope and hand it to me. I will mail it to you (one year from today).**
>
> **You can take some time to reflect on what you want to write before starting or think about it as you write. You have 15–20 minutes to write your letter. Enjoy it. I will collect the letters when time is up.**

Answer any questions and then allow teens to write. You may want to walk around the room to keep people on task or to answer questions privately. When everyone is done, collect the sealed envelopes and write your return address in the upper lefthand corner of each. Wrap a rubber band around them and keep them in a safe place until you are due to mail them. Mark your calendar and put a sticky note on top of the stack indicating the date you need to mail the letters. With your return address on the letters, those that don't make it to the intended recipients will be returned to you so you can attempt to reach the individuals in another way.

Talk About It

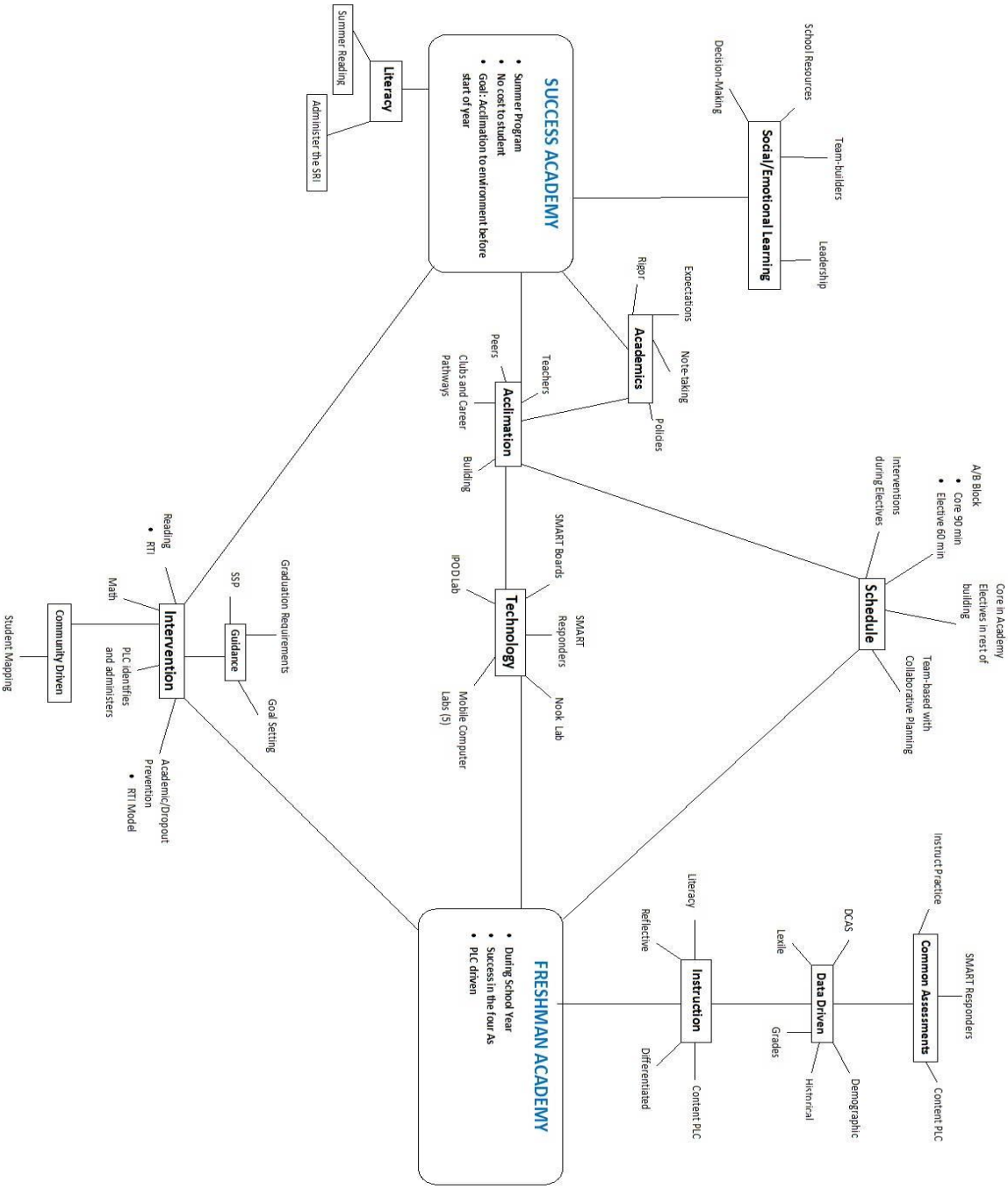
If you'd like to allow time for sharing or to bring closure to the group, consider posing these broad-based questions:

- **Does anyone want to talk about any specific goals or vision you have expressed in your letter?**
- **Overall, what has your experience as part of this group taught you about yourself? (Overall, what do you hope to learn and experience as part of this group?)**

Wrapping Up

Take a few minutes to thank teens for their teamwork and efforts, and express your hopes and vision for them, as individuals and as a group.

Appendix B: Schematic of Success Academy Organization



Appendix C: Permission to Publish Delaware School Climate Survey-Student Questions

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE | College of Education & Human Development
CENTER FOR DISABILITIES STUDIES

461 Wyoming Road
Newark, DE 19716-2355
Phone: 302-831-6974
TDD: 302-831-6689
Fax: 302-831-4690

December 23, 2013

[redacted]

Dear Mr. Wickert,

This letter is to confirm that the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project gives consent for you to use the Delaware School Climate Survey Student version in your study title: *A Case Study of the Effectiveness of a Summer Transition Program for First Time Ninth Grade Students*. All the climate surveys, for students as well as educators and parents, are on our website (Delawarepbs.org) and available for public use. It is understood that you have already received the approval of your school administrator at [redacted] to use the results from the modified Student School Climate survey administered in the fall of 2013. It is also understood that you are seeking approval from the research review board at your university.

Thank you for your interest in the student climate survey and wishes on your study.

Sincerely,

Deborah E. Boyer
School-age Services Director
Co-director, Delaware Positive Behavior Support

Appendix D: Delaware School Climate Survey-Student (Modified)

PART I: SCHOOL CLIMATE ***ABOUT ME AND MY SCHOOL***
TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONS
3. Teachers care about their students.
11. Teachers listen to students when they have problems.
14. Adults who work in this school care about the students.
18. Students like their teachers.
19. Teachers like their students.
STUDENT-STUDENT RELATIONS
6. Students are friendly with each other.
10. Students care about each other.
16. Students treat each other with respect.
17. Students get along with each other.
CLARITY OF EXPECTATIONS
2. Rules in this school are made clear to students.
5. Students know how they are expected to act.
9. Students know what the rules are.
13. This school makes it clear how students are expected to act.
SCHOOL SAFETY
1. This school is safe.
7. Students know they are safe in this school.
12. Students feel safe in this school.
20. Students are safe in the hallways.
BULLYING SCHOOL-WIDE
4. Students threaten and bully others in this school.
8. Students worry about others bullying them in this school.
15. In this school, bullying is a problem.
21. Students bully one another in this school.

PART III: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT
1. I feel happy in school.
2. My school is a fun place to be.
3. I like this school.
4. I like most of my teachers.
5. I like students who go to this school.
Added Questions
6. I am able to get to class without getting lost.
7. I am comfortable with following lunchtime procedures.
8. I can find and open my locker on my own.
9. I can get to class on time.
10. I plan (or have already) to join a club or after school sport.
11. I feel like I fit in at this school.

Note: "Added Questions" were added at the request of the school of study and lack the pre-established empirical validity of the rest of the survey.

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of the level of effectiveness of a summer transition program at acclimating students to the physical, social, and academic environments at the school under study. The researcher is inviting teachers and interventionists of first time ninth grade students who have participated in all three administrations of the transition program to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Jonathan S. Wickert, who is a doctoral student at Walden University: You may already know the researcher as the Instructional Advisor at the school under study, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to determine the level of effectiveness of the school's summer transition program at acclimating students to the physical, social, and academic environments at the school under study.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a one to one semi-structured interview lasting approximately one hour. The interview will take place in the participant's classroom after normal working hour and be digitally recorded. Participants will also participate in answering follow-up questions as required for a duration of no longer than one hour.
- Participate in member-checking of the interview transcript as well as the researcher's notes for accuracy of transcription, response, and interpretation. Member-checking of the interview will last approximately one to two hours. A sealed copy of the transcribed interview, along with researcher notes will be provided to the participant for review in person with the researcher in the location of the interview, after school hours.

At the conclusion of the study, all participants will receive a one page executive summary of the study. This will be the same summary provided to the building Principal.

The interview questions are as follows:

1. In your classroom, what differences do you notice between students who attended the summer transition program and those who did not?

2. What impact did the summer transition program have on the relationships you have with your students?

3. What impact has the summer transition program had on the academic success of students who participated as compared to students who did not participate in the Success Academy?

4. How do summer transition program participants differ from non-participants in terms of familiarity of classroom routines during the school year (on time to class, rules ,

etc.)?

5. Do summer transition program participants apper to feel more or less confident

with the school transition once the school year begins? How do you know?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at the school under study will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. Declining to participate or discontinuing participation will not negatively impact the participant's relationship with the researcher or the participant's employment status at the school under study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, frustration, and stress. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The results of this study will assist the school under study in determining the level of effectiveness of the summer transition program and in making future funding decisions as it relates to this program. The results will also assist other high schools in the creation of their own summer transition programs.

Payment:
There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by locking papers in a safe in the researcher's home. Any data or responses collected and analyzed using a computer will only be saved on that computer. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email at jonathan.wickert@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 02-28-14-0276850 and it expires on February 27, 2015.

Insert the phrase that matches the format of the study:
The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, "I consent" , I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix F: Summary of DSCS-S Results for Central Research Question 1

		Attended			Did Not Attend		
Question	Subscale	#	Response 1, 2	Response 3, 4	#	Response 1, 2	Response 3, 4
Students feel safe in this school.	School Safety 12	255	14%	86%	172	14%	86%
Students are safe in the hallways.	School Safety 20	255	18%	82%	172	21%	79%
Rules in this school are made clear to	Clarity of Expectations 2	257	12%	88%	175	13%	87%
Students know how they are expected to	Clarity of Expectations 5	257	12%	88%	175	11%	89%
Students know what the rules are.	Clarity of Expectations 9	257	6%	94%	175	9%	91%
This school makes it clear how students are expected to act.	Clarity of Expectations 13	255	10%	90%	172	10%	90%
I am able to get to class without getting	Added Question 6	252	13%	87%	170	31%	69%
I am comfortable with following lunchtime procedures.	Added Question 7	252	13%	87%	170	19%	81%
I can find and open my locker on my own.	Added Question 8	252	9%	91%	170	25%	75%
I can get to class on time.	Added Question 9	252	8%	92%	170	13%	87%
Teachers care about their students.	Teacher-Student Relationships 3	257	8%	92%	175	9%	91%
Teachers listen to students when they have problems.	Teacher-Student Relationships 1	257	10%	90%	175	15%	85%
Adults who work in this school care about the students.	Teacher-Student Relationships 1	255	11%	89%	172	13%	87%
Students like their teachers.	Teacher-Student Relationships 1	255	20%	80%	172	24%	76%
Teachers like their students.	Teacher-Student Relationships 1	255	12%	88%	172	16%	84%
Students are friendly with each other.	Student-Student Relationships 6	257	27%	73%	175	26%	74%
Students care about each other.	Student-Student Relationships 1	257	40%	60%	175	42%	58%
Students treat each other with respect.	Student-Student Relationships 1	255	30%	70%	172	29%	71%
Students get along with each other.	Student-Student Relationships 1	255	24%	76%	172	23%	77%
Students threaten and bully others in this	Bullying School-Wide 4	257	62%	38%	175	62%	38%
Students worry about others bullying them in this school.	Bullying School-Wide 8	257	55%	45%	175	59%	41%
In this school, bullying is a problem.	Bullying School-Wide 15	255	71%	29%	172	65%	35%
Students bully one another in this school.	Bullying School-Wide 21	255	71%	29%	172	62%	38%
I feel happy in school.	Emotional Engagement 1	252	22%	78%	170	25%	75%
My school is a fun place to be.	Emotional Engagement 2	252	35%	65%	170	38%	62%
I like this school.	Emotional Engagement 3	252	14%	86%	170	21%	79%
I like most of my teachers.	Emotional Engagement 4	252	9%	91%	170	11%	89%
I like students who go to this school.	Emotional Engagement 5	252	18%	82%	170	15%	85%
This school is safe.	School Safety 1	257	7%	93%	175	10%	90%
Students know they are safe in this school.	School Safety 7	257	16%	84%	175	16%	84%

Note. Response 1 (Disagree a lot), Response 2 (Disagree), Response 3 (Agree), Response 4 (Agree a lot)

Appendix G: Summary of DSCS-S Means and Standard Deviations

Question	Subscale	Attended			Did Not Attend		
		n	Mean	Std. Deviatio	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students feel safe in this school.	School Safety 12	255	2.99	0.608	172	0.0293	0.547
Students are safe in the hallways.	School Safety 20	255	2.9	0.584	172	2.87	0.608
Rules in this school are made clear to students.	Clarity of Expectations 2	257	3.16	0.665	175	3.02	0.647
Students know how they are expected to act.	Clarity of Expectations 5	257	3.1	0.61	175	3.02	0.611
Students know what the rules are.	Clarity of Expectations 9	257	3.17	0.532	175	3.07	0.514
This school makes it clear how students are expected to act.	Clarity of Expectations 13	255	3.13	0.602	172	3.04	0.566
I am able to get to class without getting lost.	Added Question 6	252	3.05	0.645	170	2.81	0.816
I am comfortable with following lunchtime procedures.	Added Question 7	252	3.01	0.637	170	2.94	0.731
I can find and open my locker on my own.	Added Question 8	252	3.19	0.684	170	2.84	0.824
I can get to class on time.	Added Question 9	252	3.14	0.606	170	3.07	0.649
Teachers care about their students.	Teacher-Student Relationships 3	257	3.18	0.597	175	3.14	0.581
Teachers listen to students when they have problems.	Teacher-Student Relationships 11	257	3.12	0.661	175	3.03	0.682
Adults who work in this school care about the students.	Teacher-Student Relationships 14	255	3.05	0.619	172	2.98	0.616
Students like their teachers.	Teacher-Student Relationships 18	255	2.85	0.583	172	2.78	0.619
Teachers like their students.	Teacher-Student Relationships 19	255	2.96	0.535	172	2.92	0.582
Students are friendly with each other.	Student-Student Relationships 6	257	2.77	0.622	175	2.78	0.668
Students care about each other.	Student-Student Relationships 10	257	2.61	0.676	175	2.58	0.722
Students treat each other with respect.	Student-Student Relationships 16	255	2.71	0.604	172	2.72	0.661
Students get along with each other.	Student-Student Relationships 17	255	2.8	0.569	172	2.8	0.569
Students threaten and bully others in this school.	Bullying School-Wide 4	257	2.35	0.778	175	2.35	0.823
Students worry about others bullying them in this school.	Bullying School-Wide 8	257	2.42	0.731	175	2.33	0.753
In this school, bullying is a problem.	Bullying School-Wide 15	255	2.23	0.691	172	2.3	0.779
Students bully one another in this school.	Bullying School-Wide 21	255	2.24	0.718	172	2.3	0.781
I feel happy in school.	Emotional Engagement 1	252	2.88	0.704	170	2.79	0.707
My school is a fun place to be.	Emotional Engagement 2	252	2.71	0.787	170	2.62	0.792
I like this school.	Emotional Engagement 3	252	3.02	0.659	170	2.85	0.694
I like most of my teachers.	Emotional Engagement 4	252	3.13	0.612	170	3.04	0.638
I like students who go to this school.	Emotional Engagement 5	252	2.93	0.643	170	2.94	0.573
This school is safe	School Safety 1	257	3.14	0.555	175	3.04	0.529
Students know they are safe in this school.	School Safety 7	257	2.93	0.551	175	2.91	0.545

Curriculum Vitae

Doctorate in Education: Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment **GPA: 4.0**
February 2011-January 2015
Walden University

Chief of Interpretation
August 2015-present
Delaware State Parks

Instructional Advisor (High School)
October 2010-August 2014
Delaware

High School Social Studies Teacher
August 2007-October 2010
Delaware

Master's in Education: Curriculum and Instruction **GPA: 4.0**
September 2003-May 2006
Frostburg State University
Frostburg, MD 21532

Graduate Assistant
Sept. 2005-May 2006
Frostburg State University
EDUC 200 Phase I Teaching & Professional Assessment Laboratory

- Instructed students on writing instructional objectives and creating full lesson plans
- Redesigned course prior to Spring semester to increase effectiveness and align rubrics with assessments
- Assessed student lesson plans and teaching performances

Bachelor of Arts, Social Science/Secondary Education **GPA: 3.8**
September 1999-May 2003
Concentrations: History and Economics
Frostburg State University
Frostburg, MD 21532

Study Abroad
Central Queensland University, Australia
Fall 2001
Completed coursework:

- History of Australia
- Intermediate Macroeconomics
- Movements, Cults, and Social Change
- Outdoor Pursuits